

Northern Ireland



DRAFT

Annual Report and Accounts

1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024



**Working together.
Making a difference.**

Welcome

We are the Northern Ireland Social Care Council. We are a public body, set up by the Department of Health in 2001 as part of their policy to improve standards across social work and social care services.

We are helping to raise standards in social work and social care by:

- **Registering the workforce** – there are 44,000 people working in social work and social care in Northern Ireland. All of these people must be registered with the Social Care Council to be able to work in their job role. Everyone on the Social Care Council Register has been checked to make sure they are suitable to work in their job role.
- **Regulating standards in the workforce** - every registered person must keep to the standards we set for their work and must keep updating their skills and knowledge to help them do their job. They must also meet the Social Care Council standards for their behaviour. This includes how they treat the people they provide services for and how they behave towards their work colleagues.
- **Setting standards for social work education** – we set the standards for the Degree in Social Work courses in Northern Ireland. We also approve education and training for social workers to support them in their career development.
- **Promoting workforce learning and development** – we work with our stakeholders to develop training and learning to support social workers and social care workers to develop their skills and knowledge throughout their career.



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Northern Ireland Social Care Council Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024

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for Northern Ireland on

DD Month 2024

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Chair's Introduction

CONTENT TO BE UPDATED

Hello, as Chair of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, I am proud to be able to present in this Annual Report the delivery of a significant programme of work to manage standards and registration for the 44,000 people approved by the Social Care Council to provide social work and social care services across Northern Ireland.



As the regulatory body for social workers and social care workers practising here, everything we do is focused on high quality, safe and effective care. This report evidences the difference that our work has made towards developing a thriving, capable and compassionate social work and social care workforce that makes a unique contribution to the care and protection of people in need.

On behalf of the Social Care Council Board and staff, I would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution made by each of the social workers and social care workers registered on our Social Care Register who continue to provide vital services every day across Northern Ireland regardless of the circumstances around them. Social workers and social care workers are delivering high quality care to everyone in Northern Ireland at an extremely difficult time for all of us – and the value of these roles could not be more important than it is today.

Social Work and Social Care matters – it matters to the thousands of children and adults who receive care and support every day. As we continue to navigate our way through the impact of Covid19 and the increasing financial pressures faced by society, this care and support is even more vital. The challenge, however, is how to deliver safe, quality care in a system that is under strain. Financial and workforce pressures are prevalent across the Health and Social Care (HSC) System and impact on the delivery of social work and social care services. Strategies to support social work and social care workforce recruitment and retention are vital to secure the delivery of safe, quality care and protect the health and wellbeing of our registrants. The Social Care Council must be responsive to these challenging and changing circumstances. Our focus is on the safety, quality and improvement of social work and social care services through a well-trained and supported workforce.

During 2022-23, we consulted with our stakeholders to develop our Strategic Plan for 2023-27. Our Strategic Plan for 2023- 2027 sets out our ambitions and priorities for the next four years. We are ambitious for the Social Care Council and for our registrants and through our work we will seek to support the HSC Improvement and Transformation Programme positioning social work and social care as key enablers in transforming our health and social care services. We have worked in collaboration with the Department of Health (DoH) to established a new 'Social Care Collaborative Forum' whose purpose is to deliver reform, address service pressures, promote co-ordinated activity and collaboration, and provide strategic oversight, direction and governance. Our Strategic Plan was developed at a significant period in the history of the Social Care Council. In addition to reaching its 21st birthday milestone in October 2022, the organisation participated in a review of our services by the DoH. This review confirmed our role and function as the regulator for social work and social care in Northern Ireland and set some progressive recommendations supporting our ambitions, which we will deliver through this Strategic Plan.

Partnership is at the heart of our work. We will deliver our strategic priorities through the invaluable and enduring partnership arrangements we have in place, working with our registrants, people who use services and carers, providers of social work and social care services, education and training providers, and with Government, all of whom have contributed to the progress we have made to date. Our ambition is to be a regulator of excellence, one we and our registrants can be proud of. The new strategy will be flexible and relevant, and it will shape our work for the next four years as we seek to make a difference for our registrants and the people who use social work and social care services. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to give their views and helped to shape the 2023-27 Strategic Plan.

Chair's Introduction

This is the third year in which the Social Care Council had to deliver most of its services remotely as a result of the COVID pandemic restrictions. Along with stakeholders, we have adapted to new ways of working, with tasks being delivered online, and engagement through video conferencing and webinars. Throughout the year, as restrictions eased, it was possible to reinstate some face-to-face engagement with our stakeholders and partner organisations.

We have continued to listen to our stakeholders and developed our services and resources to support them in delivering social care services. The online registration system was refreshed to provide further guidance for employers and new applicants, as well as for those maintaining their registration. During the year, the Learning Zone was updated and new resources added to assist registrants in their ongoing learning and development. Our digital communications channels have been key in reaching our registrants, employers and stakeholder groups to ensure they were kept connected with the services, events and resources we were providing. We also provided support for the Department of Health (DoH), delivering communications campaigns for the Reform of Adult Social Care. Successful media campaigns were delivered online, in print and on local media to share stories about the valuable contribution that social care makes to individuals, families and communities. Social work careers were promoted online and on local radio to encourage more people to join the profession.

On behalf of the Social Care Council Board, I would like to commend all of the staff for their efforts and their undoubted commitment to our vision of quality social care services and outcomes for everyone. I also want to put on record my appreciation of the leadership, support and direction provided during this most challenging year by our senior leadership team; Patricia Higgins, CEO, Declan McAllister, Director of Registration and Corporate Services and Marian O'Rourke, Director of Regulation and Standards.

Finally, on behalf of the Board members and staff, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all involved in our key partnerships (Professional in Practice, Leaders in Social Care and Registrants), who worked tirelessly to ensure the business of the Social Care Council continued without interruption. May I also offer my sincere thanks to those involved in the Participation Partnership who continue to support our work (further detail is included in the PPI report on page 13).

There is no doubt 2023-24 will be another challenging year for the Social Care Council, as we adapt to a new office environment at James House in Belfast, and for the wider social care sector as we respond to work and other pressures. I am confident we will adapt and change together to ensure that the social work and social care workforce has the skills and values required to deliver high quality services for the people of Northern Ireland.

TO BE SIGNED BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

Paul Martin

Chair, Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Our Purpose

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



Our Vision

To have a thriving, capable and compassionate social work and social care workforce providing the highest quality of care, protection and support to people in need.

We will realise our vision by taking forward four priorities:

Regulate



Deliver effective regulation

Support



Develop the capability of the workforce

Influence



Lead with influence

Innovate



Innovate and improve

Glossary – words we use to describe our work

ALB	Arms' length body.
AYE	Assessed Year in Employment – the first year in assessed practice for newly qualified social workers.
BASW NI	The professional association for social work and social workers in Northern Ireland.
Board	This is the Board of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council who provide strategic oversight and direction.
BSO	Business Services Organisation – provides a range of services for health and social care organisations.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer.
CORU	The regulator for health and social care professionals in Ireland.
CPD	Continuing Professional Development – ongoing learning and training.
DoH	Department of Health – the government body responsible for health and social care in Northern Ireland.
ECHO	Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes – is a programme of learning, sharing and support that uses video conferencing to share learning and good practice.
FtP	Fitness to Practise – a registrant's suitability to work in social work or social care.
FReM	The Department of Finance's Financial Reporting Manual.
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation – the legislation around holding and using personal Information.
HEI's	Higher Education Institutions.
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.
IAR	Individual Assessment Route – an option for social workers to have their learning and practice assessed and get a Northern Ireland Social Care Council Award.
IASW	Irish Association of Social Workers.
ICT	Information and Communications Technology –computers, networks, websites and mobile applications we use.
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers – a worldwide body representing social work.
IIP	Investors in People – an award for good standards in staff and organisation management and development.

Glossary

ISO	Interim Suspension Order – temporary action to stop a registrant working while we make enquiries about a very serious complaint.
KPI	Key Performance Indicator – standards we use to measure how well we do our job.
KSF	Knowledge and Skills Framework – this is the framework which staff use to ensure they are developing the right level of knowledge and skills to do their jobs well.
NI	Northern Ireland.
NICON	The Northern Ireland Confederation for Health and Social Care.
OU	Open University.
PiP	Professional in Practice – the framework for social workers’ on-going learning and Qualifications.
PPI	Personal Public Involvement – describes the scheme through which we engage service users and carers.
PRTL	Post Registration Training and Learning – 90 hours of learning that all registrants must do to keep their registration up to date.
QI	Quality Improvement is a way to identify how a service, process or system can be Improved.
QUB	Queens University Belfast.
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 Register – social workers, social care workers and social work students.
RRL	Revenue Resource Limit.
RQIA	Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority – checks health and social care organisations are doing their job well.
SEHSCT	South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.
Sector Skills Council	The Council is part of a UK-wide Sector Skills Council set up to support employers in ensuring that people working in early years and children’s services and those working in social work and social care have the right skills and qualifications.
Social Care Council	Refers to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.
SLT	The Senior Leadership Team in the Social Care Council.
Stakeholders	People who are involved with our work or who are affected by what we do.
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.
UK	United Kingdom.
VBR	Values Based Recruitment – ensuring that people entering social care and social work roles have the right qualities for the job.

Section 1: Performance report

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (the Social Care Council) is a public body, established by the Department of Health to raise the standards of practice in social work and social care. This performance report provides information about how the Social Care Council business priorities were delivered during 2023-24.

The performance report for 2023-24 covers four key areas:

1. **Chief Executive's Statement on performance for 2023-24** - setting out the Chief Executive's perspective on performance against objectives and the risks to the achievement of those objectives;
2. **Personal and Public Involvement report** – summary of the partnerships and projects involving people who use services and carers in our work;
3. **Performance analysis** - providing a balanced and comprehensive analysis of performance during the year, impact of COVID on service delivery, trends identified and actions identified for the coming year;
4. **KPI summary** – Achievement against objectives and key performance indicators for 2023-24.

Our Strategic Plan for 2023-27 and Business Plan for 2023-24 focused on four key areas.



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-centred, values driven, competent, confident and compassionate. All social workers and social care workers must comply with our Standards of Conduct and Practice.



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.



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.



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.



Delivering our Strategy - Achievement of these priorities will be underpinned by investment in four key areas: Our People, Communication and Engagement, Evaluation and Resources. We will ensure we have the necessary infrastructure i.e. the people, resources, governance and estate management arrangements in place to deliver on these priorities.

An overview and commentary on how we performed against the objectives for these priorities during 2023-24 is set out in the following pages.

Chief Executive's Statement on organisational performance for 2023-24

DRAFT CONTENT – TO BE REVIEWED



This Annual Report for the period April 2023 to March 2024 reflects a strong performance for the first year of business towards our Strategic Plan for 2023-27. It includes commentary on the supports provided for the registered workforce to ensure they continued to provide front line social care services. We set quite ambitious objectives in our Strategic Plan to deliver effective regulation; develop the capability of the workforce; lead with influence; and to drive innovation and improvement. It is encouraging to see the difference that our work has made in the last year for both the registered workforce and for people receiving care. Our plans for the next few years will build on these achievements. With our partners and stakeholders, we will continue our work to support and develop the social work and social care workforce.

There is no doubt that challenging times remain for the social work and social care sector which continues to experience funding and resource constraints, and pressures in recruitment and retention. In social care we can see the turnover experienced by employers through the churn in our Register and understand the difficulties this presents in the delivery of services. In social work we are working to support employers through reviewing the routes into social work training and seeking to increase opportunities for social work entry level training. Through our work with the Department of Health's (DoH) Social Care Collaborative Forum and Children's Services Reform Board, we are working with employers, the Department of Health and other key stakeholders and decision makers to build a sustainable social work and social care workforce for the future.

We will continue to engage with people who use services and carers through our Participation Partnership listening to their experiences and views to help shape what we do. It may be difficult to top the film premiere we hosted in December which showcased the many achievements of Joanne Sansome, a long standing supporter of the Council and influential activist for service users. But we look forward to the challenge. The views of our registrants are also important in shaping our work, and following extensive engagement with registrants during the last year, we are moving forward with a new approach to involving our social work and social care registrants. We are setting up a new social work registrants forum and a new social care registrants forum, both of which will enable us to better connect with our registrants and understand their experiences working in social work and social care.

Last year, there was significant time invested in taking forward the campaigns developed the previous year to raise awareness of the valuable contribution social workers and social care workers make to our community and our economy. The social work advertising campaigns delivered in Autumn 2023 and Spring 2024 challenged people to 'Think Social Work' and the social care campaign which ran throughout the summer has shone a light on the positive difference made by social care workers every day to the lives of people and in our communities. We provided support to practitioners, researchers and service commissioners to encourage stakeholders to engage with their work. Social Care Council staff and Participation Partnership members have played a key role in reviews and workstreams to reform social care here in NI and across the UK.

Chief Executive's Statement on organisational performance for 2023-24

As the regulator of the social work and social care workforce we have a responsibility to ensure that the Standards of Conduct and Practice for registrants are relevant to current practice and support the delivery of safe and compassionate care. We are using the learning from our Fitness to Practise work to support improvement in the delivery of care, through developing digital learning resources for the workforce. During 2023-24 we were given responsibility for the Leadership in Social Work Framework and the Social Work and Social Care Research Strategy. This is an excellent opportunity to build on the existing work of the social work research community, and to develop new partnerships to influence the development of research and inform best practice for social work and social care.

We use an outcomes-based approach to assess progress against business objectives. The benefit of this approach is that our plans clearly describe what we are trying to achieve and the difference we want to make. Alongside recording achievement against performance targets, we used qualitative methods to find out about the difference this work is making for our stakeholders, including: surveys, emails and telephone interviews. Some of the 2023-24 highlights are illustrated overleaf. More detailed commentary for progress against Key Performance Indicators is included on page 46.

Planning for our 2023-24 business was based on a flexible approach to service delivery, applying a combination of remote working and face-to-face engagement to ensure we maximised the technology now available to us and those we work with. Digital engagement is enabling us to engage a wider range of registrants and stakeholders in our seminars and events. The reduction in travel for meetings and seminars is providing quite timely savings. The Social Care Council, similar to most other organisations will be working within very tight financial constraints in 2024-25 and we will ensure that resources are used in the areas they will provide the greatest benefit.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the 68 people working here in the Social Care Council. Through their hard work and dedication, we have been awarded the Investors in People Platinum Award. This Platinum accreditation is the highest level of recognition against the Investors in People standard. Only two percent of organisations achieve this level of recognition, and it sets an international benchmark for effective leadership and employee collaboration. We are honoured to be the first Health and Social Care organisation in Northern Ireland to achieve this standard. We will continue to build on this award as we work together to make a difference in everything that we do.

Business Highlights for 2023-24 include:

Stakeholders supported

56,572

people supported with registration queries
94% positive feedback on the service provided



Social Care Register maintained

for ***46,418** registrants:
*Register totals 31/3/24



39,033 social care workers
6,622 social workers
763 social work students
123 decisions uploaded to the Register

Registrations processed

17,252 registration applications/ renewals processed
94% processed within 20 days
87% of fees paid online



Fitness to Practise concerns addressed

541 referrals triaged (100% within 3 days)
291 cases closed (**91%** closed within 15 months)
37 Interim Orders granted
27 Fitness to Practise hearings



Social work and social care careers promoted

24 careers events
9k hits on Learning Zone careers resource
292 first-year students enrolled on Social Work Degree
2XX newly qualified social workers graduated from NI Social Work Degree programmes



Social work education standards assured

3 Degree courses
21 Designated practice learning providers
19 PiP Programmes
24 Social work AYE Audits



Expertise and Leadership provided to support strategic projects

- Social Care Collaborative Forum
- UK Social Care Impact
- NI Local Impact
- Social Care Echo
- Leaders in Social Care
- Social Work Leaders
- Social Work Strategy subgroup
- Apprenticeships & Trainees panel

Finances managed effectively

Break-even achieved with a £4k underspend (**TBC**)

90% of invoices paid within 10 days
98% of invoices paid within 30 days



Chief Executive's Statement on organisational performance for 2023-24

Assurance on the management of issues and risks

Effective governance systems are in place to support the regular review of issues and risks which could affect business delivery. As part of the Risk Management Strategy, the Board set the strategic risks and assessed the risk appetite for the organisation. The Risk Appetite Statement and Matrix in Appendix 3 of this report sets out the level of risk with which the Social Care Council aimed to operate across the key areas of finance, compliance, safety, service delivery and reputation in order to deliver on the strategic business themes in 2023-24.

During the year, we monitored closely those risks which had been identified as having the potential to impact on the achievement of the Business Plan objectives. Risks, controls and actions have been reviewed regularly by the Risk Management Committee. Summary of the assurances provided by our risk management processes is detailed in the **Governance Statement on page 66**. The Board Audit and Risk Assurance Committee have reviewed the Risk Register and Assurance Framework at each of their meetings. This provides assurance to the Board, our sponsor department and our stakeholders on the organisation's ability to deliver its organisational objectives. At the end of 2023-24, there were eight Strategic Risks identified by the Risk Management Committee: 2 risks were assessed as High level and 6 risks assessed as Medium level (there were no risks assessed as Extreme or Low level).

The eight strategic risks are:

- Regulatory Fitness to Practise Function Resourcing – assessed as **High Level 12**
- Resourcing the development of the Social Care Workforce - assessed as **High Level 16**
- Promoting the Value and Importance of Registration - assessed as **Medium Level 9**
- Management of Financial Resources - assessed as **Medium Level 9**
- Effective partnership/engagement with Stakeholders - assessed as **Medium Level 9**
- Social Work and Social Care Sector Data Intelligence - assessed as **Medium Level 8**
- Promoting Systems Leadership - assessed as **Medium Level -6**
- Capturing the views of stakeholders - assessed as **Medium Level 9**

Assessment and management of strategic risks in 2023-24

Regulatory Fitness to Practise Function Resourcing **High Level 12** This function remains a high risk given the nature of the work and the increasing workloads being experienced by the team. A new Case Management system was developed during 2023-24 and was in the final stages of testing at year end. This will assist with the management of cases moving into 2024-25 business year, however a review of workloads is also being undertaken which will take into consideration the complexity of work, impact of workloads from consensual disposals and the increase in Interim Suspension Orders.

Resourcing the development of the Social Care Workforce **High Level 16** Through our work on developing the capability of the workforce and our development work in innovation we aim to support the sustainability of the social care workforce. These are longer term ambitions. The workforce is under pressure financially and from recruitment and retention. As a systems leader the Social Care Council will use its influence and voice to support the sector.

Chief Executive's Statement on organisational performance for 2023-24

Promoting the Value and Importance of Registration Medium Level 9 An engagement programme is underway using stories and experiences of social work and social care. This work will continue throughout the year. The Communications Team is working closely with Registration and Workforce Development colleagues to deliver a targeted communication programme to registrants, employers and others including using benchmarks and surveys to evaluate and monitor impact and outcomes. A new Engagement Strategy is also being developed following a period of consultation which will also support the management of this risk.

Management of Financial Resources Medium Level 9 Pressures on the budget remain under active review. Without sustainable and sufficient funding going into the new financial year the organisation's ability to deliver all of its services could be compromised. However, the risk has been reduced as the organisation has a clear line of sight that the break-even position for 2023-24 will be achieved. This risk is regularly updated, taking into account the changes to funding allocations and pressure that can occur throughout the year.

Effective partnership/engagement with Stakeholders Medium Level 9 The Department of Health has transferred the Leadership Framework for Social Work to the Social Care Council and this will strengthen partnership working around the Professional in Practice Framework and engagement with Universities. With a recent change in representation from the University of Ulster work is underway to build relationships to ensure high quality delivery of the Social Work degree.

Social Work and Social Care Sector Data Intelligence Medium Level 8 An extensive programme of work has been put in place to gather, maximise and share our data to improve outcomes and decision making. A workstream on Social Care Data and Intelligence has been established, with reporting on progress to the Social Care Leadership Forum. We are triangulating our data to join up data sets across Health and Social Care (HSC) and carrying out deep delve reviews into specific business areas including Fitness to Practise referral data. The first published report on the Register analysis is now available online at [Data reports - NISCC](#). A new State of the Nation Social Care report is also being produced for 2023-24 which will be shared with stakeholders and interested parties later in the year.

Promoting Systems Leadership Medium Level 6 During the consultation on the organisation's new Strategic Plan, the Social Care Council heard from registrants about the need to use our voice and our role to help shape better outcomes for the sector. In response to this, the organisation has a new strategic theme (Lead with Influence) which will build on our earlier work to support the sector and influence decision makers and decision making. We are working alongside an extensive range of stakeholders to make this happen. We are also working with the DOH on a Social Care Collaborative Forum to support this work in relation to the social care workforce.

Capturing the views of stakeholders Medium Level 9 We are continuing to work with people who use services and carers to develop our evidence base and evaluate effective engagement. An engagement platform based on MS Teams is in place which enables our partnership members to share information, events, connections and intelligence to support the work of the Social Care Council. We are also developing an Engagement Strategy which will support our engagement – in particular with people who use services and carers.

Chief Executive's Statement on organisational performance for 2023-24

I am satisfied that the Social Care Council has performed well against the objectives set out in the 2023-24 Business Plan. Further narrative on performance against each of the objectives is contained within the performance analysis and in the annual accounts within this report.

TO BE SIGNED BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

Patricia Higgins,
Chief Executive,
Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) report for 2023-24

Hello from the Participation Partnership – **DRAFT CONTENT**

Members of our Partnership are people who receive social care services, or who are a carer for someone. Their role is to influence, advise and challenge the work of the Social Care Council, ensuring that people who use social care services and their carers have an opportunity to shape and contribute to all of our work. The contribution of people who use social care services and carers is a valued and integral part of planning, implementing and reviewing all areas of work across the organisation.

SPACE FOR UPDATED GROUP PICTURE

The Partnership is chaired by Sarah Browne (Board Member) and supported by the Director of Registration and Corporate Services, together with a small group of other staff. During 2023-24, two members, Anne Mallon and Gerard McWilliams, undertook the role of Co-Chair for the Partnership. Their responsibilities included planning meetings, leading agenda items and hosting promotional events for the Partnership. The Co-Chair role was first introduced in 2022-23, providing an opportunity for members to develop skills in leading and chairing meetings. The Co-Chair role will rotate amongst members on a regular basis.

Participation members are committed to meeting at least every three months and they report back to the Board on their progress. They work alongside Social Care Council staff to provide insight and challenge on the involvement of people who use services and carers in social work and social care development. Participation members agree their agenda and all meetings are minuted. Throughout the year, members held their meetings and carried out project work using Zoom, MS Teams, telephone calls and emails. Meetings are hosted at James House and offered as a hybrid of online and in-person to enable members to participate in the way that best suits. The Social Care Council recognises the significant amount of personal time and expertise contributed by the members, which provides assurance that all activities are focused on the needs and experiences of those who use social care services.

As well as engaging in the business agenda for the Social Care Council, Participation members shared their personal experience and expertise in projects to provide insight for those planning and delivering social care services, and providing learning and development, including regional and UK-wide reforms for social care services.

Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) Report for 2023-24

Partnership highlights from 2023-24:

- Participation in the Impact Assembly on the future of adult social care across the UK –online and in-person events and engaging with the project team tasked to deliver £15 million funding to various adult social care projects throughout the UK through evidence-based delivery models
- Engaging with social care workers and employers to learn more about their views on qualifications and a career structure for social care.
- Participating on the Review of the Social Work Degree in NI project team and facilitating focus groups
- Support for the Regional PPI Forum to provide personal experiences and expertise to address issues with HSC service delivery.
- Contributing to Degree in Social Work programmes through input with students' taught sessions to provide insight into service user and carer experiences
- Providing service users and carer perspectives to the NI Degree Partnership review of the Regional Protocol for Progression in Practice Learning.
- Membership of the Social Care Collaborative Forum workstream for service user and carer involvement
- Ongoing support to develop Learning Zone resources, including the recently launched Human Rights Resource.
- Filming and editing of the short film 'Where there's a will, there's a way' featuring partnership member Joanne Sansome and Joe Duffy



Belfast film premiere for 'Where there's a will, there's a way'

The Social Care Council hosted a screening of this short film in partnership with the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work at Queen's at the QFT Belfast in December 2023.

This short film, produced by the Council, is about Joanne Sansome, a disability activist who has fought hard to be recognised as a campaigner, educator and published social researcher.

The film captures conversations between Joanne and her friend and colleague, Professor Joe Duffy from the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work at Queen's, and is an inspiring account of Joanne's journey to activism from an inspirational woman. Speaking at the launch, Joanne said: "I am delighted to see this film being launched today, I want this to be a positive learning resource and I hope, anyone who views it, will be left feeling as I do, as a person with a disability, that anything is possible, maybe just a little differently than how one wanted or imagined... but in the end, it's not better or worse it's just different ... and may become the best experience so far!"

Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) Report for 2023-24

At the launch, Professor Duffy spoke about how Joanne's unwavering journey as a passionate activist can help shape and influence the education and training of current and future social work students. He said: "Joanne's story, her journey, is one of determination, imagination, positivity and possibility, there is something in this for everybody and this film will be an important educational resource, going forward. It is a resource that is hope inspiring."

Patricia Higgins, Chief Executive, Social Care Council Chief believes that when others hear Joanne's story they will be inspired. She said: "We are thrilled to have helped Joanne share her story for others to hear. When you listen to Joanne's journey, you can't help but admire her drive to not take 'no' for an answer when it came to something she and all of us should be entitled to. Among her many achievements, we are grateful that she has chosen to ensure we as a workforce regulator hear the service user and carer voice in meaningful and authentic way "in all that we do."

The film was also promoted widely on local news and social media channels. Joanne and Joe were interviewed on Radio Ulster's Evening Extra programme. The film is available to view online: ['Where there's a will, there's a way' film – now available - NISCC](#)

Looking ahead

The members recognise that social workers and social care workers face immense challenges as we begin to move out of lockdown and into a period of recovery. This will require Government and the DoH to learn from the experiences of service users and carers and from frontline staff. The Participation members will support and challenge the Social Care Council to make sure that change is driven by the experience and knowledge of service users and carers. The Participation Partnership looks forward to playing a key role in delivery of the Social Care Council Business Plan 2024-25 and the wider social care improvement agenda.

SPACE FOR PHOTOS AND SIGNATURES OF CHAIRS

Sarah Browne
Chair

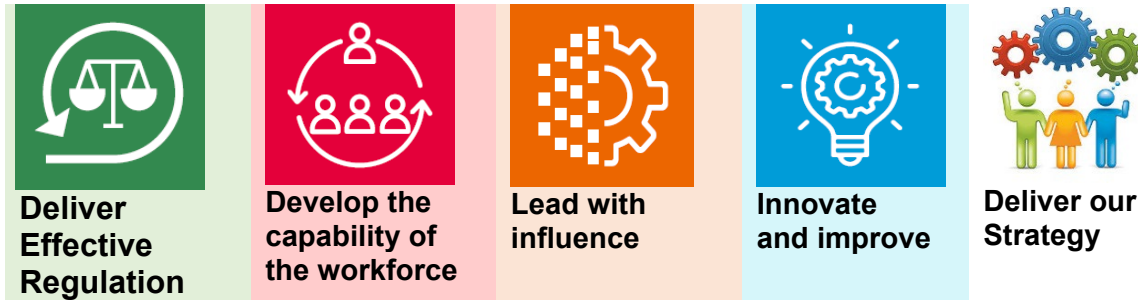
Anne Mallon
Co-Chair

Gerard McWilliams
Co-Chair

Performance Analysis for 2023-24

To ensure that our work to support workforce registration, regulation, education and development is effective, the Social Care Council applies a regular cycle of monthly reporting, quarterly evaluation and reflection; learning from experiences and adapting to changing workforce needs to shape how our work is developed and delivered.

This performance analysis highlights achievements for the year across each of the strategic priorities in our 2023-24 Business Plan:



This analysis includes key learning outcomes gained from our review of performance and provides a summary of the success indicators identified for 2023-24. It provides commentary on adjustments to plans to reflect changing business needs and any changes to our plans where business need has changed, or where achievement was not progressing as originally anticipated. A significant proportion of our work is longer term and will be included in the objectives listed for 2024-25. Further information on our aims and objectives for the coming year are published in our Business Plan for 2024-25 (available from our website www.niscc.info).

SPACE FOR AN IMAGE OF WORKFORCE/OUR ENGAGEMENT?

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Deliver Effective Regulation

Our Strategic Plan 2023-27 says we will 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 actions in 2023-24 - we said we would:

1. Deliver our Fitness to Practise (FtP) Function safely and effectively in accordance with rules, emerging case law and regulatory best practice
2. Work with employers and other key stakeholders to develop preventative approaches as part of workforce regulation
3. Support registrants and employers to maintain and value registration.
4. Implement the recommendations arising from the review of hybrid/online FtP hearings
5. Develop and promote learning resources to support registrants' awareness of the Standards of Conduct and Practice
6. Promote compliance with the Standards for Employers, in collaboration with the Regulation, Quality and Improvement Authority
7. Carry out engagement work to help us better understand the experiences of people who use services and carers, when using social work and social care services, so we can use this information to inform our business and to support effective regulation.

Indicators of success for 2023-24 – the difference we wanted to see:

1. Fitness to Practise (FtP) activity is managed efficiently in line with best practice, FtP Rules and key performance indicators.
2. Learning from FtP cases is shared and we are able to monitor how this impacts practice.
3. A minimum of 97% of registrants maintain their registration throughout the year.
4. FtP hearings are held based on the findings from the review.
5. At least 90% of registrants understand, comply with and report using the Standards to inform their practice.
6. At least 90% of employers understand and report using the Employer Standards to support social workers and social care workers.
7. We will start to have an evidence base that we can use to influence how we deliver our business in the future.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Deliver Effective Regulation

How did we do in 2023-24?

Our regulation activity is delivered through workforce registration, setting standards for social worker and social care workers' conduct and practice, and investigating concerns about individual's fitness to practise. Together, these establish and maintain clear benchmarks for good social work and social care practice.

In the 2023-24 Business Plan, there are seven Indicators of Success for our activities to deliver effective regulation. We have assessed progress towards these indicators and tracked achievement against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in monthly and quarterly reports.

At the 31 March 2024, the leadership team assessed satisfactory achievement against the objectives and KPIs for Delivering Effective Regulation. The following pages will provide an overview of the achievements in this area of work.

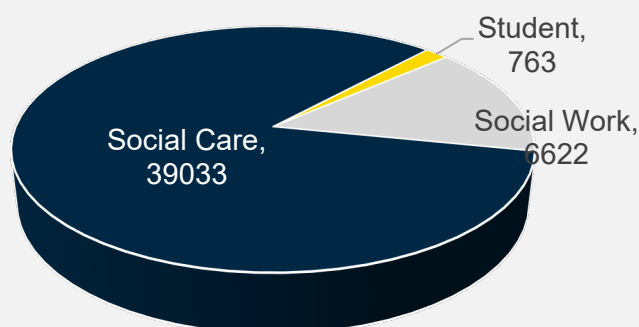


Regulation – Workforce registration 2023-24

The Social Care Council is responsible for registering all social workers, social care workers and social work students in Northern Ireland. This is a workforce of around 46,000 people.

- 46,418 people were registered on the Social Care Council Register at 31 March 2024.
- The register was made up of 39,033 social care workers, 6,622 social workers, 763 students.
- Social care workers make up the largest proportion of the register (84%).
- The remainder of the register is split between social workers (14%) and social work students (2%).

Social Care Council Register Profile
46418 registrants at 31 Mar 2024

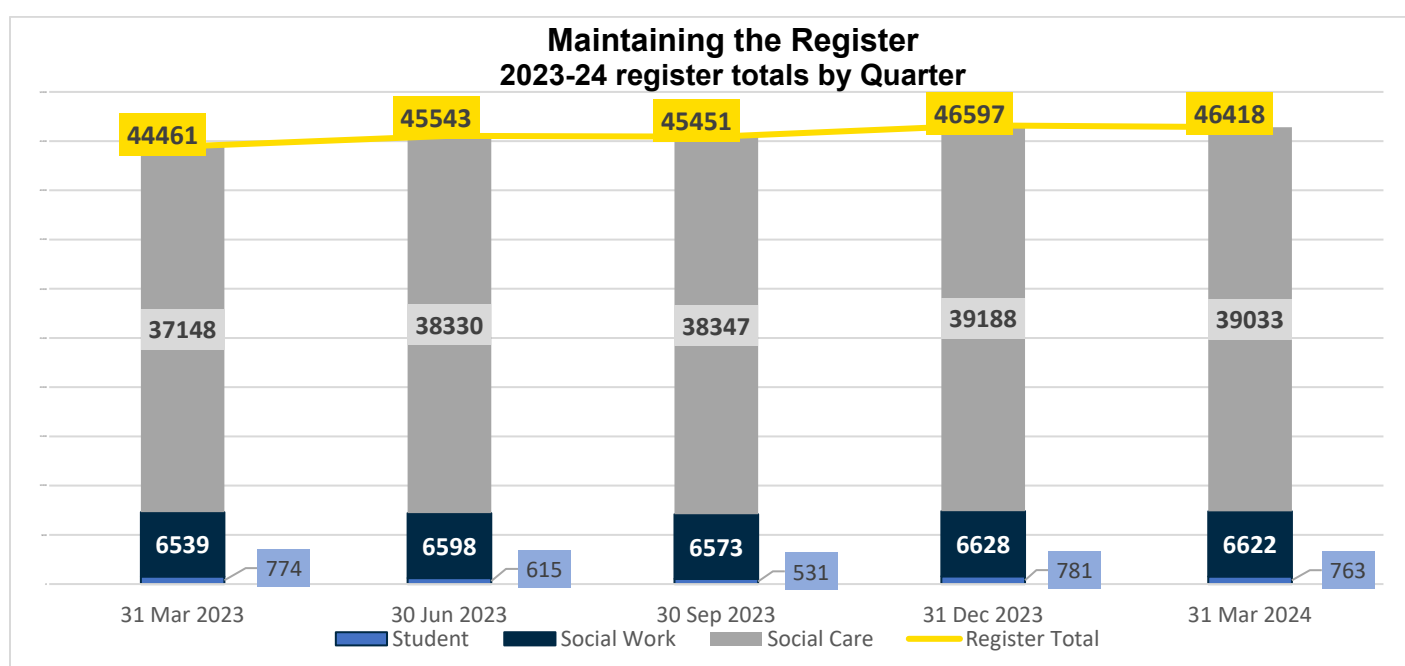


- The majority of the registered workforce (84%) identifies as female.
- Representation across the age bands remains steady, with 35% of Social Workers and 49% of Social Care Workers in the under 40 age bands.

Performance analysis for 2023-24

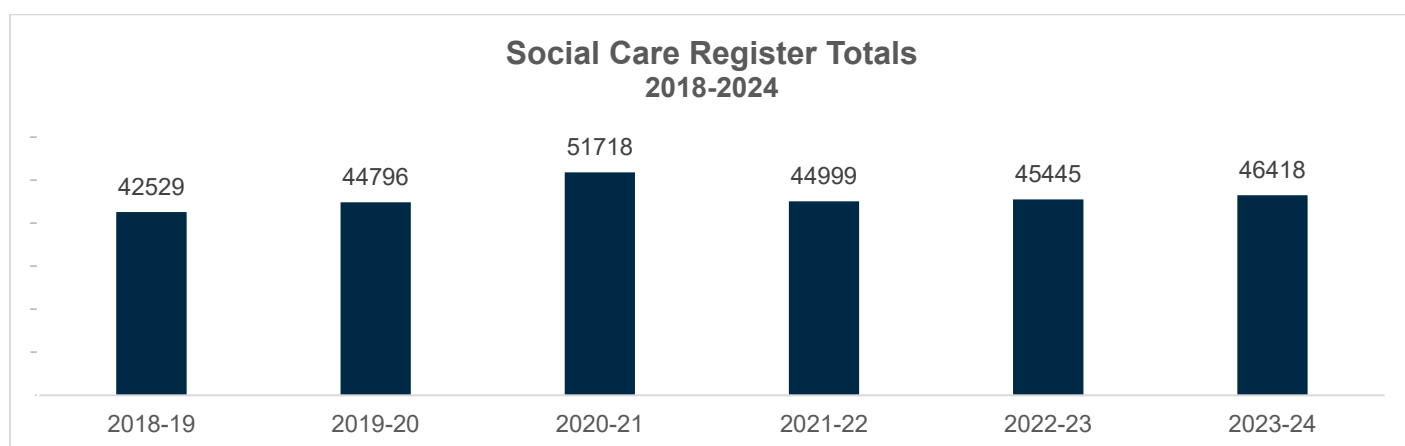
The Register currently lists 510 employing Organisations across all the employment sectors. The majority of social workers are employed within the Statutory Sector i.e. Health and Social Care Trusts (71.32%). The private sector employs the largest proportion (41.82%) of social care workers, with a further 21.81% employed by Health and Social Care Trusts and 16.29% employed by voluntary or charitable social care organisations.

The most significant groups of social care staff identified as Adult Residential Care Workers (34.55%) and Domiciliary Care Workers (31.65%). The next largest groups within social care are Supported Living Workers (6.64%) and Day Care Workers (5.21%). This profile of the registered workforce has remained relatively stable since compulsory registration for social work and social care was completed in 2018.

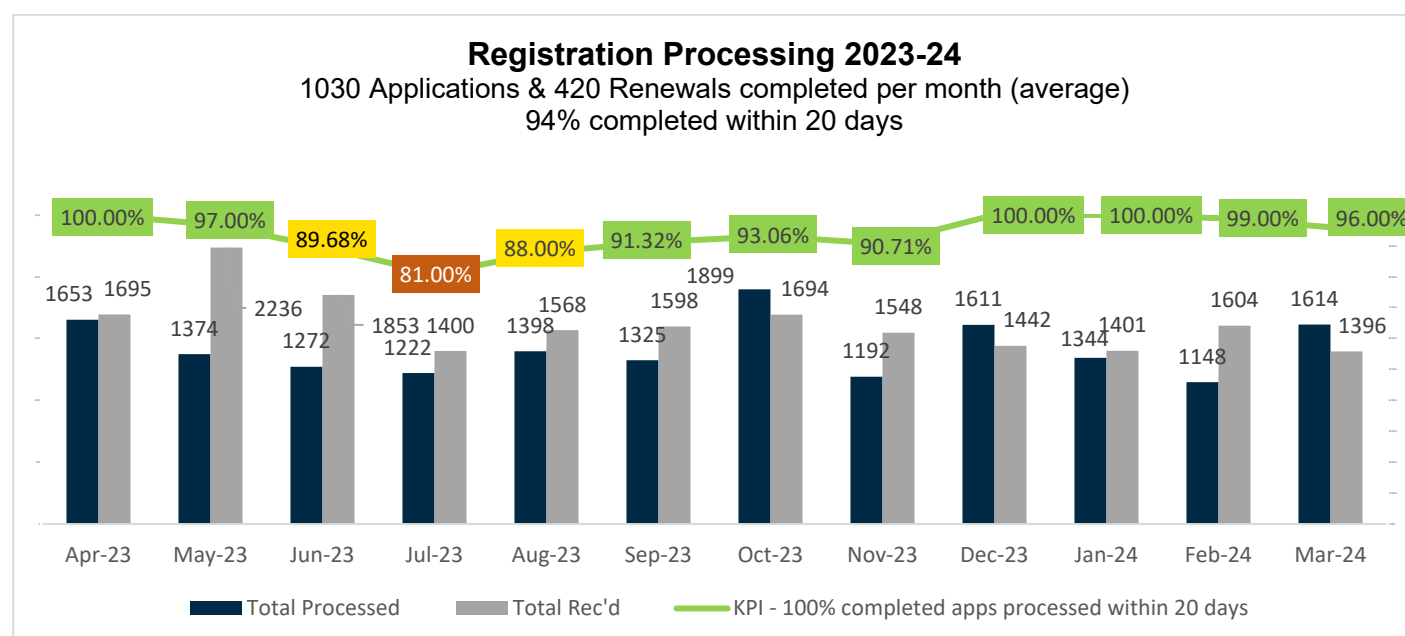


In the 12 months between 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2024, register numbers have shown a net growth of around 4% - mostly in social care worker registrations. The full register opened at 44,461 in April 2023 and closed the year at 46,418. This upward trend in the number of registrants has been evident for approximately 18 months, with around 180 net increase in the register total every month. Whilst an increase in the number of registrants is observed, the workforce proportions between social work and social care remain consistent. The variation in the figures for registration across months is also influenced by removals for non-payment of fees and the time it takes to re-new and process new applications for registration. It should also be noted that student numbers will equate to the academic points of graduation and new intakes across the programmes which explains why the numbers vary at different parts of the year.

The register data does not provide detail on whether a registrant works full-time or part-time therefore it cannot be confirmed whether this increase in head count equates to increased capacity in front-line services. Work is being undertaken with employers and service commissioners to centralise workforce data. This will assist with workforce planning to meet future service needs.

Performance analysis for 2023-24

The number of people on the register recorded the highest ever numbers during the pandemic, peaking at 51,700 in March 2021 following the recruitment of temporary workers to support frontline services during the pandemic. Register totals for 2021-22 and 2022-23 then settled around 42-44k as temporary workers returned to pre-COVID employments. The Register is not expected to experience any significant changes in size such as that experienced during COVID unless additional staff groups are required to be registered, or a further workforce appeal is required to address workforce pressures.



Registration workflow experienced pressures across the months from June-August, achieving 81%-89% against the KPI to process 100% of applications within 20 days. Performance against KPI was impacted in this period due to system downtime for IT upgrades. Performance for registration processing improved steadily in Quarters 3 and 4, with 95% and 98% of completed applications completed within 20 days.

Performance analysis for 2023-24

Registration Matters



All registrants are required to pay an annual fee to maintain their registration and must also complete a renewal process every three to five years depending on their job role.

Reminders are sent to all registrants to assist them in maintaining their registration. 99% of registration applications and 87% of registration fees were completed using the online registration system.

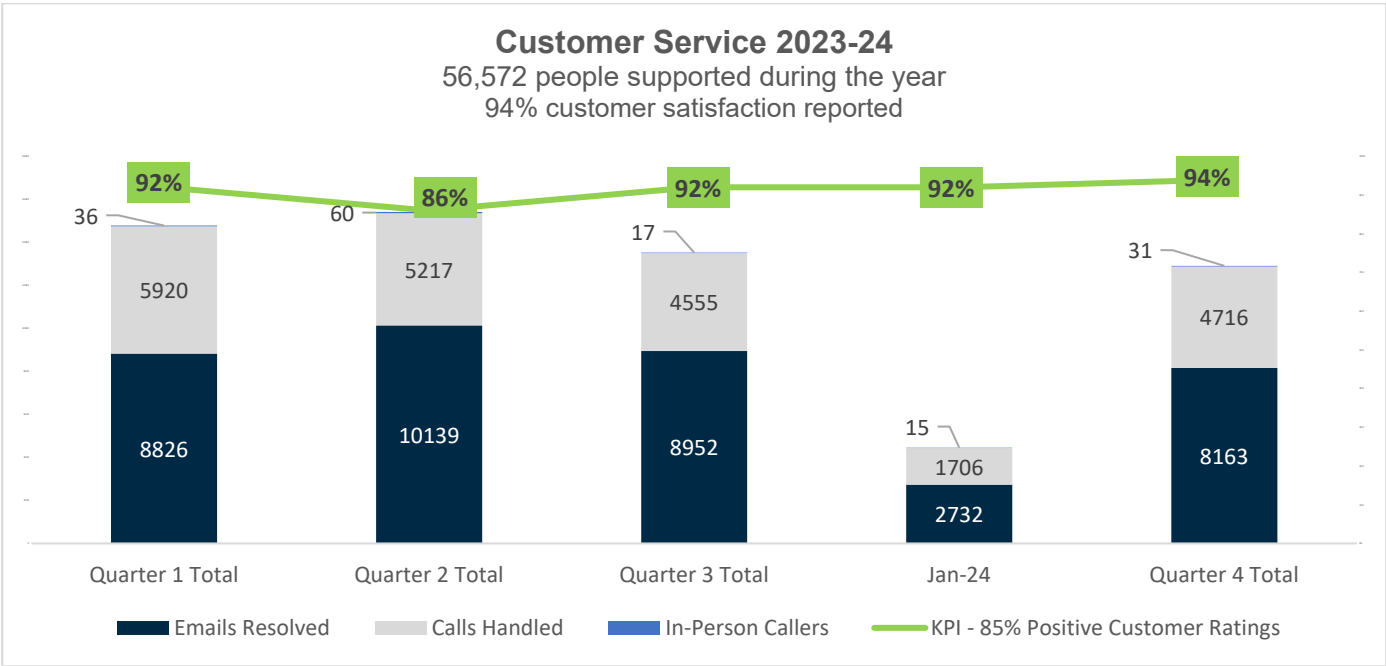
Those who did not pay fees or failed to complete renewal processes are automatically removed from the register after seven days. The application of these automated reminders and removals has assisted in cleansing the register data and ensuring that only those currently practising in social work or social care remain on the live register. 93.4% of registrants maintained their registration throughout the year. This was 4% below the success indicator (97%) set for 2023-24. In Quarters 3 and 4, we put in place additional resources to support the registration of new and existing registrants, promoting information about prompt payment of fees and updating their registration record.

Following permanent appointments to the management roles within the team in 2022-23, further recruitment and development was undertaken to support the Team Leaders in their roles. The registration team engaged in training and development sessions to support business improvement. Upgrades to the registration database were completed in June 2023 and a review of user pathways was completed to streamline the registration application process as part of development work for the new Registration Mobile Application which will be available in Summer 2024. This new mobile application will assist registrants and employers in the management of registration details, paying fees etc. These investments in service improvements have shown an improvement in workflow for registration processing with cumulative performance of 94% achieved, compared to 88% KPI achievement in 2022-23. The benefits from the upgrades to the system and the introduction of new technology for registrants and employers will be tracked during 2024-25.

During 2023-24, workforce registration services were delivered primarily through the online registration portal for registrants and employers. 55,572 people were supported with their registration queries during the year. Email was the main channel for providing customer support. 36,080 emails were managed, with an average turnaround of 3 days. 149 emails remained in the system for resolution at the end of March 2024.

20,408 telephone calls were managed by the team during the year. A review of registration capacity has shown that the team can manage around 1700 calls per month within the current staff resources. Call handling times ranged from 5-55 minutes, which evidences the complexity of some of the calls being received. A customer appointment system has been developed to enable those who need in-person support to arrange a convenient time to come to the James House building for assistance with their registration query.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



719 people responded to the Customer survey in 2023-24 and reported 94% positive satisfaction with their experience of the support provided. An average of 10 people per month provided additional commendation for individual staff members. It is noted that the survey responses represent 1.5% of customers. Further work will be done in 2024-25 to promote the survey more widely.



Regulation – Workforce fitness to practise 2023-24

The Social Care Council is responsible for investigating concerns that a registrant may not have met the standards required in their conduct or practice. Concerns can be referred by anyone and they can relate to a wide range of issues.

Assessment of these concerns is based on whether the registrant remains fit to practise in their role. Fitness to Practise takes account of whether a registrant has the skills, knowledge and character to practise their profession safely and effectively. This approach to regulation provides the option to apply consensually agreed conditions and sanctions that can remediate for lapses in a registrant’s practice. It offers the capacity to resolve concerns about practice issues, or health conditions in a fair and appropriate manner. More serious cases continue to be managed through formal Fitness to Practise hearings and committees.

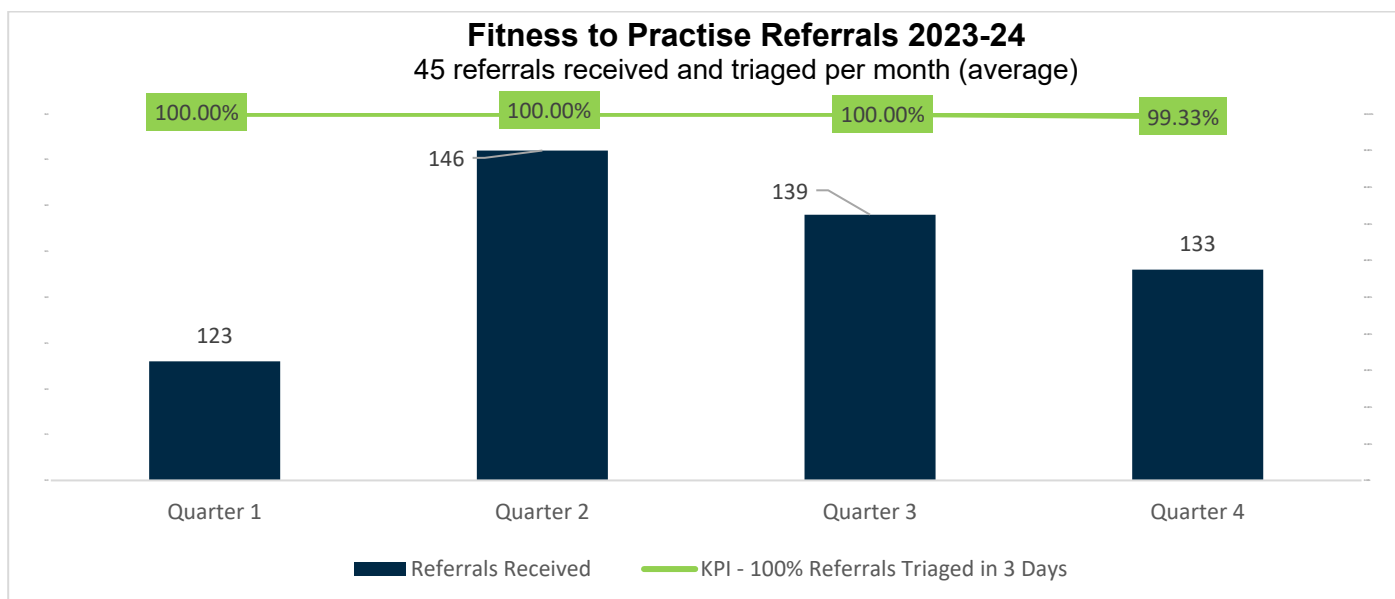
The Fitness to Practise team assesses all concerns reported to them and follows a series of steps so ensure that all concerns are treated in a robust and appropriate way. The Social Care Council aims to have all referrals risk assessed within three working days of receiving them. High risk concerns are escalated to ensure that risk to the public are minimised.

Performance analysis for 2023-24

Only a small number of registrants are referred to the Fitness to Practise Team each year (around 1% of the registered workforce). 541 referrals were received in-year, which is a 10% increase against the total referrals received for 2022-23. 31% of these referrals were assessed as not meeting the threshold to require a case to be opened for a Fitness to Practise investigation. This is a similar pattern to the proportion of referrals that resulted in a case for investigation last year. 373 new fitness to practise cases were opened for investigation in-year, which is also a 10% increase against 2022-23 figures.

A quality improvement project was undertaken to explore options to reduce the number of referrals incorrectly reported to the Fitness to Practise Team. The project involved surveys and interviews with people who had recently made a referral. It also reviewed the guidance published to assist people deciding whether a concern meets the threshold for Fitness to Practise investigation. This will be completed in 2024-25 with the revision of guidance material and information sharing with social care employers.

A new online system for making referrals which is scheduled for introduction early in 2024-25 will also assist with reducing the level of incorrect referrals. This work will help reduce the pressure on the Fitness to Practise Team and will also benefit registrants and employers from having unnecessary involvement in the referral system.

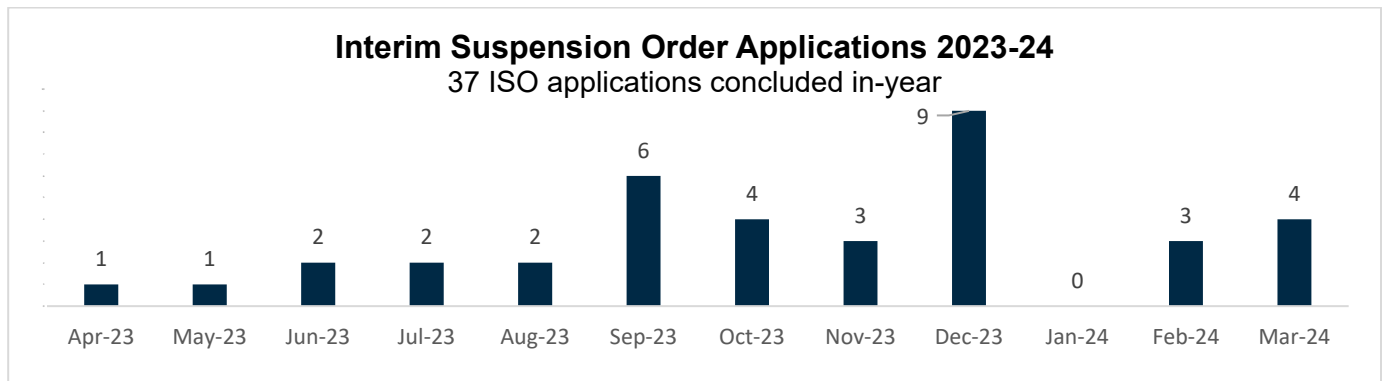


100% of referrals received in-year were within three working days – meeting KPI standard. This performance reflects the effective management of risk in triaging referrals in-year, despite considerable increase in referrals and the proportion of these requiring further investigations.

In circumstances where a concern about a registrant is assessed as high risk, the Fitness to Practise Team may apply for an Interim Suspension Order (ISO) hearing which seeks to temporarily suspend a registered person from practising in their social work or social care role while further investigations are undertaken. This would occur in only a small number of referrals. 37 Interim Orders were applied in 2023-24 (27 were concluded in 2022-23). All of the ISOs were completed within the four-week KPI.

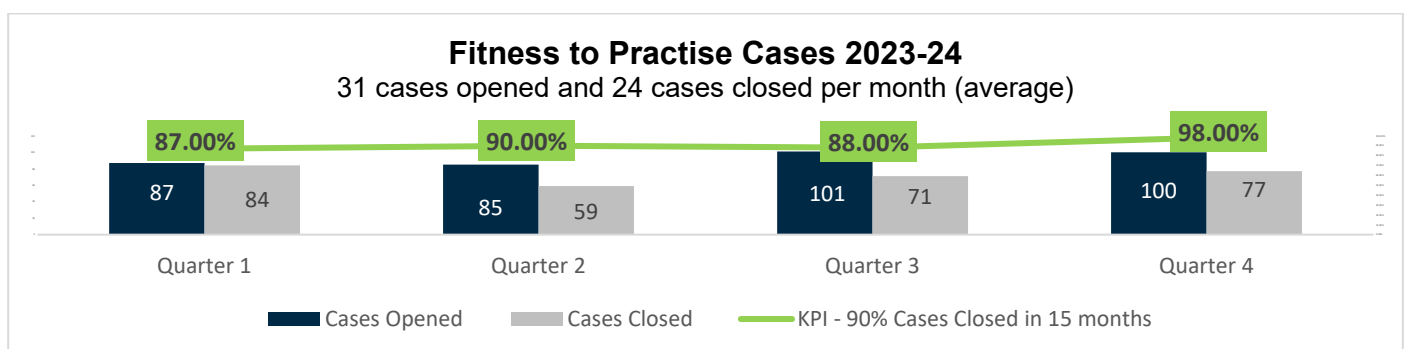
Performance analysis for 2023-24

The unpredictability of when ISOs will be required places additional pressures on Fitness to Practise and Committee teams. This was particularly evident in December, when 9 ISOs were concluded. This was the highest monthly total in 2023-24. Achievement of KPI standards required careful allocation of resources to manage them effectively. There were 42 Interim Orders in place at 31 March 2024.



92% of Fitness to Practise cases were closed through by Fitness to Practise Officers and 8% were closed through Fitness to Practise Committees. The Fitness to Practise Model of Regulation provides a wide range of disposal options including Consensual Disposals, ranging from letters of advice to warnings or undertakings to improve practice. 41% of cases were assessed as requiring 'no further action', 43% required a 'letter of advice about the Standards', 7% required a 'warning', 0.69% involved 'undertakings' and a further 0.69% were resolved through removal by agreement. This approach supports engagement with the registrant to address less serious concerns and offers the opportunity to apply a proportionate and timely sanction that can support remediation and improvement in practice. It is important to highlight that all Consensual Disposal decisions are public facing and subjected to regular external audit to ensure openness and transparency.

291 cases were closed in 2023-24, which is a drop back to 2021-22 volumes (341 cases were closed last year). The KPI standard for closure of Fitness to Practise cases is that 90% to be closed within 15 months. This KPI can often be affected by long-running cases which can take anywhere from 16 to 60 months to conclude. Closure times can be impacted by external factors such as employer investigations, police or court proceedings or health issues relating to the registrant. The 10% increase in concerns referred for triage and the corresponding increase in new cases for investigation have also affected capacity for faster case closure times. Despite these additional pressures, 91% of cases closed in-year met the KPI Standard, which is a significant improvement on performance last year (78%) and 2021-22 (73%).



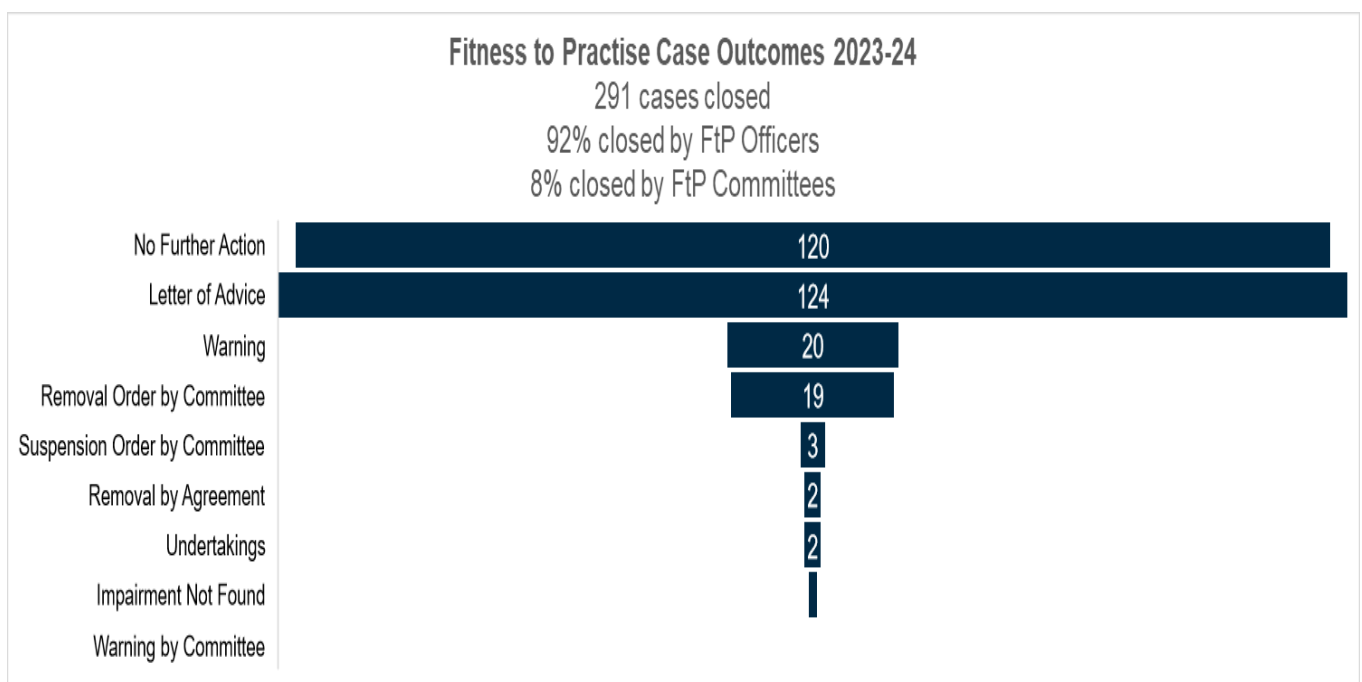
Performance analysis for 2023-24

At 31 March 2024, 418 active Fitness to Practise cases remained in the system, 25% of which were more than 15 months old. All cases are reviewed at monthly case conferences, including long-running cases. The impact of these long-running cases on KPI is kept under review by management. It remains the aim to attain the standard of closing 90% of cases within 15 months.

116 cases were referred to Fitness to Practise Committees during 2023-24. Committees made 140 decisions involving registration applications, Interim Order applications and Fitness to Practise final orders. 37 Interim Order applications were concluded (27 in 2022-23) and 37 Interim Order reviews were held, (30 held in 2022-23). 25 Fitness to Practise Hearings were held in 2023-24 (22 in 2022-23), with 20 Removal Orders and 3 Suspension Orders applied. (1 case was adjourned and 1 impairment not found). The Registration and Preliminary Proceedings Committees heard 87 registration, interim order and interim order review applications.

The Committee Team delivered 74 Committee days in 2023-24, including 25 Fitness to Practise Hearings. 95 people were supported by the team to engage in proceedings by phone, email or in person. All hearings were held in accordance with the Registration and FtP Rules. All of these hearings were delivered using in-person and online service delivery. The delivery medium was selected based on complexity of the case, the needs of participants and the recommendation of the Chair.

During the year, a review of delivery for Fitness to Practise Committees and Hearings was undertaken. This was undertaken to provide a formal process for assessing the most suitable method for delivering proceedings post-pandemic. The Council engaged all those who had participated in proceedings in since March 2021 through online surveys and discussions. A literature review was also undertaken to get wider perspective from other regulators, public bodies and the Courts/Tribunals services. The review feedback has been collated and will be used to develop new guidance for planning and delivering proceedings. This report will be presented to the Board in June 2024, along with any recommendations for changes required to the Fitness to Practise Rules.



Performance analysis for 2023-24

Further training was held in December 2023 for all Chairs and Committee Members to consolidate and underpin their knowledge, as well as to provide them with case law updates. The performance of Chairs and Committee Members is continually measured by the completion of our bespoke online 360 tool after each Committee, culminating in end of year one to one meetings with the Director of Registration & Corporate Services. Internal Audit completed an audit of Committee processes for the first time, with a satisfactory level of assurance received. The audit made three recommendations, none of which were Priority 1.

It is not yet clear whether the level of referrals and cases will continue to increase in line with register growth. Additional funding was approved by the DoH in 2021-22 to increase the staffing resource for the Fitness to Practise Team and Committee function in response to the increasing volume of work and the complex nature of the cases being referred. Recruitment was completed in 2022-23. All new staff have completed Bond Solon training in investigative practice, which gives an external benchmark of assurance on Fitness to Practise assessments. Steady progress in Fitness to Practise Team outputs is evidencing the investment in staff recruitment and development during 2022-23. New staff have been mentored to develop their skills and specialist knowledge. The manager is working closely with the Head of Service to review and improve processes to enhance the service. The implementation of the electronic case management system in April 2024 and online referrals will reduce administrative burdens and should assist in improving case management timescales.

The Council takes a proactive approach towards reducing the number of registrants whose conduct or practice falls below the standards required for registration. Fitness to Practise and Workforce Development Teams worked together on a programme of workforce engagement and education to improve understanding about the workforce standards and to share learning about issues that cause registrants to be referred to Fitness to Practise. Work was undertaken collaborate with RQIA and employers to strengthen the connection between workplace practices, inspection standards and the Standards for Conduct and Practice. Pressures within the sector and limited engagement with RQIA have meant the pace of this work has not progressed as far as originally visioned but can only progress at a pace that enables all participants to fully engage therefore will continue into 2024-25.

The Council Learning Zone provides a wide range of free resources for registrants and their managers to use to guide them on meeting the standards expected of registrants and their employers. Around 1,000 people view the standards resources, guides and interactive tools on the Learning Zone every month. During the year, Fitness to Practise and Workforce Development teams collaborated on the development of new learning resources to support registrants. The new digital learning resource – Human Rights for Social Workers was launched on United Nations World Day of Social Justice. It is aimed at social workers and social work students to support them to understand human rights, the legal framework and how human rights are applied. The resource examines each human right that social workers may encounter in their work and the situations they may apply to. This resource is available at <https://learningzone.niscc.info/learning-resources/human-rights-for-social-workers/> Development work was also undertaken for a resource to support social workers in managing 'All things Digital'. This will be launched early in 2024-25.

The Council undertook an analysis of referrals received in the last 10 years to look for themes or indicators causing registrants to breach their Standards. This report has been presented to social work and social care teams and managers at events across Northern Ireland. The report highlights the types of concerns more prevalent in certain services or settings and is assisting with a more targets approach to the education activities supporting the upstreaming agenda. The team also worked with South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust on a Learning from Complaints pilot. Tools developed as part of this pilot develop tools for sharing learning from complaints will be taken forward in 2024-25 to mainstream and regionalise them.



Deliver Effective Regulation

What we have learned in 2023-24

Standards are the cornerstone of everything the Social Care Council does to strengthen the professionalism of the registered workforce across Northern Ireland. We must continue engaging with registrants, employers and key stakeholder groups to raise awareness and understanding of the Standards. Social Care Council Fitness to Practise and Workforce Development Teams collaboration with inspection staff and leads from the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and other regulators is essential in order to share learning about workforce standards and to discuss interventions to promote registration and the standards in the workplace.

Looking Ahead – Our Plans for 2024-25

Evaluation of the work completed to deliver effective regulation indicates that the actions set out in the 2023-24 Business Plan supported these priorities. It has identified work that will carry forward into the new business year and some new actions to be taken forward in 2024-25 that will support us in our long term plans to improve workforce standards.

Our 2024-25 priorities are to:

- Support registrants and employers to maintain and value registration by promoting our online resources, encouraging the use of the online Portal, managing and responding to emails and phone calls, promoting one to one clinics for registrants and employers, and effectively processing applications, and renewals against our KPI's.
- Review the ways in which we support registrants when they contact us online, on the phone or in person to use ICT and other methods to improve the registrants experience by December 2024.
- Deliver our FtP functions safely and effectively in accordance with rules, emerging case law and regulatory best practice and our KPI's. This includes triaging cases, investigative enquiries, and preparing and presenting evidence to FtP Hearings and implementing any recommendations arising from the 2023/24 independent review.
- Deliver our Committee hearings services to support our KPI's, including the provision of high-quality papers, ensuring hearings (online or in person) are managed professionally and that all committee members are trained and supported in carrying out their roles. We will implement recommendations arising from the 2023/24 independent review.
- Implement the recommendations arising from the review of hybrid/online FtP hearings by January 2025 including any changes to our Rules and processes.
- Promote compliance with the Standards of Conduct and Practice for Registrants, and working with RQIA promote compliance with the Standards for Employers.



Develop the capability of the workforce

Our Strategic Plan 2023-27 says we will make the following differences in developing the capability of the workforce:

1. Establish a qualifications and continuous learning framework which can support a career in social care that strengthens the capability of the social care workforce.
2. 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.
3. Embed the PIP Framework for social workers as the benchmark for safety, quality, improvement and continued fitness for practice.
4. Support the development of social work leadership capability using the DoH Leadership Framework.
5. Promote uptake and engagement in continuous learning through the development of a Digital Learning Strategy.

Our actions in 2023-24 - we said we would:

1. Work with the Leaders in Social Care Partnership and the DoH to support the delivery of social care workforce reform during 2023/24.
2. Approve and assure standards of social work education and training at qualifying and post qualifying levels including a review of the Degree in Social Work during 2023/24.
3. Work with social work registrants, employers and others to promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement through engagement in the PIP Framework during 2023/24.
4. Engage with Social Work Leaders to support leadership at all levels of the profession by implementing the Social Work Leadership Framework during 2023/24.
5. Carry out a scoping exercise to inform a Digital Learning Strategy by March 2024 which will support a culture of continuous professional learning and development.

Indicators of success for 2023-24 – the difference we wanted to see:

1. Recommendations identified by the Partnership are delivered.
2. Social work education meets the required standards.
3. Social work education reflects the diversity of the workforce.
4. The redesign of the PiP Credit Accumulation Route will be complete.
5. Evidence of engagement with social work leaders to support the Social Work Leadership Framework.
6. Analysis and scoping paper will shape the framework for the Digital Strategy.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Develop the capability of the workforce

How did we do in 2023-24?

Central to our workforce development activity is working in partnership with stakeholders to develop education, training and learning to future-proof the workforce. All Social Care Council registrants must engage in learning and development throughout their career in social work and social care. Through our workforce development functions we develop and promote qualifications, learning resources, training opportunities and informal information sessions for support registrants to develop the knowledge and skills required to practice safely and to a high standard. We also audit registrant's training and learning records to ensure they are meeting the standards required in their professional development. By setting and monitoring standards for social work education and training at both qualifying and post qualifying levels we support the development of safe and effective practice across the career spectrum. We regulate and quality assure the delivery of the Degree in Social Work and Professional in Practice approved programmes and courses (for which we are the awarding body) through robust approval, monitoring and review processes.

In the 2023-24 Business Plan, there are six Indicators of Success for our activity to develop the capability of the workforce. We have assessed progress towards these indicators and tracked achievement against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in monthly and quarterly reports.

At the 31 March 2024, the leadership team assessed satisfactory achievement against the objectives and KPIs for Develop the Capability of the Workforce. The following pages will provide an overview of the achievements in this area of work.



Supporting Social Care Workforce Reform - A major part of our workforce development activity is in support of the Department of Health (DoH) policy to reform social care services in NI. We deliver on priorities identified by our Leaders in Social Care Partnership and the DoH Social Care Collaborative Forum to recruit, retain and upskill the workforce to meet the needs of people in our community who need care and support.



Social Care Career Structure - The development of a career structure and recognised learning framework for social care have are a key element of the plans to reform and transform social care services in NI. The foundation for the Care in Practice Learning Framework for social care is the Certificate in Safe and Effective Practice. This certificate includes all the mandatory training that new workers must complete when they are completing induction for their role in social care. It has been designed to provide a recognised qualification for new social care workers as they get started in their social care career. The introduction of the certificate will provide employers with assurance of a new employee's experience and ability to practice their role. It will reduce the duplication of training when a social care worker changes employment or role within in social care.

During 2023-24, the working group completed development of the specification for the certificate into an endorsed programme with the Open College Network (OCN). The specification was submitted to CCEA for approval in February 2024 and four employers were engaged to act as pilot sites for the new qualification, to test delivery and assessment of the certificate in a range of

Performance analysis for 2023-24

care settings. The pilot will run for six months from March 2024 and be evaluated by the Social Care Council with support from People First. Feedback from employers, trainers and social care workers will be used to make final amendments to guidance and training materials. It is anticipated that the new certificate will be available to social care employers in Autumn 2024.

The Council is responsible for reviewing social care qualifications in NI to ensure that they remain relevant to the training and education needs of the workforce. The team commenced a review of the Level 2 and 3 Diplomas in Health and Social Care (NI) in Quarter 4. Online surveys were developed to seek views from social care employers and training providers about the content of the diplomas, length of time taken to complete them and their uptake in the sector. Feedback from the surveys and discussions is being analysed in April 2024 and an action plan will be prepared for the review and update of the diplomas to ensure they support the learning and development of the social care workforce.



Social care workers views on the learning and development – the Council engaged a design company to engage with social care managers to help capture attitudes, needs and expectations for the new framework and certificate. 160 managers and 105 frontline workers were engaged across four in-person events and via online surveys.

Feedback from the sessions was broadly positive about the new framework and certificate. Participants reported that learning and development at entrance level would support better understanding of the complexities of social care, support resilience, wellbeing, capability and capacity. It was noted that the requirement to complete an entry level qualification may be a barrier to some people seeking to join the workforce. They highlighted the need for further engagement to be undertaken with managers to help them understand their responsibilities to facilitate and support social care workers' learning and development. Discussions and responses to the online survey also commented that improvements to terms and conditions for social care roles was an essential part of recognising and valuing the work involved in these roles. The information gathered from these sessions will be used to inform promotion and implementation plans for the new certificate. It will also be helpful in the 2024-25 engagement strategy and communication campaigns.



DoH Funded Social Care Training – 2023-24 was the third consecutive year in which the Department of Health provided funding to support priority training in adult social care. The Council co-ordinated allocation of the funding on behalf of the DoH and engaged with employers to assess the impact within the workplace.

During 2023-24, the Council provided mentoring support for the 81 candidates who were funded to undertake Level 4 and 5 qualifications in Quarter 4 of 2022-23 business year. The mentor also worked with employers and learning providers to ensure that all parties understood what is expected from them to help the candidates to complete the qualification. In November 2023, the DoH provided £50k to support training at Levels 3, 4 and 5. 38 social care workers from 32 organisations were approved for training (11 x Level 3, 5 x Level 4, 22 Level 5). These new candidates and their employers are being provided with specialist mentoring support through 2024-25 to facilitate completion of the qualifications.

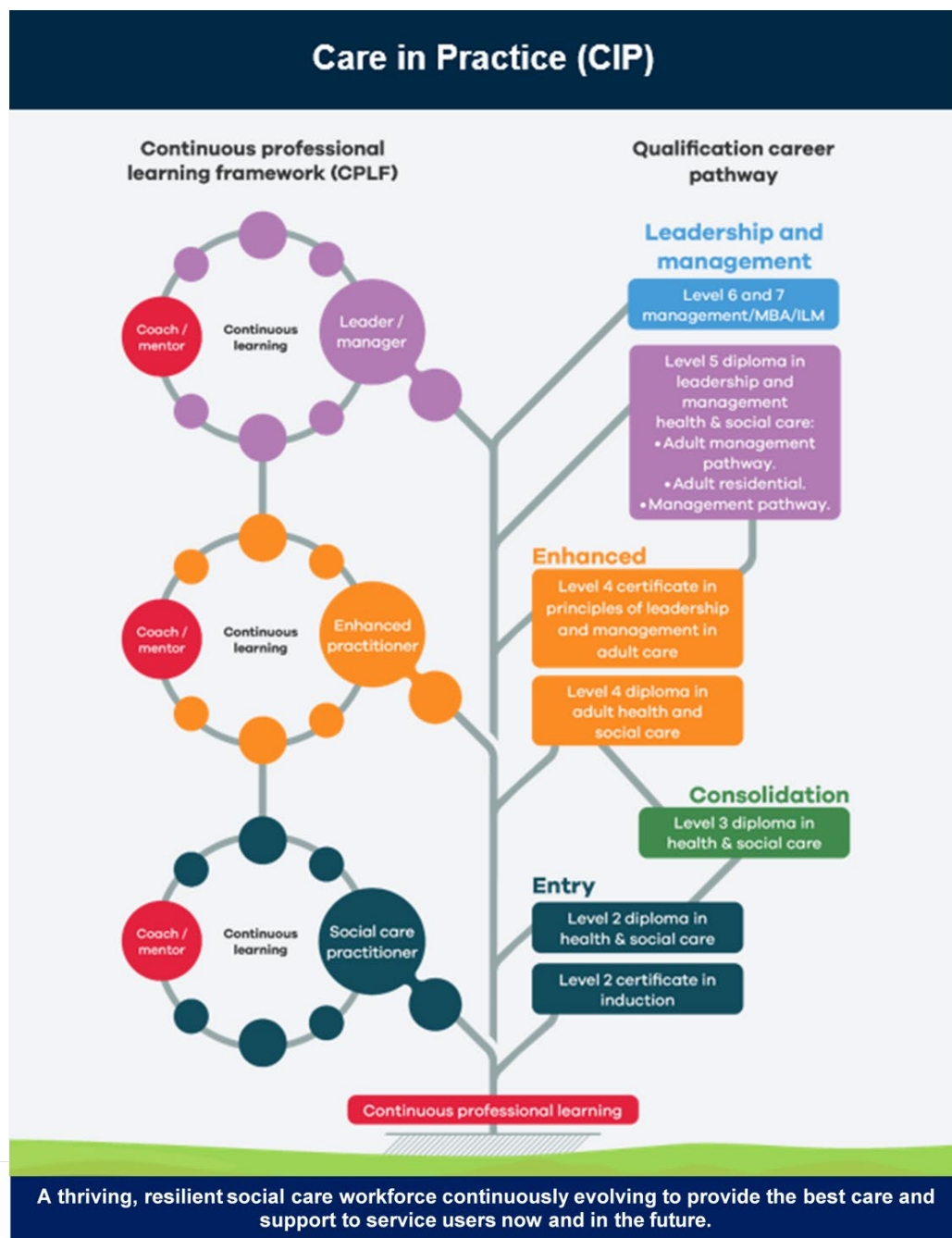
Performance analysis for 2023-24



Social care recruitment and employability – Following the successful employment academies and development programmes supported by the Council in 2022-23, the Council developed a series of news stories and podcasts to promote the experiences of the people who had engaged in the programme.

The workforce development team partnered with the Princes Trust and local Councils again in 2023-24 to plan and deliver further ‘Get Hired’ programmes to encourage young people into employment. The first of two scheduled programmes were delivered by end of March which resulted in eight young people receiving offers for roles with L’Arche and Cedar Foundation.

The Social Care Career Journey



Performance analysis for 2023-24



Approving and assuring standards for social work education and training NI

The Social Care Council has a statutory responsibility to set standards for social work education and training at both qualifying and post qualifying levels.

The Council is responsible for approving courses to deliver the Degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland. There are three approved courses which are delivered through the Open University (OU), Queens University of Belfast (QUB) and Ulster University (UU) – UU sites are at Belfast Metropolitan College, Magee College and South West Regional College. The Council is also the awarding body for qualifications delivered through the Professional in Practice Framework for qualified social workers. There are 19 approved programmes for PIP delivered through taught programmes at QUB, UU, HSC Leadership Centre and Child and Adolescent Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, Northern Ireland (CCAPNI). Social workers can also engage with the PIP Framework through approved Work Based Learning programmes (WBLR), by submitting a portfolio through the Individual Assessment Route (IAR), or through Credit Accumulation for ongoing learning (CAR).

The annual programme of Quality Assurance and monitoring visits was completed for the Degree courses, Designated Practice Learning Providers who provide placement opportunities for social work students and approved PiP Programmes. Management Boards and the NI Degree in Social Work Partnership (NIDSWP) were supported to ensure effective delivery of the Degree and Practice Learning and regional consistency in standards. Funding was disbursed to Voluntary Sector organisations on behalf of the DoH to support costs of practice learning opportunities for social work students.

In Autumn 2023, the Council processed registration applications for all new Degree in Social Work students enrolling on courses. Student information was updated and forwarded to the DoH student bursary unit. Student records were updated throughout the year to reflect deferrals and withdrawals and students who completed the Degree in June 2023 were updated on the register to Qualified Social Worker with the AYE condition. The registration team worked with universities to fast track student graduation outcomes as part of the DoH recruitment programme for new social workers to priority posts within Health and Social Care Trusts.

The Council processed on average 100 PIP programme module intakes and outcomes every month. Candidate files were reviewed throughout the year to ensure that records of PIP achievement and progress were kept up to date. Candidates and employers received advice on how they could add to their PIP achievements to attain a full PIP Award. 700 candidate records were updated to reflect withdrawals from modules or programmes.

Standardisation training was provided for new and existing PIP assessors for the Individual Assessment Route. To ensure consistent application of the assessment criteria across all submissions, PIP assessment panel outcomes were reviewed by an independent assessor.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Periodic Review of the Degree in Social Work - Every five years, the Council undertakes a Periodic Review of the Degree to ensure that it continues to equip social work students to meet the requirements for professional practice.

In 2023-24, the Review of the Degree project team engaged with social work course providers, tutors, practice teachers, employers and people who use services to hear their views on the strengths of the Degree and to identify areas for future development. The team also carried out investigative analysis to ensure compliance with the Degree Framework Specification Standards. Early indications are that the Degree is enabling students to understand their role as a social worker and is providing them with the foundations they need at the start of their social work career. The team will complete their analysis in Quarter 1 of 2024-25 and present the full report to the Board, along with recommendations to develop the Degree to meet future needs.



Development of the PiP Framework – All PiP programmes must complete a cycle of approval and reapproval to provide assurance that the course continues to meet the Social Care Council Standards. During 2023-24, the re-approval process for Ulster University PiP programmes took place and following a series of meetings, academic revalidation was agreed with a number of Conditions and Recommendations.

Work continued through the year on the review of the PiP Credit Accumulation Route (CAR). Social worker focus groups and surveys gathered feedback on the practical application of credit accumulation. The project team has revised the process for CAR to support social workers to claim credit for activities undertaken as part of their ongoing learning and development. Development work on the online registration portal will be carried out to support the changes to CAR and facilitate online credit accumulation. The final submission point for CAR in the existing system was held in January 2024. A total of 9 candidates submitted for 15 Requirements. The majority of these were new social workers applying for PiP II Requirements. There was also 1 Specialist Award submission and 1 Leadership and Strategic Award submission. From October 2024, CAR submissions will be processed via IAR panels in Spring and Autumn. To support the development of the new Work Based Learning Route for PiP, the PiP Partnership approved a pilot of the guidance to be delivered over the next 3 years. The Council has provided support for two original and two new WBLR providers to complete the approvals processes during the year. Two Work Based Learning Route courses were presented at November Approval Panel. SEHSCT Regional QI Course and HSC Leadership Centre Leading Social Work Course were approved for 3 years on the Leadership and Strategic Award.



Audits - monitoring registrant standards of training and learning

All registrants are required to complete at least 90 hours of training / learning during every registration period (3 or 5 years depending on their registration role). This is called Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL).

PRTL Audit - To provide assurance that registrants are meeting the PRTL standards, the Social Care Council audits PRTL records from a sample of social workers and social care managers twice a year. PRTL audit sample is selected at random from those social workers and social care managers due to renew their registration (those who have attained Professional in Practice (PiP) Requirements, or social care relevant qualifications within the time period are exempted from that

Performance analysis for 2023-24

audit cycle). In 2023-24, 2000 social workers and 200 social care managers met the criteria for audit and 5% of these were selected at random to submit their records for audit. XX% of the audit samples have been assessed as meeting the standards, XX% have been referred back for further information and XX% have been granted deferrals to next year (this was for health reasons or individual circumstances).

AYE Audit - All newly qualified social workers are registered with a condition on their registration called the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE). This condition is normally applied for the new social worker's first year in social work practice. As a newly qualified social worker they receive extra support to develop their skills, knowledge and competence through their first Assessed Year in Employment. Each AYE social worker is assessed by their employer against the AYE standards set by the Council. Completion of the AYE ensures that new social workers have made the transition from student to employee and are competent to practise in the workplace. To ensure consistency in AYE standards across all areas in social work in NI, the Council audits a sample of new social workers who are nearing completion of their AYE year. The audit looks at the work roles completed, duration of employment, training and development days and a reflection on the personal development achieved during the AYE. In 2023-24, XX AYE social workers were selected for audit. XX% have been assessed as meeting the standards, XX% have received extensions to the length of time to complete the AYE (this can be due to career breaks, health reasons, delays in obtaining a social work post or working part-time). A project team involving AYE leads from social care employers is reviewing those requiring extended time to complete the AYE to identify supports needed to assist new social workers in this part of their career development.

PiP II Requirements Monitoring - New social workers are required to complete two Requirements from the Consolidation Award on the PiP Framework within three years of completing their AYE. These Requirements support the development of in-depth competence, to produce well-rounded, competent and confident practitioners. New social workers will have a condition placed on their record until they complete 'PiP II Requirements'. The Council monitored completion of PiP II Requirements throughout the year and followed up with registrants and employers to track their progress to satisfying this condition. There are currently XXX social workers with the PiP II condition applied to their registration. The PiP team also provided support for social workers to build on their achievements and progress to complete the remaining four Requirements for them to complete the full PiP Consolidation Award. In 2023-24, XX social workers attained the full PiP Consolidation Award.

Degree in Social Work achievements 2023-24

XXX new students enrolled on courses
XXX students graduated from Degree courses

XXX newly qualified social workers completed the Assessed Year in Employment

XXX new social workers completed PiP II Requirements



Performance analysis for 2023-24

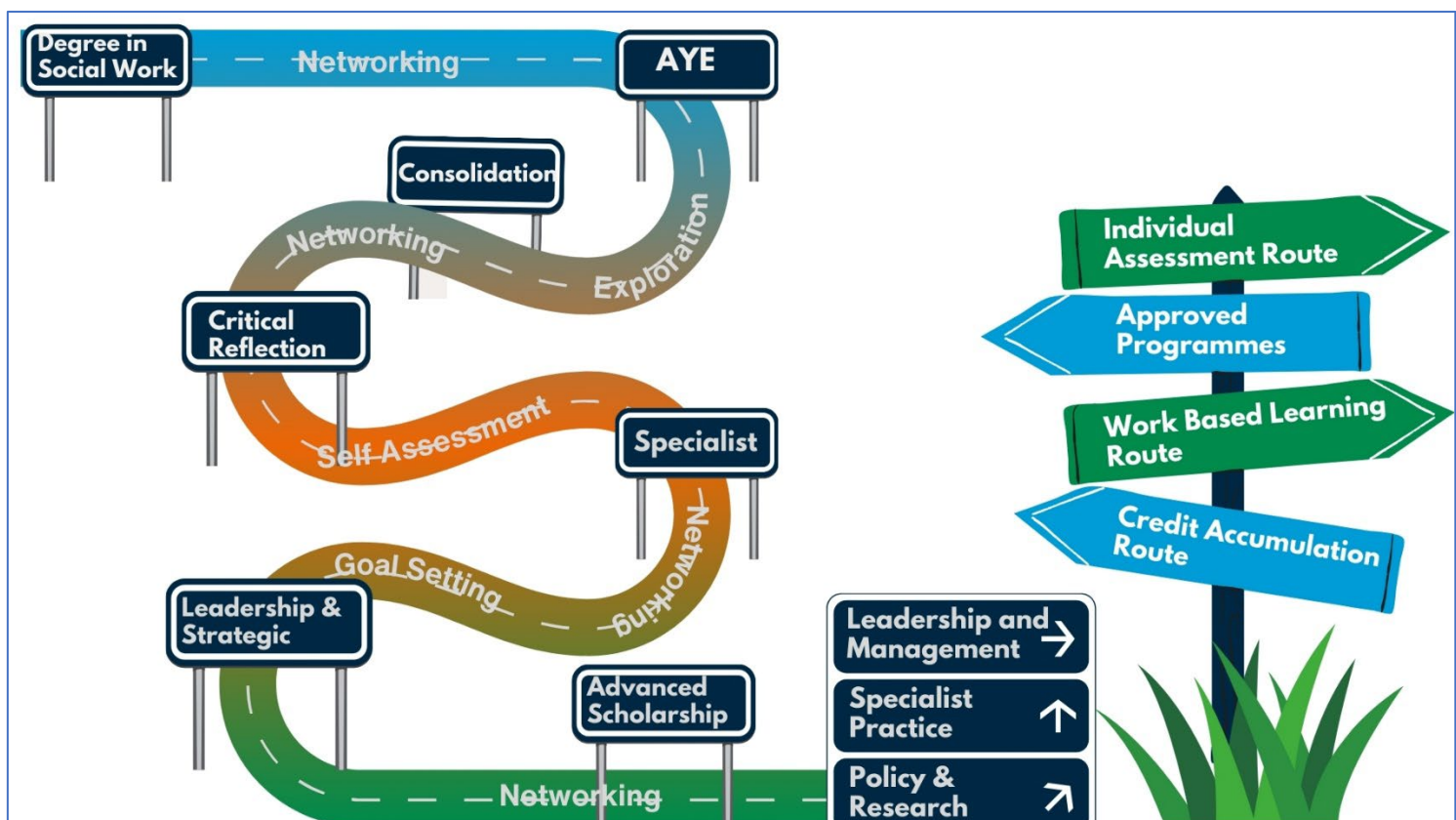
Professional in Practice (PIP) recognition of achievement – In June 2023, 184 social workers who had achieved PIP Awards were invited to receive their award at a ceremony with family and line managers. The event was an opportunity to recognise the commitment of social workers to their professional development. The Lord Mayor of Mid and East Antrim joined the event to offer her congratulations to the successful awards recipients.

PIP Social Work Awards presented included:

- 36 NI Consolidation Awards
- 136 NI Specialist Awards
- 11 NI Leadership and Strategic Awards
- 1 NI Advanced Scholarship Award



The Social Work Career Journey



Performance analysis for 2023-24



Workforce Engagement – Throughout the year, the Workforce Engagement Team has delivered a range of presentations, information sessions and small group discussions to raise awareness about social work and social care standards and development. The team uses a range of ways to reach out to stakeholders including, in-person meetings, online seminars, news and videos on our website and social media and updating learning resources on the online Learning Zone.



During 2023-24, over 200 engagement opportunities were fulfilled, involving around 5,000 managers, social care workers, social workers, students and service users, at service settings, colleges, career seminars and public events across NI. The engagement team delivered presentations at workplace events to share information about the Social Care Council, registration, standards, learning and development with social care workers and managers. Sessions were also delivered university students to introduce the AYE standards. The PiP Framework information was shared in workplaces as part of induction and CPD for social workers.



Lunchtime Seminars - The seminars free to attend and are an opportunity for social workers, social care workers and colleagues from other professions to share their learning and best practice without having to take extended time away from their workplace.

In 2023-24, 1064 people logged on to 9 Social Care Council online Lunchtime Seminars. To date, 1178 people have viewed the online recordings/presentations. The seminar presented by DoH 'Social Work (NI) Supervision Policy 2024 – promoting quality supervision in social work' attracted the most people to the live presentation, with 279 attendees. The seminar 'Being compassionate with people in distress: suicide, self-harm and safety planning' presented by Morrison Consulting has attracted the most online engagement with 485 views to date. They have been operating for a number of years and continue to be popular with attendees and with those wishing to present a seminar. The programme for 2024-25 is already well packed, with a number of seminars waiting to be scheduled. During the year, the team reviewed the processes for promoting and managing the seminars. They introduced additional prompts to ensure that those who registered had the links they needed and had tested the technology to enable them to get connected. These actions have improved attendance rates by 25% compared to last year. Feedback from participants has commented on the valuable support provided by the team to ensure they could get connected.



Social Care Managers Forum - 600 people attended the four regional Social Care Managers Forum events held in May and October 2023.

These events aim to bring together managers from across the sector to update them on the new resources available to support them in meeting their responsibilities for registered staff. The event provided an opportunity for managers to share their views about the new Care in Practice Framework. RQIA staff also presented at the event, providing a joined up approach to social care regulation.

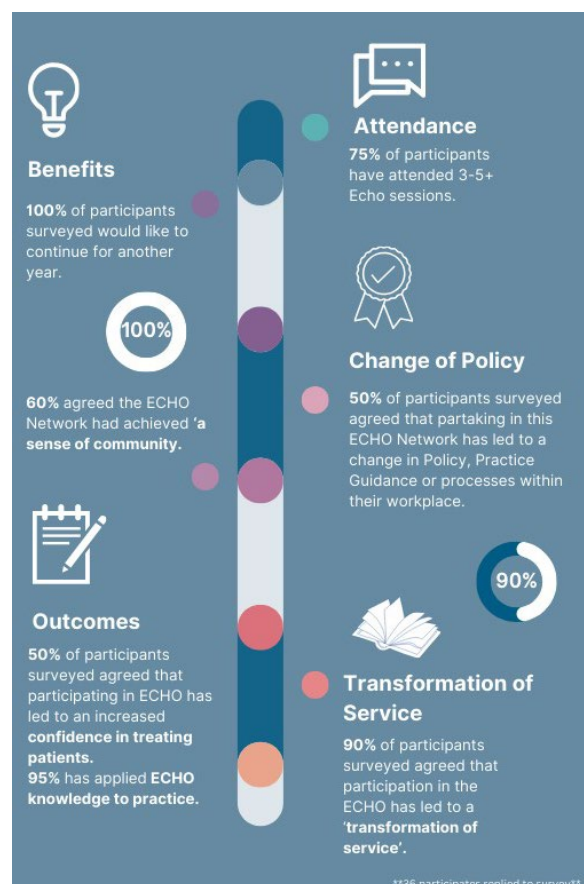
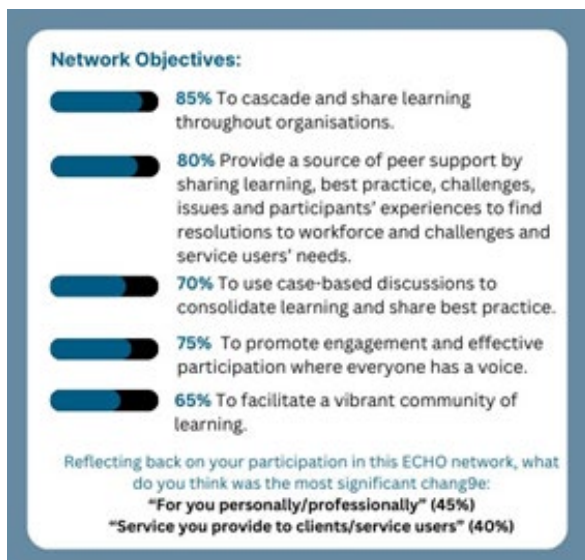


Performance analysis for 2023-24



Social Care ECHO Network – Regularly engaged over 40 Care at Home Managers and Supervisors in online events including presentations, discussions and updates on emerging practice and issues affecting social care services.

The October 2023 ECHO participant survey reported strongly positive views that the project objectives to cascade learning, share best practice and provide peer support were being met.



IMPACT (Improving Adult Care Together) – IMPACT is a UK-wide project to identify innovation and improvement for social care. The Social Care Council was chosen to lead one of six IMPACT projects which is focused on improving social care worker health and well-being.

The project team, involves service users and carers in developing an action plan to improve health and wellbeing for adult social care workers. Members of the Social Care Council Participation Partnership are providing expertise to the project. Last year, the NI group had been involved in exploring ways of improving recruitment and retention within adult social care with a focus on 'values-based recruitment' between December 2022 and May 2023. The group also provided feedback on the Values Based Retention Toolkit during 2023-24 which is being developed for the Council. The resource is being developed to support employees and is based largely on the resources developed by the Scottish Social Services Council. Cedar Training were commissioned to write the resource content. The toolkit build was completed in March and is expected to be ready for user testing in April/May 2024.

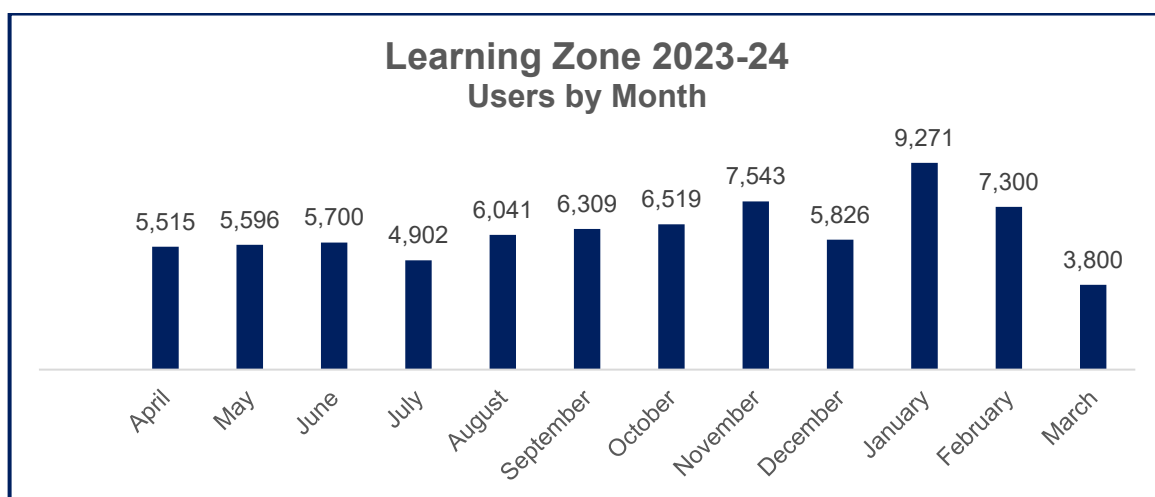
Performance analysis for 2023-24



Learning Zone Online Learning and Resources - The Social Care Council Learning Zone redevelopment was completed and the new platform launched in October 2023. Engagement with the Learning Zone has remained strong, 6-7k users engaged every month.

The Social Care Council was selected to present the Learning Zone digital learning resources at the ESN Conference in Malmo, Sweden. The conference was focused on the role of technology in promoting autonomy and inclusion. The team were also invited to participate in a thematic panel on Digital Innovation Supporting the Workforce. All presentations were very positively received by attendees.

The most often accessed pages are: PRTL, Standards of Conduct and Practice, Dysphagia Awareness, AYE, Careers in Social Work and Making the Right Decisions.



Learning Zone Development and Progress 2023-24:

- **4 Understanding Child Development Resources (ages 0-18):** were originally intended to be an update on the existing apps that were developed in 2017. Content has been rewritten to reflect the changes in policy and best practice. Content was completed and published for pilot in March. Final versions will go live mid-April.
- **Values Based Retention Developed:** Development of the digital toolkit was completed by the end of March. This resource will go out for pilot in April/May.
- **Human Rights for Social Workers Resource:** was launched on United Nations World Day of Social Justice. It will be showcased at the April Lunchtime Seminar. It is aimed at social workers and social work students to support them to understand human rights, the legal framework and how human rights are applied.
- **23 Things Digital for Social Work:** is under development. Content on Encompass is still pending from the Encompass SW Information Leads and on Assistive Technology. Content development will continue into new business year.
- **Reflective Practice for Social Care Workers** – launched at Social Care Managers Forum events November 2023
- **Reform of Social Care:** launched June 2023
- **Homelessness Resource** – Launched June 2023



Developing the capability of the workforce

What we have learned in 2023-24

Our collaborative approach with employers, registrants, social care educators and awarding bodies has been effective in supporting workforce learning and development. Social care workers, social workers, managers and allied professionals are making use of our free to access resources, networks and events as part of their learning and development. Online learning offers flexibility to learn at a time and a pace that suits the individual. Registrants and employers also value in-person training to support safe and effective delivery of care.

Social care workers and their managers welcome the introduction of a career structure and learning framework for social care. Information and awareness sessions are needed to support managers as they integrate the new certificate into workforce induction. Improvements to terms and conditions for the workforce The provision of funded training programmes and a recognised career structure should attract more people to the workforce.

Social care transformation includes changes to working practice and service delivery to make use of digital technology. Social care workers are positive about the use of technology but will require training to use these with confidence. Further engagement with the sector is required in 2024-25 to develop a Social Care Council digital learning strategy that will support the registered workforce.

Looking Ahead – Our Plans for 2024-25

Evaluation of the work completed to develop workforce capability indicates that the actions set out in the 2023-24 Business Plan support these priorities. It has identified work that will carry forward into the new business year and some new actions to be taken forward in 2024-25 that will support us in our long term plans to improve workforce standards.

Our 2024-25 priorities are to:

- Approve and assure standards of social work education and training at qualifying and post qualifying levels.
- Work with the Professional in Practice (PiP) Partnership, social work registrants, and others to promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement through engagement in the PIP Framework.
- Engage with Social Work Leaders to support leadership at all levels of the profession by implementing the Social Work Leadership Framework.
- Support the equality, diversity and inclusivity of the social work and social care workforce by establishing baseline datasets on which to build evidence and growth by December 2024.
- Contribute to the development of cultural competence in the social care and social work workforce through the promotion and development of Learning Resources by March 2025.

Performance analysis for 2022-23



Lead with influence

Our Strategic Plan 2023-27 says we will make the following differences in leading with influence :

Our actions in 2023-24 - we said we would:

1. Produce a 2022/23 State of the Nation Report on the social work and social care workforce
2. Work with the DoH and other stakeholders to build and share our data sets to inform the social care sector during 2023/24.
3. Support the reform, transformation and development of the social care workforce through our work with the Leaders in Social Care Partnership and the Social Care Collaborative Forum during 2023/24.
4. Work with other regulators, including RQIA to ensure data and intelligence is used to inform the delivery of safe and effective care during 2023/24.
5. Raise the profile of social work and the Degree in Social Work, while increasing recognition of the value of the social care and social workforce during 2023/24.
6. Promote careers in social work and social care, including targeting sectors to promote the diversity of the workforce during 2023/24.

Indicators of success for 2023-24 – the difference we wanted to see:

1. Data on the social work and social care workforce is available and published.
2. Contribution to HSC data sets and reporting to share with leaders.
3. The programme of work for the Leaders in Social Care Partnership for 2023/24 is delivered.
4. Regular engagement with regulators and RQIA to share information in a way that supports safe and effective care.
5. Using surveys, increase awareness in the Degree in Social Work by 10%.
6. Using surveys, develop a benchmark on the recognition of the value of social work and social care.
7. Targeted and public relations campaign delivered.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Lead with influence

How did we do in 2023-24?

We are developing our capacity to analyse the information and intelligence we hold about the social work and social care workforce. Our work with strategic forums and workstreams to share and access data across the health and social care system is informing policy development and social care reform. Along with employers and education providers, we are promoting careers in social work and social care to help strengthen the capability and diversity of the workforce. We are also leading on the Social Work and Social Care Research Strategy 2020-2025 to support research evidence activity, improvement and innovative practice.

In the 2023-24 Business Plan, there are seven Indicators of Success for our activities to lead with influence. We have assessed progress towards these indicators and tracked achievement against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in monthly and quarterly reports.

At the 31 March 2024, the leadership team assessed satisfactory achievement against the objectives and KPIs for Lead with Influence. The following pages will provide an overview of the achievements in this area of work.



Social Care Collaborative Forum - During 2023-24, Social Care Council staff supported a number of workstreams for the DoH social work and social care reform and strategic Services and Adult Protection Training and Development. The Chief Executive acts as Co-Chair of the Social Care Collaborative Forum, which has been established by the Department of Health to provide vision, along with strategic advice and guidance on social care, and take forward agreed actions to support improvement and transformation. The Social Care Collaborative Forum Terms of Reference and workplans for all of the workstreams have been agreed. Two new workstreams were agreed by the Forum to include Carers and Supported Living. A workshop was held in the Autumn with the members of the Fair Work Forum to review its' terms of Reference, membership and workplan and consider its' relationship with the Social Care Collaborative Forum. Patricia Higgins and Peter Toogood presented a parallel session at the NICON conference on the establishment and work of the Forum.



Joint Working with Other Regulators – The Head of Fitness to Practise is an active member of NI Joint Regulator's Forum. This forum has developed a Shared Intelligence Framework/Emerging Concerns Protocol which provides a structure and mechanisms for regulators to share information that may indicate risks to people who use services, their carers and families. Staff also provide support and share knowledge with other regulators in UK and Ireland to support consistency in social work and social care education, training and practice.



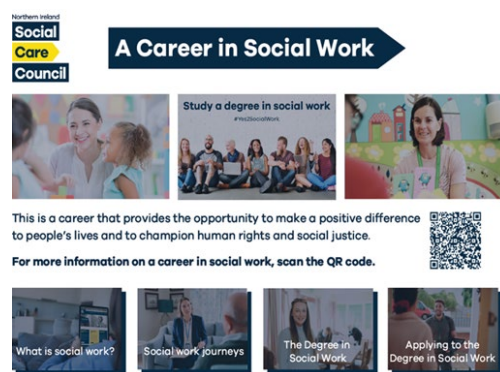
Social Work Leadership - The Social Care Council hosted a workshop in 2022-23 with social work leaders to explore the implementation of the Social Work Leadership Framework. The framework was developed by the DoH and has been given to the Social Care Council to lead its implementation. We are working in collaboration with the five HSC Trusts, and the Centre for Effective Services to develop an implementation plan.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Raising the Profile of Social Work and Social Care - The Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement provided secretariat support to the forum Communications workstream including establishing membership and Terms of Reference, producing information to describe the work purpose of the forum, an evaluation of the 2022/23 'social care – making a difference' campaign and work to inform the 2023/24 campaign which runs over the Summer 2024.

Communication campaigns and engagement activities were delivered to raise awareness of social care and social work as positive career choices. Promotional work was aligned to support UCAS admissions and included features with people from diverse backgrounds. Widening participation in social work education requires longer term changes in attitudes and expectations amongst prospective students and those who influence their career choices. Success in this area in terms of increasing the diversity of applicants and students may not be evident for another 3-5 years, therefore continues into 2024-25.



The annual #Yes2SocialWork campaign was launched in October and ran to January 2024 to promote the Degree in Social Work. An improvement was seen in applications received for the year. A 'Thank you' campaign was delivered successfully in during March 2024 to encourage people to recognize the value of social workers in the community. This had significant success and included digital storytelling and PR awareness. A communications campaign was prepared to support World Social Work Day in March 2024. It focused on stories from social worker's describing their motivation to join the profession. These stories were shared widely by local media outlets and viewed extensively on the Council website and social media. The Council has provided a key role in planning for the 2024 Regional Social Work Awards. This has included development of the new Award categories, revising the application form and guidance, preparing the application process to be delivered online and recruiting panel members to judge each award. Date of the awards is not yet confirmed and will be subject to available funding.

The 2023/24 'Social care – making the difference' campaign was designed during the year, ready for delivery in Summer 2024 which is focusing on career progression, diversity of social care and myth busting – this includes podcasts, videos, digital storytelling and a PR/social media campaign.

To celebrate Apprentice Week 2024, the Council developed news stories and videos to highlight the availability of all-age apprenticeships in the social care sector. The campaign ran across all digital platforms, aimed at encouraging employers in the independent and voluntary sector who want to develop their social care workers and support them to gain qualifications. UK and Ireland Skills Alliance meeting was hosted by the Council over two days in September, bringing together partners to discuss workforce recruitment, retention, skills development and training.



Performance analysis for 2023-24

The Care to Chat podcast series was further developed during 2023-24, with 14 new recordings released between May and November. Around 4,000 people have downloaded the podcasts to date.



All the recordings can be accessed from the Council website.

- [Human rights and social work – making it real in practice](#)
- [Leadership in social work – what does it mean for you?](#)
- [‘So, you think you know the Social Care Council’ – 21 years on](#)
- [Compassionate leadership in the Northern Ireland health and social care system](#)
- [Social work in education – Putting the ‘social’ back in social work](#)
- [Fostering equality, diversity and inclusion in social work and social care](#)
- [Human rights as part of social work practice – A conversation with...Nazia Latif](#)
- [Social care workforce reform – what does it mean for you](#)
- [‘When health and social care gets personal’ – Cillin’s story](#)
- [Attracting young people into social care](#)
- [A conversation with.... Declan Lawn, Co-creator of BBC drama, Blue Lights](#)
- [Social care reform – Made with care](#)
- [They take care of us – let’s take care of them](#)
- [I am a registered social worker...A conversation with Koulla Yiasouma](#)



Research and Evidence – Responsibility for building a social work and social care research community transferred to the Council in 2023. Building on the network already established for the social work research group in N, work is underway to establish membership and terms of reference to lead the social work and social care research agenda in NI.

The Board approved establishment of a Social Work and Social Care Research and Evidence Partnership within the Council. Terms of Reference and working arrangements will be confirmed in April 2024. Communications and engagement activity have been carried out to raise awareness about this developing network. Information sessions have engaged people interested in supporting the work to building a research community for social work and social care.

HOLD SPACE FOR CONFERENCE PHOTOS AND POSTERS

The 11th Annual Social Work and Social Care Research in Practice Conference was hosted jointly by the Social Care Council and the Public Health Agency in March 2024. The event showcased XX research projects and recognised the achievements of XX social workers who had completed the Research Methods programme at Ulster University.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Building and Sharing Data and Intelligence - Council staff lead or contributed to workstreams to support the DoH in developing workforce intelligence; working together to improve the quality of workforce data. Improving and aligning data will facilitate intelligence gathering about the workforce to provide a unified view of the workforce across NI. Council staff contribute to groups of subject experts to inform policy development and implementation to support population wellbeing.

Emerging technologies are key to transforming social work and social care service delivery to meet the changing needs of our communities. The Social Care Council is a member of the Digital Health and Care NI (DHCNI) project team to develop digital capability for health and social care in NI. DHCNI strategy focuses on enabling health and social care staff to have the right information in the right place at the right time to ensure effective, efficient and safe decision-making. It recognises that digital health can be a game-changer as it improves the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of care, allowing for new models in the delivery of services. The Social Care Council is providing insight into digital capabilities and attitudes towards the use of technology to inform the development of the Digital Capability Strategy and forthcoming Digital Capability Framework. Together with our digital partners, we are seeking to motivate and support a workforce that can confidently use digital health technologies to deliver health and social care.

The Social Care Council has continued to support the networks of leaders, managers and registrants across social work and social care to ensure the voice of the sector is represented in the forums that are shaping future policy and services. The Social Work Data & Intelligence Workstream continued work on developing systems and processes to share data and intelligence across the social work workforce. Workshops held in April and June, were facilitated by Big Motive to map data needs and opportunities. A pilot real-time dashboard for workforce data was developed to test how data could be mapped and merged successfully.

During 2023-24, work continued towards building our skills and capacity to analyse the information we gather about our registered workforce and to share trends and knowledge with the DoH and our sector partners to help develop the workforce. Live information about the workforce is essential for the Social Care Council and our sector partners for forecasting and planning. The Database and Intelligence Officer has provided expertise in providing analysis of the information held by the organisation and also to identify gaps in the information we hold about our registrants. Further work was undertaken to scope the development of information published through PowerBi dashboards including length of registration, AYE and PIP achievement.

The Council completed a review of social care worker Fitness to Practise Referrals 2021-22 which explored factors that may affect the likelihood of a referral. Findings were shared with managers, employers and other regulators. Review of the data held by the Social Care Council is being undertaken to assist with strategic workforce planning. These reports are now available from the website as a quarterly publication. A web page for workforce research and data analysis is under development and will be launched in May 2024. Scoping was undertaken for a State of the Nation style report on the social care workforce. 'Social Care Still Matters' will be published in Autumn 2024.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Lead with influence

What we have learned in 2023-24?

In recognising the value of collective leadership across the Health and Social Care system, as well within the regulatory system, we work with a range of networks of people who collaborate on development and improvement. Our work to connect social work and social care leaders is helping to shape social work and social care as health and social care transformation moves forward. Now, more than ever, insight from sector leaders is needed to inform strategic workforce planning and development.

Looking Ahead – Our Plans for 2024-25

Evaluation of the work completed to lead with influence indicates that the actions set out in the 2023-24 Business Plan support these priorities. It has identified work that will carry forward into the new business year and some new actions to be taken forward in 2024-25 that will support us in our long term plans to improve workforce standards.

Our 2024-25 priorities are to:

- Work with the DoH and other stakeholders to build and share our data sets to inform the social care sector including the production on an annual State of the Nation Report on the social care workforce.
- Support the reform, transformation and development of the social care workforce through our work with the Leaders in Social Care Partnership, the Social Care Collaborative Forum and the Children's Services Strategic Reform Board.
- Establish the Registrants Social Work Forum and Registrant Social Care Forum by September 2024, following the review of the Registrants Forum that took place in 2023-24.
- Work collaboratively with our existing partnerships and networks and establish new networks including a Research and Evidence Partnership to influence and support the use of research and evidence within the social work and social care workforce.
- Raise the profile of social work and social care while increasing recognition of the value of the social work and social care workforce.
- Promote careers in social work and social care, including targeting sectors to promote the diversity and inclusivity of the workforce.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Innovate and improve

Our Strategic Plan 2023-27 says we will make the following differences to innovate and improved:

Our actions in 2023-24 - we said we would:

1. Develop an engagement strategy by October 2023 for the Social Care Council, which is informed by our existing registrant engagement and supports the growth of community confidence;
2. Carry out a review of the current user experience journey for registrants by December 2023.
3. Complete development work to support the efficient delivery of registration services, improve practitioner experience and improve the integrity and quality of the Register data by January 2024.
4. Deliver an improved registration and regulation system by June 2023 that will support an improved end user experience for staff, registrants and employer.
5. Implement a new case management system, by January 2024, for Fitness to Practise to support efficiency and effectiveness and enhance reporting capability.
6. Develop an App to support the regulation and registration system for social workers and social care workers by December 2023.

Indicators of success for 2023-24 – the difference we wanted to see:

1. Engagement strategy in place supporting meaningful engagement.
2. User data and experiences available and used in designing our business.
3. Registration systems and processes are efficient and effective.
4. Business benefits from upgrade realised with a 20% increase in satisfaction levels.
5. Business benefits from new system realised by March 2024.
6. Uptake of new App by 10% of register by March 2024, with 50%+ satisfaction level

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Innovate and improve

How did we do in 2023-24?

We need to keep connected to the evolutions in technology and provide services in a manner that meets the needs of our registrants and our staff. We engaged with our stakeholders to scope an engagement strategy that will target our use of electronic communications, engagement and collaboration in a meaningful and accessible way. Our Data Quality Improvement Group is improving the quality of the data we hold and the Digital Content Group is reviewing consistency across our front line and online services.

In the 2023-24 Business Plan, there are six Indicators of Success for our activities to innovate and improve. We have assessed progress towards these indicators and tracked achievement against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in monthly and quarterly reports.

At the 31 March 2024, the leadership team assessed satisfactory achievement against the objectives and KPIs for Innovate and Improve. The following pages will provide an overview of the achievements in this area of work.



Engaging Effectively - Surveys and focus groups were delivered with registrants, managers, employers, and service users/carers to find out their communications needs and expectations from their engagement with the Council. Findings from these activities have been compiled to support the Council in planning for career structure for social care and to inform the development of the Engagement Strategy. Completion date for the strategy has been moved from to September 2024.



App Development – User engagement and scoping of user journeys to support the new Registration App have been completed. Work on the application pathway in SOCRATES and data cleansing to streamline employment sectors/job profiles is ongoing. This work is required to ensure information processed through the App is compatible with the main database. Members of our Participation Partnership were involved in the review of user needs and expectations for the App and will contribute to user testing along with staff and registrants/employers in April/May 2024 prior to final release of the App in June 2024.



Learning Management System - the new HSC learning management system for staff was launched in May 2023. This provides for all training and e-learning and enables managers to review the learning and development of their teams. The e-learning data for the Social Care Council has been migrated across to the new system and reports on e-learning completion/compliance can now be obtained from the new system.

Performance analysis for 2023-24

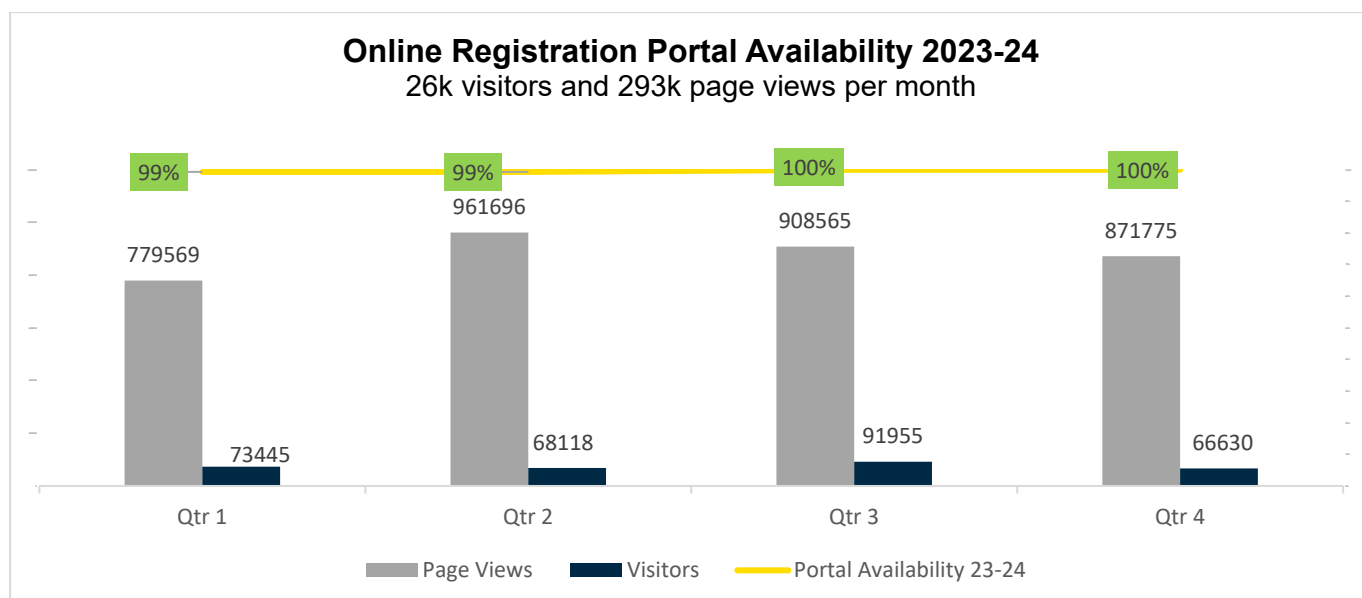


Fitness to Practise Case Management System - the project to deliver a new ICT supported case management system for Fitness to Practise and Committee is underway and is expected to be delivered in early January. Good progress and engagement has taken place with the identified provider to map out the needs across both Fitness to Practise and Committee teams. • Development work on the Case Management system and Online Referrals is in the final stages. Client testing has been ongoing since mid-January. Training for staff was delivered during March prior to Go-Live in April 2024.



Registration and Regulation System: The SOCRATES system upgrade to CRM365 was completed in May 2023, enabling a flexible and future proofed Cloud environment to support new developments for registrants. There are numerous benefits from the new CRM. Development work has also been completed on the reports for the PiP assessment processes in March 2024. Summary tables have been updated on the server to provide information for Power Bi dashboards for PIP and AYE.

- Workflows were created to enable registration staff to manage cancellation of incomplete applications.
- System views were set up to draw down data for Joiners and Leavers surveys.
- Reports have been developed to support tracking of compliance for conditions applied for AYE and PiP II requirements.
- Data cleansing was completed for a number of data points, including Gender, Age, Town, Employment Sector and Job Role
- Payments Provider updated to use ClearAccept from Sagepay
- Public Facing Register updated to show new Registration Status
- Password Criteria strengthened to be set as: "Minimum 8 characters, 1 uppercase and 1 lowercase"
- The Online Registration Portal achieved 99% uptime throughout the year



Performance analysis for 2023-24



Digital Communication - The Social Care Council website and digital media channels were updated throughout the year. Email marketing via Mailchimp delivered over 50 campaign messages and updates to registrants every month.

Google Analytics software was upgraded on the Council website, Learning Zone and Registration Portal. Staff engaged in a training programme to understand the new features of G4A and to work with the supplier to build tailored dashboards and reports.

All consultations, surveys and engagement forms were moved to the new Citizen Space platform. This government supported platform provides a range of tools to securely manage all stakeholder consultation and engagement. Staff from across all teams have been trained to use the site for their projects.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Innovate and improve

What we have learned in 2023-24?

The use of technology continues to revolutionise the way we work – we are now much more confident and capable in accessing services online, using online meeting tools (or a hybrid approach to allow both in person and on screen at the same time), the use of Applications (Apps) to support services, social media platforms and seeing how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being referenced more in the media as a business and home life tool. All of this means that as an organisation we need to keep connected to the evolutions in technology and provide services in a manner that meets the needs of our registrants and our staff; while acknowledging the benefits of in person engagement and communication; and getting the balance right between technology and human contacts and interactions.

Looking Ahead – Our Plans for 2024-25

Evaluation of the work completed to innovate and improve indicates that the actions set out in the 2023-24 Business Plan support these priorities. It has identified work that will carry forward into the new business year and some new actions to be taken forward in 2024-25 that will support us in our long term plans to improve workforce standards.

Our 2024-25 priorities are to:

- Develop an engagement strategy by September 2024, which is informed by our existing registrant engagement and supports the growth of community confidence.
- Carry out a review of the current user experience journey for registrants by December 2024.
- Working with DHCNI to scope the requirements for a Registration and CPD system by September 2024 and seek business case approval that will support an improved end user experience for staff, registrants and employer.
- Develop and launch a new App to support the regulation and registration system for social workers and social care workers by June 2024.
- Work with our Registration, Workforce Development, Database, Fitness to Practise and Committee Teams to drive up the quality of our system data with clear targets out outcomes to identify areas for inspection and quality assurance during 2024-25.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Delivering our Strategy

Our Strategic Plan 2023-27 says we will make the following differences to delivery on our strategy:

Our actions in 2023-24 - we said we would:

1. Deliver an action plan to implement the IIP Framework, which includes our Health and Wellbeing programme, by February 2024.
2. Develop a Reward and Recognition framework for all staff that supports our culture, values, equality and diversity commitments and People Plan by October 2023.
3. Deliver the Social Care Council's Leadership Programme for managers at all levels in the organisation by March 2024.
4. Working with BSO HR and the HSC Leadership Centre, develop a People Plan to support the organisation in delivering its Strategic Plan, by March 2024.
5. Deliver and evaluate the Registration Training Programme with HSC Leadership Centre by December 2023.
6. 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 March 2024.
7. Improve our use of evaluation approaches to demonstrate impact in key areas of business by March 2024.
8. Ensure we break even by March 2024.
9. Comply to a high standard with all governance related policies, procedures, audits, business performance and risk reporting and related activity during 2023/24.
10. Maximise use of our SLA's with BSO during 2023/24.

Indicators of success for 2023-24 – the difference we wanted to see:

1. IIP Gold maintained
2. Action Plan delivered
3. Strategy co-designed with staff and being used by all staff.
4. Positive culture in place that embraces equality and diversity.
5. 80% of Leaders complete the course by March 2024.
6. People Plan developed.
7. Outcomes in the report are realised.
8. Intranet is overhauled and staff satisfaction levels increase by 20%.
9. All staff understand how evaluation operates and can apply it.
10. Break even achieved.
11. Audits provide satisfactory assurance.
12. Board satisfied with level of assurance.
13. SLA's reviewed and signed off.

Performance analysis for 2023-24



Delivering our Strategy

How did we do in 2023-24?

Infrastructure is about the people, systems and processes that guide and deliver our work. Our objectives in relation to promoting a healthy workplace, developing staff, improving quality and managing our finances were successfully achieved. The Social Care Council agile working policy has supported staff to adapt to balance office-time and remote working to make best use of their time. Larger meetings/events have resumed with external stakeholders in the office and at other venues. Engagement activity to promote social work and social care careers, CPD, registration and the Standards are now has also restarted. Staff have been able to travel to meet with regulatory and workforce development colleagues in the UK, Ireland and Europe as part of the programme of work to share best practice and implement policy.

In the 2023-24 Business Plan, there are thirteen Indicators of Success for delivering our strategy. We have assessed progress towards these indicators and tracked achievement against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in monthly and quarterly reports.

At the 31 March 2024, the leadership team assessed satisfactory achievement against the objectives and KPIs for Delivering our Strategy. The following pages will provide an overview of the achievements in this area of work.



People

All staff came together in James House at the end of January to mark the first day in the new office. This was part of a series of monthly 'Townhall' events that were held during the year. Townhalls are in-person events at James House. They are an opportunity to update everyone on all things 'Social Care Council', celebrate staff achievements and involve staff in planning our work. Through the year, all staff teams presented an overview of their work as part of the Townhall events.

Every staff member was engaged in quarterly check-ins throughout the year. These provide an opportunity to reflect on what is helping individuals to achieve their goals and to identify any supports they or their manager can make to help address any 'stones in their shoes' that are impeding them. Everyone has individual goals and development opportunities that they agree with their manager to support them in their plans for the year.

The new HSC e-learning system went live in 2023-24. The launch included introductory sessions for all users to ensure they were able to access their training dashboard, complete online learning and book training coursed. All staff completed mandatory e-learning and participated in in-house information sessions on changes to processes or new areas of work. New staff were supported by colleagues to complete their induction based in the office and were supported to move to agile working once they and their manager were assured they had the appropriate level of knowledge about their role. Staff also received training on the new Complaints Policy.

Performance analysis for 2023-24

Staff also completed a range of training including Microsoft packages, minuting meetings, managing difficult conversations and regulatory investigation to meet their identified development needs for the year. The registration team completed the training programme with the HSC Leadership Centre. This programme supported group sessions to look at how work was planned and delivered. Staff were encouraged to identify how their skills and knowledge could be best placed to support team objectives. Additional sessions were provided for the team leaders and managers to focus on developing management skills. All staff reported positive satisfaction with the programme.

Two staff members participated in the Young Scotland programme in January 2024. This residential programme provides opportunities for those of any age who are relatively new in their job role to work with others from across the UK and Ireland on developing presentation skills, networking and reflective practice.



Two staff completed the Social Work Quality Improvement Programme, using the course to identify opportunities to reduce the number of incorrect referrals made to the Fitness Practise Team.

The Social Care Council's Leadership Programme involved managers at all levels in the organization. Monthly sessions were based on the Compassionate Leadership book by Professor Michael West. Managers worked in groups to lead and present at one of the monthly sessions. Presentations were based on selected themes and characteristics of Compassionate Leadership and how this applies to us as managers in the Social Care Council.

**HOLD SPACE FOR GROUP PHOTO WITH
MICHAEL WEST**

Feedback from participants was 100% positive that it had strengthened their connections as a management group and had helped them develop skills to lead and manage their teams. They did reflect that the preparation for the presentations and actual delivery of the sessions was a challenge, but proved a very practical way to develop skills in this shared safe space. The managers will meet in April to plan how the programme will continued in 2024-25.

Performance analysis for 2023-24

**HOLD SPACE FOR GROUP PHOTO
WITH NEW AWARDS**

The Social Care Council IIP action plans were successfully delivered in-year. The organisation achieved Platinum accreditation in March 2024, which is the highest IIP standard worldwide. The organisation was also reaccredited with the IIP Health and Wellbeing Award Gold Standard. Staff are engaged in a range of activities, supporting the overall delivery of the Social Care Council's Business Plan. The Senior Leadership Team, chaired by the Chief Executive, has worked with staff to ensure the staffing resource is deployed to support business priorities.

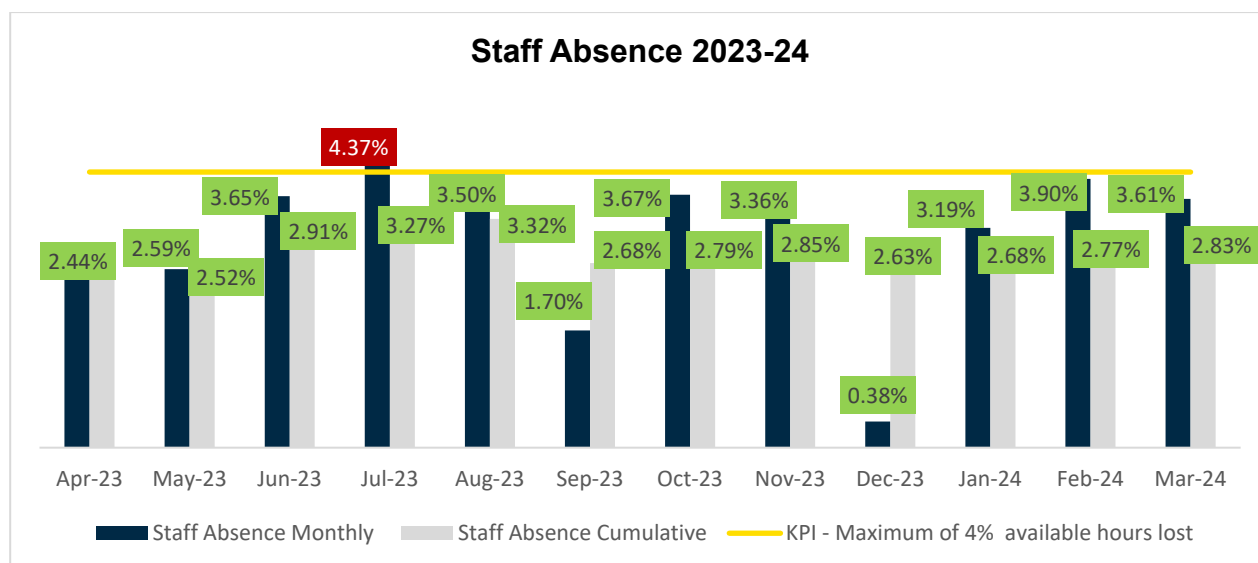
During the year, staff participated in the pulse surveys, mostly focused on their experiences of agile working and adapting to the new office facilities. The outcomes from the survey were very positive with good and strong indicators throughout. The survey reflected the positive culture of the organisation and its leadership and enabled the successful implementation of the organisation's Agile Working Policy.

The HSC Leadership Centre presented an update to the management team in March 2023 on a draft People Plan for the Social Care Council to support succession planning, career development and recruitment and retention. A series of meetings were held during April 2023 for BSO team to meet with individual managers from the Social Care Council to gather their information about existing opportunities and requirements in areas such as: Professional Qualifications, Leadership and Management development. Initial findings were shared with staff at team meetings and updates. Although the organisation progressed with development plans for individuals and teams, further work on this strategic People Plan was paused in Quarter 3 to allow time for the organisation to review the impact of changes to business delivery following the IT upgrades for registration and the new case management system development for Fitness to Practise and Committee in Quarter 3 and 4. Work on this strategic plan for developing our people, including a reward and recognition framework will restart in Quarter 2 of 2024-25.

Health and Wellbeing - Support for staff wellbeing and development remains a priority for managers and team leaders. A combination of online and in-person team meetings, check-ins and informal breaks have supported staff during the year. Activities included awareness sessions on health and disability, walking groups, Couch to 5K, book groups and the traditional tea and buns to mark personal achievements. All staff members have opted in to the new Agile Working Policy and are using this innovative approach to manage their work pattern between the office space and remote locations, including home. Managers and teams plan working patterns to ensure there is on-site support for each business area throughout the week. Staff events and team meetings are planned as in-person events to provide opportunities for connection and shared learning. The Health and Wellbeing Committee shared links to support services and details of local events to support wellbeing such as the lunchtime walking tours and Sustrans promotional events.

Performance analysis for 2023-24

Staff absence totals for 2023-24 were 2.83 % (2022-23 3.41%) - which is below the overall KPI of 4%. In July, marginally exceeded KPI at 4.37%. This was due to long term absences. Absence remained within KPI for all other months.



Equality and Diversity - The Social Care Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity; providing the systems and culture to meet the duties set out within Section 75 of the Equality Act. The Social Care Council developed and delivered the annual Equality Action Plan and annual Disability Action Plan for 2023-24, in addition to a broad range of equality founded policies and procedures. (The Equality Scheme is reviewed every five years). The Equality Unit in the Business Services Organisation provided guidance and expertise on delivering on Equality Action Plans and supported statutory reporting to the Equality Commission. The Equality Unit is assisted the Social Care Council with the requirements of the review of Disability and Equality Plans. Consultation events were held during the year, facilitated by the Equality Unit. Details of what the organisation has done to deliver its equality, diversity, disability, human rights and good relations actions are set out in the Annual Equality Progress Reports which can be found on our website at www.niscc.info.



Resources – 2023-24 marked the first full year of business in the new premises in James House. The Social Care Council relocated to James House as part of the Belfast Optimisation Project in February 2023. Staff have worked closely with facilities management to settle the organisation into the new premises to ensure it meets the service needs.

In addition to providing cost-savings in estates management, the new premises provides access to a wide range of onsite meeting rooms and a large conference space, which have proved invaluable as we returned to hosting in-person meetings and events. James House offer a range of shared and collaborative spaces to work from, with staff pre-booking desks and areas through a mobile application. The new premises are equipped with video conferencing technology to facilitate online and hybrid meetings. The organisation is maximising on the technology available to support agile working. All staff are equipped to work in the office and remotely. Staff can also use HSC local hubs to work from if their home location is not suitable. All staff have CISCO and MS Teams for calls, meetings and messaging. Meetings with BSO have taken place to review the level of service and cover from the range of SLA's for back office services including Information Governance, Estates, Health and Safety and recruitment.

Performance analysis for 2023-24

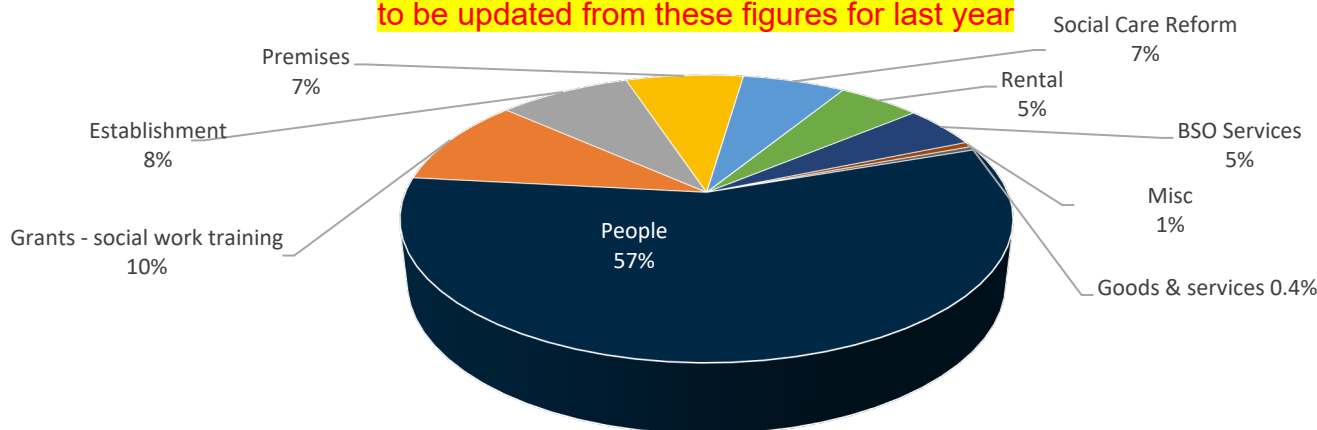


Finance

The Social Care Council Month 12 finance reports indicate a **£4k surplus** at 31 March 2024. The breakeven position target has therefore been reached for the financial year 2023-24. Full details of income and expenditure is included on **page 90 of the accounts**. Income received includes £1,459,391 from Registration Fees and £4,095,858 Revenue Resource Limit received from the Department of Health. Total expenditure of £5,723,616 was made up of £3,159,842 Pay related costs and £2,563,774 Non--Pay costs.

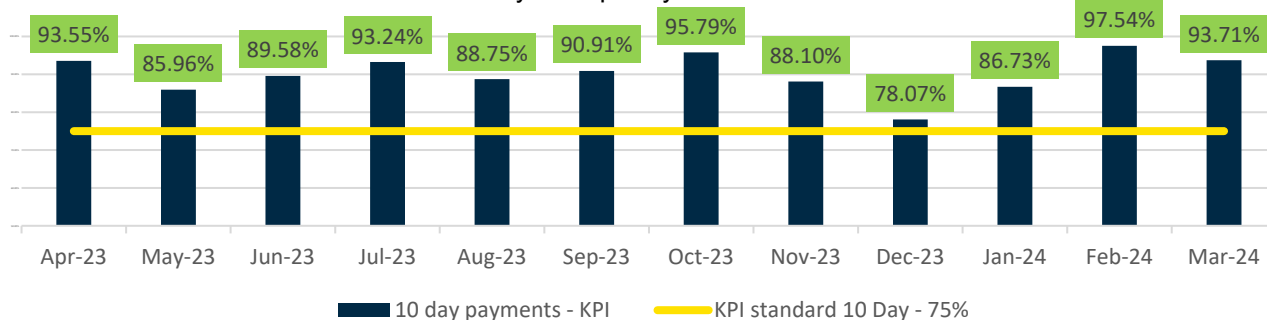
Finance - Key areas funded 2023-24

to be updated from these figures for last year

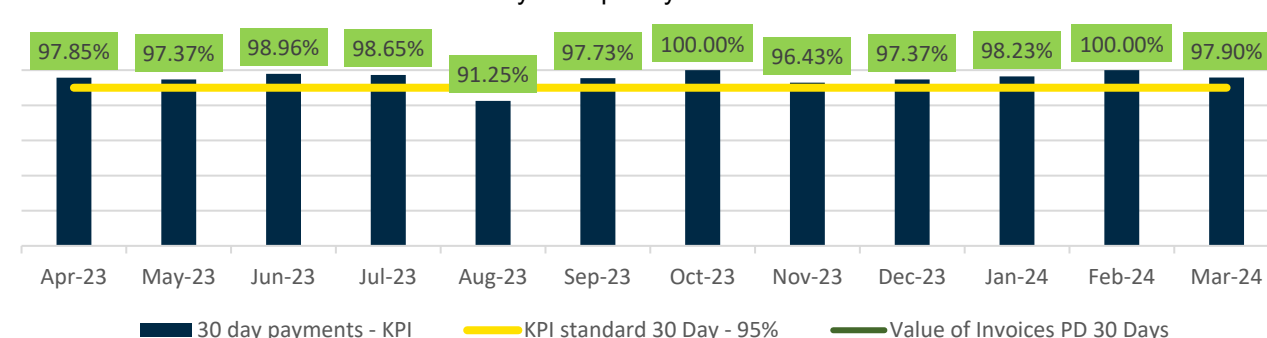


During the year, the Council paid 1,172 invoices (£3,244,742) in the course of its business. All of these were paid within the prompt payment targets to pay 75% of invoices within 10-days and 95% of 30-day payments were achieved.

10 Day Prompt Payments 2023-24



30 Day Prompt Payments 2023-24



Performance analysis for 2023-24



Communications and Engagement

Since our establishment in 2001, communication and engagement with our registrants and stakeholders has remained a key theme, recognising that to deliver our statutory functions we need to effectively connect with our registrants and stakeholders to successfully deliver our business. To support the outcomes set out in the Strategic Plan 2023-27, we have invested in the promotion of social work and social care, developing our social media presence and creating engagement forums for leaders, managers and front-line registrants to strengthen our connections with the sector.



Digital Communications - The Communications Team progressed a series of campaigns across the website, social media through direct email campaigns to support internal and external communications and engagement activity. Corporate communications activities included: the ECHO network, Lunchtime Seminar series, Learning Zone, events, recruitment opportunities and promotion of reports.

Traffic on the website www.niscc.info averaged 6k users per month. The Social Care Council websites have WebReader by ReachDeck software, which adds speech, reading, and translation support tools to online content, to enable people with a visual impairment to access information on our websites. The service was used about 4k times per month. The most popular aids used were Toolbar, Speech and Translate. At 31 March 2024, we had 11.5k followers across our digital channels



Developing Strategy - Work on the development of the engagement strategy did not progress as well as anticipated. An extensive piece of work was completed with registrants to find out best to engage with them and arrangements for the new Registrant’s Forums were developed. Initial review of the feedback indicates that registrants engage best with direct emails and face-to- face sessions. In order to widen accessibility to Council activities and resources, the Digital Content Group is involving staff from all areas to review how we prepare and present what we do. Further work is required to engage with people who use services and carers in our Engagement Strategy. This will be done in collaboration with the Participation Partnership in 2024-25.

The Council invests a significant amount of time to ensure staff are connected with the work of the Council. External request to support wider HSC communications for the reform agenda delayed progress in completing the Internal Communications strategy in-year. This will be taken forward in 2024-25 to ensure the Council can articulate and co-ordinates the activity and engagement involving our staff. This will ensure that all the work to keep people involved and connected is tracked directly to our communications aims and we can target activity to where it is most effective.



Delivering our Strategy

What we have learned in 2023-24? – **TO BE FINALISED**

- A communication and engagement strategy will support and co-ordinate our key efforts and messages communications must be clear and easy to understand.
- Online resources are essential in reaching such a large and disparate stakeholder group.
- Improving public perception is a long-term outcome.
- More work is required to solidify communication and engagement with our immediate stakeholders – registrants, employers, people who use services and their carers.
- A QI approach to reviewing specific business functions/activities can lead to positive change and improvements.
- The system to support staff and managers in managing absences is fit for purpose.
- It is important to use a range of methods to engage and involve staff in delivery of the business.
- Health and wellbeing activities are having a positive impact on our staff, board and partners.

Looking Ahead – Our Plans for 2024-25

Evaluation of the work completed to deliver our strategy indicates that the actions set out in the 2023-24 Business Plan support these priorities. It has identified work that will carry forward into the new business year and some new actions to be taken forward in 2024-25 that will support us in our long term plans to improve workforce standards.

Our 2024-25 priorities are to:

- Deliver the actions arising from the IIP assessment including a Reward and Recognition framework for all staff that supports our culture, values, equality and diversity commitments and People Plan by December 2024.
- Develop a programme to support all staff and leaders in the organisation following on from the 2023-24 Compassionate Leadership Programme by September 2024.
- Develop a Health and Wellbeing Programme with associated outcomes to support all staff in the organisation by September 2024.
- Develop a People Plan by September 2024 to support the organisation in delivering its Strategic Plan. The Plan will assess whether the organisation has the right structures and resources in place to support it to fully deliver its Strategic Plan.
- Develop a Climate Change Strategy and action plan by December 2024.
- Develop and implement an internal communications plan to include digital opportunities such as redeveloping the intranet using SharePoint and investing in the right tools for updating staff by December 2024.
- Ensure we achieve financial break even by March 2025.

Performance analysis for 2023-24

Performance in relation to environmental matters

The Statutory Duty for Sustainable Development applicable to public authorities is set out at section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 and applies to all Northern Ireland Departments and District Councils.

The six priority areas are:

- Building a dynamic, innovative economy that delivers the prosperity required to tackle disadvantage and to lift communities out of poverty.
- Strengthening society so that it is more tolerant, inclusive and stable and permits positive progress in quality of life for everyone.
- Driving sustainable, long-term investment in key infrastructure to support economic and social development.
- Striking an appropriate balance between the responsible use and protection of natural resources in support of a better quality of life and a better-quality environment.
- Ensuring a reliable, affordable and sustainable energy provision and reducing our carbon footprint.
- Ensuring the existence of a policy environment which supports the overall advancement of sustainable development in and beyond Government.

The Social Care Council remains committed to making an active contribution to those areas which it can influence. Prominence is therefore given to the way in which we conduct our work to minimise, where relevant, a negative impact on these duties, but more importantly to make sustainable improvements wherever possible.

A number of positive actions have been implemented:

- The Social Care Council participated in the Belfast Optimisation Project, moving to James House in February 2023 alongside a number of other ALBs and organisations.
- Agile working is now in place with staff working a combination of at home and office-based. This has reduced the need for travel to the workplace and meetings are taking place using video-conferencing software.
- As a result of agile working the production of printing and photocopying has reduced as staff use ICT support including One Note.
- The Social Care Council's Board now uses the Decision Time platform for publication of papers.
- E-Resources – investment in the Learning Zone as an alternative to printed learning resources.

This has included clear procedures on the minimisation of waste, colour photocopying and paper production. The continued promotion of the online Portal has also led to almost negligible use of printed materials for registration application paperwork. Following the organisation's move to new premises at James House, the Social Care Council is reviewing how it can develop actions and measure to support a Climate Action Plan. This work will be completed during 2023-24.

Performance analysis – Key performance indicators

The organisation delivered its business during 2023-24 through remote and agile working – benefiting from remote and office-based working. The Senior Leadership Team, supported by Heads of Functions, continued to meet weekly throughout the year to review business priorities and share learning.

The 2023-24 Business Plan was delivered against 26 objectives and 12 KPIs. Progress against the annual Business Plan objectives was monitored by the Operational Leadership Team throughout the year. Monthly performance reports for the Senior Leadership Team and Quarterly reports for the Social Care Council Board included successes, opportunities for improvement and details of mitigating action undertaken for areas that were at risk of not meeting required outcomes.

The Senior Leadership Team is satisfied that delivery of the 26 objectives and performance against the 12 KPIs set out in the 2023-24 Business Plan meet the standards required to confirm achievement of year end outcomes in line with the 2023-27 Strategic Plan despite the challenges of delivering our services through remote and then agile working arrangements.

KPI Overview at 31 March 2024

At the end of Quarter 4/Month 12 (31 March 2024):

- 12 KPIs were rated **GREEN** Further detail is provided overleaf.

KPI	Performance	Comment on any highlights/risks/mitigation
1. Customer experience – 85% of those using our services, report a positive experience	Cum 94% Number of Survey responses (n=719)	Across months 1-12 of 2023-24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 56,572 people supported by Registration Advisers 20,408 calls handled (40% of calls presented were handled) 36,080 emails managed (149 emails awaiting resolution at closing) <p>GREEN rating for 94% cumulative KPI reflects positive experiences reported by those supported through the services. It is recognized that the survey responses represent 1.5% of customers. Further work will be done in 2024-25 to promote the survey more widely.</p>

KPI	Performance	Comment on any highlights/risks/mitigation
2. We will process 100% of completed applications/ renewals within 20 working days of submission	Cum 94% Number of applications/ renewals completed (n=17,252)	Across months 1-12 of 2023-24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17,252 registrations completed (12,373 applications and 4.879 renewals) • 88% of applications/renewals processed within 20 days of completed materials being received (1,887 applications in the system at closing) • 95% of renewals processed automatically through the online system • 45,691 fees paid (86% paid online) <p>GREEN rating for 94% cumulative KPI is within tolerance limits. This reflects improved performance against 2022-23 achievements as a result of management activities to recruit and develop staff and to involve staff in improving work processes. Team leader and staff development work will continue into 2024-25. Further service improvements are also anticipated following the introduction of the Mobile App and development work on the application pathways to reduce opportunities for errors or duplication of submissions.</p>
KPI	Performance	Comment on any highlights/risks/mitigation
3. We will update the register for all Fitness to Practise decisions within 2 working days of receipt of the information	Cum 100% Number of registration records updated (n=123)	Across months 1-12 of 2023-24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 123 registrant records were updated to reflect decisions made by Fitness to Practise Officers and Committees. • 100% of updates were completed within the 2-day timescale. <p>GREEN rating for 100% cumulative KPI reflects the benefit achieved from training undertaken to increase capacity within the team to amend registration records with fitness to practise and committee decisions.</p>
KPI	Performance	Comment on any highlights/risks/mitigation
4. We will triage all referrals to the Fitness to Practise Team within 3 working days (referrals are assessed against the Social Care Council 'Standard for Acceptance')	Cum 100% Number of concerns referred to fitness practice and triaged (n=541)	Across months 1-12 of 2023-24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 541 concerns referred about a registrant's fitness to practise were triaged • 14% of referrals were screened out at triage because they did not meet the standard, or were not within the remit of the Social Care Council • 17% of referrals were screened out following provisional enquiries • 69% of referrals resulted in investigation as a fitness to practise case (same as last year) • 10% increase in referrals compared to 2022-23 <p>GREEN rating for 100% cumulative KPI reflects strong performance across the year and the effective management of risk in triaging referrals in-year, despite considerable increase in referrals</p>

KPI	Performance	Comment on any highlights/risks/mitigation
5. We will conclude 100% of Interim Suspension Order (ISO) hearings within 4 weeks of referral	Cum 100% (n=37)	<p>Across months 1-12 of 2023-24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37 cases were identified as high risk and referred for Interim Order hearing • 100% of Interim Orders were concluded within 4 weeks of referral • 37% increase in Interim Order cases compared to 2022-23 <p>GREEN rating for 100% cumulative KPI reflects the agility of the FtP Officers and the Committee Management Team to implement processes respond within time constraints. The system was robust enough to respond to within tight timescales to ensure registrants identified as posing a high risk to those receiving social care services were temporarily prevented from practising whilst investigations proceeded.</p>
KPI	Performance	Comment on any highlights/risks/mitigation
6. We will conclude 90% of Fitness to Practise cases within 15 months of opening the case	Cum 91% (n=291)	<p>Across months 1-12 of 2023-24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 291 Fitness to Practise cases concluded (418 active cases in the system at closing) • 92% of cases resolved by FtP Officers (120 no further action, 124 letters of advice about standards, 20 warnings, 2 undertakings. 2 removals by agreement) • 8% of cases decided by FtP Hearing Committee (20 removal orders, 3 suspension orders, 1 impairment not found, 1 adjourned) <p>GREEN rating for 100% cumulative KPI reflects the steady performance on case management through the year. Case closures were 15% lower than last year. There were 418 cases in the system at year end. Performance on closure times can be impacted by criminal proceedings, safeguarding investigations, employer investigations, health assessments, as well as staff resource. Witness/employer co-operation was also a factor. All cases are reviewed at monthly case conferences, including long-running cases. 25% of active cases in the system at closing were older than 15 months. The impact of these long-running cases on KPI is kept under review by management. It remains the aim of management to attain the standard of closing 90% of cases within 15 months.</p>

KPI	Performance	Comment on any highlights/risks/mitigation
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	Cum 100%	<p>Across months 1-12 of 2023-24</p> <p>The programme of monitoring, review and inspection for social work education and practice learning was delivered for 2023-24. Responses from providers at qualifying and post qualifying levels provided assurance that the Social Care Council standards were being met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Degree in Social Work Approved Courses monitored • 21 Designated Practice Learning Providers monitored • 24 AYE Audit responses reviewed in 2022 sample and all candidates met the required standards • 16 PIP Approved Programmes monitored • Ulster University PiP Programmes Re-Approval completed • 255 Degree in Social Work graduates in NI (summer 2023) • 292 students enrolled on the Degree in Autumn 2023 (including xx Open University) • 1887 PiP Awards presented in June 2023 <p>GREEN rating for 100% cumulative KPI reflects the engagement that has been sustained with course management boards, PiP Partnership, Degree in Social Work Partnership and with employer leads for AYE and PIP to ensure programmes are supported in regular review of teaching to adapt to changing service requirements.</p>
8. We will ensure our staff absence levels do not exceed 4% during the year	Month 12 Cum 2.83%	<p>Cumulative absence across months 1-12 was recorded at 2.83%.</p> <p>Staff absence totals for 2023-24 were 2.83 % (2022-23 3.41%) - which is below the overall KPI of 4%. In July, marginally exceeded KPI at 4.37%. This was due to long term absences. Absence remained with KPI for all other months.</p> <p>*Since October 2022, COVID related absences have been recorded as sickness absence (rather than Public Sector Duties Paid).</p> <p>GREEN rating for 2.83% cumulative KPI for staff absence</p>

KPI	Performance	Comment on any highlights/risks/mitigation
<p>9. We will ensure we achieve the minimum standard of paying 95% of undisputed invoices within 30 days</p> <p>10. We will achieve the minimum standard of paying 75% of undisputed invoices within 10 day prompt payment target</p>	<p>Cum (n=1172)</p> <p>30 Day KPI 97.78%</p> <p>10 Day KPI 90.10%</p>	<p>Across months 1-12 of 2023-24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,172 invoices paid, with a value of £3.25m • 90.10% of invoices paid within 10 days (£2.85m) • 97.78% of invoices paid within 30 days (£3.17m) <p>GREEN rating for 92.37% and 98.78% cumulative KPIs reflects the strong performance across procurement, processing and approval of invoices to ensure efficient processing of payments. KPI standards for 10 and 30 day payments were met throughout the year.</p>
<p>11. We will manage our finances to achieve financial breakeven target of 0.25% or £20k (whichever is greater)</p>	<p>At end of Month 12 Unaudited Year-End Position £4k</p>	<p>Month 12 finance reports indicate a £4k surplus at 31 March 2024. The unaudited breakeven position target has therefore been reached for the financial year 2023-024.</p> <p>GREEN rating for breakeven position against KPI is based on the following summary of actual income and expenditure. Further information is provided in the accounts section of this report.</p>
<p>12. We will ensure the Online Registration Portal is available at least 98% of time during the year</p>	<p>Month 12 Cum 99%</p> <p>Number of Portal Sessions n=3.5m</p>	<p>Across months 1-12 of 2023-24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 99% Portal availability • 30k visitors • 3.5m page views <p>GREEN rating for 99% cumulative KPI reflects the robust systems in place to monitor system performance and address service issues as they are reported by users. In addition to maintaining the online system, the team managed development and testing for upgrade of the CRM system for the database and portal.</p> <p>Staff and stakeholders were assisted with payment issues, log-in assistance, employment details, endorser permissions/videoconferencing/printers. Registration support provided for cancelled applications/ voluntary removals/ fee generation/ bulk updates, training.</p>

Performance Analysis for 2023-24

Positioning

Based on these performance reports, I can confirm that the Social Care Council is well placed to deliver a strong and reliable performance during the next business year. We recognise that there may be some adaptations needed as we continue to prioritise and deliver our business in response to the demands and constraints placed on operations by the COVID pandemic and the current financial climate. The organisation has a highly skilled workforce, who are strongly motivated to deliver quality services and who are well supported to enable them to work flexibly to meet business needs.

We are committed to supporting front line workers in social work and social care. We will continue to develop online learning and supports and ensure that those coming back to work in social work or social care can be registered quickly and safely.

The Leadership Teams will continue to review the needs and demands for our services and will ensure that feedback from stakeholders will shape our perspective on our priorities and ambitions.

I will ensure that the Social Care Council listens to those priorities and ambitions to make sure we continue to work with and for our stakeholders.

TO BE SIGNED BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

Patricia Higgins,
Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Date: DD Month 2024

Section 2: Accountability Report

Corporate Governance Report - Director's Report

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council was established in October 2001 under the Health and Personal Social Services Act (NI) 2001. It is a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Health. The Social Care Council is helping to raise standards in social care through the registration of the social work and social care workforce and setting standards for their conduct, training and practice. In doing so, the Social Care Council engages with a variety of stakeholders, including those who use social care services, carers, the social care workforce, employers, training providers and government agencies. The Social Care Council also works collaboratively with its counterparts in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Our Values

The overall vision for the Social Care Council focuses on improving standards in social work and social care.

This vision will be achieved through the delivery of our core values:

- Respect,
- Integrity,
- Partnership,
- Excellence



Our Ambitions

We want to make a difference to social work and social care, to improve outcomes for those who are supported through these services.

Our ambitions are the long term outcomes we want to achieve for both the Social Care Council and for the social work and social care workforce:

- Workforce transformation,
- Evidence-based practice,
- Workforce data & intelligence,
- Agile regulation,
- Innovation.



Director's Report

The Social Care Council is a partner in the UK Alliance, Skills for Care and Development (SfCD), responsible for social care and children's services throughout the UK. As partners we're committed to supporting employers to create a world-class workforce, that's vital for the growth of the economy and the wellbeing of people who need care and support in our communities.

The Social Care Council is led by a Board which comprises a Chair and 8 non-Executive Members who have responsibility for ensuring the Board's strategic policies as agreed with the DoH are successfully delivered. Details of the Board's structure and its membership can be found at Appendix 1 of this Annual Report. The organisational structure is headed by a Chief Executive who is also the designated Accounting Officer. She is supported by two Directors: the Director of Registration and Corporate Services, and the Director of Regulation and Standards. The organisational structure can be found at Appendix 2.

Equality

The Social Care Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all. Details of good practice and training initiatives, including those relating to disability issues are outlined in the Annual Equality Progress Report which can be found on its website at www.niscc.info. The Social Care Council has an Equal Opportunity Policy in place that covers all aspects of equality within employment, including the obligations of the organisation under disability discrimination legislation and protecting the rights and interests of Section 75 groups. During 2023-24, the Social Care Council consulted with stakeholders on the Disability and Equality Action Plans for 2023-28. This review was delivered in partnership with the BSO Equality Unit in accordance with the Equality Commission guidelines. These new plans will assist the Social Care Council to deliver on policy and service delivery developments to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved. The Disability and Equality Action Plans are available from the website www.niscc.info.

Staff Communication

A range of methods are used to communicate with staff. These include monthly team meetings which enable the sharing of corporate information together with updates on business and team performance, and team development. Monthly staff 'Townhall' meetings are held to encourage staff teams to share information about the work that they do. The staff intranet is updated regularly to help staff to access useful information such as policies and procedures in one place, together with an interactive calendar and group forums. The Social Care Council also holds information sessions every quarter to openly discuss matters which impact the organisation such as funding pressures, business delivery and strategic policy directions.

Director's Report**Prompt Payment Policy****Public Sector Payment Policy – Measure of Compliance**

The Department of Health requires that NISCC pay their non-HSC trade creditors in accordance with applicable terms and appropriate Government Accounting guidance. The NISCC's payment policy is consistent with applicable terms and appropriate Government Accounting guidance and its measure of compliance is:

	2024		2023	
	Number	Value £	Number	Value £
Total bills paid			1,310	3,286,085
Total bills paid within 30 day target			1,294	3,165,196
% of bills paid within 30 day target			98.78%	96%
Total bills paid within 10 day target			1,210	2,847,061
% of bills paid within 10 day target			92.37%	87%

The Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002

	£
Amount of compensation paid for payment(s) being late	-
Total	-

Information Governance

BSO provides services to the Social Care Council to assist with fulfilling responsibilities for General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All staff have completed the mandatory e-learning module to ensure they are aware of their role in fulfilling GDPR requirements. There were no data breaches during the year.

Health and Safety at Work

The Social Care Council has an approved Health and Safety at Work Policy. The organisation complies with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 and all other relevant health and safety legislation and codes of practice. We are committed to ensuring so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of employees and of others who may be affected by our operations. Expert advice and support on health and safety legislation and codes of practice is provided through a Service Level Agreement with the Business Services Organisation. The Health and Wellbeing Committee, which reports to the Senior Leadership Team has a responsibility to promote measures which ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of staff at work. The Committee has representation from all teams and meets quarterly to plan and deliver Health and Wellbeing activities. The Social Care Council has access to the HSC Occupational Health Service. In addition, a programme of employee assistance and confidential counselling is made available through the Inspire Workplace organisation.

Director's Report

Complaints

The Social Care Council received two written complaints about its services during 2023-24. The complaints were not upheld. One of the complaints received escalated to the next internal stage for review but was not upheld. No complaints were received from the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. In addition, the Evaluation Manager reviews all feedback received through the Customer Service Survey to identify those customers who issues remain unresolved, or those who have reported they received an unsatisfactory outcome. These are followed up with relevant team members to ensure that all customer issues are resolved where possible. Learning from these reviews is discussed with managers and staff teams as appropriate.

Audit Information

The Directors can confirm that there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are not aware. The Directors can also confirm that they have taken steps to ensure that they are aware of relevant audit information and to establish that the HSC body's auditors are aware of the information.

Long Term Expenditure

The Social Care Council receives its financial allocation on a year-to-year basis from the Department of Health (DoH) and any long-term expenditure pressures identified by the Social Care Council are managed through the DoH.

Senior Leadership Team



The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for ensuring all of the Social Care Council's business areas meet corporate, governance and legislative requirements for public accountability and value for money.

(Patricia Higgins, Declan McAllister and Marian O'Rourke)

Patricia Higgins (Chief Executive) has overall responsibility for the Social Care Council. She works with the Chair of the Social Care Council's Board and the Board Members in the delivery of the Social Care Council's strategic direction, leadership and accountability.

Declan McAllister (Director of Registration and Corporate Services) has responsibility for the Registration function and for Corporate Services, which includes Finance, HR, IT Development, Procurement, Estates and Governance.

Marian O'Rourke (Director of Regulation and Standards) has responsibility for the Fitness to Practise function, the regulation of social work education and training at qualifying level and the Professional in Practice CPD framework for social workers, and the development of the social work and social care workforces.

Director's Report

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Board

Board Membership reflects three broad interest groups:

- Lay People:** People who have direct experience as a user of social care services, as a carer, or of unpaid work in the voluntary or community sector.
- Registrants:** People who are social care workers, eligible for inclusion in the Social Care Register.
- Stakeholders:** People who must be directly involved in the commissioning or delivery of social care services, the delivery of education and training in social care or as a representative of a trade union, professional or other regulatory body concerned with health and social care, or be a member of the legal profession.

All Members are appointed in a personal capacity because of the skills and experience they possess.

The Board is chaired by Mr Paul Martin supported by Board Members –

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| • Sarah Browne | • Jacqueline McGarvey |
| • Roslyn Dougherty | • David Hayes |
| • Gerard Guckian | • Anne O'Reilly
last day of service was 30/09/2023 |

Mr Paul Martin was appointed as Chair of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council on 1 April 2018 following a public appointments exercise which was managed by the Public Appointments Unit. Board Members are listed at Appendix 1.

The Board meets four times a year to consider issues of strategy and accountability. The meetings of the Board are held in open session and are advertised on our website. The agenda and minutes of Board meetings are published on the Social Care Council's website www.niscc.info. The Board also have strategic days during the year to focus on key areas of work and strategy, for example when developing the Corporate Plan.

The Board carried out a 'Board Self-Assessment' during 2023-24 to ensure itself that it demonstrates good practice in all areas of governance and accountability and developed an action plan to strengthen and improve its governance arrangements. This is reported in the Governance Statement contained within this Annual Report and Accounts for 2023-24.

The Social Care Council holds a Register of Directors' Interests which contains the declared interests of both Executive and Non-Executive Directors. This is available by contacting the Chief Executive's Office at the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, 4th Floor James House, 2 Cromac Avenue, Belfast, BT7 2JA, Tel 028 9536 2600.

Director's Report

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Committees

The Board has established two Committees to support it in the delivery of its strategic functions, each of which is chaired by a Board Member:

- **The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee** (chaired by Board Member Gerard Guckian) assists the Board in the discharge of its functions by providing independent and objective review of the Social Care Council's control systems, financial information to the Board, risk management and information governance processes, compliance with the law, guidance and Standards of Conduct and Practice, and governance processes. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report which forms part of this Annual Report can be found on page 70.
- **The Remuneration Committee** (chaired by Mr Paul Martin) advises the Board about appropriate remuneration and terms of service for the Chief Executive. It meets twice a year.

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Partnerships

The Board has established a number of Partnerships to inform and deliver its wide range of business and to provide structured arrangements for stakeholder engagement and involvement:

- **Participation Forum** consists of people who use social care services and carers, and its role is to challenge, influence and advise the work of the Social Care Council.
- **Registrants Forum** consists of registrants and workforce representatives and its role is to ensure effective engagement with and by Registrants in the work of the Social Care Council. This structure of this forum was reviewed with registrants during 2023-24 and separate forums for social work and social care will be established during 2024-25.
- **Leaders in Social Care Partnership** consists of providers of social care services from the statutory, private and 3rd sectors, with a focus on supporting the transformation and development of the social care workforce in Northern Ireland.
- **Professional in Practice (PiP) Partnership** consists of social work employers and Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) who are key to the delivery of the PiP Framework.
- **Research Community Network** - The Board has approved the establishment of a Social Work and Social Care Research and Evidence Partnership within the Council to take forward the programme of work to build a social work and social care research community in 2024-25.
-

TO BE SIGNED BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

Patricia Higgins,
Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Date: XX Month 2024

Corporate Governance Report - Statement of Accounting Officer Responsibilities

Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Under the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001, the Department of Health has directed the Northern Ireland Social Care Council to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must provide a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Department of Health, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in FReM have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts
- prepare the accounts on a going concern basis, and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable

The Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health as Principal Accounting Officer for Health and Social Care Resources in Northern Ireland has designated Patricia Higgins of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council as the Interim Accounting Officer for the Northern Ireland Social Care Council. "The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland published by the Department of Finance."

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

Corporate Governance Report - Governance Statement 2023-24

Governance Statement 2023-24

1. Introduction / Scope of Responsibility

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Council) is accounting for internal control. As Accounting Officer and Chief Executive of the Social Care Council, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal governance that supports the achievement of the organisation's policies, aims and objectives, whilst safeguarding the public funds and assets for which I am responsible in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me by the Department of Health (DoH).

The Social Care Council is an Arm's-Length Body, sponsored by the DoH and works in partnership with all the Health and Social Care (HSC) organisations including the other Regional Organisations sponsored by the DoH.

In particular the Social Care Council has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) to enable it to properly fulfil its role as a regulator of the social care workforce, and information sharing protocols are in place with the other Social Care Councils in England, Wales and Scotland. The Social Care Council also works closely with CORU, the Social Work and Social Care regulator in the Republic of Ireland, to share best practice in regulation and registration of social workers and social care workers.

The Social Care Council has a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum in place which sets out the strategic control framework within which the Social Care Council is required to operate, and the conditions under which government funds are provided as detailed in Government Accounting Northern Ireland. The Accounting Officer and Chair of the Social Care Council apprise the DoH at the highest level of engagement through twice-yearly Accountability Meetings, and at the same time the Social Care Council works in partnership with the DOH Government Liaison Officer to ensure operational and strategic issues are raised appropriately with the DoH throughout the year.

As part of the HSC sector, the Social Care Council is expected to face significant financial challenges in 2024-25 and therefore extensive budget planning work to support the business plan is ongoing between the Social Care Council and the DoH.

2. Compliance with Corporate Governance Best Practice

The Board applies the principles of good practice in Corporate Governance and continues to further strengthen its governance arrangements. The Board does this by undertaking continuous assessment of its compliance with Corporate Governance best practice through completion of an annual Board self-assessment. The Board completed its self-assessment for year ended 31 March 2024 and updated the Action Plan which it will continue to review at least annually to ensure continual improvement in governance and best practice.

Governance Statement 2023-24

The Board agreed that –

- 18 indicators were assessed as Green (all good practices are in place);
- 0 indicators were assessed as Amber or Red.

The summary for the Board's self-assessment is set out below.

Indicator		Board's Assessment
1.	Board Composition and Commitment	
1.1	Board positions and size	Green
1.2	Balance and calibre of Board members	Green
1.3	Role of the Board	Green
1.4	Committees of the Board	Green
1.5	Board member commitment	Green
2.	Board Evaluation, Development and Learning	
2.1	Effective Board level evaluation	Green
2.2	Whole Board development programme	Green
2.3	Board induction, succession and contingency planning	Green
2.4	Board member appraisal and personal development	Green
3.	Board Insight and Foresight	
3.1	Board performance reporting	Green
3.2	Efficiency and Productivity	Green
3.3	Environmental and strategic focus	Green
3.4	Quality of Board papers and timeliness of information	Green
3.5	Assurance and risk management	Green
4.	Board Engagement and Involvement	
4.1	External stakeholders	Green
4.2	Internal stakeholders	Green
4.3	Board profile and visibility	Green

3. Governance Framework

The Board provides strategic leadership to the Social Care Council and comprises a Chair and 8 Members who are a combination of registrants, lay members and others who are key stakeholders in social care services. The Board completed an independent review of board membership and skills in 2022-23 and currently 3 vacancies exist at Board level to meet the complement of 9 members including the Chair.

Operational responsibilities are delivered by the Chief Executive. The duties and functions of the Chair and Board Members are set out in the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum and also in the Social Care Council's Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation and Standing Financial Instructions.

Governance Statement 2023-24

The Board is in the final stages of introducing a new Partnership Agreement which will replace the current Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM) in conjunction with the DOH. Meetings of the Board were held in open session six times during the year and records are maintained of the Board attendance. In addition, the Board held two Strategic Planning Sessions. During 2023-24 the Board attendance for all sessions was XX% when taken collectively over the year. Attendance at Board Strategic Days, Committees and Partnerships during 2023-24 is set out below:

Chair/ Member	Attendance at Board During 2023-24 (%)
Paul Martin, Chair	100%
Sarah Browne, Member	100%
Roslyn Dougherty, Member	100%
Gerry Guckian, Member	100%
David Hayes, Member	83.3%
Jacqueline McGarvey, Member	100%
*Anne O'Reilly, Member	100%

*A O'Reilly – term ended 30/09/23

	Board Strategic	Audit & Risk Assurance Committee	Remuneration Committee	Participation Forum	Leaders in Social Care Partnership	Professional in Practice Partnership	Registrants' Forum
FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS IN 2023-24	4	4	2	4	4	4	5
P Martin	100%	N/A	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
S Browne	100%	N/A	100%	100%	100%	N/A	N/A
R Dougherty	100%	N/A	100%	N/A	N/A	100%	N/A
G Guckian	100%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
D Hayes	50%	N/A	N/A	33.3%	N/A	N/A	N/A
J McGarvey	100%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	60%
*A O'Reilly	75%	N/A	N/A	N/A	75%	N/A	N/A

(attendance % refers to those meetings the member was eligible to attend)

*A O'Reilly – term ended 30/09/23

Governance Statement 2023-24

The Board's performance is reviewed as part of the annual Board Self-Assessment and the performance appraisal system.

The Board has established two statutory Committees to support it in the delivery of its strategic functions:

- The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is chaired by a Member of the Board of the Social Care Council and assists the Board in the discharge of its functions by providing independent and objective review of the Social Care Council's control systems, financial information to the Board, risk management processes, compliance with law, guidance and Codes of Conduct, and governance processes; and
- The Remuneration Committee is chaired by the Chair of the Social Care Council and advises the Board about appropriate remuneration and terms of service for the Chief Executive.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee carries out an annual self-assessment and develops an action plan to address any areas where performance could be improved or enhanced.

4. Business Planning, Risk Management and Fraud

Business planning and risk management are at the heart of governance arrangements to ensure that statutory obligations and ministerial priorities are properly reflected in the management of business at all levels within the organisation.

Business Planning

The Social Care Council Strategic Plan 2023-27 was developed following engagement with staff and stakeholders including, in particular, people who use social care services and carers as is described in the Social Care Council's Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) Consultation Scheme. The Strategic Plan takes account of recent developments in social care strategy including the Minister of Health's strategy 'Health and Wellbeing 2026'. The Strategic Plan describes at a strategic level how the Social Care Council will deliver on its overarching aim and strategic outcomes as a regulator of the social care workforce and the outcomes which it expects as a result. The Strategic Plan is available on the Social Care Council's website.

The Social Care Council also develops an annual Business Plan which provides further detail on how the Social Care Council will deliver its Strategic Plan, focusing on the outcomes of delivering its objectives. The same process of engagement and consultation is applied as with the development of the Strategic Plan. The Business Plan is approved by the Board and ultimately by the DoH before being circulated and published. The Strategic Plan and Business Plan are compliant with the requirements set out in the Social Care Council's Management Statement and Financial Memorandum. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for delivering the Strategic and Business Plans and is supported by her Directors and operational team.

To give effect to the Strategic and Business Plans, the Social Care Council develops an Operational Plan and Key Performance Indicators. This ensures that all staff can clearly understand their role in delivering the Social Care Council's objectives and ensures that their own personal and team objectives and learning plans are aligned to the Social Care Council's business objectives. The Operational Plan and Business Plan are reviewed on a quarterly basis by Senior Managers which informs reporting to the Senior Leadership Team and ultimately to the Board.

Governance Statement 2023-24

A Business Performance Management Report is presented to the Board for scrutiny on a quarterly basis, detailing how the Social Care Council is performing against its annual Business Plan. This includes further assurance reports such as an evaluation of the Social Care Council's delivery of its strategic outcomes; financial monitoring reports; and reports associated with workforce registration and regulation.

The Board agrees its work programme for the year to make best use of both its open sessions and strategic planning sessions.

Ultimately, the Social Care Council accounts for its business performance through the production of its Annual Report and Accounts which are laid before the NI Assembly and published on the Social Care Council's website.

Risk Management

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility to the Board for risk management. Leadership on risk is provided through the Board with delegated authority to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee which is chaired by a Board Member and is supported by the Director of Registration and Corporate Services. The Risk Management process seeks to identify risks in accordance with best practice as well as providing a system for embedding risk management throughout the Social Care Council.

The Board set the strategic risks and risk appetite for the organisation which are set out in the Social Care Council's Risk Management Strategy. The Board also approve and have oversight of the Social Care Council's Assurance Framework. The Board agrees the strategic risks that impact on the delivery of the organisation's strategic plan and annual business plan. The Board's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee review the strategic risks in detail at each of their meetings, ensuring the controls and actions are having a positive impact on the mitigation of the risks.

The risk appetite agreed by the Board in relation to each of the strategic themes and strategic risks from cautious to hungry is in place along with an agreed risk appetite statement for each of its risk appetite areas (finance, compliance, safety, service delivery and reputation).

All staff receive training on risk management and are required to complete an e-learning module on risk management awareness and are also provided with detailed Risk Management Procedures. In addition, risk management training forms part of induction for all new staff.

The Social Care Council has been able to effectively manage its risk profile throughout the year by identifying the risk appetite relevant to the risk and its associated mitigating actions which are set out in its Risk Register and Assurance Framework.

Risk Management Framework

The Social Care Council ensures effective risk management is embedded as part of its culture and throughout the organisation. It has a Risk Management Strategy which describes how risks (and near misses) should be managed, elevated, and controlled, including evaluating the value of inherent and residual risks. The Social Care Council has also developed detailed Risk Management Procedures which break down how to report and manage risks for all staff.

Governance Statement 2022-23

The Social Care Council details its risks through a Risk Register and Assurance Framework which are formally reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Risk Management Committee (chaired by the Director of Registration and Corporate Services), which in turn reports to the Senior Leadership Team, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and ultimately to the Board as part of a quarterly Risk Progress Report. The risk register is maintained on a regular basis and updated through risk management software which assigns risk owners, controls and actions. The risks can be tracked through the software to establish how risks are being managed and mitigated.

The Risk Management Committee is also responsible for ensuring the overarching Risk Management Strategy is reviewed on a regular basis so that it reflects all aspects of risk, governance and control. The Risk Management Strategy was reviewed during the year to take account of the strategic direction being set by the Board in relation to strategic risks and risk appetite.

The Social Care Council works with Internal Audit to provide assurances and validation of its compliance in relation to risk management and has a Business Continuity Strategy and Plan in place which is tested on an annual basis, with lessons learned being fed back into the overarching Risk Management Strategy.

Fraud

The Social Care Council has a zero-tolerance approach to fraud in order to protect and support our key public services. It has put in place a Fraud Policy Statement and Fraud Response Plan to outline the approach to tackling fraud, define staff responsibilities and the actions to be taken in the event of suspected or perpetrated fraud, whether originating internally or externally to the organisation. The Social Care Council has a Fraud Liaison Officer (FLO) whose role is to promote fraud awareness, coordinate investigations in conjunction with the Business Services Organisation (BSO) Counter Fraud and Probity Services team and provide advice to staff on fraud reporting arrangements. All staff are provided with mandatory fraud awareness training in support of the Fraud Policy Statement and Fraud Response Plan, and during the year all staff completed the annual Fraud E-learning support resource.

5. Information Risk

Information Risk Management is an essential part of good governance. The Social Care Council ensures that information risk management is considered in its procedures and policies. Information Risk Management is managed within the context of the Social Care Council's Risk Management Strategy and Information Governance Strategy.

The Social Care Council holds a range of personal data in respect of registrants (c.46,000) and confidential data in respect of complaints against registrants. It also holds a range of personal data in respect of staff and information which supports the running of the business. The Social Care Council maintains an Information Asset Register and Disposals Schedule which are reviewed regularly, and any areas of non-compliance are brought to the attention of the Senior Information Risk Owner and Personal Data Guardian.

Specific roles in the Social Care Council have been identified to support it in managing risks to the organisation in respect of the information it may hold. These roles include:

- Personal Data Guardian
- Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)
- Information Governance and Records Management Officer (IGRMO)
- Information Asset Owners (IAOs)

Governance Statement 2023-24

The Information Governance function is well embedded in the organisation and forms part of the remit of the Risk Management Committee as reflected in the Committee's Terms of Reference. The Director of Registration and Corporate Services chairs the Risk Management Committee and is also the Social Care Council's SIRO and Data Guardian. Due to the size and structure of the organisation the members of the Risk Management Committee (risk co-ordinators) are also the organisation's Information Asset Owners.

The Social Care Council receives its Records Management and Information Governance support through a Service Level Agreement with Information Governance Shared Services in the BSO. This includes the appointment of a Data Protection Officer to support the Social Care Council in its compliance with Information Access Requests and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

The Social Care Council ensures that the information it produces and creates is used appropriately, stored and shared safely and is compliant with its Information Management policies. Where information or data is shared outside of the organisation, Data Sharing Protocols, and Data Sharing Agreements are agreed in advance as necessary. The transfer of information is also subject to compliance with GDPR.

The organisation has ICT policies in place that include protecting against the risk of a cyber-security event and draws upon the services of the Business Services Organisation (ITS) to support it in the delivery of robust cyber security protocols and arrangements. The Board, the Senior Executive Team and all staff are trained in cyber security awareness and are regularly reminded of their personal responsibility to be vigilant and how to report any concerns.

The Social Care Council can **report that there were no data breaches or cyber** security incidents during the year.

The Social Care Council has a number of policies and strategies in place that support its overall risk management agenda. These are:

- Information Governance Strategy
- Records Management Strategy
- Records Management Procedures
- Access to Information Policy
- Privacy Policy and Privacy Statement
- Disclosure Policy
- Clear Desk and Screen Policy
- Data Security Breach Management Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Data Quality Policy
- ICT Policy

Governance Statement 2023-24

The Social Care Council is currently reviewing all of the above policies and ensuring they are aligned to the HSC suite of IT and related policies.

The Accounting Officer and Board receive quarterly reports through the Assurance Report on the management of all risks, including those in relation to IT, information and other potential threats. The Assurance Report highlights any gaps in assurance and how these are being remedied. In addition, an end of year Assurance Report is produced that highlights assurances (and gaps) across all areas of business. This Report is provided to the Senior Leadership Team, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Board.

Public Stakeholder Involvement

The Social Care Council's engagement with people who use services and carers, and other stakeholders has been enshrined in its structure since its inception in 2001. In addition, the Social Care Council has a strategic objective to 'raise awareness and knowledge of the work of the Social Care Council and ensure its work is informed and influenced by people who use services and carers, registrants, employers and other stakeholders'.

The Social Care Council published a Personal and Public Involvement Consultation Scheme which was developed by people who use social care services and carers and was approved by the Board. Additionally, it produced Principles of Participation, again in partnership with service users and carers.

The Social Care Council has established a number of Partnerships to ensure inclusivity and involvement from the broadest range of people and stakeholders. These are:

- Participation Forum (comprising people who use social care services and carers)
- Leaders in Social Care Partnership (comprising employers of the social care workforce)
- The Professional in Practice Partnership (comprising employers of social workers, Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), and other education providers who are key to the delivery of the PiP Framework).
- Registrants Forum (comprising registrants): Currently Under Review to develop proposals for effective engagement with social work and social care registrants. Work continues with regular oversight by the Board.

These Partnerships meet regularly throughout the year and are kept informed of the Social Care Council business developments and issues raised at these meetings are brought to the attention of the Board who review the minutes of the meetings of the Partnerships/Forums. This holistic approach to engagement ensures that any risks identified by stakeholders are brought to the attention of the Board. It is noted that the registrant's forum is currently under review in terms of its governance and remit with final determination to be agreed by the Board during 2023-24.

The Social Care Council ensures all papers presented to its Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and to the Board include a cover sheet which explains to what extent stakeholders have been engaged in the development of the paper/proposal and, where appropriate, how they influenced the outcome. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Board can therefore clearly challenge the Social Care Council in how it has engaged people who use services and carers, and other stakeholders in the development of policy and other initiatives.

Governance Statement 2023-24

6. Assurance

As part of its Governance arrangements, the Social Care Council considers the contents of both its Assurance Framework and Risk Register when identifying possible control issues.

The Social Care Council's Standing Orders require the setting up of an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, as directed by HSS (PDD) 8/94 to reassure the Board that financial stewardship and corporate governance standards are being met. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee maintains and reviews the effectiveness of the system of internal control for the Social Care Council. Full details of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, its role, terms of reference, and responsibilities can be found in the Standing Orders.

The Internal Audit Service for the Social Care Council is provided by the BSO. Internal Audit carries out its role by systematic review and evaluation of risk management, control and governance which comprises the policies, procedures and operations in place to:

- establish and monitor the achievement of the Social Care Council's objectives;
- identify, assess and manage the risks to achieving the Social Care Council's objectives;
- ensure the economical, effective and efficient use of resources;
- ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations; and
- safeguard the Social Care Council's assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity, bribery or corruption.

The Board receives a wide range of papers for information and decision-making purposes presented by Social Care Council's officers. This includes a Business Performance Management Report. The papers are of suitable quality to enable the Board to make informed decisions.

The Board is satisfied with the quality of the information received during the year and is satisfied that the information was sufficient to enable the Board to fulfil its obligations.

End of Year Assurance

The Social Care Council provides an end of year assurance report to its Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and its Board on all of its areas of governance and control, using a RAG system to identify any areas where gaps in assurance and/or action is required. Any actions identified are managed through the Social Care Council's Risk Register and Risk Assurance Framework.

7. Sources of Independent Assurance

The Social Care Council obtains Independent Assurance from the following sources:

- Internal Audit (as provided under a Service Level Agreement with BSO); and
- External Audit by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO).
- Other Independent Assurances

Governance Statement 2023-24

Internal Audit

The Social Care Council utilises an internal audit function which operates to defined standards and whose work is informed by an analysis of risk to which the body is exposed, and annual audit plans are based on this analysis. Internal Audit has three assessment levels of assurance: Satisfactory, Limited and Unacceptable.

In 2023-24 Internal Audit reviewed the following systems:

- Performance Management and Reporting, providing a satisfactory assurance
- Joint Recruitment Review with Shared Service, providing a limited assurance
- Financial Review, providing a satisfactory assurance
- Information Governance, providing satisfactory assurance
- Complaints, providing a satisfactory assurance on complaints handling and limited assurance on complaints governance.

In her annual report, the Internal Auditor reported that she can provide satisfactory assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Social Care Council's framework of governance, risk management and control. There were no priority 1 weaknesses in control identified, however a number of priority 2 weaknesses were identified and action plans are in place to address these. A number of the actions relating to limited assurance audits are detailed as follows;

Audit	Action
Recruitment	<p>The Social Care Council should enhance controls to provide assurances that all panel members have been appropriately trained</p> <p>The Social Care Council should develop and implement an action plan to improve recruitment key performance indicators</p>
Complaints	The Social Care Council should review and enhance complaints handling performance reporting

External Audit

The Financial Statements of the Social Care Council are audited by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and the results of their audit are set out in their Annual Report to those Charged with Governance. A representative from the Northern Ireland Audit Office attends the Social Care Council's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Meetings. The External Auditor is required to certify, examine and report on each of the Statements comprising the Financial Statements of the organisation. An unqualified audit opinion was provided in 2021-22.

Other Independent Assurances

The Social Care Council achieved the IIP Platinum standard award for Investors in People in March 2024. The Investors in People Platinum accreditation is the highest level of recognition against the Investors in People standard. Only two percent of organizations achieve this level of recognition, and it sets an international benchmark for effective leadership and employee collaboration. The Council was also assessed against the IIP Health and Wellbeing and retained the Gold standard in this category.

Governance Statement 2023-24

An independent review of Board composition and skills was also completed during 2022-23 and a number of recommendations have been identified with an associated action plan now in place.

An independent review of the management of fee income was also completed in year following the impact of Covid and fee collection from April 2020. The Social Care Council was found to be in compliance with Financial Reporting standards with a small number of recommendations which now have been actioned.

8. Review of Effectiveness of the System of Internal Governance

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for the review of effectiveness of the system of internal governance. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal governance is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the executive managers within the Social Care Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their management letter and other reports. I have been advised on the implications of the result of my review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Social Care Council, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, and the Risk Management Committee, and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement to the system is in place.

9. Internal Governance Divergences

Internal Control Issues now Resolved 2021/22

In response to COVID-19 the DOH introduced the interim policy decision to defer all registration fees and not to remove anyone from the register. The Social Care Council managed this interim change; however, it had a knock-on effect on fee recovery which resulted in significant pressures for the Registration team and the organisation during 2021/22. Following the completion of an independent review and delivery of an action plan; registration services are now in a business-as-usual status.

The interim arrangements put in place to fill senior positions including the Chief Executive post have now been resolved and permanent appointments have now been made.

Internal Control Issues 2023-24

A number of audits have been conducted in BSO Shared Services, as part of the BSO Internal Audit Plan, including those for the Payroll Service Centre (split level of assurance was given whereby some aspects given limited assurance and other elementary processes satisfactory assurance) and Recruitment Shared Services (Limited Assurance was given). While these reports are the responsibility of BSO Management to take forward, the Social Care Council will keep these matters under review to ensure they do not adversely impact on the organisation.

With regard to the wider control environment, the Social Care Council has in place a range of organisational controls commensurate with the current assessment of risk which is designed to ensure the efficient and effective discharge of its business in accordance with the law and Departmental direction. Every effort is made to ensure that the objectives of the Social Care Council are pursued in accordance with the recognised and accepted standards of public administration.

Governance Statement 2023-24

11. EU Exit

The Social Care Council is working alongside the Department of Health and the other Arms-Length bodies following EU Exit. The Social Care Council is satisfied that it is able to operate its business effectively, however collaborative working with regulators across the UK and Ireland will continue to ensure the maintenance of standards and the right to work in Social Work and Social Care. This includes working with the Department of Health and ROI counterparts to help register ROI Social Workers and Social Care Workers who wish to work in Northern Ireland.

12. Budget Position and Authority

The Northern Ireland Budget Act 2023 was passed by Parliament and received Royal Assent on 8 February 2023 which authorised the cash and use of resources for all departments and other bodies for the full 2022-23 year, and also included a Vote on Account for the early months of the 2023-24 financial year. This will be followed by a further Budget Bill which the Secretary of State will bring to Parliament in due course, following the 2023-24 Northern Ireland Budget which he set in his Written Ministerial Statement on 27 April 2023.

The *Written Ministerial Statement* has enabled the Department of Health to issue opening allocations for 2023-24 which will enable essential services to continue. However, despite plans to deliver significant efficiencies, the budget allocation provided has resulted in a significant funding gap. The Department of Health and its Arm's Length Bodies are currently working on the development of further savings measures to bridge the gap. However, it is clear that, if the Department of Health does not receive significant additional funding, the implementation of high impact savings will be required, with adverse consequences for an already highly pressurised health and social care system which would be very damaging for service delivery.

13. Conclusion

The Social Care Council has a rigorous system of accountability which I can rely on as Accounting Officer to form an opinion on the probity and use of public funds, as detailed in Managing Public Money NI (MPMNI).

Further to considering the accountability framework within the Social Care Council and in conjunction with assurances given to me by the Head of Internal Audit, I am content that the Social Care Council has operated a sound system of internal governance during the period 2023-24.

TO BE SIGNED BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

Patricia Higgins

Chief Executive

Northern Ireland Social Care Council

DD Month 2024

Corporate Governance Report - Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report

The Social Care Council's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is made up of Board Members. The Committee met on the following dates during 2023-24:

- 17 April 2023 (this was an extraordinary meeting)
- 10 May 2023
- 14 June 2023
- 4 October 2023
- 7 February 2024

During the 2023-24 financial year, membership of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee was as follows:

APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024	ATTENDANCE AT AUDIT and RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (%)
Mr Gerry Guickan	100%
Ms Jacqui McGarvey	60%
*Ms Lesley Mitchell	100%

*The Board Skills Audit had identified the need for financial experience within the Audit and Risk Committee. In May 2024, based on the outcomes of the Board Skills Audit, Lesley Mitchell (HSC Leadership Centre Associate and Independent Reviewer) was co-opted as a member of the Audit and Risk Committee to provide these skills on a temporary basis until the Public Appointments Unit are able to fulfil recruitment to fill vacant Board Member posts. The Committee Terms of Reference were amended to reflect this appointment.

Internal Audit, External Audit and representatives from the Business Services Organisation (BSO) attend the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The Chief Executive of the Social Care Council, Patricia Higgins, also attends when required along with the Director of Registration and Corporate Services, Declan McAllister and the Director of Regulation and Standards, Marian O'Rourke. Mr McAllister is the Executive Officer in attendance and is responsible for servicing the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The Government Liaison Officer (GLO) from the DoH also attends.

Membership of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is consistent with the Social Care Council's Standing Orders.

During the 2023-24 financial year, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee undertook the following tasks:

- Agreed an Internal Audit Plan;
- Considered an External Audit Strategy;
- Reviewed the Social Care Council's Assurance Framework;
- Ensured the production of the Social Care Council's Final Accounts were in accordance with relevant statutory regulations;
- Considered the Social Care Council's mid-year Assurance Statement and Governance Statement;
- Reviewed a number of Internal Audit Reviews of key aspects of the Social Care Council's business during the previous business year 2021-22.

- Considered the NIAO Report to Those Charged with Governance.
- Reviewed the Social Care Council's Procurement Report, including the Contract Register and Direct Award Contract Report for 2022-23.
- Reviewed the Social Care Council's End of Year Assurance Report.

As part of its remit the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee can confirm, on reviewing the processes and related documents in relation to finance, risk, risk registers, governance and audit reports, that it is able to provide assurances to the Board and to the Accounting Officer in relation to key statutory and accountability obligations.

Furthermore, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee can provide assurance to the Board and the Accounting Officer on key issues relating to the Governance Statement. This is based on the information provided to the Committee from Internal Audit, External Audit and from the Executive Team. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee endorses the Assurance Framework which captures all risks, controls and gaps in controls and mitigating actions, and this is presented to the Board by the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee can further confirm that, on an annual basis, Internal Audit provide written confirmation to the Committee that all reviews performed are in accordance with applicable auditing standards. In doing so, the Chair and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee present the final Accounts to the Board and the Accounting Officer for approval. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, facilitated by the Head of Internal Audit, completed the National Audit Office Audit Committee Self-Assessment Checklist, which is carried-out on an annual basis. As a result, the Council's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee confirmed its compliance with the good practice principles.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee was satisfied that during 2023-24, based on the information available to it, that:

- The assurances provided to it were comprehensive and reliable and were of a sufficient standard to inform the decision-making of the Board and of the Interim Accounting Officer.
- The assurances provided to it were suitably reflected in the Social Care Council's Risk Management process as necessary.
- It was suitably informed of any material issues that were pertinent to the Governance Statement.
- Appropriate financial reporting and information was in place.

The work of Internal and External Audit was of a suitable quality and their approach to their responsibilities was appropriate.

Remuneration Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

Remuneration Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

SCOPE OF THE REPORT

The Remuneration Report summarises the Remuneration Policy of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and particularly its application in connection with senior managers. The Report also describes how the Northern Ireland Social Care Council applies the principles of good corporate governance in relation to senior executives' remuneration in accordance with HSS(SM) 3/2001 and subsequent supplements issued by the DoH. Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay and benefits in kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council's Board, as set out in its Standing Orders, has delegated certain functions to the Remuneration Committee, including assessing the performance of Senior Executives and, where permitted by the DoH, agreeing the discretionary level of performance related pay. The Remuneration Committee is chaired by the Chair, Mr Paul Martin. The Remuneration Committee is entirely comprised of Non-Executive Directors, namely, Roslyn Doherty and Sarah Brown. The Remuneration Committee met in this form on 14 June 2023 and 10 January 2024.

REMUNERATION POLICY

The salary, pension entitlement and the value of any taxable benefits in kind paid to both Executive and Non-Executive Directors is set out within this Report. None of the Executive or Non-Executive Directors of the Social Care Council received any other bonus or performance related pay in 2022-23.

Non-Executive Directors are appointed by the DoH under the Public Appointments process and the duration of such contracts is normally for a term of four years. The overall objective of the Senior Executive remuneration arrangements is to achieve a fair, transparent, affordable and defensible pay and grading system for all Senior Executives employed across the HSC.

The main components of the arrangements are:

- pay and terms and conditions of service for the Chief Executive are determined by the DoH
- the Chief Executive post is subject to evaluation by the DoH Evaluation Panel which is responsible for the management, maintenance and integrity of the evaluation process
- pay ranges will be reviewed annually and the effective date for any extension of the pay ranges following review of the ranges by the Minister will be 1st April in the year of the review, and
- there will be progression through the pay range subject to fully acceptable performance.

SERVICE CONTRACTS

HSC appointments are made on the basis of the merit principle in fair and open competition and in accordance with all relevant legislation and Circular HSS (SM) 3/2001. Unless otherwise stated, the employee/s covered by this Report are appointed on a permanent basis, subject to satisfactory performance. Further information about the work of the Civil Service Commissioners can be found at www.nicscommissioners.org.

Remuneration and Staff Report

The date of appointment for the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's Executive and Non-Executive Directors, and the Chair are set out below:

CHAIR

NAME	POSITION	DATE OF APPOINTMENT
Paul Martin	Chair	1 April 2018

NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

NAME	POSITION	DATE OF APPOINTMENT
Sarah Browne	Council Member	1 April 2018
Roslyn Dougherty	Council Member	1 April 2018
David Hayes	Council Member	1 April 2018
Gerard Guckian	Council Member	1 May 2018
Jacqueline McGarvey	Council Member	1 April 2018
Anne O'Reilly	Council Member	1 December 2014

* Anne O'Reilly last day of service was 30/09/23

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

NAME	POSITION	DATE OF APPOINTMENT
Mrs Patricia Higgins	Chief Executive	From 3 September 2018 (Director of Regulation and Standards from 1 June 2002, Chief Executive from May 2022).
Mr Declan McAllister	Director of Registration and Corporate Services	17 July 2017
Mrs Marian O'Rourke	Director of Regulation and Standards	From 8 October 2018 (Head of Workforce Development from 1 April 2014, Director of Regulation and Standards from September 2022).

NOTICE PERIODS

Three months' notice is to be provided by either party except in the event of summary dismissal. There is nothing to prevent either party waiving the right to notice or from accepting payment in lieu of notice.

RETIREMENT AGE

The Social Care Council does not operate a general retirement age for all staff. However the BSO reserves the right to require an individual employee or group of employees to retire at a particular age where this is objectively justified in the particular circumstances of the case.

COMPENSATION FOR PREMATURE RETIREMENT

In accordance with the DoH circular HSS (S) 11/83 and subsequent supplements, there is provision within the HSC Pension Scheme for premature retirement with immediate payment of superannuation benefits and compensation for eligible employees on the grounds of:

- Efficiency of the service.
- Redundancy.

Remuneration and Staff Report

Section 16 of the Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions Handbook (issued on 14 February 2007 under cover of the Department's Guidance Circular HSS (AfC) (4) 2007) sets out the arrangements for early retirement on the grounds of redundancy and in the interest of the service. Further Circulars were issued by the Department HSS (AfC) (6) 2007 and HSS (AfC) (5) 2008 setting out changes to the timescale for the operation of the transitional protection under these arrangements.

Under the terms of Section 16 of the Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions Handbook, individuals who were members of the HSC Superannuation Scheme prior to 1 October 2006, are over 50 years of age and have at least 5 years membership of the HSC Superannuation Scheme no longer qualify for transitional protection, enhancement of service or an additional lump sum payment if they choose to take early retirement. They can opt to either take a redundancy payment, or use that redundancy payment to offset the costs associated with claiming pension benefits early, i.e. before their normal retirement age. Further detail is available in Sections 16.12 and 16.13 on the AfC Handbook.

Alternatively, staff made redundant who are members of the HSC Pension Scheme, have at least two years "continuous service" and two years "qualifying membership" and have reached the minimum pension age, currently 50 years, can opt to retire early without a reduction in their pension as an alternative to a lump sum redundancy payment of up to 24 months. In this case the cost of the early payment of the pension is paid from the lump sum redundancy payment. However, if the redundancy payment is not sufficient to meet the early payment of pension cost, the employer is required to meet the additional cost.

REPORTING OF EARLY RETIREMENT AND OTHER COMPENSATION SCHEME - EXIT PACKAGES - AUDITED

There were no exit packages during 2023-24 or 2022-23

Remuneration and Staff Report**Remuneration Report****Senior Employees' Remuneration (To be Audited)**

The salary, pension entitlements and the value of any taxable benefits in kind of the most senior members of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council were as follows:

Single total figure of remuneration								
Name	Salary £000s		Benefits in kind (rounded to nearest £100)		Pension Benefits (rounded to nearest £1,000)		Total £000s	
Non-Executive Members	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22
Paul Martin	15-20	15-20	-	-	-	-	15-20	15-20
Lee Wilson*	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	5-10
Brenda Maitland**	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	5-10
Catherine McPhillips***	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	5-10
Anne O'Reilly****	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	5-10
Jacqueline McGarvey	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	5-10
David Hayes	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	5-10
Sarah Browne	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	5-10
Gerard Guckian	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	5-10
Roslyn Dougherty	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	5-10
Christine Hunter****	-	5-10	-	-	-	-	-	5-10

* Lee Wilson last day of service was 30/11/22

** Brenda Maitland last day of service was 31/12/22.

*** Catherine McPhillips last day of service was 2/02/23

**** Christine Hunter last day of service was 31/3/22

**** Anne O'Reilly last day of service was 30/9/22

Remuneration and Staff Report**Senior Employees' Remuneration (To be Audited)**

Name	Salary £000s		Benefits in kind (rounded to nearest £100)		Pension Benefits (rounded to nearest £1,000)		Total £000s	
	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22
Executive Members								
*Patricia Higgins	90-95	80-85	-	-	30	9	120-125	90-95
Declan McAllister	75-80	75-80	-	-	32	48	105-110	120-125
Marian O'Rourke	75-80	70-75	-	-	32	41	105-110	110-115

*Patricia Higgins salary has been restated for 2021-22 to show actual remuneration paid (including pay awards paid)

BONUSES

Bonuses are based on performance levels attained and are made as part of the appraisal process. Bonuses relate to the performance in the year in which they become payable to the individual. No bonuses were paid in 2023-24 or in 2022-23.

Pensions of Senior Management (To be Audited)

Name	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/3/23 and related lump sum £000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age £000	CETV at 31/03/23 £000	CETV at 31/03/22 £000	Real increase in CETV £000
Patricia Higgins	30-35 Plus lump sum 85-90	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	698	699	15
Declan McAllister	25-30 Plus lump sum 50-55	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	543	505	12
Marian O'Rourke	20-25 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	352	308	15

As Non-Executive members do not receive pensionable remuneration, there will be no entries in respect of pensions for Non-Executive members.

Remuneration and Staff Report**Cash Equivalent Transfer Values**

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capital value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme, or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which the disclosure applies. The CETV figures and the other pension details, include the value of any pension benefits in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the HPSS pension scheme. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their purchasing additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost.

CETVs are calculated within the guidelines prescribed by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries. CETV figures are calculated using the guidance on discount rates for calculating unfunded public service pension contribution rates that was extant at 31 March 2023. HM Treasury published updated guidance on 27 April 2023; this guidance will be used in the calculation of 2023-24 CETV figures.

Real Increase in CETV - This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It takes account of the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

Fair Pay Statement - (To be Audited)

Northern Ireland Social Care Council is required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest paid Director and the lower quartile, median and upper quartile remuneration of the organisation's workforce. Following application of the guidance contained in DoH Circular (F) 23/2013, the following can be reported:

*Disclosure	2022-23	2021-22
**Band of the Highest Paid Director's Total Remuneration	90-95	80-85
25 th Percentile Total Remuneration	23,177	21,776
Median Total Remuneration	32,934	32,306
75 th Percentile Total Remuneration	40,588	42,121
Ratio (25%/Median/75%)	3.93/2.76/2.24	3.87/2.61/2.0

*Agency staff are not included in the fair pay disclosure calculations.

**Band of highest paid director's total remuneration has been restated for 2021-22 to show actual remuneration paid (including pay awards paid).

Remuneration and Staff Report

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid director in the Social Care Council in the financial year 2023-23 was £XX-XXk (2023; £90-95k) which was:

- X.XX times (2023; 3.93) the 25th percentile remuneration of the workforce, which was £XX,XXX (2023; £23,177).
- X.XX times (2023; 2.76) the median remuneration of the workforce, which was £XX,XXX (2023; £32,934).
- X.XX times (2023; 2.24) the 75th percentile remuneration of the workforce, which was £XX,XXX (2023; £40,588).

In 2023-24, X (2022-23; 0) employees received remuneration in excess of the highest-paid director. Remuneration ranged from £XX,XXX to £XX,XXX (2023: £21,730 to £81,540). Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay, and benefits-in kind. The percentage change in remuneration in respect of the Social Care Council are shown in the following table:

Disclosure	2023-24 Vs 2022-23
Average employee salary and allowances	0.39%
Highest paid director's salary and allowances	8.05%

No performance payments or bonuses were payable to Social Care Council employees in these years.

Staff Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

Staff recruitment, employment, terms and conditions are managed through a service-level agreement with the Business Services Organisation. Appointments are made on the HSC 'Agenda for Change' pay bands. Changes to staff policies, terms or conditions are consulted on and developed in collaboration with staff-side organisations and unions (Joint Negotiating Forum). The Social Care Council has an Equal Opportunity Policy in place that covers all aspects of equality within employment, including the obligations of the organisation under disability discrimination legislation and protecting the rights and interests of Section 75 groups. Details of staff engagement and equality initiatives are included on page 51 of this report.

Training and Development

The Social Care Council values its staff and is committed to enhancing their skills and improving their contribution to the organisation's goals. Individuals are encouraged to complete a Personal Development Plan (PDP) as part of the appraisal process. Overall, needs are very much focused on service delivery with outcomes that relate to performance against team and organisational objectives.

Remuneration and Staff Report

The cumulative sickness and absenteeism rate for the Social Care Council for 2023-24 was 2.83% which was below the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's corporate target to maintain absences at a maximum of 4%.

Staff Composition – To be Audited

At 31 March 2024, XX people worked for the Social Care Council. XX people were employed on permanent contracts, XX of whom worked part-time. C people were employed on temporary/fixed term contracts and XX were engaged temporarily as agency workers. XX % of contracted staff work part-time or a form of compressed hours (this was 11.1% in 2022-23). From January 2023, staff could opt into the Social Care Council's Agile Working Policy – 100% of staff are opted into the policy.

Turnover rates for permanent staff was X.X% in 2023-24 (7.9% in 2022-23).

The composition of the workforce is set out below –

Staff composition by pay band

<i>Pay Band</i>	<i>% of Workforce</i>	<i>Number of Staff</i>
Band 3	27%	17
Band's 4/6	49%	31
Band's 7/8	19%	12
SLT	5%	3

Staff composition by function

<i>Function</i>	<i>% of Workforce</i>
Registration	26%
Workforce Development (includes PiP)	25%
Fitness to Practise	18%
Business Support	9.5%
Database	6.5%
Communications	5%
Committee	5%
SLT	5%

Staff composition by gender (contracted Staff)

<i>Pay Band (Contracted Staff)</i>	<i>Male Number</i>	<i>Female Number</i>
Band 3	5	10
Band's 4/6	9	19
Band's 7/8	4	8
SLT	1	2
Overall	19	39

Remuneration and Staff Report

Staff Report

Staff Numbers and Related Costs (To be Audited)

Staff Costs

	2023		2022	
	Permanently employed staff £	Others £	Total £	Total £
Staff costs comprise:				
Wages and salaries	2,215,360	262,448	2,477,808	2,393,798
Social security costs	237,011	-	237,011	216,554
Other pension costs	445,023	-	445,023	412,626
Sub-Total	2,897,394	262,448	3,159,842	3,022,978
Capitalised staff costs	-	-	-	-
Total staff costs reported in Statement of Comprehensive Expenditure			3,159,842	3,022,978
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments			-	-
Total net costs			3,159,842	3,022,978

The Social Care Council participates in the HSC Pension Scheme. Under this multi-employer defined benefit scheme both the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and employees pay specified percentages of pay into the scheme and the liability to pay benefit falls to the DoH. The Social Care Council is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities in the scheme on a consistent and reliable basis.

As per the requirements of IAS 19, full actuarial valuations by a professionally qualified actuary are required at intervals not exceeding four years. The actuary reviews the most recent actuarial valuation at the statement of financial position date and updates it to reflect current conditions. The 2016 valuation for the HSC Pension scheme updated to reflect current financial conditions (and a change in financial assumption methodology) will be used in 2022-23 accounts.

The Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 came into operation on 24 April 2020 and enabled those workers who were unable to take annual leave as result of the pandemic to carry over up to four weeks' annual leave into the next two leave years ending on 31st March 2023. Any exemption will apply only to circumstances where workers are unable to take their leave as a result of the outbreak, and carryover of annual leave is limited to the period up to 31st March 2023. Requests to carry over leave under the regulations have been assessed by departmental managers and accruals accounted for in the final expenditure.

Remuneration and Staff Report

Staff Report - Average number of persons employed (To be Audited)

The average number of Whole-time equivalent persons employed during the year was as follows:

	2023		2022	
	Permanently employed staff No.	Others No.	Total No.	Total No.
Administrative and clerical	42*	10	52	47
Social services	18	1	19	15
Total average number of persons employed	60	11	71	62
Less average staff number relating to capitalised staff costs			-	-
Less average staff number in respect of outward secondments				
Total net average number of persons employed			71	62

The staff numbers disclosed as 'Others' in 2022-23 relate to temporary members of staff.

*Financial Year 22-23 staff numbers exclude 9 Non-executive members.

Staff Report - Reporting of early retirement and other compensation scheme – exit packages (To be Audited)

Exit package cost band	Number of compulsory redundancies		Number of other departures agreed		Total number of packages by cost band	
	20243	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022
<£10,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£10,000-£25,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£25,000-£50,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£50,000-£100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£100,000-£150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£150,000-£200,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
>£200,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total number of exit packages by type	-	-	-	-	-	-
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Total resource cost	-	-	-	-	-	-

Remuneration and Staff Report

Redundancy and other departure costs are paid in accordance with the provisions of the HSC Pension Scheme Regulations and the Compensation for Premature Retirement Regulations, statutory provisions made under the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972.

The table above shows the total exit cost of exit packages agreed and accounted for in 2022-23 and 2021-22. £nil exit costs were paid in 2022-23, the year of departure (2021-22 £nil). Where the Northern Ireland Social Care Council has agreed early retirements, the additional costs are met by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and not by the HSC pension scheme. Ill health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme and are not included in the table.

Consultancy

The Social Care Council has not engaged any consultants over the period.

Off Payroll engagements

There were no off payroll engagements during the year 2022-23.

The Social Care Council recognises that all payment disclosures should be reported in line with best practice set out in FReM 6.5.3-4, where there is a presumption that information about named individuals will be given in all circumstances, and all disclosures in the remuneration report will be consistent with identifiable information of those individuals in the financial statements. In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in advance of the intention to disclose information about them, with an invitation for sight of the intended information to be published and notification that the individual can challenge this decision under Article 21 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

TO BE SIGNED BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

Patricia Higgins,
Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Date: **DD Month 2024**

Accountability and Audit Report

Accountability Report - Assembly Disclosure Notes

i) Losses and Special Payments (Audited)

The Social Care Council had no losses or special payments during 2023-24 or 2022-23

ii) Fees and Charges (Audited)

There were no other fees and charges during the year.

iii) Remote Contingent Liabilities (Audited)

In addition to contingent liabilities reported within the meaning of IAS37, the NISCC also reports liabilities for which the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit in settlement is too remote to meet the definition of contingent liability. The NISCC had no remote contingent liabilities.

iv) Charitable Donations (Unaudited)

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council did not make any charitable donations during the year and there were no personal data related incidents requiring disclosure.

Regularity

In 2023-24 mechanisms were maintained in order to assure the Department of Health and the public of the effective performance of the Council in delivering its functions. The Accounting Officer provides assurance that all income and expenditure is in line with the principles of propriety and regularity as set out in Managing Public Money published by HM Treasury and that expenditure plans are in line with capital and revenue funding rules and regulations. Department of Health guidance on expenditure is implemented as appropriate and forms part of the Standing Financial Instructions of the Social Care Council.

The Accounting Officer confirms that the annual report and accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and that she takes personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

TO BE SIGNED BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

Patricia Higgins,

Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Date: DD Month 2024

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

**THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN
IRELAND ASSEMBLY**

SPACE HELD FOR 2024 CERTIFICATION LETTER

SPACE HELD FOR 2024 CERTIFICATION LETTER

SPACE HELD FOR 2024 CERTIFICATION LETTER

SPACE HELD FOR 2024 CERTIFICATION LETTER

TO BE SIGNED BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

NAME

Comptroller and Auditor General

Northern Ireland Audit Office

106 University Street

BELFAST

BT7 1EU

DD MONTH 2024

Section 3: Annual Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2024

FOREWORD

The accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 have been prepared in a form determined by the Department of Health based on guidance from the Department of Finance Financial Reporting manual (FReM) and in accordance with the requirements of the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009.

CERTIFICATE OF THE CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

I certify that the annual accounts set out in the financial statements and notes to the accounts (pages 90-130) which I am required to prepare on behalf of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council have been compiled from and are in accordance with the accounts and financial records maintained by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and with the accounting standards and policies for HSC bodies approved by the DoH.

Chief Executive TO BE SIGNED BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

Date: DD Month 2024

I certify that the annual accounts set out in the financial statements and notes to the accounts (pages 90-130) as prepared in accordance with the above requirements have been submitted to and duly approved by the Board.

Chairman TO BE SIGNED BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

Date: DD Month 2024

Chief Executive TO BE SIGNED BEFORE FINAL SUBMISSION

Date: DD Month 2024

STATEMENT of COMPREHENSIVE NET EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 March 2023

This account summarises the expenditure and income generated and consumed on an accruals basis. It also includes other comprehensive income and expenditure, which includes changes to the values of non-current assets and other financial instruments that cannot yet be recognised as income or expenditure.

	NOTE	2023 £	2022 £
Revenue from contracts with customers	4.1	1,459,391	1,280,742
Other Income (excluding interest)	4.2	-	-
Total operating income		1,459,391	1,280,742
Expenditure			
Staff costs	3	(3,159,842)	(3,022,978)
Purchase of goods and services	3	(23,821)	(18,747)
Depreciation, amortisation and impairment charges	3	(125,655)	(129,393)
Provision expense	3	(20,949)	-
Other expenditure	3	(2,393,349)	(2,147,160)
Total operating expenditure		(5,723,616)	(5,318,278)
Net Expenditure		(4,264,225)	(4,037,536)
Finance income	4.2	-	-
Finance expense	3	-	-
Net expenditure for the year		(4,264,225)	(4,037,536)
Adjustment to net expenditure for non-cash items		178,104	159,143
Net expenditure funded from RRL		(4,086,121)	(3,878,393)
Revenue resource limit (RRL)	23.1	4,095,858	3,885,406
Add back charitable trust fund net expenditure		-	-
Surplus/(Deficit) against RRL		9,737	7,013

**NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2023**

OTHER COMPREHENSIVE EXPENDITURE

	NOTE	2023 £	2022 £
Items that will not be reclassified to net operating costs:			
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of property, plant and equipment	5.1/8/5.2/9	-	-
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of intangibles	6.1/8/6.2/9	4,926	(3,064)
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of financial instruments	7/9	-	-
Items that may be reclassified to net operating costs:			
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of investments		-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 March 2023		(4,259,299)	(4,040,600)

The notes on pages 95-130 form part of these accounts.

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2023

STATEMENT of FINANCIAL POSITION as at 31 March 2023

This statement presents the financial position of the Social Care Council. It comprises three main components: assets owned or controlled; liabilities owed to other bodies; and equity, the remaining value of the entity.

		2023		2022	
	NOTE	£	£	£	£
Non-current Assets					
Property, plant and equipment	5.1/5.2	79,891		79,403	
Intangible assets	6.1/6.2	525,780		258,583	
Financial assets	7				
Trade and other receivables	13				
Other current assets	13				
Total Non-current Assets			605,671		337,986
Current Assets					
Assets classified as held for sale	10				
Inventories	11				
Trade and other receivables	13	41,860		14,799	
Other current assets	13	18,294		74,985	
Intangible current assets	13				
Financial assets	7				
Cash and cash equivalents	12	157,399		141,766	
Total Current Assets			217,553		231,550
Total Assets			823,224		569,536
Current Liabilities					
Trade and other payables	14	(1,732,774)		(1,462,855)	
Other liabilities	14				
Intangible current liabilities	14				
Financial liabilities	7				
Provisions	15				
Total Current Liabilities			(1,732,774)		(1,462,855)
Total assets less current liabilities			(909,550)		(893,319)
Non-current Liabilities					
Provisions	15	(20,949)			
Other payables > 1 yr	14				
Financial liabilities	7				
Total Non-current Liabilities			(20,949)		-
Total assets less total liabilities			(930,499)		(893,319)
Taxpayers' Equity and other reserves					
Revaluation reserve		37,933		33,007	
SoCNE reserve		(968,432)		(926,326)	
Total equity			(930,499)		(893,319)

The financial statements on pages 95-130 were approved by the Board on 05 July 2023 and were signed on its behalf by:

Signed (Chief Executive) Date DD Month 2024

Signed (Chairman) Date DD Month 2024

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2023

STATEMENT of CASH FLOWS for the year ended 31 March 2023

The Statement of Cash Flows shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Northern Ireland Social Care Council generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of service costs and the extent to which these operations are funded by way of income from the recipients of services provided by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash inflows and outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's future public service delivery.

	NOTE	2023 £	2022 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net surplus after interest/Net operating expenditure		(4,264,225)	(4,037,536)
Adjustments for non-cash costs	3	178,104	159,143
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables		29,630	(19,808)
<i>Less movements in receivables relating to items not passing through the NEA</i>			
Movements in receivables relating to the sale of property, plant and equipment		-	-
Movements in receivables relating to the sale of intangibles		-	-
Movements in receivables relating to finance leases		-	-
Movements in receivables relating to PFI and other service concession arrangement contracts		-	-
(Increase)/decrease in inventories		-	-
Increase/(decrease) in trade payables		269,919	330,427
<i>Less movements in payables relating to items not passing through the NEA</i>			
Movements in payables relating to the purchase of property, plant and equipment		(69,900)	24,499
Movements in payables relating to the purchase of intangibles		(3,968)	-
Movements in payables relating to finance leases		-	-
Movements on payables relating to PFI and other service concession arrangement contracts		-	-
Use of provisions	15	-	-
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities		(3,860,440)	(3,543,275)
Cash flows from investing activities			
(Purchase of property, plant and equipment)	5	36,349	(52,311)
(Purchase of intangible assets)	6	(350,895)	(11,999)
Proceeds of disposal of property, plant and equipment		-	-
Proceeds on disposal of intangibles		-	-
Proceeds on disposal of assets held for resale		-	-
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(314,546)	(64,310)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Grant in aid		4,190,619	3,656,793
Cap element of payments - finance leases and on balance sheet (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements		-	-
Net financing		4,190,619	3,656,793
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the period		15,633	49,208
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	12	141,766	92,558
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	12	157,399	141,766
The notes on pages 95-130 form part of these accounts.			

STATEMENT of CHANGES in TAXPAYERS EQUITY for the year ended 31 March 2023

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by Northern Ireland Social Care Council, analysed into 'Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Reserve' (i.e. those reserves that reflect a contribution from the Department of Health). The Revaluation Reserve reflects the change in asset values that have not been recognised as income or expenditure. The SoCNE Reserve represents the total assets less liabilities of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, to the extent that the total is not represented by other reserves and financing items.

	NOTE	SoCNE Reserve £	Revaluation Reserve £	Total £
Balance at 31 March 2021		(575,333)	36,071	(539,262)
Changes in Taxpayers Equity 2021-22				
Grant from DoH		3,656,793	-	3,656,793
Other reserves including transfers (Comprehensive net expenditure for the year)		(4,037,536)	(3,064)	(4,040,600)
Transfer of Asset Ownership				-
Non-cash charges – auditors remuneration	3	29,750	-	29,750
Balance at 31 March 2022		(926,326)	33,007	(893,319)
Changes in Taxpayers Equity 2022-23				
Grant from DoH		4,190,619	-	4,190,619
Other reserves movements including transfers (Comprehensive net expenditure for the year)		(4,264,225)	4,926	(4,259,299)
Transfer of asset ownership				-
Non-cash charges – auditors remuneration	3	31,500	-	31,500
Balance at 31 March 2023		(968,432)	37,933	(930,499)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1. Authority

These financial statements have been prepared in a form determined by the Department of Health based on guidance from the Department of Finance's Financial Reporting manual (FReM) and in accordance with the requirements of Article 90(2) (a) of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 No 1265 (NI 14) as amended by Article 6 of the Audit and Accountability (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which has been judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items considered material in relation to the accounts.

In addition, due to the manner in which the Northern Ireland Social Care Council is funded, the statement of financial position will show a negative position. In line with FReM, sponsored entities such as the Social Care Council that show total net liabilities, should prepare financial statements on a going concern basis. The cash required to discharge these net liabilities will be requested from the Department when they fall due and is shown in the Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity.

1.1 Accounting convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment, intangible assets inventories and certain financial assets and liabilities.

1.2 Property, Plant and Equipment

Property, plant and equipment assets comprise Land, Buildings, Dwellings, Transport Equipment, Plant and Machinery, Information Technology, Furniture and Fittings, and Assets under Construction. This includes donated assets.

Recognition

Property, plant and equipment must be capitalised if:

- it is held for use in delivering services or for administrative purposes;
- it is probable that future economic benefits will flow to, or service potential will be supplied to, the entity;
- it is expected to be used for more than one financial year;
- the cost of the item can be measured reliably; and
- the item has cost of at least £5,000; or
- collectively, a number of items have a cost of at least £5,000 and individually have a cost of more than £1,000, where the assets are functionally interdependent, they had broadly simultaneous purchase dates, are anticipated to have simultaneous disposal dates and are under single managerial control; or
- items form part of the initial equipping and setting-up cost of a new building, ward or unit, irrespective of their individual or collective cost.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

On initial recognition property, plant and equipment are measured at cost including any expenditure such as installation, directly attributable to bringing them into working condition. Items classified as “under construction” are recognised in the Statement of Financial Position to the extent that money has been paid or a liability has been incurred.

Valuation of Land and Buildings

Northern Ireland Social Care Council did not own any Land and Building in the current 2022-23 financial year, or in the 2021-22 financial year.

Modern Equivalent Asset

DoF has adopted a standard approach to depreciated replacement cost valuations based on modern equivalent assets and, where it would meet the location requirements of the service being provided, an alternative site can be valued. Land and Property Services (LPS) have included this requirement within the latest valuation.

Assets Under Construction (AUC)

Assets classified as “under construction” are recognised in the Statement of Financial Position to the extent that money has been paid or a liability has been incurred. They are carried at cost, less any impairment loss. Assets under construction are revalued and depreciation commences when they are brought into use.

Short Life Assets

Short life assets are not indexed. Short life is defined as a useful life of up to and including 5 years. Short life assets are carried at depreciated historic cost as this is not considered to be materially different from fair value and are depreciated over their useful life.

Where estimated life of fixtures and equipment exceeds 5 years, suitable indices will be applied each year and depreciation will be based on indexed amount.

Revaluation Reserve

An increase arising on revaluation is taken to the revaluation reserve except when it reverses an impairment for the same asset previously recognised in expenditure, in which case it is credited to expenditure to the extent of the decrease previously charged there. A revaluation decrease is recognised as an impairment charged to the revaluation reserve to the extent that there is a balance on the reserve for the asset and, thereafter, to expenditure.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.3 Depreciation

No depreciation is provided on freehold land since land has unlimited or a very long-established useful life. Items under construction are not depreciated until they are commissioned. Properties that are surplus to requirements and which meet the definition of “non-current assets held for sale” are also not depreciated.

Otherwise, depreciation is charged to write off the costs or valuation of property, plant and equipment and similarly, amortisation is applied to intangible non-current assets, less any residual value, over their estimated useful lives, in a manner that reflects the consumption of economic benefits or service potential of the assets. Assets held under finance leases are also depreciated over the lower of their estimated useful lives and the terms of the lease. The estimated useful life of an asset is the period over which the Northern Ireland Social Care Council expects to obtain economic benefits or service potential from the asset. Estimated useful lives and residual values are reviewed each year end, with the effect of any changes recognised on a prospective basis. The following asset lives have been used.

Asset Type	Asset Life
Freehold Buildings	25 – 60 years
Leasehold property	Remaining period of lease
IT Assets	3 – 10 years
Intangible assets	3 – 10 years
Other Equipment	3 – 15 years

Impairment loss

If there has been an impairment loss due to a general change in prices, the asset is written down to its recoverable amount, with the loss charged to the revaluation reserve to the extent that there is a balance on the reserve for the asset and, thereafter, to expenditure within the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. If the impairment is due to the consumption of economic benefits the full amount of the impairment is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and an amount up to the value of the impairment in the revaluation reserve is transferred to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Reserve. Where an impairment loss subsequently reverses, the carrying amount of the asset is increased to the revised estimate of the recoverable amount but capped at the amount that would have been determined had there been no initial impairment loss. The reversal of the impairment loss is credited firstly to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure to the extent of the decrease previously charged there and thereafter to the revaluation reserve.

1.4 Subsequent expenditure

Where subsequent expenditure enhances an asset beyond its original specification, the directly attributable cost is capitalised. Where subsequent expenditure which meets the definition of capital restores the asset to its original specification, the expenditure is capitalised and any existing carrying value of the item replaced is written-out and charged to operating expenses.

The overall useful life of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's buildings takes account of the fact that different components of those buildings have different useful lives. This ensures that depreciation is charged on those assets at the same rate as if separate components had been identified and depreciated at different rates.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.5 Intangible assets

Intangible assets include any of the following held - software, licences, trademarks, websites, development expenditure, Patents, Goodwill and intangible assets under construction. Software that is integral to the operating of hardware, for example an operating system is capitalised as part of the relevant item of property, plant and equipment. Software that is not integral to the operation of hardware, for example application software, is capitalised as an intangible non-current asset. Internally-generated assets are recognised if, and only if, all of the following have been demonstrated:

- the technical feasibility of completing the intangible asset so that it will be available for use;
- the intention to complete the intangible asset and use it;
- the ability to sell or use the intangible asset;
- how the intangible asset will generate probable future economic benefits or service potential;
- the availability of adequate technical, financial and other resources to complete the intangible asset and sell or use it; and
- the ability to measure reliably the expenditure attributable to the intangible asset during its development.

Recognition

Intangible assets are non-monetary assets without physical substance, which are capable of sale separately from the rest of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's business or which arise from contractual or other legal rights. Intangible assets are considered to have a finite life. They are recognised only when it is probable that future economic benefits will flow to, or service potential be provided to, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council; where the cost of the asset can be measured reliably. All single items over £5,000 in value must be capitalised while intangible assets which fall within the grouped asset definition must be capitalised if their individual value is at least £1,000 each and the group is at least £5,000 in value.

The amount recognised for internally-generated intangible assets is the sum of the expenditure incurred from the date of commencement of the intangible asset, until it is complete and ready for use.

Intangible assets acquired separately are initially recognised at fair value.

Following initial recognition, intangible assets are carried at fair value by reference to an active market, and as no active market currently exists depreciated replacement cost has been used as fair value.

1.6 Non-current assets held for sale

Non-current assets are classified as held for sale if their carrying amount will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through continuing use. In order to meet this definition IFRS 5 requires that the asset must be immediately available for sale in its current condition and that the sale is highly probable. A sale is regarded as highly probable where an active plan is in place to find a buyer for the asset through appropriate marketing at a reasonable price and the sale is considered likely to be concluded within one year. Non-current assets held for sale are measured at the lower of their previous carrying amount and fair value, less any material directly attributable selling costs. Fair value is open market value, where one is available, including alternative uses.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Assets classified as held for sale are not depreciated.

The profit or loss arising on disposal of an asset is the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying amount. The profit from sale of land which is a non-depreciating asset is recognised within income. The profit from sale of a depreciating asset is shown as a reduced expense. The loss from sale of land or from any depreciating assets is shown within operating expenses. On disposal, the balance for the asset on the revaluation reserve is transferred to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure reserve.

Property, plant or equipment that is to be scrapped or demolished does not qualify for recognition as held for sale. Instead, it is retained as an operational asset and its economic life is adjusted. The asset is de-recognised when it is scrapped or demolished.

1.7 Inventories

Inventories are valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value and are included exclusive of VAT. This is considered to be a reasonable approximation to fair value due to the high turnover of stocks.

1.8 Income

Income is classified between Revenue from Contracts and Other Operating Income as assessed in line with organisational activity, under the requirements of IFRS 15 and as applicable to the public sector. Judgement is exercised in order to determine whether the 5 essential criteria within the scope of IFRS 15 are met in order to define income as a contract.

Income relates directly to the activities of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and is recognised on an accruals basis when, and to the extent that a performance obligation is satisfied in a manner that depicts the transfer to the customer of the goods or services promised.

Where the criteria to determine whether a contract is in existence is not met, income is classified as Other Operating Income within the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure and is recognised when the right to receive payment is established.

Income is stated net of VAT.

Registration fee income - NISCC has adopted IFRS 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers (IFRS 15). NISCC receives the following types of registration fee income and accounts for them as follows:

- One off fees - One off fees comprise application, renewal and restoration fees. These fees are paid at the point of application, renewal or restoration and are non-refundable and are accounted for in full on receipt.
- Annual fees - Annual fees are due annually on the date the registrant was confirmed to the register. They are collected in advance, are non-refundable and are apportioned over the year the annual fee covers.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Under IFRS 15, the point of recognition of fees is based upon when the performance obligation of the contract is satisfied, and the benefits have been fully received by the registrant. NISCC fulfils its performance obligation by maintaining a social worker's and social care worker's registration over the annual registration period, therefore the annual fees are recognised in the statement of financial position as deferred income and are released to the statement of comprehensive net expenditure proportionately over the period that the fee relates to.

Deferred registration fee income that is recognised within the statement of financial position relates to the following financial year only and is recognised as a current liability.

1.9 Grant in aid

Funding received from other entities, including the Department, are accounted for as grant in aid and are reflected through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Reserve.

1.10 Investments

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council does not have any investments.

1.11 Research and Development expenditure

Research and development (R&D) expenditure is expensed in the year it is incurred in accordance with IAS 38.

Following the introduction of the 2010 European System of Accounts (ESA10), and the change in budgeting treatment (from the revenue budget to the capital budget) of R&D expenditure, additional disclosures are included in the notes to the accounts. This treatment was implemented from 2016-17.

1.12 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is cash in hand and deposits with any financial institution repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are investments that mature in 3 months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

1.13 Leases

Under IFRS 16 Leased Assets which the Northern Ireland Social Care Council has use/control over and which it does not necessarily legally own are to be recognised as a 'Right-Of-Use' (ROU) asset. There are only two exceptions:

- short term assets – with a life of up to one year; and
- low value assets – with a value equal to or below the Department's threshold limit which is currently £5,000.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Short term leases

Short term leases are defined as having a lease term of 12 months or less. Any lease with a purchase option cannot qualify as a short-term lease. The lessee must not exercise an option to extend the lease beyond 12 months. No liability should be recognised in respect of short-term leases, and neither should the underlying asset be capitalised.

Lease agreements which contain a purchase option cannot qualify as short-term. Examples of short-term leases are software leases, specialised equipment, hire cars and some property leases.

Low value assets

An asset is considered "low value" if its value, when new, is less than the capitalisation threshold. The application of the exemption is independent of considerations of materiality. The low value assessment is performed on the underlying asset, which is the value of that underlying asset when new. Examples of low value assets are, tablet and personal computers, small items of office furniture and telephones.

Separating lease and service components

Some contracts may contain both a lease element and a service element. DoH bodies can, at their own discretion, choose to combine lease and non-lease components of contracts, and account for the entire contract as a lease. If a contract contains both lease and service components IFRS 16 provides guidance on how to separate those components. If a lessee separates lease and service components, it should capitalise amounts related to the lease components and expense elements relating to the service elements. However, IFRS 16 also provides an option for lessees to combine lease and service components and account for them as a single lease. This option should help DoH bodies where it is time consuming or difficult to separate these components.

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council as lessee

The ROU asset lease liability will initially be measured at the present value of the unavoidable future lease payments. The future lease payments should include any amounts for:

- Indexation;
- amounts payable for residual value;
- purchase price options;
- payment of penalties for terminating the lease;
- any initial direct costs; and
- costs relating to restoration of the asset at the end of the lease.

The lease liability is discounted using the rate implicit in the lease.

Lease payments are apportioned between finance charges and reduction of the lease obligation so as to achieve a constant rate on interest on the remaining balance of the liability. Finance charges are recognised in calculating the ALB's surplus/deficit.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The difference between the carrying amount and the lease liability on transition is recognised as an adjustment to taxpayer's equity. After transition the difference is recognised as income in accordance with IAS 20.

Subsequent measurement

After the commencement date (the date that the lessor makes the underlying asset available for use by the lessee) a lessee shall measure the liability by;

- Increasing the carrying amount to reflect interest;
- Reducing the carrying amount to reflect lease payments made; and
- Re-measuring the carrying amount to reflect any reassessments or lease modifications, or to reflect revised in substance fixed lease payments.

There is a need to reassess the lease liability in the future if there is:

- A change in lease term;
- change in assessment of purchase option;
- change in amounts expected to be payable under a residual value guarantee; or
- change in future payments resulting from change in index or rate.

Subsequent measurement of the ROU asset is measured in same way as other property, plant and equipment. Asset valuations should be measured at either 'fair value' or 'current value in existing use'.

Depreciation

Assets under a finance lease or ROU lease are depreciated over the shorter of the lease term and its useful life, unless there is a reasonable certainty the lessee will obtain ownership of the asset by the end of the lease term in which case it should be depreciated over its useful life.

The depreciation policy is that for other depreciable assets that are owned by the entity.

Leased assets under construction must also be depreciated.

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council as lessor

Amounts due from lessees under finance leases are recorded as receivables at the amount of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's net investment in the leases. Finance lease income is allocated to accounting periods so as to reflect a constant periodic rate of return on the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's net investment outstanding in respect of the leases.

Rental income from operating leases is recognised on a straight-line basis over the term of the lease. Initial direct costs incurred in negotiating and arranging an operating lease are added to the carrying amount of the leased asset and recognised on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council will classify subleases as follows:

- If the head lease is short term (up to 1 year), the sublease is classified as an operating lease;
- otherwise, the sublease is classified with reference to the right-of-use asset arising from the head lease, rather than with reference to the underlying asset.

1.14 Private Finance Initiative (PFI) transactions

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council has had no PFI transactions during the year.

1.15 Financial instruments

A financial instrument is defined as any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity.

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council has financial instruments in the form of trade receivables and payables and cash and cash equivalents.

Financial assets

Financial assets are recognised on the Statement of Financial Position when the Northern Ireland Social Care Council becomes party to the financial instrument contract or, in the case of trade receivables, when the goods or services have been delivered. Financial assets are derecognised when the contractual rights have expired or the asset has been transferred.

Financial assets are initially recognised at fair value. IFRS 9 requires consideration of the expected credit loss model on financial assets. The measurement of the loss allowance depends upon the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's assessment at the end of each reporting period as to whether the financial instrument's credit risk has increased significantly since initial recognition, based on reasonable and supportable information that is available, without undue cost or effort to obtain. The amount of expected credit loss recognised is measured on the basis of the probability weighted present value of anticipated cash shortfalls over the life of the instrument, where judged necessary.

Financial assets are classified into the following categories:

- financial assets at fair value through Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure;
- held to maturity investments;
- available for sale financial assets; and
- loans and receivables.

The classification depends on the nature and purpose of the financial assets and is determined at the time of initial recognition.

Financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are recognised on the Statement of Financial Position when the Northern Ireland Social Care Council becomes party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument or, in the case of trade payables, when the goods or services have been received. Financial liabilities are de-recognised when the liability has been discharged, that is, the liability has been paid or has expired.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Financial risk management

IFRS 7 requires disclosure of the role that financial instruments have had during the period in creating or changing the risks a body faces in undertaking its activities. Because of the relationships with HSC Commissioners, and the manner in which they are funded, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating risk than would apply to a non-public sector body of a similar size, therefore the Northern Ireland Social Care Council is not exposed to the degree of financial risk faced by business entities.

There are limited powers to borrow or invest surplus funds and financial assets and liabilities are generated by day-to-day operational activities rather than being held to change the risks facing its activities. Therefore, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council is exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

Currency risk

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council is principally a domestic organisation with the great majority of transactions, assets and liabilities being in the UK and Sterling based. There is therefore low exposure to currency rate fluctuations.

Interest rate risk

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council has limited powers to borrow or invest and therefore has low exposure to interest rate fluctuations.

Credit risk

Because the majority of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's income comes from contracts with other public sector bodies, there is low exposure to credit risk.

Liquidity risk

Since the Northern Ireland Social Care Council receives the majority of its funding through its principal Commissioner, which is voted through the Assembly, there is low exposure to significant liquidity risks.

1.16 Provisions

In accordance with IAS 37, provisions are recognised when there is a present legal or constructive obligation as a result of a past event, it is probable that the Northern Ireland Social Care Council will be required to settle the obligation, and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation. The amount recognised as a provision is the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period, taking into account the risks and uncertainties.

Where a provision is measured using the cash flows estimated to settle the obligation, its carrying amount is the present value of those cash flows using the relevant discount rates provided by HM Treasury.

When some or all of the economic benefits required to settle a provision are expected to be recovered from a third party, the receivable is recognised as an asset if it is virtually certain that reimbursements will be received, and the amount of the receivable can be measured reliably.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.17 Contingent liabilities/assets

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council had no contingent assets or liabilities at either 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

1.18 Employee benefits

Short-term employee benefits

Under the requirements of IAS 19: Employee Benefits, staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as the organisation is obligated to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave that has been earned at the year end. This cost has been determined using individual's salary costs applied to their unused leave balances determined from a report of the unused annual leave balance as at 31 March 2023. It is not anticipated that the level of untaken leave will vary significantly from year to year. However, during the 2021-22 financial year the unused annual leave balances and therefore the cost of unused leave accounted for increased due to COVID pressures resulting in staff being unable to take planned leave. To ensure staff didn't lose annual leave during the 2021-22 year, key workers were granted permission to carry over additional unused leave above the usual maximum of 5 days, to be taken within the next 2 financial years. The Northern Ireland Social Care Council's staff have key worker status and thus were able to avail of this. Untaken flexi leave is estimated to be immaterial to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and has not been included.

Retirement benefit costs

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the HSC Superannuation Scheme.

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council participates in the HSC Superannuation Scheme. Under this multi-employer defined benefit scheme both the ALB and employees pay specified percentages of pay into the scheme and the liability to pay benefit falls to the DoH. The Northern Ireland Social Care Council is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities in the scheme on a consistent and reliable basis.

The costs of early retirements are met by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure at the time the Northern Ireland Social Care Council commits itself to the retirement.

As per the requirements of IAS 19, full actuarial valuations by a professionally qualified actuary are required with sufficient regularity that the amounts recognised in the financial statements do not differ materially from those determined at the reporting period date. This has been interpreted in the FReM to mean that the period between formal actuarial valuations shall be four years.

The actuary reviews the most recent actuarial valuation at the statement of financial position date and updates it to reflect current conditions. The scheme valuation data provided for the 2020 actuarial valuation that is currently underway will be used in the 2022-23 accounts. Financial assumptions are updated to reflect recent financial conditions. Demographic assumptions are updated to reflect an analysis of experience that is being carried out as part of the 2020 valuation. Whilst the 2016 valuation remains the most recently completed valuation, the 2020 valuation is sufficiently progressed to use for setting the demographics assumptions.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.19 Value Added Tax

Where output VAT is charged or input VAT is recoverable, the amounts are stated net of VAT. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the relevant expenditure category or included in the capitalised purchase cost of fixed assets.

1.20 Third party assets

Assets belonging to third parties (such as money held on behalf of patients) are not recognised in the accounts since the Northern Ireland Social Care Council has no beneficial interest in them. Details of third party assets are given in Note 22 to the accounts.

1.21 Government Grants

The note to the financial statements distinguishes between grants from UK government entities and grants from European Union.

1.22 Losses and Special Payments

Losses and special payments are items that the Assembly would not have contemplated when it agreed funds for the health service or passed legislation. By their nature they are items that ideally should not arise. They are therefore subject to special control procedures compared with the generality of payments.

They are divided into different categories, which govern the way that individual cases are handled.

Losses and special payments are charged to the relevant functional headings in expenditure on an accruals basis, including losses which would have been made good through insurance cover had DoH bodies not been bearing their own risks (with insurance premiums then being included as normal revenue expenditure). However, the note on losses and special payments is compiled directly from the losses and compensations register which reports amounts on an accruals basis with the exception of provisions for future losses.

1.23 Charitable Trust Account Consolidation

Northern Ireland Social Care Council held no charitable trust accounts at 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

1.24 Accounting Standards that have been issued but have not yet been adopted

The International Accounting Standards Board have issued the following new standards, but which are either not yet effective or adopted. Under IAS 8 there is a requirement to disclose these standards together with an assessment of their initial impact on application.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

IFRS 17 Insurance Contracts:

IFRS 17 Insurance Contracts will replace IFRS 4 Insurance Contracts and is effective for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2023. In line with the requirements of the FReM, IFRS 17 will be implemented, as interpreted and adapted for the public sector, with effect from 1 April 2023.

Management currently assesses that there will be minimal impact on application to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's consolidated financial statements.

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2023

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 2 ANALYSIS OF NET EXPENDITURE BY SEGMENT

The core business and strategic direction of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council is to protect the public through the registration and regulation of the social care workforce and to regulate the training for social workers.

The Board of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council acts as the Chief Operating Decision Maker and receives financial information on the Northern Ireland Social Care Council as a whole and makes decisions on this basis. Hence, it is appropriate that the Northern Ireland Social Care Council reports on a single operational segment basis.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 3 EXPENDITURE

	2023	2022
	£	£
Operating expenses are as follows: -		
Staff costs: ¹		
Wages and salaries	2,477,808	2,393,798
Social security costs	237,011	216,554
Other pension costs	445,023	412,626
Revenue grants to voluntary organisations	547,513	404,521
Supplies and services – general	23,821	18,747
Establishment	462,569	548,067
Transport	-	-
Premises	410,235	332,470
Rentals under operating leases	286,774	315,918
*Miscellaneous	390,772	271,708
BSO services	263,986	244,726
Total Operating Expenses	5,545,512	5,159,135
Non-cash items		
Depreciation	33,063	30,083
Amortisation	92,592	99,310
Impairments	-	-
(Profit) on disposal of property, plant and equipment (including land)	-	-
(Profit) on disposal of intangibles	-	-
Loss on disposal of property, plant and equipment (including land)	-	-
Loss on disposal of intangibles	-	-
Increase / Decrease in provisions (provision provided for in year less any release)	20,949	-
Cost of borrowing provisions (unwinding of discount on provisions)	-	-
Auditor's remuneration	31,500	29,750
Total Non-cash items	178,104	159,143
Total	5,723,616	5,318,278

During the year the Northern Ireland Social Care Council purchased no non audit services from its external auditor (NIAO) (2021-22: £Nil)

*In 2022-23, £359k of the miscellaneous expenditure relates to Social Care Reform and Social Work Promotion projects.

¹ Further detailed analysis of staff costs is located in the Staff Report on page 78 within the Accountability Report.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 4 INCOME

4.1 Revenue from Contracts with Customers

	2023	2022
	£	£
Other income from non-patient services	1,459,391	1,280,742
Seconded staff	-	-
Charitable and other contributions to expenditure	-	-
Donations / Government Grant / Lottery Funding for non-current assets	-	-
Profit on disposal of land	-	-
Interest receivable	-	-
Total Revenue from Contracts with Customers	1,459,391	1,280,742

4.2 Other Operating Income

	2023	2022
	£	£
Other income from non-patient services	-	-
Total Other Operating Income	-	-
Total Income	1,459,391	1,280,742

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 5.1 Property, plant and equipment - year ended 31 March 2023

	Land £	Buildings (excluding dwellings) £	Dwellings £	Assets under Construction £	Plant and Machinery (Equipment) £	Transport Equipment £	Information Technology (IT) £	Furniture and Fittings £	Total £
Cost or Valuation									
At 1 April 2022	-	-	-	-	6,410	-	211,652	-	218,062
Indexation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	33,551	-	33,551
Donations / Government grant / Lottery Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	(20,836)	-	(20,836)
At 31 March 2023	-	-	-	-	6,410	-	224,367	-	230,777
Depreciation									
At 1 April 2022	-	-	-	-	6,410	-	132,249	-	138,659
Indexation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	(20,836)	-	(20,836)
Provided during the year	-	-	-	-	-	-	33,063	-	33,063
At 31 March 2023	-	-	-	-	6,410	-	144,476	-	150,886

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 5.1 (continued) Property, plant and equipment - year ended 31 March 2023

	Land £	Buildings (excluding dwellings) £	Dwellings £	Assets under Construction £	Plant and Machinery (Equipment) £	Transport Equipment £	Information Technology (IT) £	Furniture and Fittings £	Total £
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	79,891	-	79,891
At 31 March 2022	-	-	-	-	-	-	79,403	-	79,403

Asset financing

Owned	-	-	-	-	-	-	79,891	-	79,891
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On B/S (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	79,891	-	79,891

The total amount of depreciation charged in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Account in respect of assets held under finance leases and hire purchase contracts is £Nil (2021: £Nil).

The fair value of assets funded from the following sources during the year was:

	2023 £	2022 £
Donations	-	-
Government Grant	-	-
Lottery Funding	-	-

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 5.2 Property, plant and equipment - year ended 31 March 2022

	Land £	Buildings (excluding dwellings) £	Dwellings £	Assets under Construction £	Plant and Machinery (Equipment) £	Transport Equipment £	Information Technology (IT) £	Furniture and Fittings £	Total £
Cost or Valuation									
At 1 April 2021	-	-	-	-	6,410	-	232,749	-	239,159
Indexation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	27,812	-	27,812
Donations / Government grant / Lottery Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(48,909)	-	(48,909)
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2022	-	-	-	-	6,410	-	211,652	-	218,062
Depreciation									
At 1 April 2021	-	-	-	-	6,410	-	151,075	-	157,485
Indexation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	(48,909)	-	(48,909)
Provided during the year	-	-	-	-	-	-	30,083	-	30,083
At 31 March 2022	-	-	-	-	6,410	-	132,249	-	138,659

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2022

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

NOTE 5.2 (continued) Property, Plant and Equipment- year ended 31 March 2022

	Land £	Buildings (excluding dwellings) £	Dwellings £	Assets under Construction £	Plant and Machinery (Equipment) £	Transport Equipment £	Information Technology (IT) £	Furniture and Fittings £	Total £
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2022	-	-	-	-	-	-	79,403	-	79,403
At 31 March 2021	-	-	-	-	-	-	81,674	-	81,674

Asset financing

Owned	-	-	-	-	-	-	79,403	-	79,403
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On SOFP PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2022	-	-	-	-	-	-	79,403	-	79,403

Asset financing

Owned	-	-	-	-	-	-	81,674	-	81,674
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On SOFP PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 1 April 2021	-	-	-	-	-	-	81,674	-	81,674

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2023

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 6.1 Intangible assets- year ended 31 March 2023

	Software Licenses £	Information Technology £	Websites £	Development Expenditure £	Licences, Trademarks and Artistic Originals £	Patents £	Goodwill £	Payments on Account and Assets under Construction £	Total £
Cost or Valuation									
At 1 April 2022	71,316	1,106,082	-	-	-	-	-	1	1,177,399
Indexation	1,458	31,963	-	-	-	-	-	-	33,421
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	354,863	354,863
Donations / Government grant / Lottery Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2023	72,774	1,138,045	-	-	-	-	-	*354,864	1,565,683
Amortisation									
At 1 April 2022	56,899	861,917	-	-	-	-	-	-	918,816
Indexation	1,458	27,037	-	-	-	-	-	-	28,495
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Provided during the year	4,820	87,772	-	-	-	-	-	-	92,592
At 31 March 2023	63,177	976,726	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,039,903

*Payments on account and assets under construction projects include: James House ICT, Registration Mobile App, Fitness to Practise Case Management System,

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2023

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 6.1 (continued) Intangible assets - year ended 31 March 2023

	Software Licenses £	Information Technology £	Websites £	Development Expenditure £	Licences, Trademarks and Artistic Originals £	Patents £	Goodwill £	Payments on Account and Assets under Construction £	Total £
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2023	9,597	161,319	-	-	-	-	-	354,864	525,780
At 31 March 2022	14,417	244,165	-	-	-	-	-	1	258,583

Asset financing

Owned	9,597	161,319	-	-	-	-	-	354,864	525,780
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On B/S (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2023	9,597	161,319	-	-	-	-	-	354,864	525,780

Any fall in value through negative indexation or revaluation is shown as impairment.
The fair value of assets funded from the following sources during the year was:

	2023 £	2022 £
Donations	-	-
Government Grant	-	-
Lottery Funding	-	-

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2023
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 6.2 Intangible assets - year ended 31 March 2022

	Software Licenses £	Information Technology £	Websites £	Development Expenditure £	Licences, Trademarks and Artistic Originals £	Patents £	Goodwill £	Payments on Account and Assets under Construction £	Total £
Cost or Valuation									
At 1 April 2021	59,944	1,119,841	-	-	-	-	-	1	1,179,786
Indexation	(627)	(13,759)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(14,386)
Additions	11,999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11,999
Donations / Government grant / Lottery Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2022	71,316	1,106,082	-	-	-	-	-	1	1,177,399

Amortisation

At 1 April 2021	54,886	775,942	-	-	-	-	-	-	830,828
Indexation	(627)	(10,695)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(11,322)
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Provided during the year	2,640	96,670	-	-	-	-	-	-	99,310
At 31 March 2022	56,899	861,917	-	-	-	-	-	-	918,816

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 6.2 Intangible assets - year ended 31 March 2022

	Software Licenses £	Information Technology £	Websites £	Development Expenditure £	Licences, Trademarks and Artistic Originals £	Patents £	Goodwill £	Payments on Account and Assets under Construction £	Total £
Carrying Amount									
At 31 March 2022	14,417	244,165	-	-	-	-	-	1	258,583
At 31 March 2021	5,058	343,899	-	-	-	-	-	1	348,958

Asset financing

Owned	14,417	244,165	-	-	-	-	-	1	258,583
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On B/S (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount									
At 31 March 2022	14,417	244,165	-	-	-	-	-	1	258,583

Asset financing

Owned	5,058	343,899	-	-	-	-	-	1	348,958
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On B/S (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount									
At 1 April 2021	5,058	343,899	-	-	-	-	-	1	348,958

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 7 FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

As the cash requirements of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council are met through Grant-in-Aid provided by the Department of Health, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body.

The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's expected purchase and usage requirements and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

NOTE 8 INVESTMENTS AND LOANS

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council had no investments or loans at either 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

NOTE 9 IMPAIRMENTS

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council had no impairments at either 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

NOTE 10 ASSETS CLASSIFIED AS HELD FOR SALE

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council did not hold any assets classified as held for sale at either 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

NOTE 11 INVENTORIES

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council did not hold any goods for resale at either 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 12 CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	2023	2022
	£	£
Balance at 1 April	141,766	92,558
Net change in cash and cash equivalents	15,633	49,208
Balance at 31 March	157,399	141,766

The following balances at 31 March were held at

	2023	2022
	£	£
Commercial Banks and cash in hand	157,399	141,766
Balance at 31 March	157,399	141,766

The bank account is operated by Business Services Organisation (BSO) on behalf of Northern Ireland Social Care Council. The account is in the legal name of the BSO.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 13 TRADE RECEIVABLES, FINANCIAL AND OTHER ASSETS

	2023 £	2022 £
Amounts falling due within one year		
Trade receivables	41,860	14,799
Deposits and advances	-	-
VAT receivable	-	-
Other receivables – not relating to fixed assets	-	-
Other receivables – relating to property, plant and equipment	-	-
Other receivables – relating to intangibles	-	-
Trade and other receivables	41,860	14,799
Other current assets		
Prepayments	18,294	74,985
Accrued income	-	-
Current part of PFI and other service concession arrangements prepayment	-	-
Other current assets	18,294	74,985
Intangible current assets		
Carbon reduction commitment	-	-
Intangible current assets	-	-
Amounts falling due after more than one year		
Trade receivables	-	-
Deposits and advances	-	-
Other receivables	-	-
Trade and other receivables	-	-
Other current assets falling due after more than one year		
Prepayments and accrued income	-	-
Other current assets falling due after more than one year	-	-
TOTAL TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES	41,860	14,799
TOTAL OTHER CURRENT ASSETS	18,294	74,985
TOTAL INTANGIBLE CURRENT ASSETS	-	-
TOTAL RECEIVABLES AND OTHER CURRENT ASSETS	60,154	89,784

The balances are net of a provision for bad debts of £Nil (2021/22: £Nil).

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 14 TRADE PAYABLES AND OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES

	2023 £	2022 £
Amounts falling due within one year		
Other taxation and social security		
Bank overdraft		
VAT payable		
Trade capital payables – property, plant and equipment		
Trade capital payables – intangibles		
Trade revenue payables	40,491	271,581
Payroll payables	156,131	93,721
Clinical Negligence payables		
RPA payables		
BSO payables		
Other payables	25	342
Accruals	996,863	*727,594
Accruals– relating to property, plant and equipment	69,900	
Accruals – relating to intangibles	3,968	
Deferred income	465,396	369,617
Trade and other payables	1,732,774	1,462,855
Current part of finance leases		
Current part of long-term loans		
Current part of imputed finance lease element of PFI and other service concession arrangements		
Other current liabilities		
Carbon reduction commitment		
Intangible current liabilities		
Total payables falling due within one year	1,732,774	1,462,855
Amounts falling due after more than one year		
Other payables, accruals and deferred income		
Trade and other payables		
Clinical Negligence payables		
Finance leases		
Current part of imputed finance lease element of PFI and other service concession arrangements		
Long term loans		
Total non-current other payables		
TOTAL TRADE PAYABLES AND OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES	1,732,774	1,462,855

*£20,933 ref PSNI holiday pay accrual was recorded as an accrual in 2021-22. This is being treated as a provision in 2022-23.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH
2023

NOTE 15 PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES AND CHARGES

	Pensions relating to former directors £	Pensions relating to other staff £	Clinical Negligence £	Other £	2023 £	2022 £
Balance at 1 April 2022	-	-	-	-	-	-
Provided in year	-	-	-	20,949	20,949	-
(Provisions not required written back)	-	-	-	-	-	-
(Provisions utilised in the year)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Borrowing costs (unwinding of discount)	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2023	-	-	-	20,949	20,949	-

Comprehensive Net Expenditure Account Charges

	2023 £	2022 £
Arising during the year	20,949	-
Reversed unused	-	-
Cost of borrowing (unwinding of discount)	-	-
Total charge within Operating costs	20,949	-

NOTE 15 PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES AND CHARGES continued

Analysis of expected timing of discounted flows as at 31 March 2023

	Pensions relating to former directors	Pensions relating to other staff	Clinical Negligence	Other	2023	2022
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Not later than one year	-	-	-	-	-	-
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	-	-	20,949	20,949	-
Later than five years	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March	-	-	-	20,949	20,949	-

A provision has been made for the potential liability surrounding Holiday Pay. An estimate has been made of an appropriate level of provision on the basis of the duration of the claims and the application of a regionally agreed estimated payment percentage of the total expenditure incurred on affected allowances. The total is estimated as £20,949 for NISCC.

The Court of Appeal (CoA) judgment from 17 June 2019 (PSNI v Agnew) determined that claims for Holiday Pay shortfall can be taken back to 1998. The PSNI appealed the CoA judgment to the Supreme Court and while the hearing concluded on 15 December 2022, the date has not yet been set for the hand down of the judgement. The HSC working group considering resolution of the liability has indicated that any solution will be more than 12 months away as it will require system change. In light of industrial action, there is also no indication of when Trade Unions discussions re settlement of the historic liability can be conducted and in the absence of a Minister, agreeing a settlement may also be delayed. As a result of this the level of uncertainty around the timing of the liability has increased and whilst it was recorded as an accrual in the prior year, it has been treated as a provision at 31 March 2023. The best estimate of the value of the liability is based on the position in the NHS in England, Scotland and Wales.

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2023

NOTE 16 CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council had no capital commitments at either 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

NOTE 17 COMMITMENTS UNDER LEASES

17.1 Operating Leases

The Social Care Council moved premises to James House on 6 February 2023 as part of the Belfast Optimisation Project. The new premises operates under a 5 year licence (the previous accommodation was provided for under a lease agreement) and has enabled significant savings in accommodation related costs.

Total future minimum lease payments under operating leases are given in the table below for each of the following periods.

	2023 £	2022 £
Obligations under operating leases comprise		
Land		
Not later than 1 year	-	-
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	-	-
Later than 5 years	-	-
Buildings		
Not later than one year	-	131,300
Later than one year but not later than five years	-	-
Later than five years	-	-
		131,300
Other		
Not later than 1 year	-	-
Later than 1 year and not later than 5 years	-	-
Later than 5 years	-	-

17.2 Finance Leases

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council had no finance leases at either 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

17.3 Operating Leases

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council did not issue any operating leases at either 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

**NOTE 18 COMMITMENTS UNDER PFI AND OTHER SERVICE CONCESSION
ARRANGEMENT CONTRACTS**

**18.1 Off balance sheet PFI and other service concession arrangement
schemes**

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council had no commitments under PFI and other concession arrangement contracts at 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

NOTE 19 OTHER FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council did not have any other financial commitments at 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

NOTE 20 CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council did not have any quantifiable contingent liabilities at 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

Unquantifiable Contingent Liabilities

Holiday Pay Liability

The Court of Appeal (CoA) judgment from 17 June 2019 (PSNI v Agnew) determined that claims for Holiday Pay shortfall can be taken back to 1998. The PSNI appealed the CoA judgment to the Supreme Court and while the hearing concluded on 15 December 2022, the date has not yet been set for the hand down of the judgement. A provision has been calculated by HSC management for the liability at 31 March 2023, based on the position in the NHS in England, Scotland and Wales, and is included in these accounts. However, the extent to which the liability may exceed this amount remains uncertain as the calculation will rely on the outstanding Supreme Court judgement and will have to be agreed with Trade Unions. The potential additional financial effect of this is unquantifiable at present.

20.1 Financial Guarantees, Indemnities and Letters of Comfort

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council did not have any financial guarantees, indemnities and letters of comfort at 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022.

NOTE 21 RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council is an arm's length body of the Department of Health and as such the Department is a related party with which the Northern Ireland Social Care Council has had various material transactions during the year.

In addition, there were material transactions throughout the year with the Business Services Organisation who are a related party by virtue of being an arm's length body with the Department of Health.

During the year, none of the Board members, members of the key management staff or other related parties have undertaken any material transactions with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

NOTE 22 THIRD PARTY ASSETS

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council held no assets at either 31 March 2023 or 31 March 2022 belonging to third parties.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 23 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TARGETS

NISCC is allocated a Revenue Resource Limit (RRL) and a Capital Resource Limit (CRL) and must contain spending within these limits. The resource limits for a body may be a combination of agreed funding allocated by commissioners, the Department of Health, other Departmental bodies or other departments. Bodies are required to report on any variation from the limit as set which is a financial target to be achieved and not part of the accounting systems. Following the implementation of review of Financial Process, the format of Financial Performance Targets has changed as the Department has introduced budget control limits for depreciation, impairments, and provisions, which an Arm's Length Body cannot exceed. In 2022-23 NISCC has remained within the budget control limit it was issued. From 2022-23 onwards, the materiality threshold limit excludes non-cash RRL. NISCC has also remained within the 2021-22 restated materiality threshold limit.

23.1 Revenue Resource Limit

NISCC is given a Revenue Resource Limit which it is not permitted to overspend.

The Revenue Resource Limit for NISCC is calculated as follows:

	2023 Total	2022 Total (Restated)
	£	£
Revenue Resource Limit (RRL)		
RRL Allocated From:		
DoH (SPPG)	4,095,858	3,885,406
DoH (Other, excludes non cash)	-	-
PHA	-	-
Other – SUMDE & NIMDTA	-	-
Total	4,095,858	3,885,406
Less RRL Issued To:		
RRL Issued	-	-
RRL to be Accounted For	4,095,858	3,885,406
 Revenue Resource Limit Expenditure		
Net Expenditure per SoCNE	4,264,225	4,037,536
 Adjustments		
Capital Grants	-	-
Research and Development under ESA10	-	-
 Depreciation/ Amortisation	(125,655)	(129,393)
Impairments	-	-
Notional Charges	(31,500)	(29,750)
Movements in Provisions	(20,949)	-
PPE Stock Adjustment	-	-
PFI and other service concession arrangements/ IFRIC	-	-
Profit/(loss) on disposal of fixed asset	-	-
Other (specify)	-	-
Total Adjustments	(178,104)	(159,143)
Net Expenditure Funded from RRL	4,086,121	3,878,393

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2023

Surplus/ (Deficit) against RRL	9,737	7,013
Break Even cumulative position (opening)	168,077	161,064
Break Even cumulative position (closing)	177,814	168,077

Materiality Test:

NISCC is required to ensure that it breaks even on an annual basis by containing its net expenditure to within 0.25% of RRL limits or £20k, whichever is greater.

	2023	2022 (Restated)
	%	%
Break Even in year position as % of RRL	0.24	0.18
Break Even cumulative position as % of RRL	4.34	4.33

23.2 Capital Resource Limit

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council is given a Capital Resource Limit which it is not permitted to overspend.

	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
Gross capital expenditure by the Social Care Council (Receipts from sales of fixed assets)	388,414	39,811
Net capital expenditure	388,414	39,811
Capital Resource Limit	388,596	39,847
Adjustment for Research and Development under ESA10	-	-
Overspend/(Underspend) against CRL	(182)	(36)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

NOTE 24 EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

There are no post balance sheet events having a material effect on the accounts

Date of authorisation for issue

The Accounting Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on DD Month 2024

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Board Membership – 2023-24



Chair, Paul Martin



Sarah Browne



Roslyn Dougherty



Gerard Guckian



David Hayes



Jacqueline McGarvey

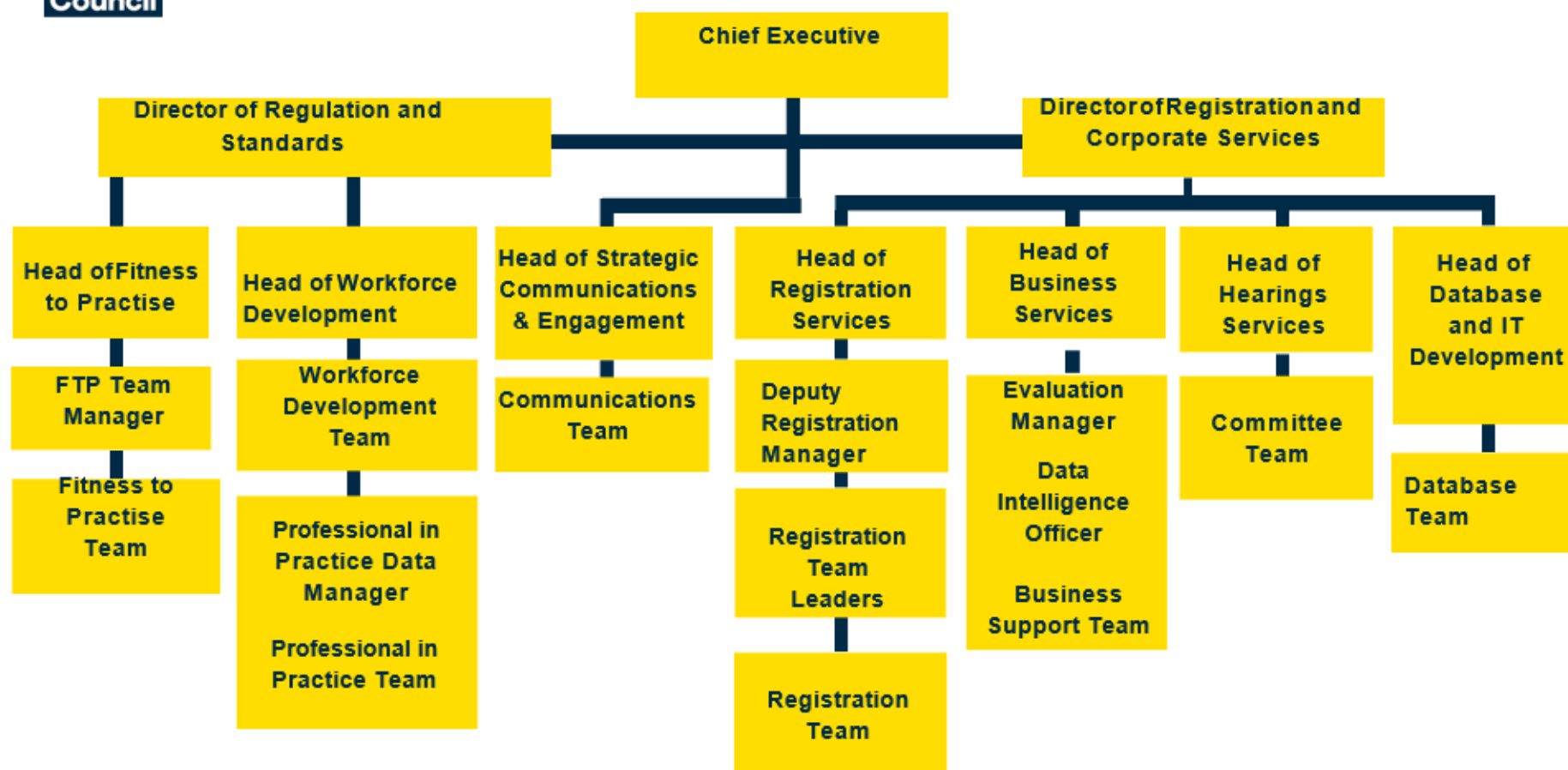


Anne O'Reilly
Term ended 30/09/23

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Organisational Chart at 31 March 2024



Organisation Structure 2024-25



Northern Ireland Social Care Council Risk Appetite 2023-24

As noted in the Governance Report, registers of risks are maintained to ensure that business is delivered safely and effectively. The Risk Appetite Statement sets out the level of risk with which the Social Care Council aims to operate. The Council recognises that it may not always be possible, and not financially affordable, to fully remove uncertainty from a decision and that decisions should be made using the best available information and expertise. When decisions need to be made urgently, the information relied upon and the considerations applied to it should be retained; and the risk culture must embrace openness, support transparency, welcome constructive challenge and promote collaboration, consultation and co-operation.

Risk Appetite Statement

The table below, outlines the Risk Appetite across the key areas of Finance, Compliance, Safety, Service Delivery and Reputation.

Area	Statement	Risk Appetite
Finance	The organisation must comply with the statutory duty to breakeven and therefore must be protected from adverse impact from risks which threaten its financial breakeven position.	Cautious
Compliance	The organisation must be averse to risks that could impact upon its compliance with law and regulation, but should be prepared to accept moderate risk in order to achieve its objectives in relation to raising the profile of the social work and social care workforce and sector leadership.	Cautious → Moderate
Safety	The organisation must be averse to risks that could threaten the safety of users, carers, registrants and staff while recognising that the organisation should be prepared to accept a more open approach to safety risk when pursuing objectives associated with development of the workforce, communication and engagement and sector leadership.	Cautious → Open
Service Delivery	Delivery of the organisations core statutory services must be protected, however having an open to hungry approach to risk will help deliver substantial benefits to service users, registrants, employers and the wider social work and social care sector.	Open → Hungry
Reputation	Damage to the organisations reputation can undermine stakeholder confidence however the organisation is prepared to accept a moderate to hungry impact on its reputation as delivery of objectives will provide significant longer term benefit.	Moderate → Hungry

Risk Appetite Matrix

The matrix below, outlines the Risk Appetite in each of the key areas of Finance, Compliance, Safety, Service Delivery and Reputational for each of the Strategic Themes set out in the 2021-22 Business Plan.

Strategic Theme	Financial	Compliance	Safety	Service Delivery	Reputational
	<i>(Impacts on the financial position and sustainability of the Social Care Council)</i>	<i>(Impacts on the Social Care Council's conformance with legal obligations and stat. duties and its compliance with regulatory requirements)</i>	<i>(Impacts on the safety and wellbeing of staff, registrants, service users, partners/stakeholders and the public)</i>	<i>(Impacts on the intended/expected delivery of the Social Care Council's services)</i>	<i>(Impacts on the Social Care Council's reputation amongst all or some of its stakeholders)</i>
1. To put standards at the heart of social work and social care practice and education and training, so as to support the delivery of effective social care services both now and in the future.	CAUTIOUS	CAUTIOUS	CAUTIOUS	OPEN	MODERATE
2. To ensure that regulation is robust, agile, valued and trusted in order to support good social work and social care practice.	CAUTIOUS	CAUTIOUS	CAUTIOUS	OPEN	MODERATE
3. To support the development of the social work and social care workforce in order that they are able to deliver safe, effective, value led care.	CAUTIOUS	MODERATE	MODERATE	OPEN	OPEN
4. To promote a systems leadership approach that contributes to capacity building that supports leadership at all levels.	CAUTIOUS	MODERATE	OPEN	HUNGRY	HUNGRY
5. To ensure there is effective and meaningful communication and engagement so as to improve the understanding of what the Social Care Council does and the value of the social work and social care workforce.	MODERATE	OPEN	OPEN	HUNGRY	HUNGRY

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