

Northern Ireland



Annual Report and Accounts

1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025



**Working together.
Making a difference.**

Welcome

We are the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (the 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 49,000 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 Public Facing Register (the 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 and promote training and learning to support social workers and social care practitioners 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 2025**

Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under Paragraph 12(4)
of Schedule 1 to the Health and Personal Social Services Act
(Northern Ireland) 2001 by the Comptroller and Auditor General
for Northern Ireland on

08 September 2025

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Chair's introduction



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 49,000 people regulated 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 practitioners, 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 who need care and support.

I have had the honour of acting as Chair of the Social Council Board during 2024-25. Our Chair, Paul Martin who has led the Board since 2018, stepped back from his role for health reasons. Paul was involved with the Social Care Council even before the doors opened in 2001. As Chief Social Services Officer for NI, he held significant responsibility for the establishment of the Social Care Council alongside wider social care and social policy development. Paul was appointed a CBE in June 2009 in recognition for his contribution to the development of child protection and social services in the UK. Paul has 50 years' experience of social work and social care and his knowledge and leadership will be greatly missed by all. On behalf of all at the Council, I would like to thank him for his service, his enthusiasm for social care reform and his unwavering support for protection of the social work professional role and title.

This has been a period of unprecedented change for both the Social Care Council Board and the Senior Leadership Team. In October and December, Patricia Higgins and Marian O'Rourke retired from the Management Team after a long career in education, regulation and standards. We would like to thank them for their service and wish them well in the future. I have had the benefit of working with them as a Board Member and Committee Chair for a number of years and appreciate the insight and knowledge they have shared in that time. I would also like to thank all of the staff, Board members, partnership and committee members for the positive attitude and willingness to adapt to change until the recruitment for Chief Executive and senior positions is completed.

The Council has a wide remit and supports an extensive range of projects and workstreams in addition to the committees and partnerships required to deliver on the statutory functions within regulation, registration and standards. As we close the 2024-25 business year, I must commend our management team, staff and partners on their commitment to delivering against all the work planned for the year and also the additional opportunities and projects that were supported as part of the wider reform agenda. For the first time ever, Northern Ireland has a career framework for social care practitioners. The 'Care in Practice Framework' was launched alongside the Department of Health 'Social Care Workforce Strategy', with a commitment from the Health Minister to recruit, develop and recognise the contribution of social care practitioners as the cornerstone of our Health and Social Care services.

On behalf of the Social Care Council Board and staff, I too would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution made by each of the social workers and social care practitioners 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 practitioners are delivering high quality care to everyone in Northern Ireland at a time of significant change. The value of these roles could not be more important than it is today.

Our strategic plan for 2023-2027 sets out our ambitions and priorities for the Social Care Council and for our registrants. Through our work, we will seek to support the Health and Social Care Improvement and Transformation Programme; positioning social work and social care as key enablers in transforming our health and social care services. In partnership with the Department of Health, we are bringing together the expertise and experience of people from all areas of social care in the 'Social Care Collaborative Forum'. The work of this forum is to deliver reform, address workforce and service pressures, promote co-ordinated activity and collaboration, and provide strategic oversight, direction and governance.

Partnership is at the heart of our work. We can only 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. Our Strategic Plan was designed to enable us to be flexible and relevant, responding to feedback from our stakeholders and changes in the world around us. I would like to thank everyone who has given of their time and energy to shape what we do and make our work the best that it can be.

On behalf of the Board members and staff, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all involved in our key partnerships who work with us throughout the year. The Participation Partnership has provided invaluable support and expertise to ensure our focus remains on ensuring good quality social work and social care services for those who need care and support. This year, the members have been involved in an extensive range of activities: supporting social work training, developing the engagement principles and values, exploring user experience, reviewing our plans and reports and judging the NI Regional Social Work Awards. All of this work is provided on a voluntary basis and is very much valued and appreciated (further detail is included in the PPI report on page 16).

On behalf of the Social Care Council Board, I would also 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.

There is no doubt 2025-26 will present both challenges and opportunities for the Social Care Council and for the wider social care sector as we respond to work and system pressures in a rapidly changing environment. 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.



Gerard Guckian
Acting Chair
Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Date: 21 August 2025

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.
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.
PiP II	New social workers are required to complete two Requirements from the Consolidation Award on the PiP Framework (PiP II Requirements) within three years of completing their AYE.
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 practitioners 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 2024-25.

The performance report for 2024-25 covers four key areas:

1. **Chief Executive's Statement on performance for 2024-25** - 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, trends identified and actions identified for the coming year;
4. **KPI summary** – Achievement against objectives and key performance indicators for 2024-25.

Our Strategic Plan for 2023-27 and Business Plan for 2024-25 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 practitioners 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 practitioners 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 2024-25 is set out in the following pages.

Chief Executive's Statement on organisational performance for 2024-25



This Annual Report for April 2024-2025 reflects a strong performance against business objectives and service standards in this second year of business towards our 2023-27 Strategic Plan, with 80% of objectives fully completed and the remainder showing significant progress within the year. The report includes progress updates on our work to deliver effective regulation; develop the capability of the workforce; lead with influence; and to drive innovation and improvement to support the reform and transformation of our health and social care services. It is encouraging to see the difference that our work has made in the last year for social care practitioners, social workers, students, employers and for people receiving care.

I want to acknowledge the contribution of my colleague Patricia Higgins who provided leadership to the Social Care Council for over 20 years. Patricia retired from her role as Chief Executive in October 2024. Having worked for the Council since its inception in 2001, she played a key role in establishing the robust systems of workforce registration, regulation and standards for social work and social care we have in place. During her tenure as Chief Executive, Patricia successfully lead the staff team, partnerships and committees to make best use of opportunities and to embrace many challenges, including seamless transfer to remote service delivery during COVID-19 restrictions and then further developments to incorporate flexible and hybrid working when the organisation relocated to new premises at James House in 2023. We are very proud that Patricia's commitment was recognised earlier this year when she received the BASW NI Outstanding Achievement Award in the 2025 Regional Social Work Awards.

Thanks also goes to my co-director Marian O'Rourke, who retired from her role as Director of Regulation and Standards in December. Marian was also a long-serving staff member, first managing the Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Partnership for a number of years before the team moved across into the Council in 2012. Her expertise and experience has been integral to the development of the Professional in Practice Framework for social work education and professional development. Marian also led on the improvement of the Framework to provide development opportunities that range from consolidating learning for newly qualified social workers right through to a doctorate level award. Marian was instrumental in the development of the Care in Practice Framework for social care practitioners which was launched in December 2024. This framework was developed to provide a career pathway for social care which would help attract and retain people in social care roles. We are equally proud that Marian's dedication was also recognised at the 2025 Regional Social Work Awards when she received the Contribution to Social Work Leadership Award.

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 high staff 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 by reviewing the routes into social work training and seeking to increase opportunities for social work entry-level training. 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. Through our work with the Department of Health's Social Care Collaborative Forum and Children's Services Reform Board, we are working with employers, DoH and other partners and decision-makers to build a sustainable social work and social care workforce for the future. 2024-25 was the fourth consecutive year in which the DoH provided funding to support priority training in adult social care.

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. The report from the Participation Partnership shows the variety of projects that our service user and carer members have supported during the year.

Through our partnership work, we have listened to our stakeholders and worked with them to develop our services and resources to support them in delivering social care services. The online registration system was upgraded to enable employers to manage their organisation's registration profile and employee information more effectively. The new electronic case management system went online in October 2024. The online Learning Zone has been reviewed and extended to provide additional learning resources to support registrants and managers; the social care reform webpage has been developed to provide accessible information on changes to support workforce development and the child development resources have been upgraded to provide a suite of resources that can be used by childcare professionals, parents and students.

The views of our registrants are also important in shaping our work, and following extensive engagement with registrants during last year, we are moving forward with a new approach to involving our social work and social care registrants in influencing our work. The Social Work Registrant Engagement Group is being co-designed with social work registrants. Through a series of workshops, we are establishing the most effective ways to connect with social work registrants to ensure they have the right information at the right time and in a way that meets their needs. Learning from this design thinking approach will be used in the development of the model for social care practitioner engagement later in the year. The digital communications, direct email and social media will continue with all registrants whilst all the development work is in progress. Feedback from the in-person Social Care Manager Forum events and monthly online Lunchtime Seminars remains strongly positive and these will continue into 2025-26.

During the year, 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. To date, we have 14,000 active followers across our digital channels and engaged in our communications campaigns to promote social work and social care.

Last year, there was significant time invested in taking forward the public campaigns to raise awareness of the valuable contribution social workers and social care practitioners make to our community and our economy. The social work campaigns delivered in Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025 challenged people to 'Thank Social Work' and encourage recognition of the value of the profession, both to society and as a career of choice. Our social care campaign which ran throughout Summer 2024 and again in February 2025, shone a light on the positive difference made by social care practitioners every day to the lives of people and in our communities, whilst also showing what a great career it can be.

As a key priority, we continue 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 targeted engagement with managers where appropriate and by developing digital learning resources for the workforce.

Last year, we were given responsibility for implementing the 'Social Work Leadership Framework'. The Leadership Framework subgroup has engaged with social workers to assess their awareness and engagement with the Framework. Feedback is being used to scope communications and information to make leadership an integral part of social work training and ongoing practice.

The Council is also now responsible for the 'Social Work and Social Care Research Strategy'. The Board approved the establishment of the Research and Evidence Partnership as a Board Sub-committee during the year. This Partnership consists of 30 members with interests across social work and social care research. Bringing the 'Social Work and Social Care Research Strategy' into the work of the Social Care Council is an excellent opportunity to build on the existing work of the social work and social care research community, and to develop new partnerships to influence the development of research that informs best practice for social work and social care. The Research Community Network has almost 80 members; they have been engaged in workshops during the year to support the development of the Partnership. In 2025-26, members will focus on scoping a research strategy for social work and social care. The Annual Social Work and Social Care Research Conference was held in March and this proved to be the largest event to date, with over 160 people participating.

We use an outcomes-based approach to assess progress against business objectives. The benefit of this 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 use qualitative methods to find out about the difference this work is making for our stakeholders; and this includes surveys, emails and telephone interviews. Some of the 2024-25 highlights are illustrated overleaf. More detailed commentary on progress against Key Performance Indicators is included on page 67.

Planning for our 2024-25 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 2025-26 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 people working here in the Social Care Council. Through their hard work and dedication, we have fully achieved 23 out of the 29 objectives set for 2024-25 (timescales for 6 objectives were extended into Quarter 1 of 2025-26).

We are a Platinum accredited Investors in People employer. Platinum accreditation is the highest level of recognition against the Investors in People standard.



Only a very small number of organisations achieve this level of recognition, and it sets an international benchmark for effective leadership and employee collaboration. We are honoured to have been the first health and social care organisation in Northern Ireland to achieve this standard. We have also retained the Gold Investors in People Award for Health and Wellbeing, which recognises our commitment to supporting our staff and their wellbeing while at work. The IiP interim assessment completed in Spring 2025 confirmed the organisation is currently on track to retain accreditation. We will continue to build on both awards as we work together to make a difference in everything that we do.

Business highlights for 2024-25 include:

Stakeholders supported

61,490

people supported with registration queries

94% positive feedback on the service provided



Register maintained for *49,253 registrants:

*Register totals 31/3/25

41,678 social care practitioners

6,775 social workers

800 social work students

128 decisions uploaded to the Register



Registrations processed

14,331 registration applications/ renewals processed (100% within 20 days)



Fitness to Practise concerns addressed

510 referrals triaged (100% within 3 days)

304 cases closed (94% closed within 15 months)

38 Interim Orders granted

21 Fitness to Practise hearings



Social work and social care careers promoted

27 careers events

5.8k active users on the Learning Zone careers resources

290 first-year students enrolled on Social Work Degree

257 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

21 Social work AYE submissions audited



Expertise and leadership provided to support strategic projects

- Social Care Collaborative Forum
- Social Care Fair Work Forum
- Social Work and Social Care Data and Intelligence Workstreams
- Leaders in Social Care Partnership
- Social Work Leadership Network
- Children's Services Reform Board
- Social Work Workforce Implementation Board
- Review of National Occupational Standards

Finances managed effectively

Break-even achieved with a £10k underspend

94% of invoices paid within 10 days

99% of invoices paid within 30 days



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 2024-25.

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 80. 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 2024-25, there were ten Strategic Risks identified by the Risk Management Committee: two risks were assessed as High level, 7 risks assessed as Medium level and 1 risk assessed as Low level (there were no risks assessed as Extreme).

The eight strategic risks are:

- Regulatory Fitness to Practise function resourcing – assessed as **High Level 12**.
- Sustainable resourcing to support adult social care reform - assessed as **High Level 16**.
- Changes at Board and senior executive level – assessed as **Medium Level 12**.
- 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**.
- Climate change actions – assessed as **Low Level 2**.

Assessment and management of strategic risks in 2024-25

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 electronic Case Management system was completed and introduced during Quarter 4 of 2024-25. This will help with the management of new cases, however, a review of existing workloads is also being undertaken which will take into consideration the complexity of work, effect of workloads from consensual disposals and the increase in Interim Suspension Orders.

Sustainable resourcing to support adult social care reform **High Level 16** Through our work on developing the capability of the workforce and our development work to foster 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.

Changes at board and senior executive level – assessed as **Medium Level 12** The Management Team has put in place temporary measures to manage the responsibilities relating the CEO and Director of Regulation and Standards posts pending permanent appointments. Board recruitment was carried out by Public Appointments in Quarter 4. New members due in post in Quarter 1.

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. Communications Team is working closely with Registration and Workforce Development to deliver a targeted communication programme to registrants, employers and others including using benchmarks and surveys to evaluate and monitor impact and outcomes.

Management of financial resources **Medium Level 9** Pressures on the budget remain under active review with a flat cash allocation indicated for the year ahead. Without sustainable and sufficient funding going into the new financial year, the organisation's ability to deliver all of its services could be compromised. 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. A new Engagement Strategy is also being developed following a period of consultation which will support the management of this risk.

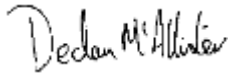
Social work and social care sector data intelligence **Medium Level 8** An extensive programme of work has been put in place to gather, maximise and share our data to improve outcomes and decision making. Social Care Data and Intelligence workstream is reporting on progress to the Social Care Collaborative 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. Register analysis is now available online at [Data reports - NISCC](#). Social Care 'Still' Matters (a new state of the nation social care report) will be completed in June 2025 and 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.

Climate change actions agreed **Low Level 2** The staff team is focused on minimising printing, making use of technology to minimise travel and also recycling within the office. A workshop for staff and members will be held in-year to finalise long term objectives.

I am satisfied that the Social Care Council has performed well against the objectives set out in the 2024-25 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.



Declan McAllister
Chief Executive (Interim)
Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Date: 21 August 2025

Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) report for 2024-25

Hello from the Participation Partnership



Members of our Partnership are people who access social care services, or who have experience of caring for someone.

Their role is to influence, advise and challenge the work of the Social Care Council, ensuring that people who access social care services and their carers have an opportunity to shape and contribute to all of our work.

The contribution of people who access social care support and carers is a valued and integral part of planning, implementing and reviewing all areas of work across the organisation.

The Participation Partnership is co-chaired by Sarah Browne (Board Member) and two Participation Members, Alan Ritchie and Joanne Sansome. The Partnership is supported by the Director of Registration and Corporate Services, together with a small group of other staff. 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 rotates amongst members on a regular basis. Their responsibilities included planning meetings, leading agenda items and hosting promotional events for the Partnership. This year, the partnership said goodbye to longstanding member, Maria Somerville. Maria has been involved with the Social Care Council for almost 20 years. Everyone would like to thank her for her contribution and wish her well with the new projects she is involved with.

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 access services and carers in social work and social care development. Members agree their agenda and all meetings are minuted.

Throughout the year, members held their meetings and carried out project work using MS Teams, telephone calls and emails. Meetings were 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 lived 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.

Partnership highlights from 2024-25:

- Contributed to development of the Social Care Council Engagement Strategy - supporting the Council Communications and Engagement team in developing the values and principles for the Engagement Strategy. Members shared their views to help the Council to better understand how they feel about their engagement with the Social Care Council. This work will be used to shape communications and engagement plans. Gerard and Joanne have supported the development of the Social Work engagement programme for the revised Registrants' Forum – this included presenting at the initial workshop for the new group.
- Promoted social work and social care - Participation Partnership members as well as service users and carers from other networks shared their experiences for the 'Social Care Making a Difference' summer campaign. This campaign uses social care stories to reflect the people delivering services alongside those they provide them for. Anne, Alan and Grace shared their personal experiences in a [Care to Chat podcast](#). Members also presented at the launch of the 2024 campaign at the Long Gallery, engaging with political parties and interest groups. This year, members again participated in judging panels for the 2025 Regional Social Work Awards – which was quite an arduous task, with some categories having up to 50 entries to be reviewed and shortlisted.
- Raised awareness about homelessness - the Council hosted the 2024 Homeless Awareness Panel event at James House. Gerry Skelton, an experienced practitioner within this field hosted a group of people who had experienced homelessness to share their story and provide insight into how social work can support people in this situation. Grace, Joanne and Gerard Forrester participated in the event. The session included discussions on the importance of educating social workers and social work students about homelessness and the impact on people. Gerard Forrester is working on a project to develop a Homelessness Strategy which will be launched in Summer 2025.
- Reviewed the Social Care Council Annual Report for 2023-24 and prepared the Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) report section to reflect on the Council's involvement of service users and carers in all aspects of the business.
- Reviewed the outline Social Care Council Business Plan for 2025-26. This report will cover the third year of the 2023-27 Strategic Plan; looking at progress achieved to date, and what actions are needed to ensure the focus is maintained towards longer term outcomes. Also, to establish if there are objectives that may need adjusted to reflect changes in needs or priorities.
- Partnered with the Board in a workshop on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion workshop. This is part of the Council's programme to involve staff and stakeholders positive actions to improve EDI in the organisation.



- Engaged in consultation discussions on the DoH 'Being Open Framework' which aims to ensure that people who use services and their carers are listened to, understood and treated with respect. Members contributed to a NISCC response as well as submitting some individual responses based on personal experiences.
- Contributed to workforce planning and the development of the DoH Social Care Workforce Strategy. Gerard and Alan participated in the strategy launch event at the Long Gallery. Gerard introduced the Minister's presentation and contributed content to a page within the printed report. The event included the launch of the Care in Practice Career Framework for Social Care Practitioners.
- Ensured effective service user involvement in social work training and development – members have been involved in service-user focused sessions with students through both nursing and social work schools at Queens University. David co-facilitated workshops and has participated in role plays for student teaching along with Ciaran Traynor (social work trainer). Gerard is working with the Open University (OU) around the degree in Social Work to explore how more applicants can be attracted to the course. He also provides service user expertise to review the teaching and content, which will be used in regular improvement and help to ensure it prepares students for practice.
- Provided strategic direction for social work training - Joanne is a member of the Strategic Advisory Group for social work, which leads on the Review of the Social Work Degree and management of student placements. Joanne worked as part of the team for the review of the degree in social work, involved in workshops, report writing and implementation planning. The report was completed and presented to the Social Care Council Board in February. Work is underway to have the student placement options ready for December/January time. Joanne's social work engagement expertise extended beyond Northern Ireland this year, to work with Professor Joe Duffy from Queens University for a project based in America to support the universities to involve service users and carers as social work educators. This included developing a guide on involvement which will be used in 500 universities across America.
- Participated in Social Care Collaborative Forum workstreams - the forum has eight workstreams, which involve members with lived experience such as Learning Disability, Supported Living, Residential Care, Communications, Workforce Pay and Conditions, Workforce Development. Members provide expert advice to the workstreams.
- Collaborated with universities on research and student training - members have also been involved in research projects. One project looked at improving outcomes for people with a learning disability, ensuring they know what services they are entitled to and how to access them, as well as training multidisciplinary teams in this area. Another project focused on the challenges faced by people with learning disabilities when admitted to hospital with no specialist learning disability nurses on their ward. Susan has worked on a Social Work Quality Improvement project with nurses and social workers. This project aims to help professionals to think differently and look through the lens of a service user.



- Contributed to NI and UK Impact Assembly - These projects aim to take innovative practice from a local to national practice. Members had been involved with a project exploring social care practitioners wellbeing, recruitment and retention. This phase of the project has completed in Summer 2024 and recommendations compiled to inform future development in this area. Some work also included engagement work with people who have a learning disability and improving their experience in supported living facilities.

Members are also providing expertise and support through their own networks and contacts on a regular basis, providing vital support for family carers to review the impact of financial and service changes and supporting appeals for families who have not received care or respite they are entitled to. They have been involved in service reform projects, including developing standards for a regional contract for care home service and development of training materials for Trauma-informed social work practice with the Safeguarding Board. Their skills have been key in development of a Carers Directory for anyone who needs to access support services across NI. Gerard has promoted the Local Engagement Partnership activities to encourage more service users to participate in this HSC network.

Looking ahead

The members recognise that social workers and social care practitioners face immense challenges in this period of significant change for Health and Social Care. This will require Government and the DoH to continue with their commitment 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 2025-26 and the wider social care improvement agenda.



Sarah Browne
Chair



Joanne Sansome
Co-Chair

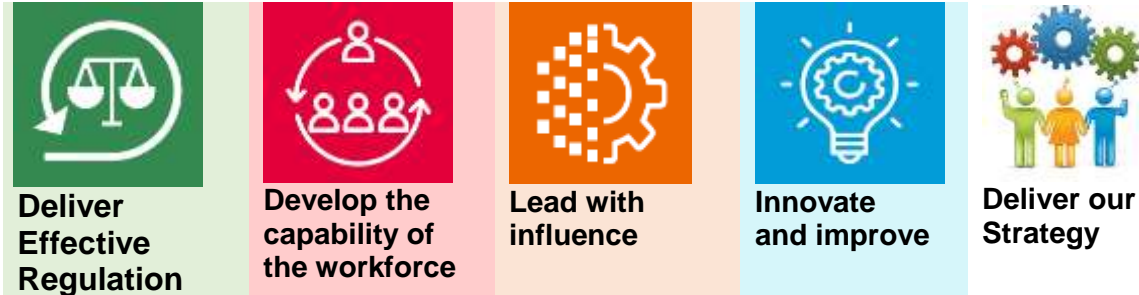


Alan Ritchie
Co-Chair

Performance analysis for 2024-25

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 2024-25 Business Plan:



This analysis includes key learning outcomes gained from our review of performance and provides a summary of the success indicators identified for 2024-25. 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 2025-26. Further information on our aims and objectives for the coming year are published in our Business Plan for 2025-26 (available from our website www.niscc.info).



Performance analysis for 2024-25



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 practitioners are supported by their employers through the Standards for Employers of Social Workers and Social care practitioners.

Our actions in 2024-25 - we said we would:	Indicators of success for 2024-25 – the difference we wanted to see:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 97% of registrants maintain their registration throughout the year and our KPIs are met.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. 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 registrant experience by December 2024. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The registrants' experience and satisfaction levels will improve in support of our KPI's.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Deliver our Fitness to Practise 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness to Practise (FtP) activity is managed efficiently in line with FtP Rules, best practice, and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). • The outcomes of our activity are robust, fair, equitable and proportionate.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee activity delivers against the KPI's and hearings are managed in an effective, professional and timely manner.

<p>5. Implement the recommendations arising from the review of hybrid/online FtP hearings by January 2025 including any changes to our Rules and processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FtP hearings held from January 2025 are based on the findings from the review.
<p>6. Promote compliance with the Standards of Conduct and Practice for Registrants, and working with RQIA promote compliance with the Standards for Employers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 90% of registrants report they are using the Standards to inform their practice. • At least 90% of employers report they are using the Employer Standards to support social workers and social care practitioners.



Deliver effective regulation

How did we do in 2024-25?

Our regulation activity is delivered through workforce registration, setting standards for social workers' and social care practitioners' 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 2024-25 Business Plan, there are eight 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 2025, the leadership team assessed satisfactory achievement against the objectives set for Deliver Effective Regulation. The following pages provide an overview of the achievements in this area of work, commentary for performance against KPIs and details of mitigating action taken to address pressures affecting KPI performance.



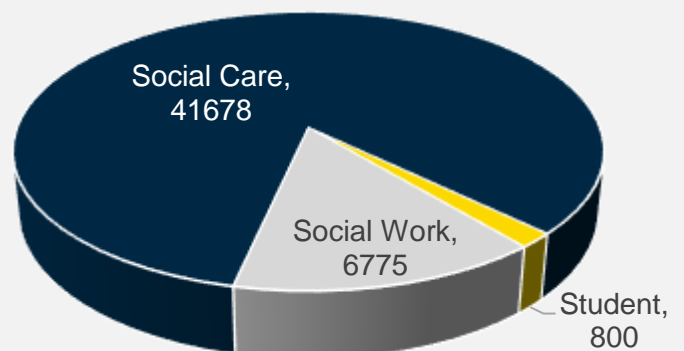
Regulation – Workforce registration 2024-25

The Social Care Council is responsible for registering all social workers, social care practitioners and social work students in Northern Ireland. This is a workforce of around 49,000 people.

- 49,253 people were registered on the Register at 31 March 2025.
- The Register was made up of 41,678 social care practitioners, 6,775 social workers and 800 students.
- Social care practitioners make up the largest proportion of the register (87%).
- The remainder of the Register is split between social workers (13%) and social work students (2%).

Social Care Council Register Profile

49,253 registrants at 31 Mar 2025

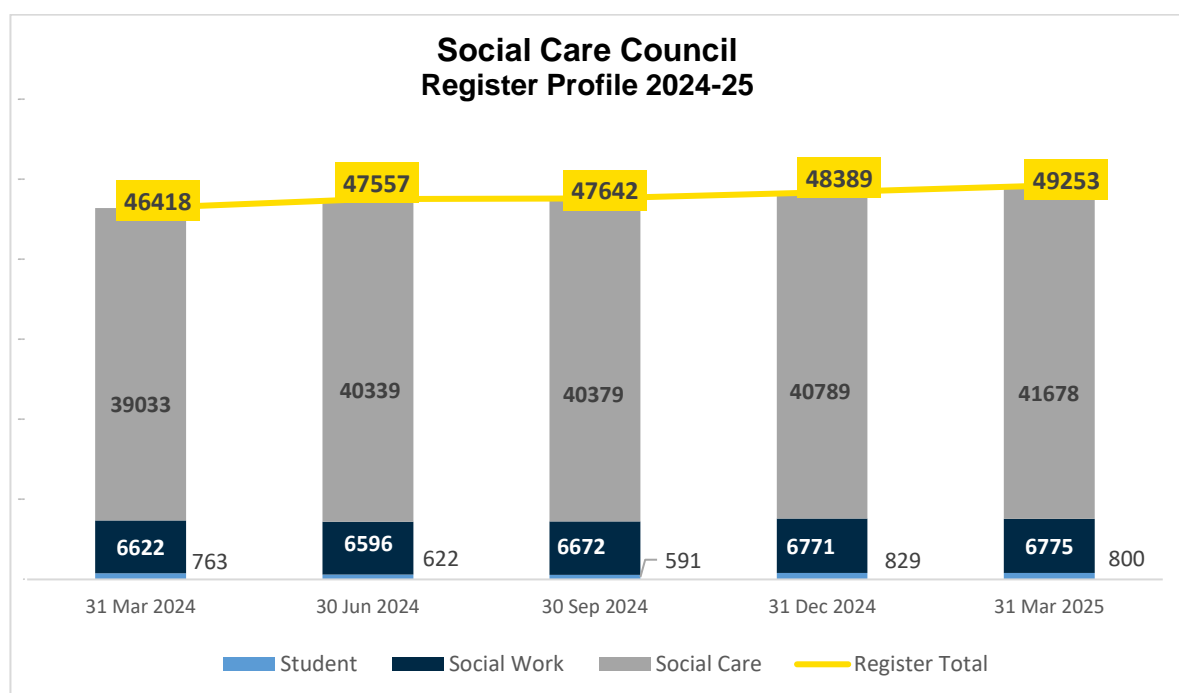


- The majority of the registered workforce (83%) identifies as female.
- Representation across the age bands remains steady, with 34% of social workers and 50% of social care workers in the under 40 age bands.

The Register currently lists 510 employing organisations across all the employment sectors. The majority of social workers are employed within the Health and Social Care Trusts (73%). 7% of social workers are employed in the voluntary sector, 4% work within the justice system, 4% work within education. 1.5% work in the private sector, 6% work across other statutory organisations and 1.25% are self-employed. The private sector employs the largest proportion (44%) of social care practitioners, with a further 16% employed by Health and Social Care Trusts and 16.29% employed by voluntary or charitable social care organisations.

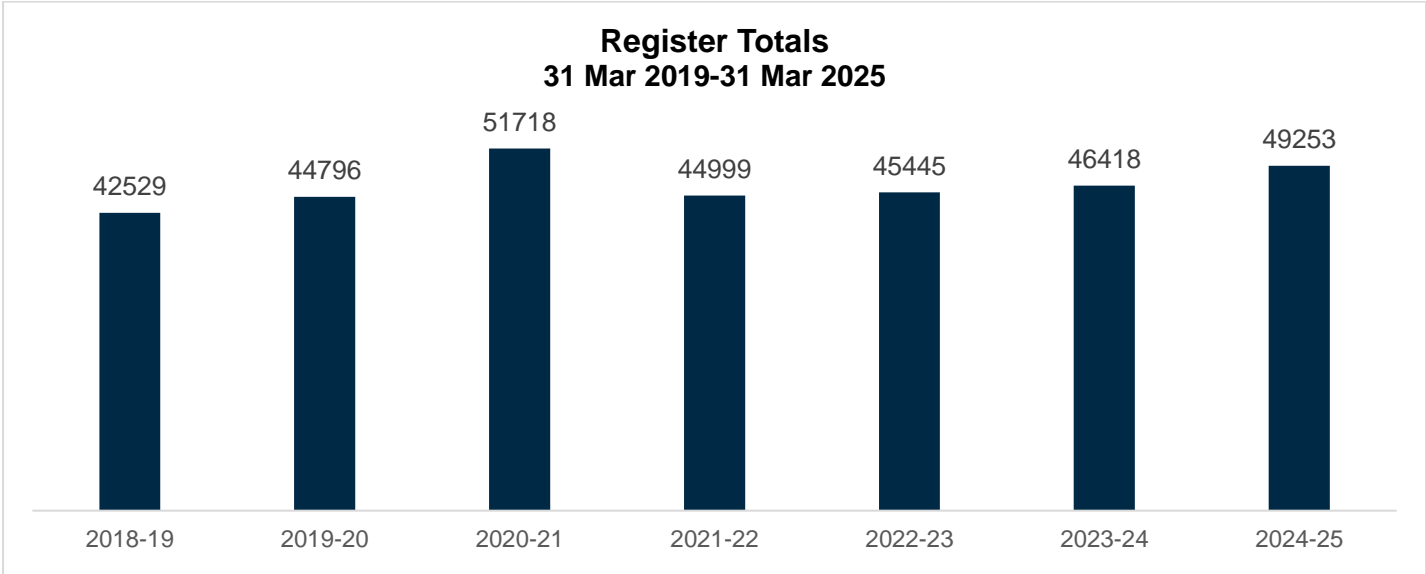
The most significant groups of social care staff identified as Adult Residential Care Workers (35%) and Domiciliary Care Workers (32%). The next largest groups within social care are Supported Living Workers (7%) and Day Care Workers (5%).

This profile of the registered workforce has remained relatively stable since compulsory registration for social work and social care was completed in 2018.

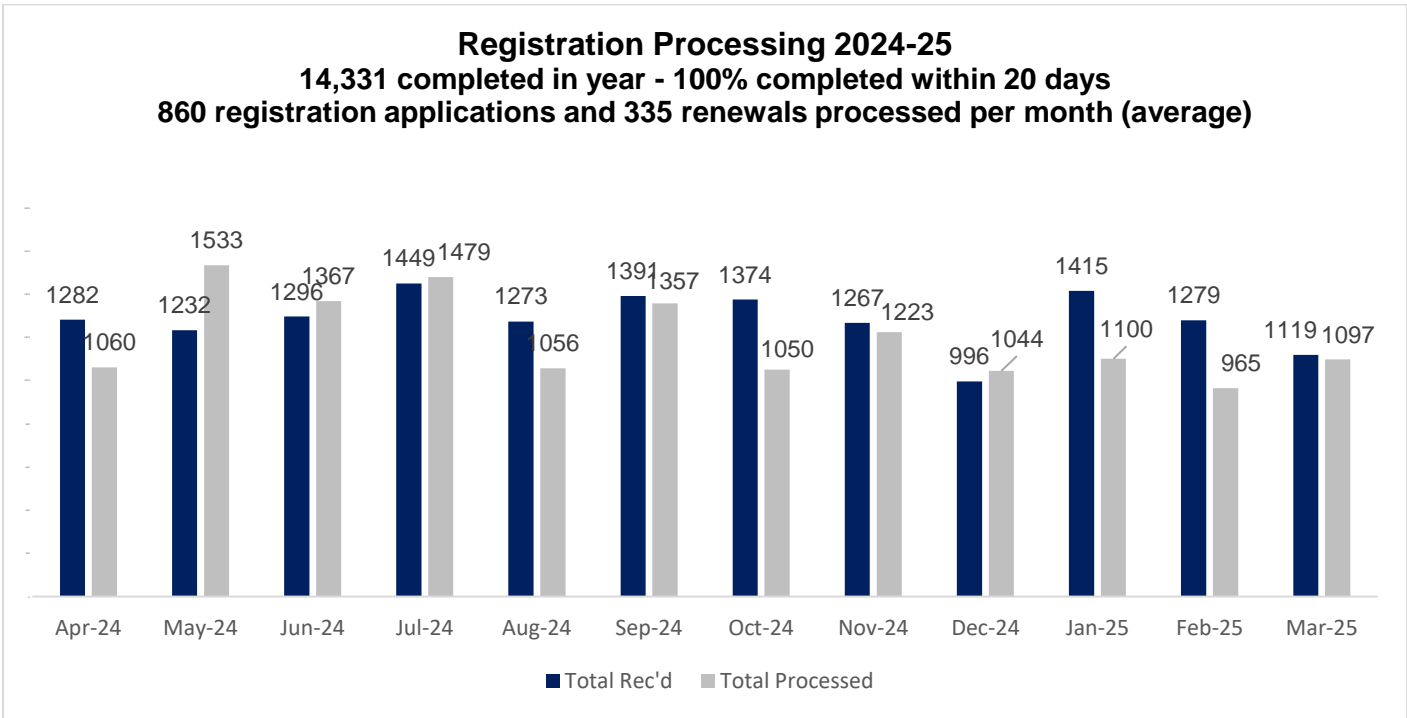


In the 12 months between 31 March 2024 and 31 March 2025, numbers on the Register have shown a net growth of around 6% - mostly in social care practitioner registrations. The full Register opened at 46,418 in April 2024 and closed the year at 49,253. This upward trend in the number of registrants has been evident for approximately 18-24 months, with around 200 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 renew 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 help with workforce planning to meet future service needs.



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 dropped back towards 45k as temporary workers returned to pre-COVID-19 employments. The Register has shown a gradual increase year-on-year since then.



(Risk tolerance limits for KPIs and the performance information used to make these assessments are included in the KPI summary on page 67.)

Registration workflow in March was marginally below KPI at 98% of applications processed within 20 days. Overall KPI for the year was 100% (99.99%).

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.

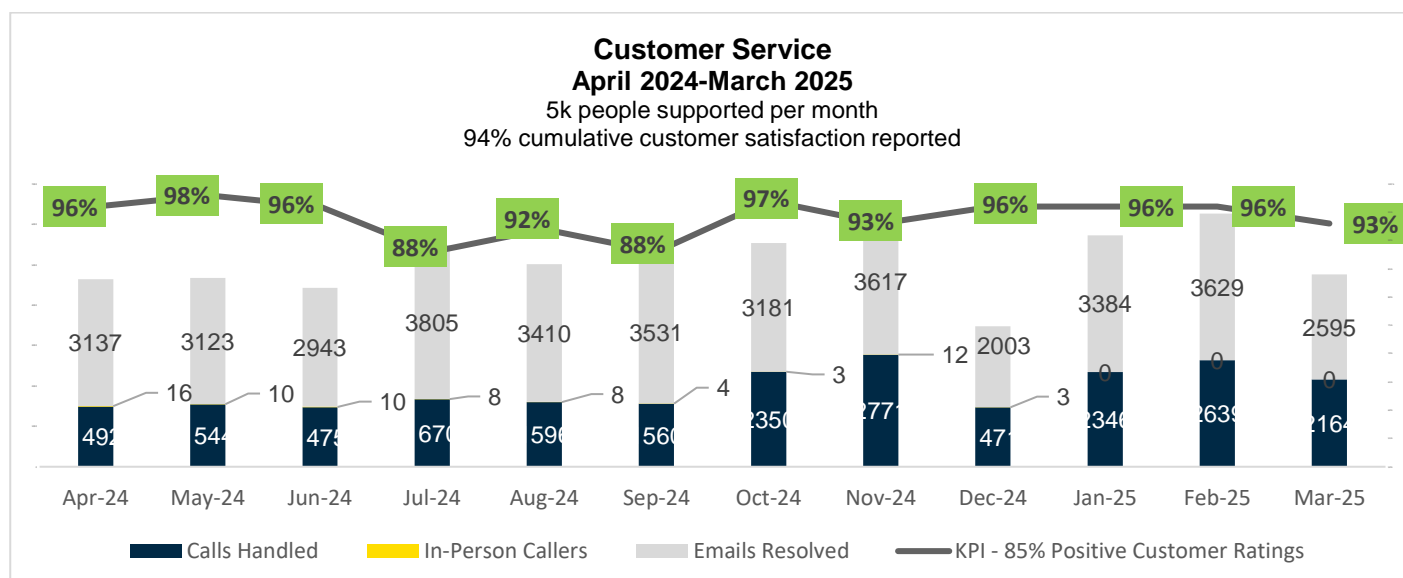
Reminders are sent to all registrants to help them maintain their registration. 99% of registration applications and 90% of registration fees were completed using the online registration system.

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. 98% of registrants maintained their registration throughout the year. This includes meeting requirements to complete training and learning, update their details, pay fees, complete periodic renewal processes.

In 2024-25 recruitment and development was completed to support the Team Leaders in their roles. The registration team engaged in training and development sessions to support business improvement. Upgrades to the employer registration portal service has provided self-service access for employers to manage organisational registrations and amend endorser details. It is anticipated that the promotion and roll-out of this facility with employers will reduce the volume of requests for assistance received in registration. Review of registration pathways was completed and development work initiated to support the separation of the application process between social work and social care. This will be taken forward in line with the app testing. Integration issues with the Clearpay payment system delayed final testing of the registration mobile app. This new mobile application will help registrants and employers in the management of registration details, paying fees, updating personal information and training achievements. Pending successful integration of the payment software, the app will be soft-launched in Quarter 1. These investments in service improvements have shown an improvement in workflow for registration processing with cumulative performance of 100% achieved, compared to 94% KPI achievement in 2023-24. The benefits from the upgrades to the system and the introduction of new technology for registrants and employers will be tracked during 2025-26.

During 2024-25, workforce registration services were delivered primarily through the online registration portal for registrants and employers. 61,490 people were supported with their registration queries during the year – this is an 8% increase on 2023-24 activity. Email was the main channel for providing customer support. 38,358 emails were managed (2% increase on previous year), with an average turnaround of three days. 349 emails remained in the system for resolution at the end of March 2025.

23,078 telephone calls were managed by the team during the year which is a 13% increase on 2023-24 activity. Customer satisfaction with the service was above KPI at 94%. A review of registration capacity in 2023-24 had estimated that the team could manage around 1,700 calls per month within the current staff resources. A pilot using an outsourced service with HUB NI was introduced from October 2024 which facilitated extended call handling periods. Regular training and updated guidance has been provided for HUB NI to assist in resolution of customer queries at first contact. HUB NI are managing the less complicated queries and fee payments. More complex issues are referred to Registration Team for resolution. Call handling times ranged from 5-55 minutes, which evidences the complexity of some of the calls being received. A customer appointment system is in place 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.



1,031 people responded to the Customer survey in 2024-25 and reported 94% positive satisfaction with their experience of the support provided. An average of 20 people per month provided additional commendation for individual staff members. It is noted that the survey responses represent 1.7% of customers.



Regulation – Workforce fitness to practise 2024-25

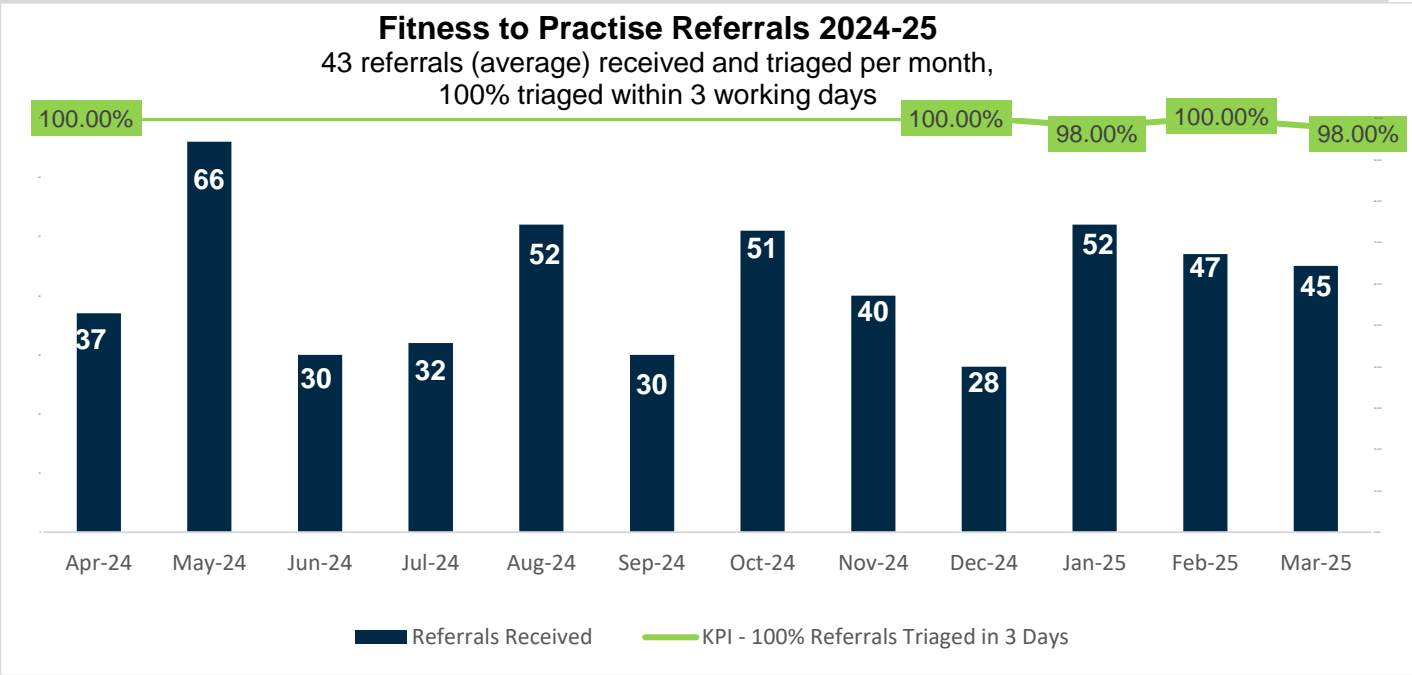
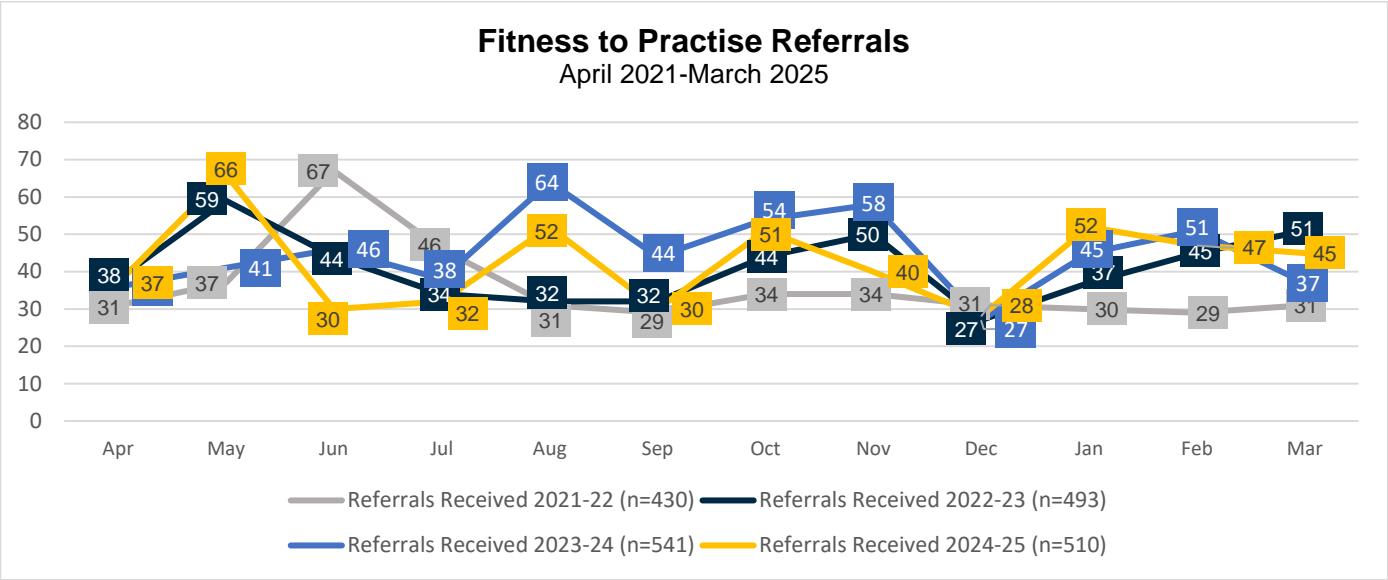
The Social Care Council is responsible for investigating concerns that a registrant may not have met the standards required in their conduct or practice. Concerns can be referred by anyone and they can relate to a wide range of issues.

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 to 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 is minimised.

Only a small number of registrants are referred to the Fitness to Practise Team each year (around 1% of the registered workforce). 510 referrals were received in-year, which is a 20% increase against the total referrals received for 2021-22. 15% of these referrals were assessed as not meeting the threshold to require a case to be opened for a Fitness to Practise investigation. This a similar pattern to the proportion of referrals that resulted in a case for investigation last year. 353 new fitness to practise cases were opened for investigation in-year. 73 cases were pended during Quarter 4 waiting allocation when FtP Officer capacity. Pended cases have been risk assessed as low risk. They are kept under review by the team at weekly Case Conference to ensure there is no change in status in the interim.

At 31 March 2025, there were 467 active cases and 73 pended cases in the system. This is the highest caseload recorded to date. It is anticipated that the introduction of the electronic case management system and online referral forms will assist with administration of cases, but this benefit could take 6-12 months to be generate tangible benefits. Referrals are unpredictable in terms of frequency and what the alleged concern relates to. Comparison of referral patterns for the last four years shows some trends in relation to periods where activity may be higher as shown below for May, June, August, October, November and Quarter 4. There are no obvious underlying causes, but anecdotal evidence may link this to delays in referrals at holiday periods, or around times when larger numbers of registrants are due to renew registration and have to declare any changes affecting their registration.



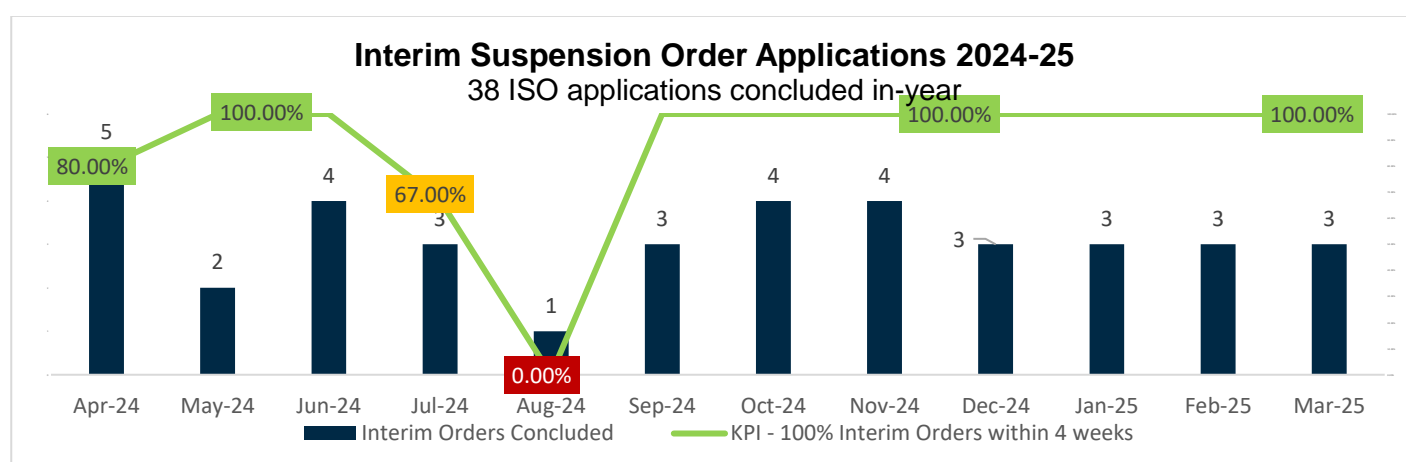
(Risk tolerance limits for KPIs and the performance information used to make these assessments are included in the KPI summary on page 67)

100% of referrals received in-year were triaged within three working days – meeting the 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. (two referrals took an additional two days to complete – no additional risk arose from this delay)

Guidance to help people identify concerns about registrant standards is currently under review and expected to be shared with employers at upcoming information sessions. This follows from a quality improvement project from 2023-24 which focused on 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. The online referral form and onscreen guidance is also expected to assist with reducing erroneous referrals during the year. Currently up to 10 referrals per month are submitted using the new service. This new process 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. This will be promoted widely during 2025-26 to encourage uptake.

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. An ISO is a temporary measure to 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.

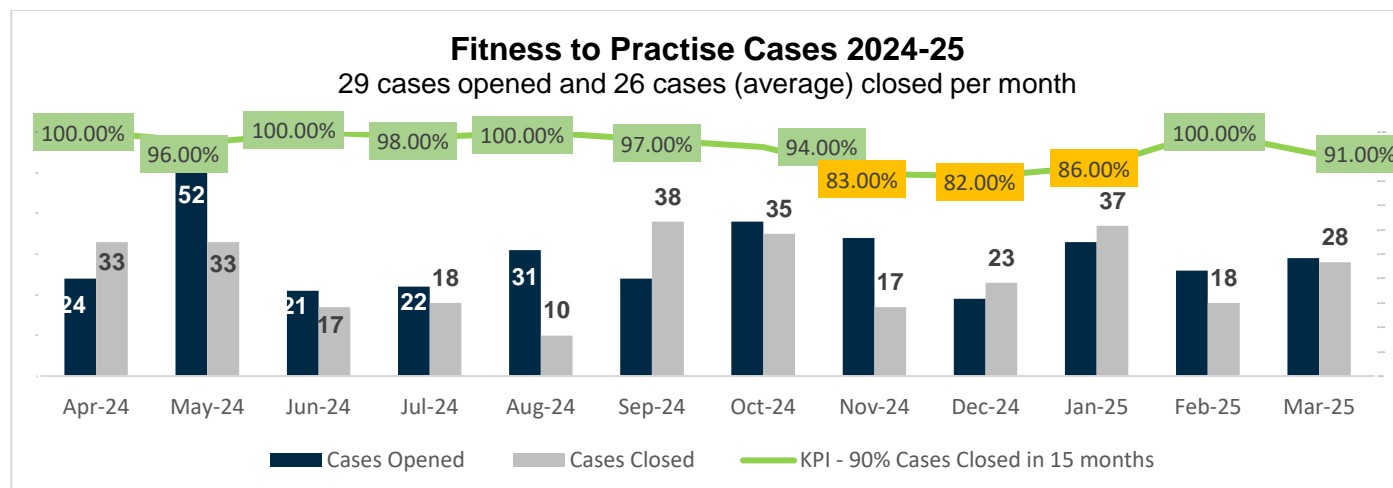
38 ISOs were applied in 2024-25 (37 concluded in 2023-24; 27 in 2022-23). KPI performance was 92% (35/38) of ISOs concluded within 4 weeks – which did not meet the 100% KPI. As shown below, these was a consequence of three single cases affected by postponements/delay in April, July and August 2024. The relatively low number of ISOs per month mean that the delay in just one case can significantly affect the KPI rating. The unpredictability of when ISOs will be required places additional pressures on Fitness to Practise and Committee teams. Achievement of KPI standards required careful allocation of resources to manage them effectively. There were 56 Interim Orders in place at 31 March 2025 – which is the highest recorded to date.



93% of Fitness to Practise cases were closed by Fitness to Practise Officers and 7% were closed by 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. 51% of cases were assessed as requiring 'no further action', 36% required a 'letter of advice about the Standards', 6% required a 'warning', 0.3% involved 'undertakings' and a further 0.6% were resolved through 'removal by agreement'.

The Social Care Council will only grant removal by agreement, if a registrant admits the allegation and that their fitness to practise is impaired. It means that a registrant is removed from the Register and is unable to work in any social care or social work post which requires registration. This approach supports engagement with the registrant to apply a proportionate and timely sanction. It also offers the opportunity to apply a 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.

304 cases were closed in 2024-25 (294 were closed in 2023-24; 341 in 2022-23). The KPI standard for closure of Fitness to Practise cases is that 90% are closed within 15 months. 94% of closed cases were completed within KPI (case closure KPI for 2023-24 was 91%; 78% in 2022-23). Cases closure times can be impacted by external factors such as employer investigations, police or court proceedings or health issues relating to the registrant, with some cases taking 16 to 59 months to conclude. The high referral rates and caseloads have affected capacity to close cases – additional resourcing options are currently being explored.



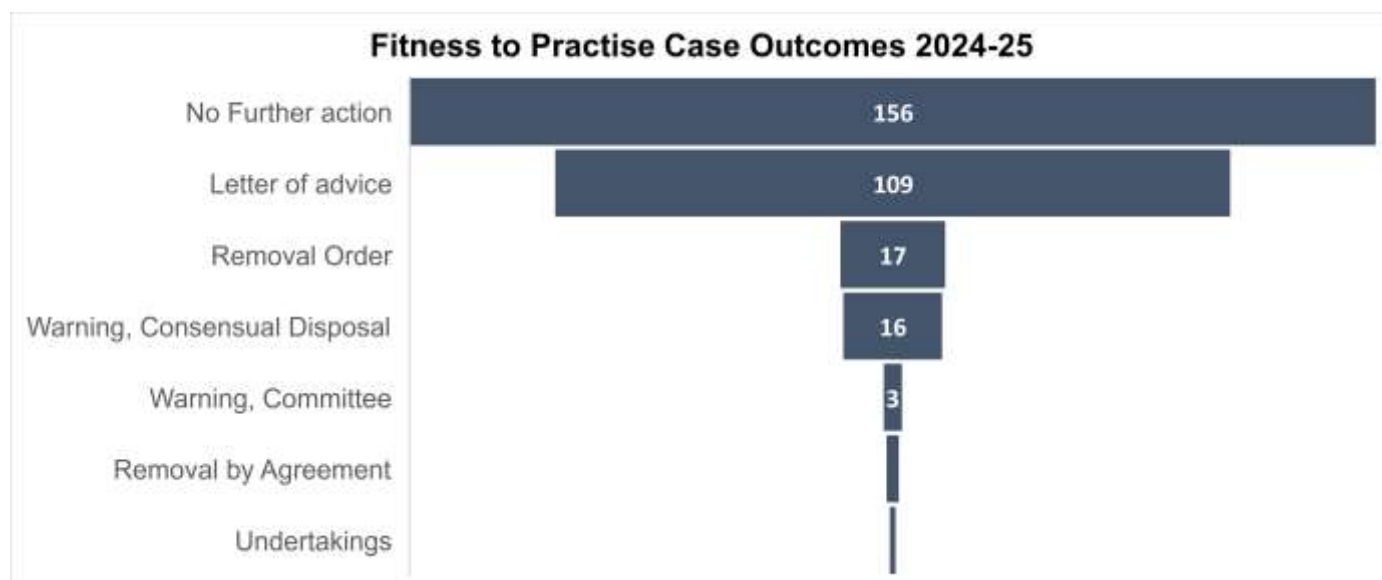
(Risk tolerance limits for KPIs and the performance information used to make these assessments are included in the KPI summary on page 67)

At 31 March 2025, 467 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.

In June 2024, the Board approved the report and recommendations from the consultation on updated processes for assessing the most suitable method (in-person, online or hybrid) for delivering Fitness to practise Hearings and Committees post-pandemic. The Fitness to Practise Rules were reviewed to ensure consistency with the new processes.

97 cases were referred to Fitness to Practise Committees during 2024-25. 135 Notices of Proceedings were issued and Committees made 144 decisions involving registration applications, Interim Order applications and Fitness to Practise final orders. 39 Interim Order applications were concluded (37 in 2023-24; 27 in 2022-23) and 43 Interim Order reviews were held, (37 held in 2023-24; 30 held in 2022-23). 21 Fitness to Practise Hearings were held in 2024-25 (25 in 2023-24; 22 in 2022-23), with 18 Removal Orders and three Warnings were applied (one case was part-heard in the period). The Registration and Preliminary Proceedings Committees heard 100 registration, interim order and interim order review applications.

The Committee Team delivered 73 Committee days in 2024-25, including 21 Fitness to Practise Hearings. 48 registrants were supported by the team to attend proceedings and 437 contacts made 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 and the needs of participants.



Overall Committee/Hearings services activity has increased 20% since 2021-22, which is similar to the change experienced in Fitness to Practise referrals/cases. Recruitment for new Committee Members and Chairs was completed in Quarter 4. This included the appointment of 4 new Chairs, 3 Lay Members and 3 Social Care Members. These members will replace those whose terms of appointment expired April 2025. Induction, training and observations were completed by the new members. All are ready to participate as panel members. The appointment of 4 new Legal Advisers will provide additional flexibility in scheduling proceedings. Development work to create the adjudication module for Committees/Hearings on the Fitness to Practise electronic case management system is progressing well.

Field Fisher audit of adjudication processes and decisions was completed and confirmed consistency in approach. Training was provided on regulatory investigation and standards for new staff and those working in other functions who are working with Fitness to Practise issues.

Annual training was delivered with 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 assessment tool after each Committee and culminated with one to one meetings with the Director of Registration and Corporate Services. Further training on giving/receiving feedback and unconscious bias is scheduled for members in May.

As noted, overall activity in Fitness to Practise referrals/cases and in the Committee/Hearings services activity has increased 20% since 2021-22. The overall Register numbers have increased by around 8% in the same period. It is anticipated that some increase in overall activity will occur in response to any future register growth. Managers are assessing what additional resource may be required to support the increase in business in the short term. Implementation of the electronic case management system and online referrals will reduce administrative burdens and assist in improving case management timescales in the longer term.

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. Staff have engaged with managers, registrants and students at workplace and college information sessions to raise awareness of the standards expected of registrants and employers. Staff from the Social Care Council and RQIA meet every

quarter to share practice experience and review any themes arising from inspections or referrals. Collaborative work was undertaken 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 meant the pace of work has not progressed as far as originally visioned, but can only progress at a pace that enables all participants to fully engage. Therefore, this work will continue into 2025-26.

The Council's 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. During the year, Fitness to Practise and Workforce Development teams collaborated on the development and promotion of Learning Zone resources to raise awareness of the standards. Printed copies of the standards for social work and social care were shared at workplace information sessions to provide registrants with a handy reference guide. 'Guidance for Employers New to Employing Social Workers' and specific guidance for 'Schools Employing Social Workers' was developed in collaboration with BASW NI, registrants and employers. The guidance was launched in Quarter 3 with school social workers in a school in Cookstown. Online information sessions for employers will continue into Quarter 1.





Deliver effective regulation

What we have learned in 2024-25

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. Continued collaboration between the Social Care Council Fitness to Practise and Workforce Development Teams and 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 2025-26

Evaluation of the work completed to deliver effective regulation indicates that the actions set out in the 2024-25 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 2025-26 that will support us in our long term plans to improve workforce standards.

Our 2025-26 priorities are to:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Commence a review our Standards of Conduct and Practice for Registrants and the Standards for Employers to ensure these remain fit for purpose.
5. 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 2024-25 - we said we would:	Indicators of success for 2024-25 – the difference we wanted to see:
1. Approve and assure standards of social work education and training at qualifying and post qualifying levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Report on the outcomes of the 2023-24 periodic review of the Degree in Social Work is published with recommendations for improvement. • The statutory requirements as the Awarding Body for the PiP Framework are met. • Post-qualifying social work education meets the required Standards for Approval within the PiP Framework.
2. 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routes to achievement within the Framework offer flexibility and accessibility to meet the needs of the workforce.
3. Engage with Social Work Leaders to support leadership at all levels of the profession by implementing the Social Work Leadership Framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of engagement with social work leaders to support the Social Work Leadership Framework. • Evidence of outcomes from year 1 of implementation. • Delivery of social work leadership focused PiP awards.
4. 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline data gathered that will enable a strategy and actions to be developed to support equality, diversity and inclusion in our work to support the workforce.
5. 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In year one (2024-25) 40% of Learning Zone resources will include opportunities to enhance cultural competence.



Develop the capability of the workforce

How did we do in 2024-25?

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 to support registrants to develop the knowledge and skills required to practice safely and to a high standard. We also audit registrants' 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 2024-25 Business Plan, there are nine 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 2025, the leadership team assessed satisfactory achievement against the objectives set for Develop the Capability of the Workforce. The following pages provide an overview of the achievements in this area of work, commentary for performance against KPIs and details of mitigating action taken to address pressures affecting KPI performance.



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 2024, the Council processed registration applications for 290 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. Students who completed the Degree in June 2024 were registered as Qualified Social Workers with the condition of Assessed Year in Employment. The registration team worked with universities to fast-track student graduation outcomes, as part of the DoH recruitment programme for new social workers entering priority posts within Health and Social Care Trusts.

The Council processed on average 150 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. A new External Assessor was recruited for the IAR route. To ensure consistent application of the assessment criteria across all submissions, PiP assessment panel outcomes were reviewed by an independent assessor.



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. The project team finalised the report from the 2023-24 review activity in Autumn 2024. The report was published in February. The report found good standards of education and practice learning within the degree structures. 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. Opportunities to improve the learning experience and support student preparation for practice were shared with educators and providers. and recommendations were published



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. All submissions for PiP Annual Monitoring were completed and follow up sent to those requiring additional material. A new process for annual monitoring is being piloted in 2025-26 to streamline the process, increase accountability and provide more analysis on how programmes are managed.

The Independent Visitors review of Initial Professional Development Award and NI Practice Teaching Training Programme will be completed early in Quarter 1. Review of the Research Methods programme is progressing. Recommendations for future delivery of the programme will be reviewed by the University and the PiP Partnership in Quarter 2.

Work continued through the year on the review of the PiP Credit Accumulation Route (CAR). In 2023-24, the project team had engaged on revisions to simplify 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 to support the changes to CAR and facilitate online processing for credit accumulation will be progressed in 2025-26. From October 2024, CAR submissions have been processed via the Individual Assessment Route (IAR) panels in Spring and Autumn. To widen access to the PiP Framework, Work-Based Learning Routes are being developed. The Work Based Learning Route continues to expand opportunities for access to recognition for in-house learning within the PiP Framework with three courses now approved and two further courses expected to be approved in the next 12 months.



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 Requirements, or social care relevant qualifications within the time period are exempted from that audit cycle). In 2024-25, 977 social workers and 158 social care managers met the criteria for audit. Normally 5% of the sample is selected at random to submit their records for audit. Due to the low number of eligible social care managers, 10% of those in the sample were selected. All those who submitted for the audit met the PRTL audit standards.



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 have completed their AYE year. A 10% sample of AYE social workers is selected from AYEes due to meet their registration condition by August of the year of audit. The purpose of the audit is to ensure compliance with the Social Care Council standards; findings are used to highlight key themes, inform workforce planning and recommend improvements in the arrangements and promote regional consistency. The audit looks at the practice context, employment journey, training and development days and the experience of completing AYE reflected in registrants' personal statements.

In 2024-25, 21 AYE social workers were selected for audit. All evidence submitted was assessed as meeting the AYE audit standards. The Social Care Council will continue to work collaboratively with key stakeholders to review AYE processes and identify how newly qualified social workers can be encouraged and supported to develop within the current practice environment of workforce recruitment and retention challenges.



PiP Two Requirements Monitoring - New social workers are required to complete two Requirements from the Consolidation Award on the PiP Framework (PiP Two Requirements) 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 the 'PiP Two Requirements'. The Council monitored completion of PiP Two Requirements throughout the year and followed up with registrants and employers to track their progress to satisfying this condition. A Two Requirements Extension Panel, comprising representation from Workforce Development and Fitness to Practise, met monthly to consider applications from social workers for extensions to achieving the Two Requirements condition of registration. In 2024-25, 35 social workers were granted extensions. 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 2024-25, 49 social workers attained the full PiP Consolidation Award.

Degree in Social Work achievements 2024-25

- 290 new students enrolled on courses.
- 257 students graduated from Degree courses .
- 221 newly qualified social workers completed the Assessed Year in Employment.



Professional in Practice (PiP) recognition of achievement – The theme for the September 2024, PiP Awards was Social Work Leadership. This event involved 240 guests in a one-day event that explored leadership in social work. 210 social workers who had achieved PiP Awards were invited to participate and to receive their award. The Social Care Council were leading by example, with Professional Adviser Mandy Cowden receiving her leadership award on the day.

PiP Awards presented included:

- 49 NI Consolidation Awards.
- 149 NI Specialist Awards.
- 12 NI Leadership and Strategic Awards.

Consolidation Award 2024



Leadership Award 2024



Specialist Award 2024



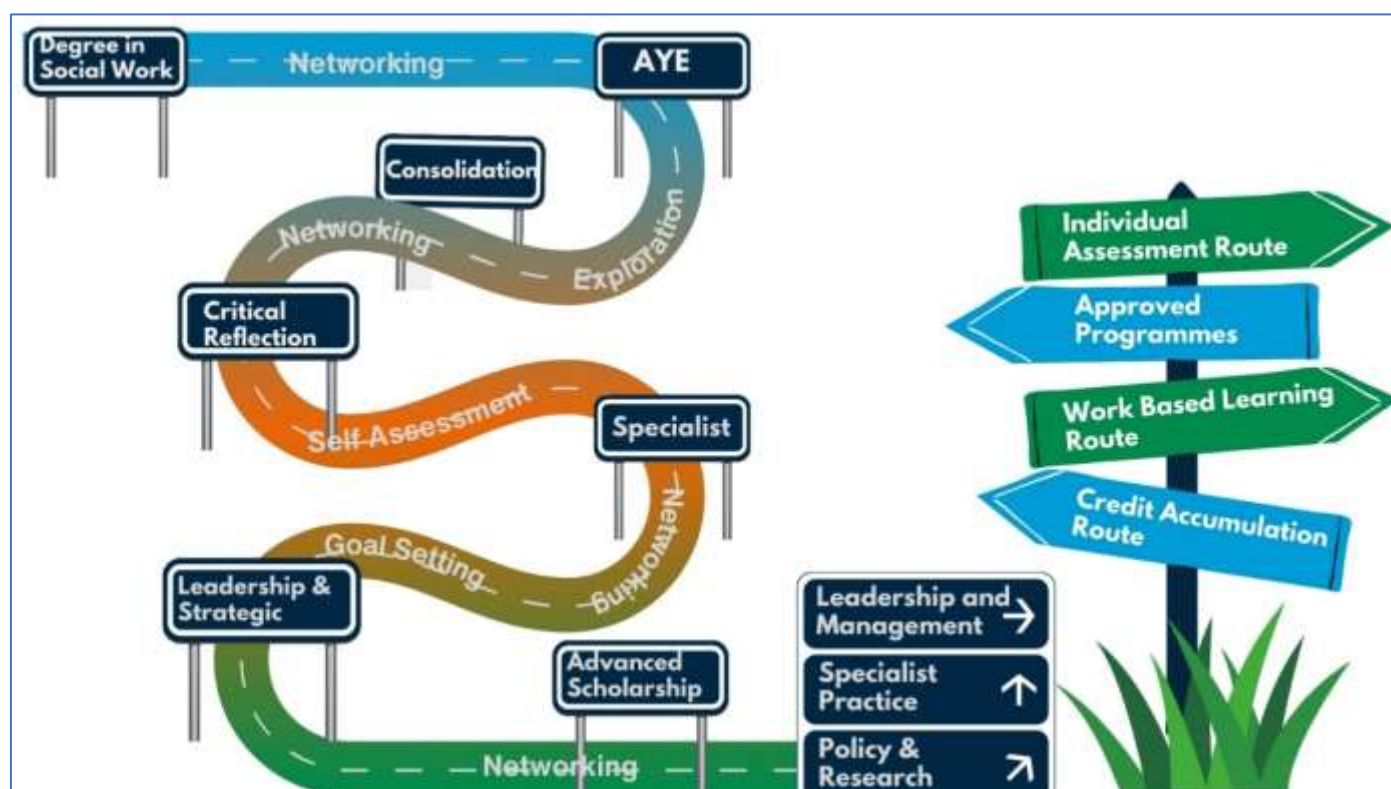
The event included presentations from social work leaders and a ‘café conversation’ session for Award recipients to showcase their work. Guest speakers included Declan Lawn, author of Blue Lights TV series, who spoke about his experience in writing about the social work role for the programme. The Chief Social Work Officer and the Lord Mayor of Mid and East Antrim joined the event to offer their congratulations to the successful awards recipients. 4 new videos promoting social workers and CPD were produced for the event. These have also been used as part of the careers resources on the website, social media and the Learning Zone.



PiP Awards 2024 - Social work leadership – Thoughts from the day



A career in social work - The learning and development journey





Workforce engagement – Throughout the year, the Workforce Development 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 2024-25, over 200 engagement opportunities were fulfilled, involving around 5,000 managers, social care practitioners, 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 practitioners and managers. Sessions were also delivered to 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 Lunchtime Seminars are an opportunity for social workers, social care practitioners and colleagues from other professions to share their learning and best practice without having to take extended time away from their workplace.

In 2024-25, 1,043 people logged on to 10 Social Care Council online Lunchtime Seminars. To date, 1,316 people have viewed the online recordings/presentations. The seminar presented by Queens University and the Safeguarding Board 'Developing trauma informed organisations - NI update and a new toolkit' attracted the most people to the live presentation, with 184 attendees. This topic also attracted the most online engagement with 414 views to date. The Lunchtime Seminars 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 2025-26 is in progress, 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 - 300 people attended the four regional Social Care Managers Forum events held in May and November 2024.

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.



Social Care Managers Forums 2024-25



Lunchtime Seminars 2024-25

Lunchtime Seminar



Wednesday, 8 January 2025

Residential staff's perspective on the model of attachment practice

12pm - 1.30pm

Book now: nisc.info/events

Lunch, learn, inspire - Learning and development the right way

Lunchtime Seminar



Wednesday, 19 June 2024

ICT systems that 'strangle' relationship-based practice for social workers in Northern Ireland.

12pm - 1.30pm

Book now: nisc.info/events

Don't forget: registered social workers and social care workers can use Lunchtime Seminars as part of their PRTL

Lunchtime Seminar



Wednesday, 2 October 2024

Developing trauma informed organisations - NI update and a new toolkit

12pm - 1.30pm

Book now: nisc.info/events

Lunch, learn, inspire - Learning and development the right way

Lunchtime Seminar



Wednesday, 16 October 2024

Supporting LGBTQ+ Children and Young People

12pm - 1.30pm

Book now: nisc.info/events

Lunch, learn, inspire - Learning and development the right way



Learning Zone online learning and resources – This free to use suite of learning resources was updated throughout the year and information promoting the site was shared via Mailchimp and social media. Website pages were created to share information about [Social Care Workforce Reform](#) and the [review of qualifications](#) for Health and Social Care.

Engagement with the Learning Zone has remained steady with 2k-3k unique users engaged every month. The most often accessed pages on the Learning Zone during the year were: Careers, Health and Safety in a Childminding Setting and Standards for Conduct and Practice for Social Care Workers

Learning Zone development and progress 2024-25

- **Understanding Child Development and Issues (ages 0-18)** – Content across the four original child development resources was updated to reflect the changes in policy and best practice. The resource was launched by the Health Minister in December and followed up by promotional events in January and February 2025.



- **Values Based Retention Toolkit** - This complements the Values Based Recruitment Toolkit 3 employers are engaged in pilots. Podcasts are under development to promote the experience.



- **Launching in Quarter 1 of 2025-26** will be 23 Things Digital for Social Work and the updated Loneliness and Staying Connected. These will be showcased at the Social Care Managers forums in early June



Develop the capability of the workforce

What we have learned in 2024-25

Our collaborative approach with employers, registrants, social care educators and awarding bodies has been effective in supporting workforce learning and development. Social care practitioners, 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 practitioners and their managers welcome the introduction of a career structure and learning framework for social care. Information and awareness sessions will be key to supporting employers as they integrate the new certificate. 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 practitioners are positive about the use of technology but will require training to use these with confidence. Further engagement with the sector is required in 2025-26 to develop a Social Care Council digital learning strategy that will support the registered workforce.

Social Workers have continued to engage in learning and development opportunities despite recruitment, retention and workforce pressures. This is reflected in submissions for PRTL audit and in levels of achievement within the Professional in Practice Framework. We anticipate continued growth in submissions to the individual Assessment and Work Based Learning Routes in 2025-26.

Looking ahead – Our plans for 2025-26

Evaluation of the work completed to develop workforce capability indicates that the actions set out in the 2024-25 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 2025-26 that will support us in our long-term plans to improve workforce standards.

Our 2025-26 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 September 2025.
- Develop, promote and support the Care in Practice Framework and career progression as part of the Social Care Council's responsibilities within the wider Department of Health social care workforce reform agenda set out in the 'DoH Social Care Workforce Strategy 2025-35'.



Lead with influence

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

Our actions in 2024-25 - we said we would:	Indicators of success for 2024-25 – the difference we wanted to see:
1. 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to HSC data sets and reporting to share with leaders. • State of the Nation Social Care Workforce report produced.
2. 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme of work for the Leaders in Social Care Partnership for 2024-25 is delivered.
3. Establish the Registrants Social Work Forum and Registrant Social Care Forum by September 2024, following the review of the Registrants Forum that took place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The voice of social work and social care registrants have a formal mechanism through which to influence outcomes and change for the sector and help shape and influence the work of the Social Care Council.
4. 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintained inclusive engagement and networking with existing groups supporting the creation of new research engagements as appropriate, internally and externally
5. Raise the profile of social work and social care while increasing recognition of the value of the social work and social care workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using surveys, increase awareness and develop a benchmark on the recognition of the value of social work and social care. • Targeted and public relations campaign delivered
6. Promote careers in social work and social care, including targeting sectors to promote the diversity and inclusivity of the workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted and public relations campaign delivered to promote the value of social work and social care. • Full evaluation of the four years of the 'Social Care – Making a difference campaign'.



Lead with influence

How did we do in 2024-25?

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 development of the 'Social Work and Social Care Research Strategy' to support research evidence activity, improvement and innovative practice.

In the 2024-25 Business Plan, there are eleven 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 31 March 2025, the leadership team assessed satisfactory achievement against four out of the six objectives set for Lead with Influence. The Social Care Matters report was not published within 2024-25 and will be completed in Quarter 1 of 2025-26. Plans to establish a Registrants Social Work Forum and Registrant Social Care Forum by September 2024 – focus has been placed on development of the social work registrant engagement mechanism using a co-design approach. Progress for these objectives was assessed as **AMBER (good progress, but some delays/change in focus)**.

The following pages provide an overview of the achievements in this area of work, commentary for performance against KPIs and details of mitigating action taken to address pressures affecting KPI performance.



Building and Sharing Data and Intelligence - We are committed to sharing the data and knowledge we hold data in an open and transparent way. Through comprehensive analysis and insightful commentary our goal is to make sense of why social care matters and how it shapes people's lives in Northern Ireland, inform policy and improve our regulatory work to enhance public safety and the education and training for registrants. In December 2024, the Council website was developed to provide a Research and Data section which provides access to reports, data and research prepared by the Council. With a focus on fostering understanding and driving meaningful change, the aim is to provide a resource for researchers, practitioners and individuals invested in the well-being of Northern Ireland's communities. The website was updated to include reports, newsletters and presentations from the Social Care Council Annual Research conference and the Research Community network. Council quarterly reports and analysis of the register profile and review of Fitness to Practise referrals have been added to the resource section. Progress on editing of the 'Social Care Matters' state of the nation style report (March 2024 data) was paused due to resource restrictions. This work resumed in Quarter 4 and was updated to include workforce data for March 2025. The project group is due to meet in May to complete final edits to this report.

During 2024-25, 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 address inconsistencies or gaps in the information we hold about our registrants. Data fields for job roles and sectors within the registration database have

been reviewed and a proposal to streamline the structure in support of fewer and more generic categories was completed. Further work was undertaken to scope the development of information published through PowerBi dashboards including length of registration, AYE and PIP achievement.

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 and the Regional Business Intelligence group. 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 improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of care, allowing for new models in the delivery of services. The Social Care Council is providing insight into workforce 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 care.

In August 2024, the Health Minister visited the Social Care Council and spent time with the staff team to hear about the work carried out to support workforce registration, standards, learning and development. Council staff have led, or contributed to, workstreams to support the Department of Health in developing social work and social care 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. The team also contribute to subject expert groups to inform policy development and implementation to support population wellbeing. During the year, the Social Care Council supported 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 Council has facilitated workshops and meetings for groups of social work data leaders and social care data leaders to connect with Digital Health and Care NI, Business Services Organisation and Department of Health. These groups have shared their experience of data collection, analysis and reporting with the long term aim of developing systems and processes to share data and intelligence to support workforce planning and development. These groups are scheduled to meet again in Quarter 1 to workshop priorities and actions for unified data definitions, data collection and reporting.



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 to recruit, retain and upskill the workforce to meet the needs of people in our community who need care and support. The Department of Health Social Care Collaborative Forum (SCCF) was established to take forward work to support the Reform of Adult Social Care and Children's Services. The Social Care Council Chief Executive is the Co-Chair of the SCCF and during 2024-25, Social Care Council staff supported the work of the Forum through participation in workstreams. This included leading on the work to develop a career pathway for social care practitioners; leading the promotional campaigns for social care; and leading work to develop a common dataset for social care. The Council maintains a [Social Care Reform](#) webpage to provide information and updates on progress for the sector. Staff were invited to deliver a presentation 'Making Co-production Happen: Promoting Social Care Workforce Reform' at the European Social Services Conference in Antwerp in June 2024. The team has been successful in being selected to present on Workforce Support at the ESN June 2025 conference in Denmark.



Social care career structure - The [Care in Practice Framework](#) for Social Care was launched in November 2024 as part of the Department of Health launch of the 10 Year Social Care Workforce Strategy. Development of a career structure and recognised learning framework for social care is 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 [Level 2 Certificate in Safe and Effective Practice](#). The Level 2 certificate has been designed to provide a recognised qualification for new social care practitioners as they get started in their social care career. The certificate was approved by CCEA Regulation, made available from September 2024 and added to the Apprenticeship Framework in October 2024.

Development of the Level 2 certificate involved extensive engagement with employer and education interests to ensure the specification met the requirements for practice. Additional working groups were established with Awarding Organisations to fine tune the format and language of the specification. The pilot programme ran from March to August and provided an opportunity to assess the length of time and the amount of support required to complete the certificate. This is a practice based qualification designed to 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 practitioner changes employment or role within social care.

CiP Framework

Key:

Entrance Level Social Care Practitioner

Learning and developing new skills

Social Care Practitioner

Developing and consolidating new skills

Enhanced Social Care Practitioner

Developing and enhancing skills

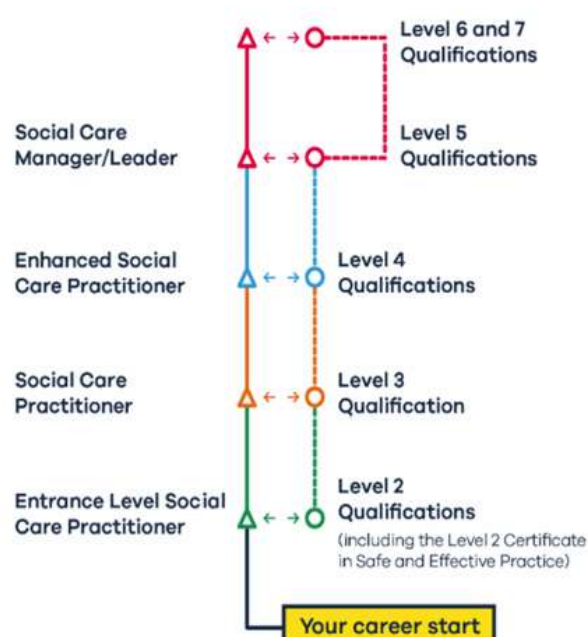
Social Care Manager/Leader

Helping others achieve their goals

Qualifications pathway



Continuous learning pathway



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 continued the Review of the Level 2 and 3 Diplomas in Health and Social Care (NI) during 2024-25:

- Reviews of Level 2 Diploma has been completed and 3 Awarding Organisations have been accredited by CCEA for delivery.
- Reviews of Level 2 and 3 qualifications almost complete (circa 95% completion).
- Applications made, to CCEA, for Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications to be on Apprenticeship Framework.
- Review of the National Occupational Standards for Health and Social Care opened in 2024-25. To date 99 standards have been reviewed and uploaded for NI assessment.



DoH funded social care training – 2024-25 was the fourth consecutive year in which the Department of Health provided funding to support priority training in adult social care. The Council allocated £127k for staff to complete 105 Health and Social Care qualifications:

- 15 Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management in Health and Social Care (NI)-Adult Residential Management pathway.
- 34 Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management in Health and Social Care (NI)-Adult Management pathway.
- 5 Level 3 Diploma in Health & Social Care (NI).
- 4 Level 3 Award in Education and Training (Train the Trainer).
- 11 Level 2 Diploma in Health & Social Care (NI).
- 26 Level 2 Certificate in Safe and Effective Practice.



Social care practitioners views on learning and development – the Council engaged with social care practitioners, employers and training providers involved in the pilot of the new Level 2 Certificate in Safe and Effective Practice. Their feedback helped to shape the guidance and support materials to accompany the certificate.



Social care recruitment and employability – Following the successful employment academies and development programmes supported by the Council in 2023-24, the workforce development team partnered with the King's Trust again in

2024-25 to plan and deliver further 'Get Hired' programmes to encourage young people into employment. Two programmes created opportunities for seven people to within social care employment. The Council also developed a series of news stories and podcasts to raise awareness of the many different ways that people get started in their social care career and to show the variety of job opportunities this sector offers.



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.

The Social Care Council joined with the HSC Regulators Forum at an engagement event held with local Assembly Members and interest groups to raise awareness of the role of regulation in Health and Social Care in raising professional standards. Staff also participated in meetings and workshops with partner regulators 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 holds lead responsibility for implementation of the 'NI Social Work Leadership Framework'. Meetings and workshops were held throughout the year, bringing together social work leads to collaborate on integrating the framework into education and practice development.

Front-line social workers and students were engaged in online surveys and focus groups to benchmark awareness of the framework, how it is used in practice and possible opportunities to make it more accessible. This learning will be taken forward in the 2025-26 workplan. Social workers who were nominated for the Contribution to Social Work Leadership category in the 2025 Social Work Awards have been engaged in developing their leadership story as part of a webpage hosted on the Department of Health website for Social Work Leadership.



UK and Ireland Social Work and Social Care Alliance – The Social Care Council is a member of this Alliance working with the social work/social care Regulators in the UK and Ireland, along with Skills for Care in England. This group collaborates on skills, qualifications and workforce development for social care across the UK and Ireland. In Autumn 2024, the Alliance published the report on the Economic Value of Social Care within the UK. This report demonstrated the vital role of social care, which makes up 5% of the Northern Ireland labour force, generating around £730m in annual revenue and adding £1.5b in economic value to the economy. The report has been shared online and through engagement with employers, government departments and elected representatives to improve understanding of the benefits of investing in social care workforce recruitment and development.



Raising the profile of social work and social care - The Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement supported the Social Care Collaborative Forum's Communications workstream. The group lead on planning and delivery of the 2024 'Social Care Making a Difference' campaign and scoping for a full evaluation of the 2022-23 'social care – making a difference' campaign. The 2024-25 'Social care – making the difference' campaign was designed during the year, ready for delivery in Summer 2025 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.

Communication campaigns and engagement activities were delivered to raise awareness of a career in social work, promoting it as a positive career choice. Promotional work was aligned to support applications to social work courses 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 three to five years. This campaign will continue into 2025-26.



The annual #Yes2SocialWork campaign launched in October and ran to January 2025 to promote the Degree in Social Work. Promotional activity included 'Pathways into social work' videos, highlighting the routes into the Degree in Social Work in NI. Stories featured school leavers, graduates returning to study social work through the two-year Relevant Graduate Route and mature students from different backgrounds embarking on a career change. Social Care Council Interim Chief Executive Declan McAllister wrote to all post-primary schools across Northern Ireland to encourage A-Level students to consider the Degree in Social Work as part of their UCAS application.



A 'Thank you' campaign was delivered successfully during March 2025 to encourage people to recognise the value of social workers in the community. This campaign included support for World Social Work Day. This had significant success and included digital storytelling and PR awareness. It focused on stories from social workers, describing their experiences of working in the profession. These stories were shared widely by local media outlets and viewed extensively on the Council website and social media. The Council provided a key role in planning the March 2025 Regional Social Work Awards. This included development of the online application processes, screening entries, co-ordinating judging panels and managing outcomes. A series of news and updates on shortlisted finalists was shared to support the build-up to the awards event which hosted over 200 social workers and colleagues at a gala event in Fermanagh. Celebratory news stories were published to congratulate the winners from each category; including recognition for former NISCC senior staff, Patricia Higgins and Marian O'Rourke.

To celebrate Apprenticeship Week 2025, 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 practitioners and support them to gain qualifications. The Learning Zone was updated to provide information for employers and potential apprenticeship recruits.

The Care to Chat podcast series was further developed during 2024-25, with 11 new recordings released discussing topics across social work and social care. 6,000 people have downloaded the podcasts to date. All the [Care to Chat](#) recordings can be accessed from the Council website.



Research and evidence – Responsibility for building a social work and social care research community transferred to the Council in 2023. Our intent is to capitalise on the work already established over the years to build a culture of research and evidence, including the Building Research Community which is a thriving engagement network for social work research.

The Social Work and Social Care Research and Evidence Partnership was formally established as a sub-committee of Social Care Council's Board. This partner will lead the social work and social care research agenda in NI. Communications and engagement activity has been carried out to raise awareness about this strategic partnership and the Research Community Network. Information sessions have engaged people interested in supporting the work to building a research community for social work and social care. A stakeholder mapping event and workshops were held during the year to support development and planning for the research strategy.

The 12th Annual Social Work and Social Care Research in Practice Conference was hosted jointly by the Social Care Council and the Public Health Agency in Riddell Hall, Belfast in March 2025. Attended by 160 delegates and speakers the event included a number of keynote speakers from Wales, Ireland and Northern Ireland. In addition, it showcased 40 research, evidence and innovation projects via oral and poster formats. The event was also an opportunity to recognise 17 post qualifying students, including service users and carers, for their achievements in the post qualifying Research Methods Programme at Ulster University. The conference newsletters, presentations and photos from the event are available from the [Research](#) section of the website.

Annual Social Work and Social Care Research Conference 2025





Lead with influence

What we have learned in 2024-25

In recognising the value of compassionate and 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 2025-26

Evaluation of the work completed to lead with influence indicates that the actions set out in the 2024-25 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 2025-26 that will support us in our long term plans to support the building of a sustainable workforce and improve workforce standards.

Our 2025-26 priorities are to:

- 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.
- Work across all our Partnerships to design and deliver our business that meets the needs of the workforce, employers, and stakeholders.
- Work collaboratively with our existing partnerships and networks to develop our Research and Evidence Partnership in order to influence and support the use of research and evidence within the social work and social care workforce, including the development of the next research and evidence strategy.
- Raise the profile of social work and social care while increasing recognition of the value of the social work and social care workforce.
- Engage our stakeholders in agreeing our equality, diversity and inclusion programme to support an inclusive and diverse workforce that embraces differences and improves awareness.



Innovate and improve

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

Our actions in 2024-25 - we said we would:	Indicators of success for 2024-25 – the difference we wanted to see:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an engagement strategy by September 2024, 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 2024. 3. 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. 4. Develop and launch a new App to support the regulation and registration system for social workers and social care workers by June 2024. 5. 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement strategy in place supporting meaningful engagement. • User data and experiences available and used in designing our business. • Business Case approval from DHCNI and a board approved specification prepared ready for procurement once funding has been approved • Uptake of new App by 20% of register by March 2025, with 50%+ satisfaction level • Testing and quality assurance of our data and datasets will improve reporting, confidence and better outcomes.



Innovate and improve

How did we do in 2024-25?

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 develop the values and principles underpinning our engagement strategy. This strategy will ensure we 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 2024-25 Business Plan, there are five 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 three out of the five objectives set for Innovate and Improve. The Engagement Strategy was not completed in 2024-25. The values and principles of engagement have been agreed with registrants, partnerships and staff. Further work will be completed in Quarter 1 to finalise key engagement priorities and their connection with the business calendar. Initial scoping for the new Registration and CPD system has been completed. Further development of the business case will now take place in 2025-26. The Registration Mobile App development has been delayed whilst additional work is carried out on integration issues with the payments provider. The App will be ready for a soft launch June/July subject to final test approvals. Progress for these objectives was assessed as **AMBER (good progress, but some delays/change in focus)**.

The following pages provide an overview of the achievements in this area of work, commentary for performance against KPIs and details of mitigating action taken to address pressures affecting KPI performance.



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.

The Values and Principles of Engagement have been agreed. The User Experience Group met throughout the year to review customer contacts for accessibility and ease of understanding (letters, emails, phone scripts, website information and printed guidance). Feedback from Customer Service and events has also been reviewed to identify opportunities to improve our engagement. This work will continue in 2025-26. Estimated completion date for the Engagement Strategy is September 2025.



App development – Staff and user groups were engaged in the development phases for the new Registration Mobile App. Work on the application pathway in SOCRATES and data cleansing to streamline employment sectors/job profiles was completed. This work was required to ensure that information processed through the App is compatible with the main database. Go-Live was delayed due to issues with the integration of the payments application. Further testing is due to be completed in Quarter 1, with a soft launch in June/July expected.



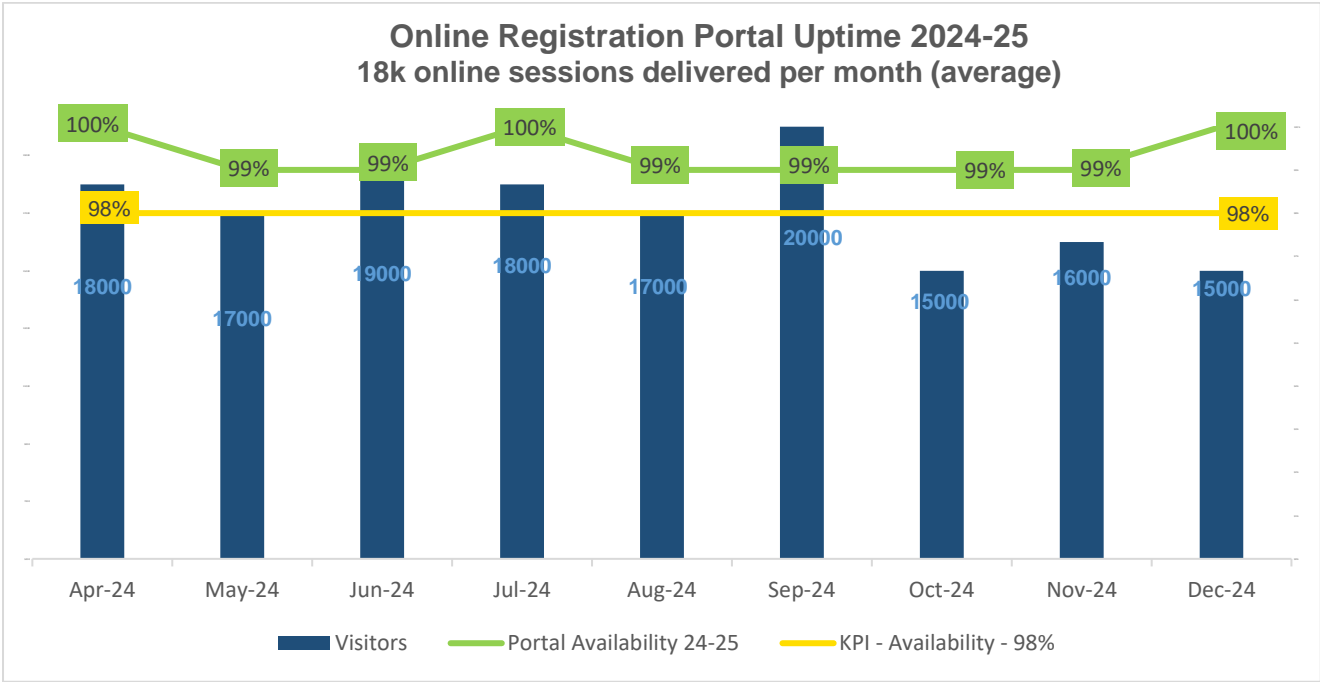
Learning Management System – All staff are engaged with developing their knowledge through the new HSC learning management system for staff which was launched in May 2023. This provides for all training and e-learning and enables managers to review the learning and development of their teams. The system supports managers and staff, providing in tracking and links to training available, through the user's profile.



Fitness to Practise Case Management System - the project to deliver a new ICT supported case management system for Fitness to Practise and Committee was completed in 2024-25. This project was completed on time and within budget. The online forms for referring FtP concerns was also completed in-year. On average, 10 people per month are using the new online referrals process. Work on the adjudication module for managing Committees and Hearings is progressing satisfactorily and is expected for staff testing in Quarter 2.



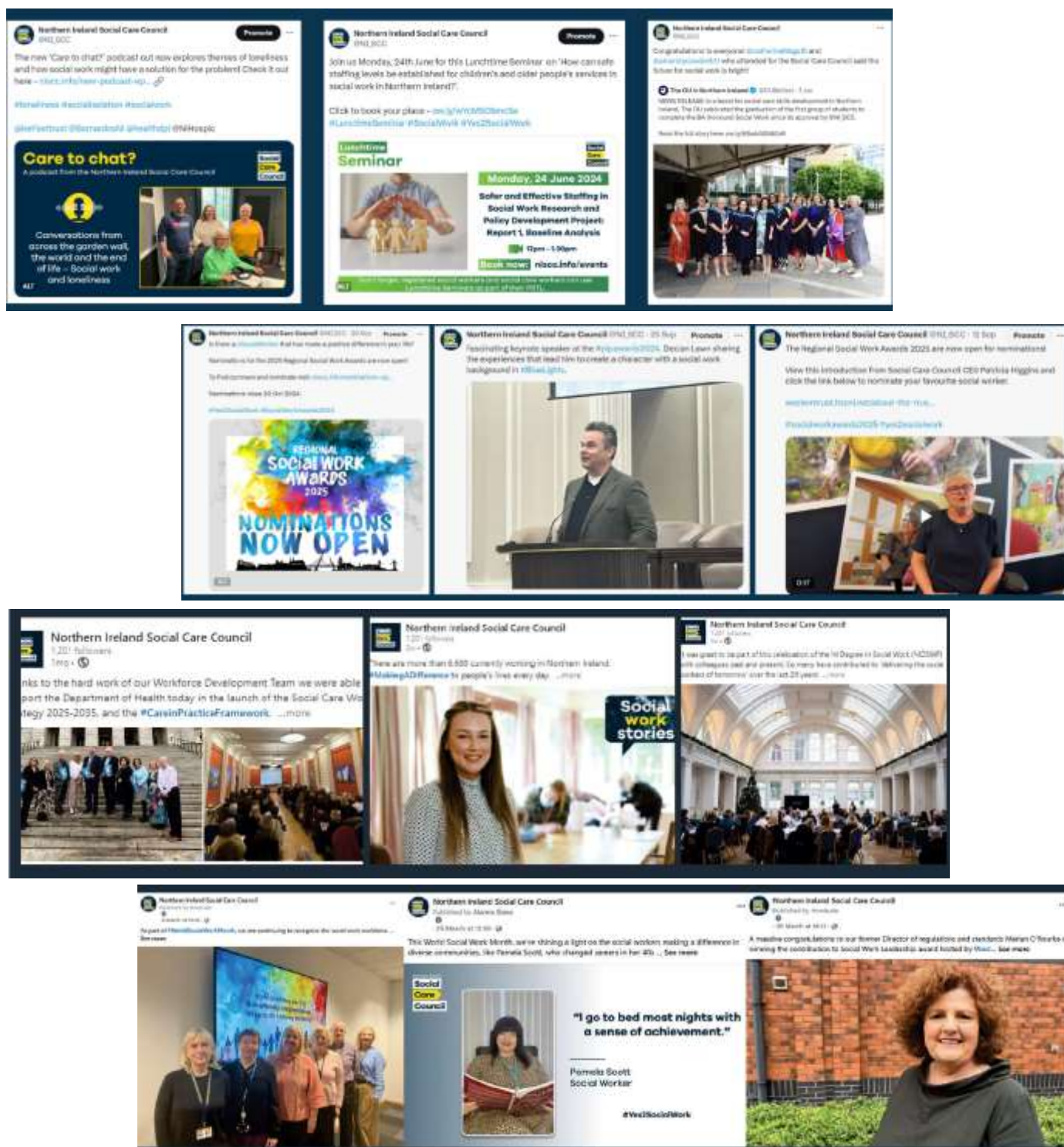
Registration and regulation system: The team delivered a rolling programme of development work and updates for the SOCRATES online registration system and registration portal services to improve user experience and streamline processes required for registrations/renewals/maintenance of registration. Development work has also been carried out on the reports for the PiP assessment processes in March 2025. Reports have been developed to provide information to assist with tracking PiP achievement and compliances for those subject to PiP Requirements and the AYE condition.



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. In 2023-24, Google Analytics software was upgraded on the Council website, Learning Zone and Registration Portal. In 2024-25, Staff continued work with the supplier to build tailored dashboards and reports on the G4 platform to support analysis of online resources and communications.



The Citizen Space consultation platform was used extensively to gather stakeholder feedback on a range of activities including: customer service, Lunchtime Seminars, Learning Zone resources, Social Care Managers Forum, Qualifications Reviews, Fair Work Forum Review. 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 and to generate reports on the information provided. Citizen Space was also used to support online applications for the Social Work Awards and applications for approved Training Funding.





Innovate and improve

What we have learned in 2024-25

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 2025-26

Evaluation of the work completed to innovate and improve indicates that the actions set out in the 2024-25 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 2025-26 that will support us in our long term plans to improve the quality and accessibility of our services.

Our 2025-26 priorities are to:

- Finalise our engagement strategy by December 2025, following a period of consultation, which will set out how we engage registrants and others in delivering our business and promoting the value, impact and recognition of the social work and social care workforce.
- Following business case approval for a new Registration and CPD system, commence delivery of a business reform project to put a new ICT enabled system in place by March 2027.
- Scope how AI can support workstreams and business functions that will inform a Digital AI strategy for the Social Care Council by December 2025.
- 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 and outcomes to identify areas for inspection and quality assurance during 2025-26.



Delivering our Strategy

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

Our actions in 2024-25 - we said we would:	Indicators of success for 2024-25 – the difference we wanted to see:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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. 2. Develop a programme to support all staff and leaders in the organisation following on from the 2023-24 Compassionate Leadership Programme by September 2024. 3. Develop a Health and Wellbeing Programme with associated outcomes to support all staff in the organisation by September 2024. 4. 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. 5. Develop a Climate Change Strategy and action plan by December 2024. 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 for updating staff by December 2024. 7. Ensure we break even by March 2025. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IIP Platinum maintained • Reward and Recognition Framework in place • Positive impact on culture of the organisation and staff satisfaction levels benchmarked against the IIP survey. • Staff engaged in a development programme that focuses on • Leadership capability and opportunity across the organisation. • IIP Health and Wellbeing Gold maintained with actions that will inform a future Platinum accreditation by April 2026. • Positive impact on the wellbeing of staff with levels benchmarked • against the IIP health and wellbeing survey. • People Plan developed with gaps and issues identified. • Staff are connected to their contribution to supporting climate change and affirmative actions are in place which can be managed and reported on. • Intranet is improved and staff satisfaction levels increase by 20%. • Break even achieved.



Delivering our Strategy

How did we do in 2024-25?

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-based and remote working to make best use of their time. Staff have delivered a wide range of meetings and events for internal engagement, external stakeholders and to deliver projects on behalf of the Department of Health and other HSC networks.

Engagement activity to promote social work and social care careers, CPD, registration and the Standards has returned to pre-pandemic levels, with an average of 15 information sessions, careers events, or employability programmes supported each month at venues across NI. Staff are connecting with regulatory and workforce development colleagues in the UK, Ireland and Europe in-person and online as part of the programme of work to share best practice and implement policy.

In the 2024-25 Business Plan, there are twelve 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 31 March 2025, the leadership team assessed satisfactory achievement against five out of the seven objectives set for Delivering Our Strategy. The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will be completed in June/July. The first draft of the Internal Communications Plan has been developed and will be finalised during 2025. and will Social Care Matters report was not published within 2024-25 and will be completed in Quarter 1 of 2025-26. The Registration Mobile App is undergoing final testing of the payments software integration and is on track for soft launch June/July 2025. Progress for these objectives was assessed as **AMBER (good progress, but some delays/change in focus)**.

The following pages provide an overview of the achievements in this area of work, commentary for performance against KPIs and details of mitigating action taken to address pressures affecting KPI performance.



People

All staff come together in James House at least once a month to participate in the '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.

All staff are using the updated HSC e-learning system which first went live in 2023-24. The site is used for mandatory e-learning and personal development. Staff participated in groups to review work processes and contributed ideas to support improvements to services such as piloting outsourcing registrant call handling and developing specialist for specific areas of work such as Assessed Year in Employment, Internationally Qualified Social Workers and Data Quality exercises. 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 refresher training on the new 'Complaints Policy' to ensure that customer issues were addressed promptly and resolved locally where possible.

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. Fitness to Practise staff completed the Level 5 Certificate in Investigative Practice. Band 4 and 5 staff completed a development programme with the Leadership Centre, which focused on their personal strengths and interpersonal skills. Two staff engaged in the Leading Edge development programme for young managers.



Two staff members participated in the Young Scotland programme in January 2025. 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. This is the third time staff from the organisation have participated in this programme. They presented to colleagues at the Townhall to share their experience. It was recognised that the programme is challenging, but has increased their confidence to connect with new people and new projects.



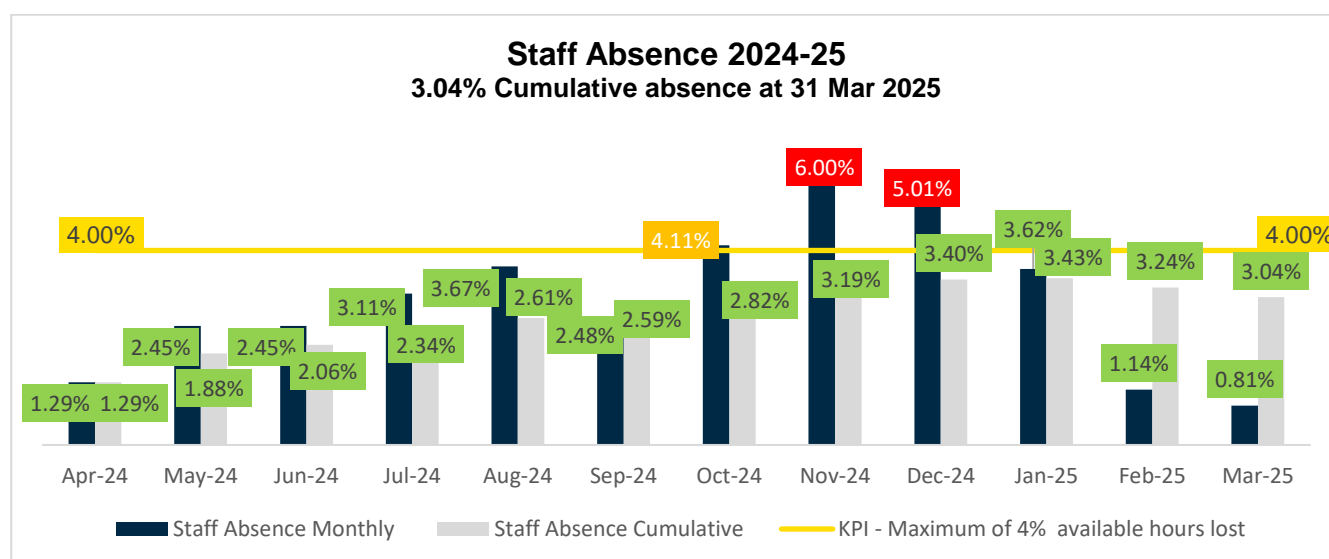
The Social Care Council IIP action plans were successfully delivered in-year. The organisation had achieved Platinum accreditation in March 2024, which is the highest IIP standard worldwide. The organisation also holds the IIP Health and Wellbeing Award Gold Standard. At the interim assessment in Spring 2025, the assessor commented on the positive experiences and engagement evident amongst the staff team.

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'.

During the year, HR specialists worked with the management and staff groups to progress development of the People Plan. Staff contributed to discussions relating to the opportunities for development they would like to see for themselves and their team in the next 3-5 years. Feedback from these sessions was collated and the management team is taking forward the recommendations with staff groups in 2025-26.

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 into 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 are regular opportunities for teams to come together in a shared space at least one day per 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. Social Care Council staff have supported health events in the building including NI Blood Transfusion donor sessions, disability and equality coffee mornings.

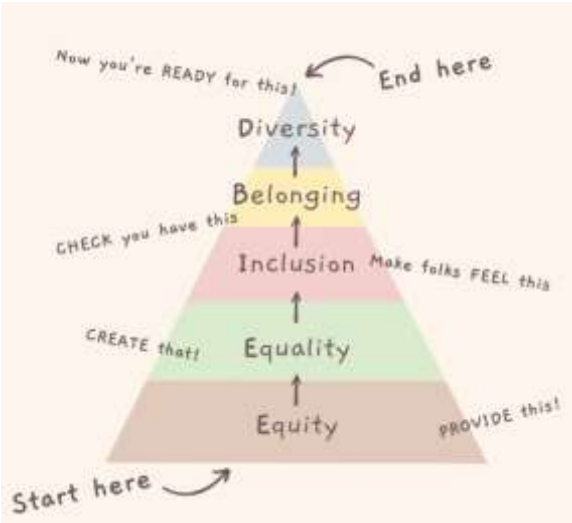
Staff absence totals for 2024-25 were 3.04% (2023-24 2.83%) - which is below the overall KPI of 4%. Absence exceeded the 4% KPI in October, November and December 2024. This was due to long term absences and seasonal illnesses. Absence remained within KPI for all other months.



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. Business Services Organisation (BSO) Equality Unit provides the Council with a high-quality bespoke Equality and Human Rights service. Services include staff training, awareness sessions and guidance materials relating to individual responsibilities for promoting equality and diversity. BSO also provides one-to-one support for senior staff on considering equality issues in policy and decision-making. All staff have completed e-learning modules on equality and diversity and all those involved in policy/service development have completed training on equality screening and impact assessment.

The Social Care Council delivered the annual 'Equality Action Plan' and annual 'Disability Action Plan' 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 annual Action Plans and supported statutory reporting to the Equality Commission.

Work is progressing to raise the profile of inclusion and diversity as core component of the role and functions of the Social Care Council as an Employer and a Regulator. The Internal Diversity group for Social Care Council staff was established in 2024-25, bringing together volunteers with an interest in progressing this work across the organisational functions. All staff participated in a facilitated workshop which provided opportunities for discussions on equality, diversity and inclusion and to capture their views and perceptions and suggestions for improvements. An additional facilitated workshop was hosted with Board members and members of the Participation Partnership. This work will continue in 2025-26.



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 – 2024-25 marked the second 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. All staff are working flexibly, using the James House office as a base to come together with teams and projects as required. The organisation is maximising the use of 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 Microsoft Teams for calls, meetings and messaging.

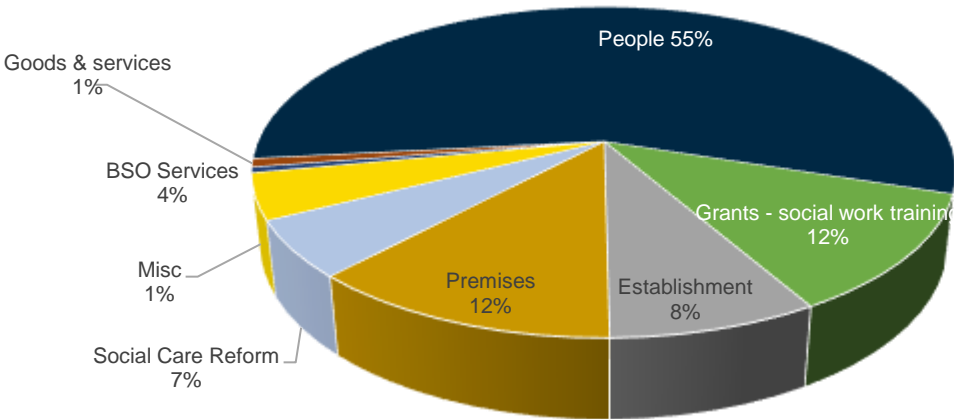
In addition to providing cost-savings in estates management, the new premises provides access to a wide range of onsite meeting rooms and a large conference space, which have proved invaluable for in-person meetings, workshops and events. James House offers a range of shared and collaborative spaces 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. 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. The new facility also offers space for bicycle parking, access to local running/walking routes and there are shower facilities for those who exercise on the way to work, or during rest periods.

Finance



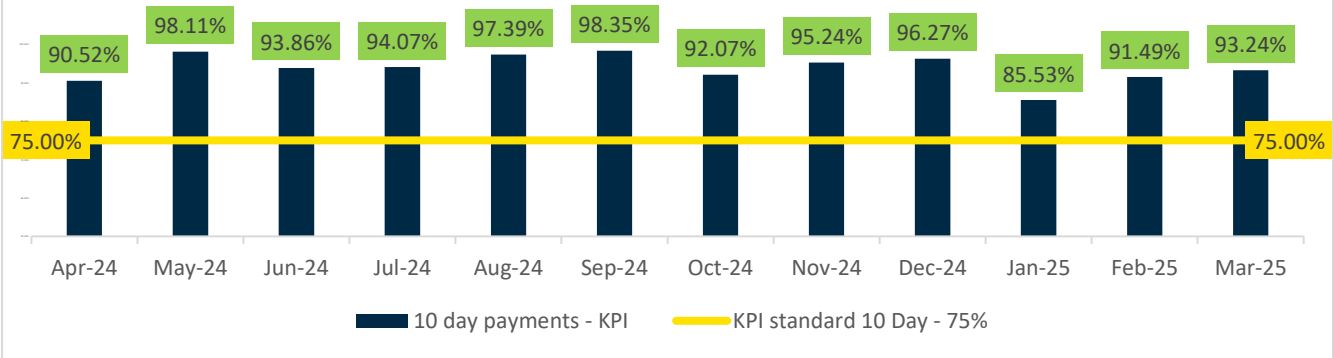
The Social Care Council achieved a £10k surplus at year-end (31 March 2025). The breakeven position target has therefore been reached for the financial year 2024-25. Full details of income and expenditure is on pages 113-116 of the accounts. Income received includes £1,745,781 from Registration Fees and £4,452,548 Revenue Resource Limit received from the Department of Health. Total expenditure of £6.5m was made up of £3.56m pay-related costs and £2.91m non-pay costs.

Finance - Key areas funded in 2024-25

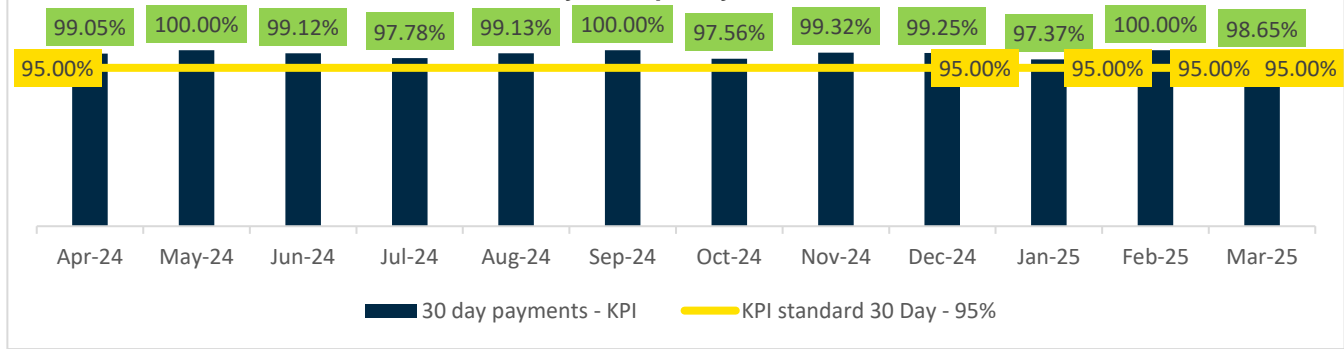


During the year, the Council paid 1,673 invoices totalling £2.99m in the course of its business. Prompt payment targets to pay 75% of invoices within 10-days and 95% within 30-days were met.

10 Day Prompt Payments 2024-25



30 Day Prompt Payments 2024-25





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 Social Work and Social Care career campaigns, Lunchtime Seminar series, Learning Zone, Care to Chat Podcasts, World Social Work Day, Apprenticeships Week, Carers Week, Schools Summit, recruitment opportunities and promotion of reports. At 31 March 2025, we had 14k followers across our digital channels.



Traffic on the website www.niscc.info averaged 12k 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.



Developing strategy - Work on the development of the engagement strategy continued in this year. Registrants, staff and Participation Partnership members developed the values and principles which are the foundations for all our engagement and communication. 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 to make future proof material in terms of accessibility needs. The Council invests a significant amount of time to ensure staff are connected with the work of the Council. Work will continue on the development of the Internal Communications strategy in 2025-26 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 2024-25

Our strategic plan sets an ambitious vision to engage with the workforce and the wider public to raise awareness about the positive difference made by our work to raise standards in social work and social care. More work is required to solidify communication and engagement with our immediate stakeholders – registrants, employers, people who use services and their carers; improving public perception is a long-term outcome. A communication and engagement strategy will support and co-ordinate our key efforts and messages.

Supporting staff to use new tools such as quality improvement, evaluation, design thinking will ensure that our work makes best use of available resources, integrates with changing stakeholder needs and integrates with emerging technology solutions.

Our staff are benefiting from health and wellbeing programmes, the availability of the agile working policy and the opportunity to be involved in training and learning. Staff events, team meetings and quarterly check-ins are involving staff in organisational development as well as supporting them in their personal development plans.

Looking Ahead – Our Plans for 2025-26

Evaluation of the work completed to deliver our strategy indicates that the actions set out in the 2024-25 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 2025-26 that will support us in our long term plans to improve workforce standards.

Our 2025-26 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 2025.
- Develop a 3-year Learning and Development Programme for all staff that supports them in their work and their careers.
- Develop a Health and Wellbeing Programme with associated outcomes to support all staff in the organisation by March 2026.
- Review our structure and functions to ensure we are able to continue to deliver our business priorities in the future within our financial allocation, while also building career structure and growth for staff.
- 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 2025.
- Ensure we break even by March 2026.

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.
- Facilities within James House have enabled staff to recycle food waste, plastics, paper, tins and cardboard.
- 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 measures to support a Climate Action Plan. Members of the Participation Partnership are involved in the development work to complete the plan development work during 2025-26.

Performance analysis – Key Performance Indicators

The organisation delivered its business making best use of technology to support agile working – with staff working flexibly between remote and office-based working. The Senior Leadership Team, supported by Heads of Functions, continued to meet monthly throughout the year to review business priorities and share learning.

The 2024-25 Business Plan was delivered against 29 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 overall delivery of the 29 objectives and performance against the 12 KPIs set out in the 2024-25 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.

Overview of Key Performance Indicators for 2024-25

At the end of 2024-25 business year (31 March 2025):

- 11/12 KPIs were rated **GREEN** Further detail on the performance information used to make these assessments and the *risk tolerances applied are included in the table below.
- 23/29 Objectives were assessed as fully completed

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=1031) *Lower limit for KPI risk tolerance assessed as 85%	Across months 1-12 of 2024-25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 61,490 people supported by Registration Advisers • 23,078 calls handled (38% of calls presented were handled) • 38,258 emails managed (349 emails awaiting resolution at closing) *GREEN rating for 94% cumulative KPI reflects positive experiences reported by those supported through the services. It is recognized that the survey responses represent 1.6% of customers. Further work will be done in 2024-25 to promote the survey.
2. We will process 100% of completed applications/ renewals within 20 working days of submission	Cum 100% Number of applications/ renewals completed (n=17,252) *Lower limit for KPI risk tolerance assessed as 92%	Across months 1-12 of 2024-25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14,331 registrations completed (10,315 applications and 4,016 renewals) • 100% (99.9%) of applications/renewals processed within 20 days of completed materials being received (1,170 applications in the system at closing) • 96% of renewals processed automatically through the online system • 45,200 fees paid (90% paid online) *GREEN rating for 100% cumulative KPI is within tolerance limits. This reflects improved performance against 2023 and 2024 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 2025-26. 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.
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=128) *Lower limit for KPI risk tolerance assessed as 100%	Across months 1-12 of 2024-25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 128 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. *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.
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) *Lower limit for KPI risk tolerance assessed as 94%	Across months 1-12 of 2024-25 <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 *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
5. We will conclude 100% of Interim Suspension Order (ISO) hearings within 4 weeks of referral	Cum 92% (n=38) *Lower limit for KPI risk tolerance assessed as 69%	Across months 1-12 of 2024-25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38 cases were identified as high risk and referred for Interim Order hearing • 92% of Interim Orders were concluded within 4 weeks of referral • 37% increase in Interim Order cases compared to 2022-23 *AMBER rating for 100% cumulative KPI reflects the impact of 3 ISO cases that took more than 4 weeks to complete. ISO occurrences are unpredictable and required rapid adjustment to scheduling to process within timescales. agility of the FtP Officers and the Committee Management Team to implement processes respond within time constraints. No additional risk to the public

		occurred during the delay. 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.
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) *Lower limit for KPI risk tolerance assessed as 75%	Across months 1-12 of 2024-25 <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 the 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>
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%	Across months 1-12 of 2024-25 <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 • 21 AYE Audit responses reviewed in sample and all candidates met the required standards • 19 PIP Approved Programmes monitored • Ulster University PiP Programmes external visitor review completed • 257 Degree in Social Work graduates in NI (summer 2024) • 290 students enrolled on the Degree in Autumn 2024

	*Lower limit for KPI risk tolerance assessed as 100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 210 PiP Awards presented in Sept 2024 <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>
KPI	Performance	Comment on any highlights/risks/mitigation
8. We will ensure our staff absence levels do not exceed 4% during the year	<p>Month 12 Cum 3.04%</p> <p>*Upper limit for KPI risk tolerance assessed as 4%</p>	<p>Cumulative absence across months 1-12 was recorded at 2.83%.</p> <p>Staff absence totals for 2024-25 were 3.04 % (2023-24 2.83%) - which is below the overall KPI of 4%. KPI was exceeded in October (4.11%), November (6.0%) and December (6.01%). This was due to long term absences and seasonal illnesses. Absence remained within 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>
<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=1673)</p> <p>30 Day KPI 98.98%</p> <p>*Lower limit for KPI risk tolerance assessed as 90%</p> <p>10 Day KPI 93.96%</p> <p>*Lower limit for KPI risk tolerance assessed as 70%</p>	<p>Across months 1-12 of 2024-25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,673 invoices paid, with a value of £2.99m • 93.96% of invoices paid within 10 days (£2.55m) • 98.98% of invoices paid within 30 days (£2.92m) <p>*GREEN rating for 93.96% and 98.98% cumulative KPIs reflects the strong performance across procurement, processing and approval of invoices to ensure efficient processing of payments. KPI standards for 10-day and 30-day payments were met throughout the year.</p>

KPI	Performance	Comment on any highlights/risks/mitigation
11. We will manage our finances to achieve financial breakeven target of 0.25% or £20k (whichever is greater)	At end of Month 12 Unaudited Year-End Position £10k	<p>Month 12 finance reports confirmed a £10k surplus at 31 March 2025. The breakeven position has therefore been reached for the financial year 2024-25.</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>
12. We will ensure the Online Registration Portal is available at least 98% of time during the year	Month 12 Cum 100% Number of Portal Sessions n=216k *Lower limit for KPI risk tolerance assessed as 93%	<p>Across months 1-12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% Portal availability • 216k active users • 4.5m page views <p>*GREEN rating for 100% 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 improvements to the database and portal.</p> <p>Staff and stakeholders were assisted with payment issues, online account log-ins, updating employment details, amending employer/endorser permissions and set up for videoconferencing. Support was provided for bulk management of duplicated registration applications, requests for voluntary registration removals, fee generations system updates and system training.</p>

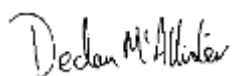
Positioning

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 planning and service delivery within 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.



Declan McAllister

Chief Executive (Interim)

Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Date: 21 August 2025

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.



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. The Chief Executive is supported by the Director of Registration and Corporate Services and the Director of Regulation and Standards. The organisational structure can be found at Appendix 2.

Equality and diversity

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. Managers worked with BSO Equality Unit and Human Resources Team, reviewing recruitment and employment policies and practice to ensure they meet their business objective to be an Employer of Choice for people from all backgrounds.

The Council is a partner in the HSC work placement scheme which provides opportunities for people with disabilities to gain employment experience. 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

Internal 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. Teams and working groups use Microsoft Teams to share work updates and information.

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:

	2025		2024	
	Number	Value £	Number	Value £
Total bills paid	1,673	2,990,505	1,172	3,244,742
Total bills paid within 30 day target	1,656	2,920,244	1,146	3,094,542
% of bills paid within 30 day target	99%	95%	98%	95%
Total bills paid within 10 day target	1,572	2,804,020	1,056	2,296,839
% of bills paid within 10 day target	94%	94%	90%	71%

The Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002

There was no interest payable arising from claims made by businesses under this legislation.

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.

Complaints

The Social Care Council received 15 written complaints about its services during 2024-25. All of these were resolved at the initial stage – with 9 complaints upheld and addressed. 6 complaints were 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 Social Care Council'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 2024-25

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.

During Quarter 3, interim arrangements to cover the senior leadership responsibilities were put in place whilst recruitment to cover retirement of Chief Executive and Director of Regulation and Standards was in progress.

Summary of SLT responsibilities are as follows:

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 was appointed as interim CEO from 14 October 2024 to cover these responsibilities following Patricia Higgins' retirement)

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. (Sandra Stranaghan acted as interim Director from 17 February 2025 to cover these responsibilities)

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. (Catherine Maguire and Helen McVicker acted as interim Co-Directors from 1 December 2024 to cover these responsibilities)

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Board 2024-25

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 practitioners, 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 Chair is Mr Paul Martin and he is supported by *Board Members –

- Gerard Guckian **(Deputy Chair)
- Sarah Browne
- Roslyn Dougherty
- David Hayes
- Jacqueline McGarvey

*3 positions were vacant during 2024-25. New members are due to take up post early in 2025-26 following a recruitment exercise by the Public Appointments Unit.

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. **Gerard Guckian was Acting Chair during Mr Martin's ill-health absence in 2024-25.

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 completed its self-assessment for year ended 31 March 2025 and updated the Action Plan which it will continue to review at least annually to ensure continual improvement in governance and best practice. This is reported in the Governance Statement contained within this Annual Report and Accounts for 2024-25.

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 Business Support Team at the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, 4th Floor James House, 2 Cromac Avenue, Belfast, BT7 2JA, business.support@niscc.hscni.net

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Committees 2024-25

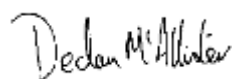
The Board has established two Committees to support it in the delivery of its strategic functions, each of which is chaired by a Board Member:

- **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 91.
- **The Remuneration Committee** (chaired by the Board Chair) 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 2024-25

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.
- **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 and Evidence Partnership** - comprising representatives from government departments and other relevant research constituencies, senior representatives from higher education institutions, health and social care, justice, education and voluntary and private sectors; service users and carers and the professional body for social workers and social care practitioners in Northern Ireland. This partnership was established in 2024 to take forward the programme of work to build a social work and social care research community.
- **Registrants Engagement Forums** - During 2024-25, the Registrants Forum was stood down and following a consultation and period of engagement, it was agreed to replace the forum with two separate groups – one focusing on social work and the other on social care. The Social Workers Registrants Engagement Group has now been established, and work is ongoing to best co-ordinate the involvement of social care practitioners in a separate group.



Declan McAllister
Chief Executive (Interim)
Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Date: 21 August 2025

Corporate Governance Report – Statement of Accounting Officer Responsibilities

Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

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 Declan McAllister 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 2024-25

1. Introduction / Scope of Responsibility

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Council) is accountable 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 jointly chairs the Social Care Collaborative forum with the DOH which has the responsibility for taking forward proposals for the Reform of Adult Social Care and is represented on the Social Work Implementation board taking forward transformation in Social Work.

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 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 practitioners. The Social Care Council is also a member of the NI Joint Regulators Forum comprising health and social care professional and system regulators, to share best practice and identify emerging concerns.

The Social Care Council has a Partnership Agreement and Engagement Plan 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 will face significant financial challenges in 2025-26 following a flat cash allocation based on 2024-25 and is working closely with the DoH on its anticipated financial pressures.

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 2025 and updated the Action Plan which it will continue to review at least annually to ensure continual improvement in governance and best practice.

The Board agreed that –

- 15 indicators were assessed as Green (all good practices are in place).
- 2 indicators were assessed as Amber/Green.

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	Amber	Green
1.2	Balance and calibre of Board members	Amber	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	

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. At present the Board has 3 vacancies. Recruitment has taken place and it is expected that the new Board Members will take up appointment during Summer 2025.

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

Meetings of the Board were held in open session four times during the year and records are maintained of the Board attendance. In addition, the Board held two Strategic Planning Sessions. During 2024-25 the Board attendance for all sessions was:

Chair/ Member	Attendance at Board During 2024-25 (%)
Paul Martin, Chair *	0%
Gerry Guckian, Deputy Chair	100%
Sarah Browne, Member	100%
Roslyn Dougherty, Member	100%
David Hayes, Member	100%
Jacqueline McGarvey, Member	100%

**Paul Martin was on long term sick absence during the year.*

Overall this represents an 83.3% attendance rate when taken collectively over the year 2024-25. Attendance at Board Strategic Days, Committees and Partnerships during 2024-25 is set out below:

	Board Strategic	Audit & Risk Assurance Committee	Remuneration Committee	Participation Forum	Leaders in Social Care Partnership	Professional in Practice Partnership	Research & Evidence Partnership
FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS IN 2024-25	2	5	3	4	4	4	2
P Martin *	0%	N/A	0%	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%	**100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
D Hayes	50%	N/A	N/A	0%	N/A	N/A	100%
J McGarvey	50%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lesley Mitchell (Co-opted)	N/A	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

** Paul Martin was on long term sick leave during the year.*

*** Attended in capacity of Acting Chair for Audit & Risk Assurance Committee meetings*

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.

3. 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 has developed a four-year Strategic Plan 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 at www.niscc.info

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 the Senior Leadership Team and an operational team.

To give effect to the Strategic and Business Plans, the Social Care Council reports monthly on business objective and key performance indicator performance. 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.

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. This also includes additional RAG rating for each control and assurance which is identified against each risk as part of the three lines of defence good practice guide.

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.

4. 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.49,500) 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).

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 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 BSO Information Technology Service 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 was one data breach during the year. The data breach was a low risk breach and was managed in accordance with the Social Care Council's Data Security Breach Management Policy. There were no cyber security incidents.

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.

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 of people who use social care services and carers.
- Leaders in Social Care Partnership - comprising of employers of the social care workforce.
- The Professional in Practice Partnership - comprising of employers of social workers, Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), and other education providers who are key to the delivery of the PiP Framework.
- Research and Evidence Partnership - comprising of representatives from government departments and other relevant research constituencies, senior representatives from higher education institutions, health and social care, justice, education and voluntary and private sectors; service users and carers and the professional body for social workers and social care practitioners in Northern Ireland.
- Registrants Forum - comprising of registrants This forum has been under review with the Board for the last 12 months and it has now been agreed to create a separate Social Work Registrants and Social Care Registrants forum reporting to the Senior Executive team with progress reports coming to the Board.

During 2024-25, the Registrants Forum was stood down and following a consultation and period of engagement, it was agreed to replace the forum with two separate groups – one focusing on social work and the other on social care. The Social Workers Registrants Engagement Group has now been established, and work is ongoing to best co-ordinate the involvement of social care practitioners in a separate group.

The Social Care Council 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 Partnership Forums. This holistic approach to engagement ensures that any risks identified by stakeholders are brought to the attention of the Board.

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.

5. 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 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.

6. 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

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 2024-25 Internal Audit reviewed the following systems:

- Board Effectiveness, providing a satisfactory assurance.
- Financial Review, providing a satisfactory assurance.
- Management of the Social Care Council Fitness to Practise, providing a satisfactory assurance.
- Registration, providing a satisfactory assurance.

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.

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 2024-25.

Other Independent Assurances

The Social Care Council was proud to be awarded IIP Platinum standard award for Investors in people in 2023-24 and currently holds IIP Gold for the new Health and Wellbeing assessment standard.

7. 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.

8. Internal Governance Divergences

Internal Control Issues now Resolved 2023-24

The Social Care Council moved premises to James House on 3 February 2023 as part of the Belfast Optimisation Project. The Social Care Council, along with a number of the other regional ALB's of the Department of Health, are co-located at James House under a licence arrangement. During the auditing of the 2023-24 annual accounts, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) raised an issue regarding the accountancy designation of the licence. The NIAO submitted the view that the accountancy treatment should be way of a lease in line with IFRS16. Following detailed discussions between the Department of Health, the Department of Finance, Business Services Organisation and the NIAO, agreement has now been reached that the accounting treatment for James House is designated as a lease in line with IFRS16. The Social Care financial statements for 2023-24 have been adjusted accordingly and the accounts signed off by the Interim Chief Executive, Declan McAllister.

Internal Control Issues 2024-25

During the year, the Social Care Council's Chair, Paul Martin, was on long term sick leave and retired on 31 March 2025. In his absence, Gerry Guckian (Board Member) covered the Chair position. The Department of Health and the Public Appointments Unit are planning a recruitment scheme during 2025-26 to fill the Chair position on a permanent basis.

The Chief Executive, and one of the two Directors retired during 2024-25. Patricia Higgins, Chief Executive, retired in October 2024 and Marian O'Rourke, Director of Regulation and Standards, retired in December 2024. A formal recruitment exercise for a new Chief Executive commenced in September 2024, however it was unable to be completed. As an interim position and following an internal recruitment scheme, Declan McAllister was appointed Interim Chief Executive in October 2024. A recruitment exercise is underway to fill the Chief Executive position on a permanent basis.

An internal recruitment scheme also took place to fill the Director of Regulation and Standards role. The Head of Fitness to Practise and the Head of Workforce Development are co-sharing the Director of Regulation and Standards role on an interim basis until such time as this position can be filled on a permanent basis (following the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive).

Declan McAllister's substantive role, as Director of Registration and Corporate Services is being filled on an interim basis. The Head of Business Services was appointed following an internal recruitment scheme to the Interim Director of Registration and Corporate Services.

These interim arrangements will be reviewed once a permanent Chief Executive is appointed.

9. Interjurisdictional Work

Following the EU Exit, the Social Care Council is satisfied that it is able to operate its business effectively, and continues to work collaboratively with Regulators across the UK and Ireland 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 Republic of Ireland (ROI) counterparts to help register social workers who are required to practice in Northern Ireland and the ROI.

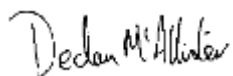
10. Budget Position

The Social Care Council received a flat cash allocation for 2025-26 based on its 2024-25 opening allocation. This will present immediate financial pressures for the organisation. The Social Care Council will work closely with its Sponsor Department at the Department of Health during the year to help manage these pressures which includes funding for social care reform.

11. 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 2024-25.



Declan McAllister
Chief Executive (Interim)
Northern Ireland Social Care Council

21 August 2025

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 2024-25:

- 8 May 2024
- 12 June 2024
- 19 June 2024 (this was an extraordinary meeting)
- 2 October 2024
- 12 February 2025

During the 2024-25 financial year, membership of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee was as follows:

APRIL 2024 – MARCH 2025	ATTENDANCE AT AUDIT and RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (%)
Mr Gerry Guckian	100%
Ms Jacqui McGarvey	100%
*Ms Lesley Mitchell	100%

*The Board Skills Audit had identified the need for financial experience within the Audit and Risk Committee. In May 2023, 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, also attends when required along with the Director of Registration and Corporate Services and the Director of Regulation and Standards. The Director of Registration and Corporate Services 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 2024-25 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 2023-24.
- 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 2024-25.
- 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 2024-25, 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 and Staff Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

Remuneration Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

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 meetings held in 2024-25 were chaired by the Deputy Chair, Mr Gerard Guckian. The Remuneration Committee is chaired by the Chair, Mr Paul Martin and Acting Chair, Gerard Guckian. The Remuneration Committee is entirely comprised of Non-Executive Directors, namely, Roslyn Doherty and Sarah Browne. The Remuneration Committee met in this form on 21 May 2024, 12 June 2024 and 24 October 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 2024-25.

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 employees 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.

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
Gerard Guckian	Acting Co-Chair	1 April 2024

NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

NAME	POSITION	DATE OF APPOINTMENT
Gerard Guckian	Council Member	1 May 2018, acting Co-Chair from 1 April 2024
Sarah Browne	Council Member	1 April 2018
Roslyn Dougherty	Council Member	1 April 2018
David Hayes	Council Member	1 April 2018
Jacqueline McGarvey	Council Member	1 April 2018

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

NAME	POSITION	DATE OF APPOINTMENT
Mrs Patricia Higgins	Chief Executive (Retired from post 31/10/2024)	From 3 September 2018 (Director of Regulation and Standards from 1 June 2002, Chief Executive from May 2022) Retired 31 October 2024, from 12 November 2024 on secondment to Department of Health.
Mr Declan McAllister	Chief Executive (Interim)	From 14 October 2024 (substantive position Director of Registration and Corporate Services from 17 July 2017).
Ms Sandra Stranaghan	Director of Registration and Corporate Services (Interim)	From 17 February 2025 (substantive position Head of Business Services from 01 December 2019).
Mrs Marian O'Rourke	Director of Regulation and Standards (Retired from post 31/12/2024)	From 8 October 2018 (Head of Workforce Development from 1 April 2014, Director of Regulation and Standards from September 2022). Retired 31 December 2024.
Ms Catherine Maguire	Co-Director of Regulation and Standards (Interim)	From 4 November 2024 0.5 WTE (substantive position Head of Workforce Development from 01 May 2023, Professional Advisor - Workforce Development from 02 January 2017).
Mrs Helen McVicker	Co-Director of Regulation and Standards (Interim)	From 4 November 2024 0.5 WTE (substantive position Head of Fitness to Practise 1 October 2017, Professional Advisor - Workforce Development from 1 April 2009).

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.

NISCC participates in the HSC Superannuation Scheme. Under this multi-employer defined benefit scheme, both NISCC and employees pay specified percentages of pensionable pay into the scheme and the liability to pay benefit falls to the DoH. NISCC is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities in the scheme on a consistent and reliable basis. Further information regarding the HSC Superannuation Scheme can be found in the HSC Superannuation Scheme Statement in the Departmental Resource Account for DoH. The costs of agreed early retirements are met by NISCC and charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure at the time NISCC commits itself to the retirement. Employee contributions are determined by the level of pensionable earnings.

The following table sets out member contribution rates that apply from 1 November 2022. Following implementation of the 2023-24 Agenda for Change pay award due in 2024-25, these contribution rates will be amended accordingly in line with scheme regulation requirements. The employee contribution rates at 31 March 2025 are as follows for members of the HSC Superannuation Scheme:

In accordance with the Scheme regulations, the tiered contribution thresholds for 2023-24 were amended to reflect the AFC uplift in pay. The revised thresholds are displayed Table 1 below.

The amended thresholds, whilst applicable from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 were applied retrospectively for these days and were implemented simultaneously with the 2023-24 pay award paid in June 2024.

Table 1: 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Pensionable earnings	Contribution Rates 2023-24 (before tax relief and based on actual annual pensionable pay)
Up to £13,246	5.1%
£13,247 to £17,673	5.7%
£17,674 to £24,022	6.1%
£24,023 to £25,146	6.8%
£25,147 to £29,635	7.7%
£29,636 to £30,638	8.8%
£30,639 to £45,996	9.8%
£45,997 to £51,708	10.0%
£51,709 to £58,972	11.6%
£58,973 to £75,632	12.5%
£75,633 and above	13.5%

From 1 April 2024 the Employee Tiered Contribution Structure has reduced to 6 tiers which are displayed below in Table 2.

Table 2: 1 April 2024 - ongoing

Annual pensionable earnings (full-time equivalent basis, based on actual salary)	Contribution Rate 2024-25 (before tax relief and based on actual annual pensionable pay))
Up to £13,259	5.2%
£13,260 to £26,831	6.5%
£26,832 to £32,691	8.3%
£32,692 to £49,078	9.8%
£49,079 to £62,924	10.7%
£62,925 and above	12.5%

From 1 April 2024, the employer contribution rate increased to 23.2% from 22.5%.

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

There were no exit packages during 2023-24 or 2024-25.

Remuneration Report

Senior Employees’ Remuneration (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	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24
Paul Martin	20-25	15-20	-	-	-	-	20-25	15-20
Gerard Guckian*	20-25	5-10	-	-	-	-	20-25	5-10
Anne O'Reilly**	0-5	0-5	-	-	-	-	0-5	0-5
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
Roslyn Dougherty	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	5-10

*From 1 April 2024 Gerard Guckian has been Acting Co-Chair alongside Paul Martin.

**Anne O'Reilly’s last day of service was 30 September 2023. Anne O'Reilly received a back-dated pay award re 2023-24 during 2024-25 but was not working as part of the Social Care Council's Board function.

Remuneration Report

Senior Executive Pay Structure Reform

With effect from 1 April 2023, the Department of Health has introduced in 2025 a Senior Executive Pay Structure Reform which impacts all Senior Executives in post at 1 April 2023. An incremental scale has been introduced, initially an 8-point scale, annually reducing by 1 point to achieve a 5-point scale by year 4 (1 April 2026). All incremental progression is subject to satisfactory performance, as considered by the relevant Remuneration Committee applying the standards as set out in the revised Performance Management Framework. The Department will introduce a new performance framework, setting expectations of organisational and personal objectives which must be met to merit a satisfactory rating. There shall be no further individual performance related pay elements or bonuses. The estimated impact of these changes is reflected within the Senior Employees Remuneration Table below. It should be noted that these figures are accrued and unpaid at 31 March 2025.

Public Service Pensions Remedy

With effect from 1 April 2022, all active members of the HSC Pension Scheme transitioned to the new 2015 HSC Pension Scheme. For those members who were previously in the legacy schemes, the 1995 and 2008 sections, the benefits they had accrued on those schemes will remain with them and are fully protected until they retire. The McCloud judgement found that the transitional protection offered to members when their schemes were reformed was discriminatory on grounds of age. In light of this decision, the government agreed to provide remedy to eligible members across the main public sector schemes. Those affected by the McCloud remedy and retiring after 1 October 2023 will be asked to make a choice about some of their pension benefits as part of their retirement process. For those members affected by the McCloud judgement, the highest value under the remedy options has been provided in accrued pension benefits.

Senior Employees' Remuneration (Audited)

Name	Salary - £000s		Benefits in kind (rounded to nearest £100)		Pension Benefits (rounded to nearest £1,000)		Total - £000s	
	2024-25*	2023-24*	2024-25*	2023-24*	2024-25*	2023-24*	2024-25*	2023-24*
Executive Members								
Patricia Higgins***	70-75 FYE 105-110	110-115	-	-	(55)	21	10-15	135-140
Declan McAllister***	85-90 FYE 90-95	80-85	-	-	48	18	135-140	100-105
Marian O'Rourke***	60-65 FYE 85-90	80-85	-	-	(217)	(10)**	(150-155)	70-75**
Catherine Maguire	15-20 FYE 70-75	-	-	-	14	-	20-25	-
Helen McVicker***	15-20 FYE 70-75	-	-	-	17	-	30-35	-
Sandra Stranaghan	5-10 FYE 70-75	-	-	-	-	-	5-10	-

FYE – full year equivalent

*2023-24 salaries show actual remuneration paid plus accrued pay awards for 2023-24 paid in 2024-25. 2024-25 is reflective of AFC pay awards paid for 2023-24 and 2024-25 as well as Chief Executives pay settlement accrued for 2023-24 and 2024-25.

**restated

***Members affected by the Public Service Pensions Remedy, McCloud judgement

Patricia Higgins 2023-24 pay included backpay of £22k in relation to 2021-22 & 2022-23 chief executive pay awards. 2024-25 includes chief executive pay up to retirement date of 31 October 2024. Patricia Higgins was on secondment with the Department of Health (DoH) from 12 November 2024 recharged to DoH, these amounts have not been included in above salary. £nil backpay has been paid in 2024-25 with an additional £17k (£22k in total including accruals prior year) accrued for back pay due for 2023-24 and 2024-25. Pension benefit is the total benefit 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025 including accrued in secondment role with DoH.

Declan McAllister 2023-24 pay included £6k accrued into 2024-25 for 2023-24 AFC pay award paid in 2024-25 in relation to Director of Registration and Corporate Services role retained until 13 October 2024. On 14 October 2024 Declan McAllister became Chief Executive (Interim), £40k salary at chief executive is included in the above amounts and £nil backpay has been paid in 2024-25 in relation to the chief executive role with £1k accrued for back pay due for 2023-24 and 2024-25. As both roles retained in year fall into Executive pay, figures above include total pay and pension benefit across the year for both roles. Full year equivalent is listed for chief executive role.

Marian O'Rourke retired from her role as Director of Regulation and Standards on 31 December 2024. Whilst Marian O'Rourke is a member of the HSC pensions scheme affected by the Public Service Pensions Remedy, McCloud judgement, the member had already made CARE remedy decision and therefore only these figures have been provided in accrued pension benefit.

Catherine Maguire became Co Director of Regulation and Standards (Interim) on 4 November 2024 alongside Helen McVicker at 0.5 working time equivalent (WTE) whilst retaining her substantive role 0.5 WTE. Above salary is in relation to director role. Pension benefit is the total benefit 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025 including both substantive and interim roles. Full year equivalent is listed for director role.

Helen McVicker became Co Director of Regulation and Standards (Interim) on 4 November 2024 alongside Catherine Maguire at 0.5 WTE whilst retaining her substantive role 0.5 WTE. Above salary is in relation to director role. Pension benefit is the total benefit 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025 including both substantive and interim roles. Full year equivalent is listed for director role.

Sandra Stranaghan became Director of Registration and Corporate Services (Interim) on 17 February 2025. Above salary is in relation to director role. Full year equivalent is listed for director role. Sandra Stranaghan is not a member of the pension scheme.

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 2024-25 or in 2023-24.

Pensions of Senior Management (Audited)

Name	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/3/25 and related lump sum £000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age £000	CETV at 31/03/24 £000	CETV at 31/03/25 £000	Real increase in CETV £000
**Patricia Higgins	40-45 Plus lump sum 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of (70-75)	897	842	(55)
Declan McAllister	30-35 Plus lump sum 75-80	2.5-5 Plus lump sum of 0-5	686	753	67
***Marian O'Rourke	10-15 Plus lump sum of 0-5	(10-12.5) Plus lump sum of 0-5	453	314	(139)
****Sandra Stranaghan	-	-	-	-	-
Catherine Maguire	5-10 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-5	148	168	19
Helen McVicker	20-25 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-5	307	332	25

*Pension figures included above are based on actual contributions in 2024-25 including backpay pay award for 2023-24 paid in 2024-25. Also included is 2024-25 AFC pay award paid where relevant during the year. Pension figures included above exclude 2023-24 and 2024-25 chief executives pay settlement as this will be paid in 2025-26. Apart from Marian O'Rourke, for those members affected by the McCloud judgement, the highest value under the remedy options has been provided in accrued pension benefits.

** Patricia Higgins retired 31 October 2024 and was on secondment to DoH from 12 November 2024.

***Marian O'Rourke retired 31 December 2024.

****Sandra Stranaghan Director of Registration and Corporate Services (Interim) is not a member of a pension scheme, therefore no amounts recorded.

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

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 2025. HM Treasury published updated guidance on 27 April 2023; this guidance was used in the calculation of 2024-25 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 (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	2024-25	2023-24
Band of the Highest Paid Director's Total Remuneration	105-110	110-115
25 th Percentile Total Remuneration	26,244	26,651
Median Total Remuneration	36,483	32,144
75 th Percentile Total Remuneration	46,148	44,122
Ratio (25%/Median/75%)	4.16/3.00/2.37	4.30/3.57/2.60

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

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid director in the Social Care Council in the financial year 2024-25 was £105-110k (2023-24; £110-115k) which was:

- 4.16 times (2023-24; 4.30) the 25th percentile remuneration of the workforce, which was £26,244 (2023-24; £26,651).
- 3.00 times (2023-24; 3.57) the median remuneration of the workforce, which was £36,483 (2023-24; £32,144).
- 2.37 times (2023-24; 2.60) the 75th percentile remuneration of the workforce, which was £46,148 (2023-24; £44,122).

In 2024-25, 0 (2023-24; 0) employees received remuneration in excess of the highest-paid director. Remuneration ranged from £24,071 to £109,268 (2023-24: £23,433 to £114,632). 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	2024-25 Vs 2023-24
Average employee salary and allowances	5.57%
Highest paid director's salary and allowances	(4.68%)

The average salary has increased due to pay awards and staff changes. The highest paid director's salary has decreased due to back pay being paid and accrued in 2023-24. No bonus payments were made in 2024-25 or 2023-24

Staff Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

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 73 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.

The cumulative sickness and absenteeism rate for the Social Care Council for 2024-25 was 3.04% which was below the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's corporate target to maintain absences at a maximum of 4%.

Staff Composition (Audited)

At 31 March 2025, 74 people worked for the Social Care Council. 68 people were employed on permanent contracts, 11 of whom worked part-time. 3 people were employed on temporary/fixed term contracts and 3 were engaged temporarily as agency workers. 16.2% of contracted staff work part-time or a form of compressed hours (this was 8.1% in 2023-24). From January 2023, staff could opt into the Social Care Council's Agile Working Policy – 100% of staff opted to do so.

79% of job roles in the Council are categorised as administrative and 21% as social work/services posts. Job descriptions and specifications are reviewed routinely as part of recruitment practice to ensure there are no requirements within them that may act as a barrier to any stakeholder group.

Staff composition remained relatively stable with turnover rates for permanent staff at 3.15% in 2024-25 (5.24% in 2023-24). The composition of the workforce is set out below –

Staff composition by pay band

Pay Band	% of Workforce	Number of Staff
Band 3	22%	15
Band's 4/6	38%	26
Band's 7/8	28%	19
SLT	12%	8

Staff composition by function

Function	% of Workforce
Registration	25%
Workforce Development (includes PiP)	26%
Fitness to Practise	18%
Business Support	10%
Database	6%
Communications	5%
Committee	5%
SLT	5%

All staff in the Social Care Council are supported to understand and apply the Council's values of respect, integrity, partnership and excellence. These underpin all aspects of our work and support our ambition to develop a diverse and inclusive workplace. Regional policies are in place to support a positive work environment e.g. flexible working, adjustments for individual circumstances, equality of opportunity. These ensure that support is in place for staff who need adjustments to enable them to fulfil their job role and also that all staff can recognise and address any discriminatory practice.

To assist the Council in developing and supporting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, staff are asked to indicate on their HR record their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability/health conditions, marital status, dependents, community background, and political opinion. It is not compulsory for staff to provide these details and currently around 60% of staff have opted not to disclose their status in these areas. Whilst the Council recognises that staff are entitled to keep this information private, managers are working with staff to raise awareness of the benefits of having stronger data on the workforce profile to better support and inform positive equality and diversity practice.

Staff composition by gender (contracted Staff)

Pay Band (Contracted Staff)	Male Number	Female Number
Band 3	3	12
Band's 4/6	10	16
Band's 7/8	7	12
SLT	1	7
Overall	21	47

The profile for the workforce has remained relatively unchanged in the last three years in terms of key demographics.

The age profile of the workforce has lowered slightly following a number of planned retirements in-year. The number of staff aged 60 years or over reduced from 30% in 2023-24 to 19% for 2024-25.

As part of ongoing work to support business continuity and succession planning, job roles & specifications are being reviewed to ensure there are no barriers to people from underrepresented groups seeking to join the workforce or for existing staff members to achieve internal promotion.

Community Background		Marital Status	
Perceived Protestant	7.35%	Divorced	4.41%
Protestant	36.76%	Married/Civil Partnership	44.12%
Perceived Roman Catholic	1.47%	Other	2.94%
Roman Catholic	42.65%	Separated	0.00%
Neither	4.41%	Single	10.29%
Perceived Neither	0.00%	Unknown	38.24%
Not assigned	7.35%	Widow/Widower	0.00%
Ethnicity		Dependents	
Not assigned	58.82%	Yes	14.71%
White	39.71%	Not assigned	64.71%
Other	1.47%	No	20.59%
Black African	0.00%		
Indian	0.00%		
Chinese	0.00%		
Sexual Orientation		Disability	
Do not wish to answer	0.00%	No	45.59%
Not assigned	61.76%	Not assigned	42.65%
Opposite sex	35.29%	Yes	11.76%
Both sexes	0.00%		
Same sex	2.94%		

Staff Report - Staff Numbers and Related Costs (Audited)

Staff Costs

		2025		2024
	Permanently employed staff	Others	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£
Staff costs comprise:				
Wages and salaries	2,624,268	119,553	2,743,821	2,619,942
Social security costs	289,362	-	289,362	271,447
Other pension costs	525,281	-	525,281	501,408
Sub-Total	3,438,911	119,553	3,558,464	3,392,797
Capitalised staff costs	-	-	-	-
Total staff costs reported in Statement of Comprehensive Expenditure			3,558,464	3,392,797
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments			28,353	-
Total net costs			3,530,111	3,392,797

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 scheme valuation data provided for the 2020 actuarial valuation has been used for the 2024-25 accounts. Demographic assumptions are updated to reflect an analysis of experience that has been carried out as part of the 2020 valuation.

Staff Report - Average number of persons employed (Audited)

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

	2025		2024	
	Permanently employed staff	Others	Total	Total
	No.	No.	No.	No.
Administrative and clerical	49*	3	52	50
Social services	15	3	18	17
Total average number of persons employed	64	6	70	67
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			70	67

The staff numbers disclosed as 'Others' in 2024-25 relate to temporary members of staff.

*Staff numbers exclude 6 Non-executive members.

**Patricia Higgins was on secondment to Department of Health from 14 November 2024 to 31 March 2025 however part time hours during this period, therefore nil average staff number in respect of outward secondments. Patricia Higgins is included in permanently employed average staff number.

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

Exit package cost band	Number of compulsory redundancies		Number of other departures agreed		Total number of packages by cost band	
	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024
<£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	-	-	-	-	-	-

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 2024-25 and 2023-24. £nil exit costs were paid in 2024-25, the year of departure (2023-24 £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.

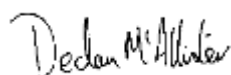
Off-Payroll engagements

There were no off-payroll engagements during the year 2024-25.

Retirements due to Ill Health

During 2024-25 there were no early retirements from the Council agreed on the grounds of ill health (2023-24 nil).

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).



Declan McAllister

Chief Executive (Interim)

Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Date: 21 August 2025

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, including special severance payments during 2024-25 or 2023-24

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.

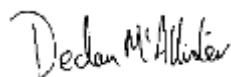
iv) Charitable Donations (Audited)

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 2024-25 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 Department of Finance 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 he takes personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.



Declan McAllister

Chief Executive (Interim)

Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Date: 21 August 2025

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

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

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council for the year ended 31 March 2025 under the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. The financial statements comprise: the Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity; and the related notes including significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by the Government Financial Reporting Manual.

I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 and Department of Health directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of this certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Northern Ireland Social Care Council is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it is anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Board and the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Accountability Report described in that report as having been audited, and my audit certificate and report. The Board and the Accounting Officer are responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my report, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with Department of Health directions made under the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001; and
- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance Report and Accountability Report. I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Board and Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer Responsibilities, the Board and the Accounting Officer are responsible for

- the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- ensuring the annual report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, is prepared in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework; and
- assessing the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included: The Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 and the Department of Health directions issued thereunder;
- making enquires of management and those charged with governance on the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the posting of unusual journals;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- documenting and evaluating the design and implementation of internal controls in place to mitigate risk of material misstatement due to fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team

considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate;

- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:
 - performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;
 - testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
 - assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining account estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
 - investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate. In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



Dorinnia Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU

1st September 2025

Section 3: Annual Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

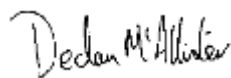
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2025

FOREWORD

The accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025 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 117-159) 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.



Declan McAllister
Chief Executive (Interim)

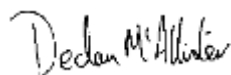
Date: 21 August 2025

I certify that the annual accounts set out in the financial statements and notes to the accounts (pages 117-159) as prepared in accordance with the above requirements have been submitted to and duly approved by the Board.



Gerard Guckian
Acting Chairman

Date: 21 August 2025



Declan McAllister
Chief Executive (Interim)

Date: 21 August 2025

STATEMENT of COMPREHENSIVE NET EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 March 2025

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	2025 £	2024 £
Revenue from contracts with customers	4.1	1,745,781	1,697,940
Other Income (excluding interest)	4.2	28,353	-
Total operating income		1,774,134	1,697,940
Expenditure			
Staff costs	3	(3,558,464)	(3,392,797)
Purchase of goods and services	3	(22,522)	(49,041)
Depreciation, amortisation and impairment charges	3	(222,965)	(212,349)
Provisions credit/(expense)	3/15	7,016	(66,244)
Other expenditure	3	(2,668,938)	(2,575,259)
Total operating expenditure		(6,465,873)	(6,295,690)
Net Expenditure		(4,691,739)	(4,597,750)
Finance income	4.2	-	-
Finance expense	3	-	-
Net expenditure for the year		(4,691,739)	(4,597,750)
Adjustment to net expenditure for non-cash items		249,349	311,193
Net expenditure funded from RRL		(4,442,390)	(4,286,557)
Revenue resource limit (RRL)	23.1	4,452,548	4,292,539
Add back charitable trust fund net expenditure		-	-
Surplus/(Deficit) against RRL		10,158	5,982

OTHER COMPREHENSIVE EXPENDITURE

	NOTE	2025 £	2024 £
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	500	(316)
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 2025		(4,691,239)	(4,598,066)

The notes on pages 122-159 form part of these accounts.

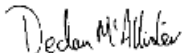
Northern Ireland Social Care Council Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25
Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

STATEMENT of FINANCIAL POSITION as at 31 March 2025

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.

	NOTE	2025 £	2024 £
Non-current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	5.1/5.2	328,609	452,300
Intangible assets	6.1/6.2	306,704	367,798
Financial assets	7	-	-
Trade and other receivables	13	-	-
Other current assets	13	-	-
Total Non-current Assets		635,313	820,098
Current Assets			
Assets classified as held for sale	10	-	-
Inventories	11	-	-
Trade and other receivables	13	53,110	21,247
Other current assets	13	38,599	42,725
Intangible current assets	13	-	-
Financial assets	7	-	-
Cash and cash equivalents	12	100,266	84,485
Total Current Assets		191,975	148,457
Total Assets		827,288	968,555
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	14	(1,608,204)	(1,697,506)
Other liabilities	14	-	-
Intangible current liabilities	14	-	-
Financial liabilities	7	-	-
Provisions	15	(34,194)	(45,609)
Total Current Liabilities		(1,642,398)	(1,743,115)
Total assets less current liabilities		(815,110)	(774,560)
Non-current Liabilities			
Provisions	15	(45,983)	(41,584)
Other payables > 1 yr	14	-	-
Financial liabilities	7	-	-
Total Non-current Liabilities		(45,983)	(41,584)
Total assets less total liabilities		(861,093)	(816,144)
Taxpayers' Equity and other reserves			
Revaluation reserve		38,117	37,617
SoCNE reserve		(899,210)	(853,761)
Total equity		(861,093)	(816,144)

The financial statements on pages 117-121 were approved by the Board on 02 July 2025 and were signed on its behalf by:

Signed  (Chief Executive Interim)

Signed  (Acting Chairman)

Date 21 August 2025

Date 21 August 2025

STATEMENT of CASH FLOWS for the year ended 31 March 2025

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	£	£
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net surplus after interest/Net operating expenditure		(4,691,739)	(4,597,750)
Adjustments for non-cash costs	3	249,349	311,193
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables		(27,737)	(3,818)
<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		(89,302)	(35,268)
<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	-
Movements in payables relating to the purchase of intangibles		(22,813)	2,901
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 (outflow)/inflow from operating activities		(4,512,342)	(4,322,742)
Cash flows from investing activities			
(Purchase of property, plant and equipment)	5	(83,700)	-
(Purchase of intangible assets)	6	(1,067)	(2,901)
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		(84,767)	(2,901)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Grant in aid		4,612,890	4,252,729
Cap element of payments - finance leases and on balance sheet (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements		-	-
Net financing		4,612,890	4,252,729
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the period		15,781	(72,914)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	12	84,485	157,399
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	12	100,266	84,485

The notes on pages 122-159 form part of these accounts.

STATEMENT of CHANGES in TAXPAYERS EQUITY for the year ended 31 March 2025

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 2023		(541,340)	37,933	(503,407)
Changes in Taxpayers Equity 2023-24				
Grant from DoH		4,252,729	-	4,252,729
Other reserves including transfers		-	-	-
(Comprehensive net expenditure for the year)		(4,597,750)	(316)	(4,598,066)
Transfer of Asset Ownership		-	-	-
Non-cash charges – auditors remuneration	3	32,600	-	32,600
Balance at 31 March 2024		(853,761)	37,617	(816,144)
Changes in Taxpayers Equity 2024-25				
Grant from DoH		4,612,890	-	4,612,890
Other reserves movements including transfers		-	-	-
(Comprehensive net expenditure for the year)		(4,691,739)	500	(4,691,239)
Transfer of asset ownership		-	-	-
Non-cash charges – auditors remuneration	3	33,400	-	33,400
Balance at 31 March 2025		(899,210)	38,117	(861,093)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
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 2025
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

NISCC’s land and buildings relate to office space at James House, Belfast held under licence agreement with the Department of Finance.

The latest valuation date for the right of use asset held is 31 January 2025 and was carried out by Land and Property Services (LPS) in accordance with IFRS16 requirements.

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 2025
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
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 2025
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 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.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.7 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.

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 practitioner'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.

In accordance with FReM adaptation of IAS20, Government grant income is in relation to notional rent in respect to the licence for office premises at James House, Belfast capitalised under IFRS16.

1.8 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.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.9 Investments

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

1.10 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.

1.11 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.

1.12 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.

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.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

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.

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.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

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.

Peppercorn leases

Peppercorn leases are defined as leases for which the consideration paid is nil or nominal and are within scope of IFRS16 if they meet the definition of a lease in all aspects apart from containing consideration. Peppercorn leases are recognised as right of use assets measured in accordance with IFRS16 as interpreted by the FReM. In accordance with IFRS16 requirements, the right of use asset is held at latest valuation, the latest valuation date for the right of use asset held is 31 January 2025 and was carried out by Land and Property Services (LPS). Government grant income equal to the valuation has been recognised in full in the year of inception in accordance with IAS20 as interpreted by the FReM.

1.13 Private Finance Initiative (PFI) transactions

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

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.14 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 2025
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.

1.15 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 2025
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.16 Contingent liabilities/assets

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council had no contingent assets or liabilities at either 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2024.

1.17 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 2025. To ensure staff didn't lose annual leave during the 2024-25 year, employees were granted permission to carry over additional unused leave above the usual maximum of 5 days, to be taken within the next financial year. 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 2024-25 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 2025
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.18 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.

1.19 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.

1.20 Government Grants

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

1.21 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.

1.22 Charitable Trust Account Consolidation

Northern Ireland Social Care Council held no charitable trust accounts at 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2024.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.23 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.

IFRS 16 Insurance PFI:

IFRS 16 applies a different measurement basis to PFI assets. To date HM Treasury guidance regarding changes to accounting for PFI arrangements have not been published. Hence it has not been possible to estimate the financial impact on the financial statements.

IFRS 17 Insurance Contracts:

IFRS 17 replaces the previous standard on insurance contracts, IFRS 4. The standard will be adapted for the central government context and updates made to the 2024-25 FReM, with an implementation date of 1 April 2025 (with limited options for early adoption).

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

IFRS 18 Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements:

IFRS 18 Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements was issued in April 2024, replaced IAS 1 Presentation of Financial Statements, and is effective for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2027. IFRS 18 will be implemented, as interpreted and adapted for the public sector if required, from a future date (not before 2027-28) that will be determined by the UK Financial Reporting Advisory Board in conjunction with HM Treasury following analysis of this new standard.

Changes to the 2025-26 FReM:

Non-investment asset valuations

In December 2023 HM Treasury released an exposure draft on potential changes to make to valuing and accounting for non-investment assets. The following key changes to the valuation and accounting of non-investment assets is to be included in the 2025-26 FReM for mandatory implementation:

- 1) Assets are now being referred to as being held for their operational capacity rather than service potential.
- 2) Reference to specialised and non-specialised assets has been removed from section 10.1.
- 3) The number of valuation processes entities can use has been reduced, e.g. annual revaluations are no longer required in the FReM.
- 4) The purpose of indexation has been added to section 10.1.
- 5) Additional guidance on whether an asset is held for its operational capacity or not has been added to section 10.1
- 6) Guidance has been added in section 10.4 to explain undertaking a full revaluation should not be the default process to demonstrate there has not been a material impairment to comply with IAS 36

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

Social benefits

The 2025-26 FReM will include new guidance on accounting for social benefits. The 2025-26 FReM will define social benefits as 'current transfers received by households (including individuals) intended to provide for the needs that arise from certain events or circumstances, for example, unemployment, retirement, housing, education or family circumstances. The 2025-26 FReM clarifies that expenditure in respect of social benefit payments should be recognised at the point at which the social benefit claimant meets the eligibility requirements to receive the benefit. Only expenditure for the period of entitlement that falls within the accounting year should be recognised.

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

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Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2025

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

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.

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25
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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 3 EXPENDITURE

	2025	2024
	£	£
Operating expenses are as follows: -		
Staff costs: ¹		
Wages and salaries	2,743,821	2,619,942
Social security costs	289,362	271,447
Other pension costs	525,281	501,408
Revenue grants to voluntary organisations	867,228	695,627
Supplies and services – general	22,522	49,041
Establishment	517,681	487,571
Transport	-	-
Premises	383,545	728,423
Rentals under operating leases	-	-
Interest charges under IFRS 16	-	-
*Miscellaneous	579,699	364,309
BSO services	287,385	266,729
Total Operating Expenses	6,216,524	5,984,497
Non-cash items		
Depreciation	137,491	141,406
Amortisation	85,474	70,943
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)	(7,016)	66,244
Cost of borrowing provisions (unwinding of discount on provisions)	-	-
Auditor's remuneration	33,400	32,600
Total Non-cash items	249,349	311,193
Total	6,465,873	6,295,690

During the year the Northern Ireland Social Care Council purchased no non-audit services from its external auditor (NIAO) (2023-24: £Nil)

*In 2024-25, £532k of the miscellaneous expenditure relates to Social Care Reform and Social Work Promotion projects (2023-24 £331k)

¹ Further detailed analysis of staff costs is located in the Staff Report on page 103 within the Accountability Report.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 4 INCOME

4.1 Revenue from Contracts with Customers

	2025	2024
	£	£
Other income from non-patient services	1,745,781	1,697,940
Total Revenue from Contracts with Customers	1,745,781	1,697,940

4.2 Other Operating Income

	2025	2024
	£	£
Seconded staff	28,353	-
Government grant	-	-
Total Other Operating Income	28,353	-
Total Income	1,774,134	1,697,940

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2025**NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025****NOTE 5.1 Property, plant and equipment - year ended 31 March 2025**

	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 2024	-	440,861	-	-	-	-	283,728	-	724,589
Indexation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	13,800	-	13,800
Donations / Government grant / Lottery Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	(3,306)	-	(3,306)
At 31 March 2025	-	440,861	-	-	-	-	294,222	-	735,083
Depreciation									
At 1 April 2024	-	101,941	-	-	-	-	170,348	-	272,289
Indexation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	(3,306)	-	(3,306)
Provided during the year	-	88,172	-	-	-	-	49,319	-	137,491
At 31 March 2025	-	190,113	-	-	-	-	216,361	-	406,474

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 5.1 (continued) Property, plant and equipment - year ended 31 March 2025

	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 2025	-	250,748	-	-	-	-	77,861	-	328,609
At 31 March 2024	-	338,920	-	-	-	-	113,380	-	452,300

Asset financing

Owned	-	250,748	-	-	-	-	77,861	-	328,609
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On B/S (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2025	-	250,748	-	-	-	-	77,861	-	328,609

The total amount of depreciation charged in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure Account in respect of assets held under leases and hire purchase contracts is £190,113 (2023-24: £101,941).

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

	2025 £	2024 £
Donations	-	-
Government Grant	-	-
Lottery Funding	-	-

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 5.2 Property, plant and equipment - year ended 31 March 2024

	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 2023	-	440,861	-	-	6,410	-	224,367	-	671,638
Indexation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donations / Gov't grant / Lottery Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	86,723	-	86,723
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(6,410)	-	(27,362)	-	(33,772)
At 31 March 2024	-	440,861	-	-	-	-	283,728	-	724,589
Depreciation									
At 1 April 2023	-	13,769	-	-	6,410	-	144,476	-	164,655
Indexation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of impairments (indexn)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(6,410)	-	(27,362)	-	(33,772)
Provided during the year	-	88,172	-	-	-	-	53,234	-	141,406
At 31 March 2024	-	101,941	-	-	-	-	170,348	-	272,289

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
NOTE 5.2 (continued) Property, Plant and Equipment- year ended 31 March 2024

	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 2024	-	338,920	-	-	-	-	113,380	-	452,300
At 31 March 2023	-	427,092	-	-	-	-	79,891	-	506,983

Asset financing									
Owned	-	338,920	-	-	-	-	113,380	-	452,300
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On SOFP PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2024	-	338,920	-	-	-	-	113,380	-	452,300

Asset financing									
Owned	-	427,092	-	-	-	-	79,891	-	506,983
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On SOFP PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 1 April 2023	-	427,092	-	-	-	-	79,891	-	506,983

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 6.1 Intangible assets- year ended 31 March 2025

	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 2024	25,600	521,583	-	-	-	-	-	268,141	815,324
Indexation	-	6,035	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,035
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23,880	23,880
Donations / Government grant / Lottery Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	173,580	-	-	-	-	-	(173,580)	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	25,600	701,198	-	-	-	-	-	*118,441	845,239

Amortisation

At 1 April 2024	18,403	429,123	-	-	-	-	-	-	447,526
Indexation	-	5,535	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,535
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Provided during the year	2,400	83,074	-	-	-	-	-	-	85,474
At 31 March 2025	20,803	517,732	-	-	-	-	-	-	538,535

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

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 6.1 (continued) Intangible assets- year ended 31 March 2025

	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 2025	4,797	183,466	-	-	-	-	-	118,441	306,704
At 31 March 2024	7,197	92,460	-	-	-	-	-	268,141	367,798

Asset financing

Owned	4,797	183,466	-	-	-	-	-	118,441	306,704
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On B/S (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2025	4,797	183,466	-	-	-	-	-	118,441	306,704

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:

	2025 £	2024 £
Donations	-	-
Government Grant	-	-
Lottery Funding	-	-

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 6.2 Intangible assets- year ended 31 March 2024

	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 2023	72,774	1,138,045	-	-	-	-	-	354,864	1,565,683
Indexation	(154)	(3,387)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(3,541)
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donations / Government grant / Lottery Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(86,723)	(86,723)
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	(47,020)	(613,075)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(660,095)
At 31 March 2024	25,600	521,583	-	-	-	-	-	*268,141	815,324

Amortisation

At 1 April 2023	63,177	976,726	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,039,903
Indexation	(154)	(3,071)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(3,225)
Reclassifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the SoCNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment charged to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	(47,020)	(613,075)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(660,095)
Provided during the year	2,400	68,543	-	-	-	-	-	-	70,943
At 31 March 2024	18,403	429,123	-	-	-	-	-	-	447,526

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

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
NOTE 6.2 Intangible assets- year ended 31 March 2024

	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 2024	7,197	92,460	-	-	-	-	-	268,141	367,798
At 31 March 2023	9,597	161,319	-	-	-	-	-	354,864	525,780

Asset financing									
Owned	7,197	92,460	-	-	-	-	-	268,141	367,798
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On B/S (SoFP) PFI and other service concession arrangements contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carrying Amount At 31 March 2024	7,197	92,460	-	-	-	-	-	268,141	367,798

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 1 April 2023	9,597	161,319	-	-	-	-	-	354,864	525,780

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

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 2025 or 31 March 2024.

NOTE 9 IMPAIRMENTS

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council had no impairments at either 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2024.

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 2025 or 31 March 2024.

NOTE 11 INVENTORIES

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council did not hold any goods for resale at either 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2024.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 12 CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	2025	2024
	£	£
Balance at 1 April	84,485	157,399
Net change in cash and cash equivalents	15,781	(72,914)
Balance at 31 March	100,266	84,485

The following balances at 31 March were held at	2025	2024
	£	£
Commercial Banks and cash in hand	100,266	84,485
Balance at 31 March	100,266	84,485

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 2025

NOTE 13 TRADE RECEIVABLES, FINANCIAL AND OTHER ASSETS

	2025	2024
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year		
Trade receivables	53,110	21,247
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	53,110	21,247
Prepayments	38,599	42,725
Accrued income	-	-
Current part of PFI and other service concession arrangements prepayment	-	-
Other current assets	38,599	42,725
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	-	-
Prepayments and accrued income	-	-
Other current assets falling due after more than one year	-	-
TOTAL TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES	53,110	21,247
TOTAL OTHER CURRENT ASSETS	38,599	42,725
TOTAL INTANGIBLE CURRENT ASSETS	-	-
TOTAL RECEIVABLES AND OTHER CURRENT ASSETS	91,709	63,972

The balances are net of a provision for bad debts of £Nil (2023-24: £Nil).

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 14 TRADE PAYABLES AND OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES

	2025	2024
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year		
Other taxation and social security	211,366	163,667
Bank overdraft	-	-
VAT payable	-	-
Trade capital payables – property, plant and equipment	-	-
Trade capital payables – intangibles	23,880	1,067
Trade revenue payables	117,327	142,492
Payroll payables	58	58
Clinical Negligence payables	-	-
RPA payables	-	-
BSO payables	52,609	22,372
Other payables	1,733	1,903
Accruals	610,194	784,255
Accruals– relating to property, plant and equipment	-	69,900
Accruals – relating to intangibles	-	-
Deferred income	591,037	511,792
Trade and other payables	1,608,204	1,697,506
Current part of leases liabilities	-	-
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	1,608,204	1,697,506
Amounts falling due after more than one year		
Other payables, accruals and deferred income	-	-
Trade and other payables	-	-
Clinical Negligence payables	-	-
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	1,608,204	1,697,506

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 15 PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES AND CHARGES

	Pensions relating to former directors £	Pensions relating to other staff £	Clinical Negligence £	Other £	2025 £	2024 £
Balance at 1 April 2024	-	-	-	87,193	87,193	20,949
Provided in year	-	-	-	4,399	4,399	66,244
(Provisions not required written back)	-	-	-	(11,415)	(11,415)	-
(Provisions utilised in the year)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Borrowing costs (unwinding of discount)	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	-	-	-	80,177	80,177	87,193

Comprehensive Net Expenditure Account Charges	2025 £	2024 £
Arising during the year	4,399	66,244
Reversed unused	(11,415)	-
Cost of borrowing (unwinding of discount)	-	-
Total charge within Operating costs	(7,016)	66,244

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 15 PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES AND CHARGES continued

Analysis of expected timing of discounted flows as at 31 March 2025

	Pensions relating to former directors	Pensions relating to other staff	Clinical Negligence	Other	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Not later than one year	-	-	-	34,194	34,194	45,609
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	-	-	45,983	45,983	41,584
Later than five years	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March	-	-	-	80,177	80,177	87,193

Amounts included in other relate to a provision made for the potential liability of senior executive pay award of £30,194 (2023-24 £41,609) see Senior Executive Pay Structure Reform note within Remuneration and Staff report (provisions have only been retained for staff pre 1 April 2023), a legal provision of £4,000 (2023-24 £4,000) surrounding an ongoing case and a Holiday Pay provision of £45,983 (2023-24 £41,584). The total of provisions is estimated as £80,177 for NISCC (2023-24 £87,193).

Holiday Pay

On 4 October 2023, the Supreme Court handed down the decision in the case of the Chief Constable of the PSNI v Agnew and others. The judgement confirmed that the claimants are able to bring their claims under the 'unlawful deductions' provisions of the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 and can thus claim in respect of a series of deductions potentially going back to the beginning of their employment or the implementation of the Working Time Regulations in 1998.

At the point that the Supreme Court judgement was provided, the PSNI had accepted the principle, established by a number of cases in both the European and domestic courts, that the claimants were entitled to be paid their normal pay during periods of annual leave, and that "normal pay" is not limited to basic pay but could include elements such as overtime, commission and allowances.

The outcome of this case has widespread implications for all public sector bodies in Northern Ireland in respect of both the pay elements that must be included in holiday pay calculations and the period of retrospection which means that some employees may be able to bring claims to be rectified as far back as 1998.

With effect from 1 April 2025, HSC employers have implemented an interim arrangement for the calculation of holiday pay to ensure employees are paid appropriately for periods of annual leave. This interim arrangement has been agreed with trade unions pending the introduction of the new HR and payroll system in 2026-27.

However, a provision in respect of the retrospective payment is still required for the period 1998-99 to 2024-25. The NISCC provision at 31 March 2025 reflects this retrospective timeframe. In calculating the provision, the NISCC has used payroll data available, for all eligible staff, within the current HR, Pay, Travel and Subsistence (HRPTS) system back to 2014 with averaging applied for the prior years and changes in staffing numbers. Actual staffing numbers are available from the current system for financial years 2014-15 to 2024-25. Staffing numbers prior to this have been estimated based on an assumed 1% increase per annum.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Revised Working Time Directive (14.5%) and Employer costs rates have been factored in, and compound interest applied. A settlement year of 2026-27 has been used and as such the overall value of the provision has been discounted to determine the net present value.

The key areas of uncertainty include:

- The reliability of the data used.
- The terms of the settlement which is subject to a number of factors including:
 - o the determination of a very significant number of cases currently progressing through the Industrial Tribunal;
 - o the number of further Industrial Tribunal claims lodged by employees;
 - o any settlement of these claims agreed with the claimants or their legal representatives;
 - o the number of grievances already lodged by employees in respect of the underpayment / incorrect payment of holiday pay which require to be resolved and any settlement negotiations with trade unions;
 - o the number of further grievances received; and
 - o any potential requirement to include additional numbers of employees within any settlement.
- The uptake rate for current or past employees.
- The extent of attrition in the workforce.
- Delays in the time it will take to administer the payments, once agreed.
- The extent to which interest will apply.

The overall impact has been to increase this provision from £41,584 in 2023-24 to £45,983. The increase in 2024-25 is largely interest driven due to the inclusion of 8% compound interest in the calculations.

NOTE 16 CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council had no capital commitments at either 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2024.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 17 COMMITMENTS UNDER LEASES

17.1 Quantitative disclosures around right of use assets

	Land and Buildings £	Other £	Total £
Cost or valuation			
At 1 April 2024	440,861	-	440,861
Additions	-	-	-
Impairments	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-
Revaluations (cost)	-	-	-
Derecognition	-	-	-
Remeasurement	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	440,861	-	440,861
Depreciation expense			
At 1 April 2024	101,941	-	101,941
Recognition	-	-	-
Charged in year	88,172	-	88,172
Transfers	-	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-	-
Revaluations (cost)	-	-	-
Derecognition	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	190,113	-	190,113
Carrying amount at 31 March 2025	250,748	-	250,748
Interest charged on IFRS 16 leases	-	-	-

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 17 COMMITMENTS UNDER LEASES continued

17.2 Quantitative disclosures around right of use assets

Under the terms of the license for James House, Belfast capitalised as an asset under IFRS16, no lease liability exists as no rent is payable under the license. Licence terms are consideration of £1 per annum if demanded. No consideration has been paid in 2024-25 (2023-24 £nil). , therefore James House has been excluded from the below amounts.

Maturity analysis

	31 March 2025	31 March 2024
	£	£
Buildings		
Not later than one year	-	-
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	-
Later than five years	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	-	-
Less interest element	-	-
Present value of obligations	<hr/>	<hr/>
	-	-
Other		
Not later than one year	-	-
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	-
Later than five years	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	-	-
Less interest element	-	-
Present value of obligations	<hr/>	<hr/>
	-	-
Total present value of obligations	-	-
Current portion	-	-
Non-current portion	-	-

17.3 Quantitative disclosures around elements in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

	31 March 2025	31 March 2024
	£	£
Variable lease payments not included in lease liabilities	-	-
Sub-leasing income	-	-
Expense related to short-term leases	-	-
Expense related to low-value asset leases (excluding short-term leases)	-	-

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 17 COMMITMENTS UNDER LEASES continued

17.4 Quantitative disclosures around cash outflow for leases

	31 March 2025	31 March 2024
	£	£
Total cash outflow for lease	-	-

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 2025 or 31 March 2024.

NOTE 19 OTHER FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council did not have any other financial commitments at 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2024.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

NOTE 20 CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council did not have any quantifiable contingent liabilities at 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2024.

Unquantifiable Contingent Liabilities

Public Sector Pensions - Injury to Feelings Claims

The Department of Finance (DoF) is a named Respondent in a class action affecting employers across the public sector and is managing claims on behalf of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments. This is an extremely complex case and may have significant implications for the NICS and wider public sector. However, the cases are at a very early stage of proceedings and until there is further clarity on potential scope and impact, a reliable estimate of liability cannot be provided.

Holiday Pay Liability

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council has made provision of the potential liability, back to 1998, for claims for shortfalls to staff in holiday pay. However, the extent to which the liability may exceed this amount remains uncertain as the calculation will rely on the outworkings of the Supreme Court judgement and will have to be agreed with Trade Unions.

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 2025 or 31 March 2024.

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 2025 or 31 March 2024 belonging to third parties.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

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 2024-25 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 2023-24 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:

	2025 Total	2024 Total
	£	£
Revenue Resource Limit (RRL)		
RRL Allocated From:		
DoH (SPPG)	4,452,548	4,292,539
DoH (Other, excludes non cash)	-	-
PHA	-	-
Other – SUMDE & NIMDTA	-	-
Total	4,452,548	4,292,539
Less RRL Issued To:		
RRL Issued	-	-
RRL to be Accounted For	4,452,348	4,292,539
 Revenue Resource Limit Expenditure		
Net Expenditure per SoCNE	4,691,739	4,597,750
 Adjustments		
Capital Grants	-	-
Research and Development under ESA10	-	-
Depreciation/ Amortisation	(222,965)	(212,349)
Impairments	-	-
Notional Charges	(33,400)	(32,600)
Movements in Provisions	7,016	(66,244)
PPE Stock Adjustment	-	-
PFI and other service concession arrangements/ IFRIC	-	-
Profit/(loss) on disposal of fixed asset	-	-
Other (specify)	-	-
Total Adjustments	(249,349)	(311,193)
Net Expenditure Funded from RRL	4,442,390	4,286,557

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

	2025	2024
Surplus/ (Deficit) against RRL	10,158	5,982
Break Even cumulative position (opening)	183,796	177,814
Break Even cumulative position (closing)	193,954	183,796

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.

	2025 %	2024 %
Break Even in year position as % of RRL	0.23	0.14
Break Even cumulative position as % of RRL	4.36	4.28

23.2 Capital Resource Limit

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

	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
Gross capital expenditure by the Social Care Council	37,680	-
(Capital grant receipt)	-	-
Net capital expenditure	37,860	-
Capital Resource Limit CRL allocated from Department of Health (DoH)	37,855	-
Adjustment for Research and Development under ESA10	-	-
Total CRL	37,855	-
Overspend/(Underspend) against CRL	(175)	-

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 01 September 2025

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Board Membership – 2024-25



Chair, Paul Martin



Sarah Browne



Roslyn Dougherty



Deputy Chair, Gerard Guckian

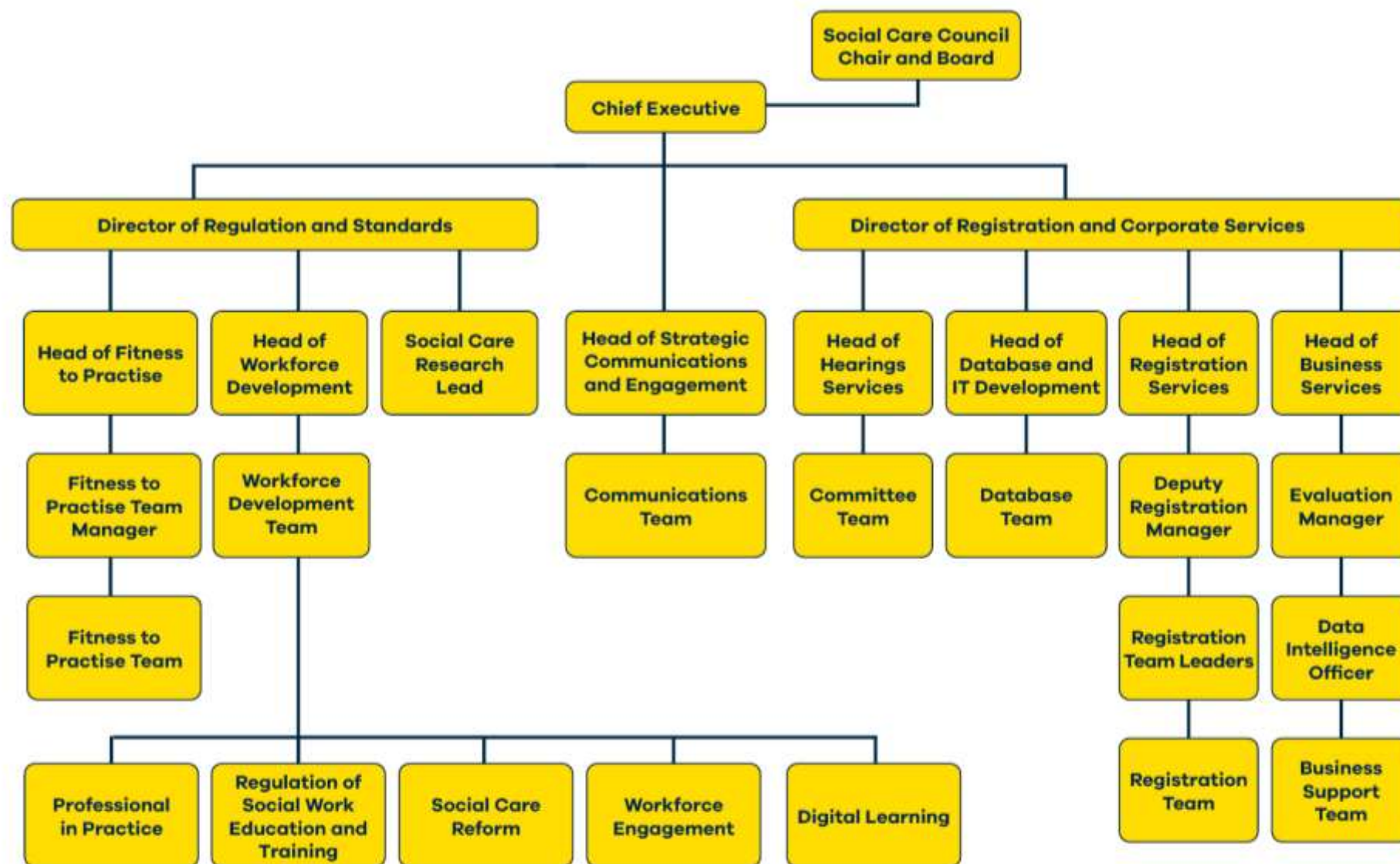


David Hayes



Jacqueline McGarvey

Northern Ireland Social Care Council Organisational Structure



Northern Ireland Social Care Council Risk Appetite 2024-25

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 prepare 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 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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