



Department of  
**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**

An Roinn

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta  
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

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# **PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES**

Development & Training Strategy

# 2006-2016

SEPTEMBER 2006



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## Foreword

Social Services play a vital role within Northern Ireland society and its economy. They make a significant and positive difference to people's lives, helping people to live safe, fulfilling and independent lives. Social services staff support people in dealing with difficult situations and major life transitions and where necessary, they take action to safeguard vulnerable people from harm.



An estimated 185,000 individuals (adults and children) use social services every year in Northern Ireland with over 40,000 staff employed to help them.

As the organisational structures for the Health and Personal Social Services change, the social services workforce will also need to adapt and change to be able to deliver consistently safe, high quality and effective services.

Quality, safety and effectiveness are central to the government's modernisation agenda. To deliver this agenda the social services workforce must be committed, highly skilled and flexible and able to respond to changing demands. The Personal Social Services Development & Training Strategy, with its central theme of associating training and qualifications with workforce registration and its emphasis on lifelong learning will support this vision for the social services workforce and help improve standards of competence and service provision. As such, the Strategy contributes to maximising the benefits of registration of the workforce and service regulation which are two key features of the quality and safety agenda.

Social services are personal by their very nature. Their effectiveness relies on the quality of interaction and engagement between staff and the people who use the service. Improving outcomes for service users means improving staff competence in engaging meaningfully and effectively with the full range of people who use the service. People's expectations of social workers and social care staff need to be reflected in staff training and development. This Strategy recognises the need for service user and carer perspectives to inform the training agenda.

People also want different services to work effectively together to ensure an integrated response to their needs. The Strategy emphasises partnership and shared learning with professionals in other key services such as health, education and justice.

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The investment already committed to Personal Social Services training will be maintained to support the delivery of the strategic targets in this Strategy. Patterns of commissioning will however need to be reviewed to reflect the changing context of social services provision and to ensure achievement of the strategic targets specified in the Strategy.

I commend this Strategy to you as the basis of supporting and building a skilled, professional, motivated and confident social services workforce that is fit for purpose and fit for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Goggins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

**PAUL GOGGINS MP**

Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

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# 1. THE SOCIAL SERVICES WORKFORCE

## Introduction to the personal social services

- 1.1 Social services staff work primarily, although not exclusively, with some of the most vulnerable and excluded people in society and provide services covering prevention, care, protection and control. They work in partnership with other public services such as health, education, police and probation to promote, enhance and where appropriate to protect the health, well-being and safety of individuals, families and communities.
- 1.2 The social services workforce numbers approximately 40,000<sup>1</sup>. One third of the workforce is employed within the statutory Health and Personal Social Services (HPSS) and in criminal justice and education with the remainder (27,000) being employed in the voluntary and private sectors. (See Appendix 1- Fact File.)
- 1.3 The range of services offered by the social services workforce can be summarised as follows:
  - **Advice, support and problem-solving:-** helping people find solutions to short-term or long-term needs or difficulties that are impacting on their well-being.
  - **Care, rehabilitation and social inclusion:-** supporting vulnerable and marginalised members of society to live safe and fulfilling lives, to maintain maximum independence in daily living and to engage in meaningful and valued activity.
  - **Prevention, protection and safeguarding:-** protecting individuals, families and communities at risk of harm from themselves or others through the use of statutory powers.
  - **Integration and partnership:-** working in partnership with carers, volunteers, other professions and agencies to provide holistic and integrated services to people with complex needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Workforce Planning Review – Social Services Staff Groups DHSSPS 2006.

- **Community action:-** empowering individuals, groups and communities to become actively involved in initiating and influencing community development to improve social well-being and quality of life.
- 1.4 While social services offer a range of practical services, such as domiciliary, day and residential care it is the quality of the personal interaction and/or therapeutic relationships of staff with service users and carers that is central to the effectiveness of service provision. The role of social services is not to take over from individuals, rather they seek to empower people to take responsibility for themselves and their own behaviour.
- 1.5 Social services are delivered by either social workers or social care workers. Differentiation between these two groups of workers relates to their respective functions, responsibilities, levels of accountability and related qualifications.
- 1.6 The Personal Social Services Development and Training Strategy (the Strategy) needs to address the competence and expertise required in the workforce to deliver the full range of social services safely and effectively at all levels and across all sectors. This includes the care functions, the protection and control functions and the multidisciplinary nature of the work both within and beyond the boundaries of the HPSS. The Strategy should also address the competence and expertise required to support the 'skilled use of self' at different levels as the basis of all interactions and therapeutic relationships with service users and carers.

### **An overview of the social work workforce**

- 1.7 Social workers represent a relatively small proportion of the whole social services workforce. There are approximately 4128<sup>2</sup> social workers in Northern Ireland registered on the social work part of the register operated by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC). Following the introduction of protection of the title of social worker from 1 June 2005, only those on this part of the register may practise as a social worker. Approximately 80% of social workers are employed in the statutory sector which includes HPSS, the probation service, education welfare service and the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem service (see Appendix 1 - Fact File).

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<sup>2</sup> 4128 social workers registered with NISCC as of 4 August 2006.

- 1.8 As a registered practitioner, social workers are personally accountable for their practice. This means that they are answerable for their actions and omissions, regardless of advice or directions from another professional. They are professionally accountable to the NISCC for maintaining the high standards of the profession as well as having a contractual accountability to their employer and fulfilling statutory duties within the relevant legislation.
- 1.9 The specific duties and powers invested in social workers through government policies and statute are to assess needs and risks, and to act on behalf of society when people pose a risk to themselves, or others, or where they are at risk from the actions of others.
- 1.10 Social workers work closely with their health colleagues in the HPSS, but they must also engage with colleagues in other sectors, such as the police, the probation service, the court service and education to carry out their statutory duties effectively and ensure a holistic and integrated response to people in need or at risk and to their families.
- 1.11 Working routinely with other disciplines and professions both within the HPSS and in other sectors means that social workers have to be skilled navigators and co-ordinators of services across professional and organisational boundaries, and in collaborating with others in joint work to minimise risks and meet the needs of an individual, family or community.
- 1.12 Social workers have to balance the needs, rights and responsibilities of those they work with, with those of their carers and at times with those of the wider community, and provide appropriate levels of support, advocacy, therapeutic help, protection and control.
- 1.13 Because of the levels of responsibility and accountability carried by social workers, their professional training is designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills to discharge their wide statutory duties safely and effectively. Post-qualifying education and training is designed to equip social workers to develop further their knowledge and expertise beyond qualifying level in working with and safeguarding people in risky situations.

## **An overview of the social care workforce**

- 1.14 The social care workforce provides a range of care and services to people who are in need of either short term or long term assistance to live their lives safely and as fully and independently as possible and to maintain or improve the overall quality of their lives. Care and support can involve one or more of the following:
- contributing to the assessment of need and care planning;
  - providing personal care;
  - helping people maintain and re-learn or develop daily living skills;
  - helping people to prepare for employment and/or independent living;
  - providing social support to help people deal with difficult and sometimes distressing circumstances; and
  - supporting vulnerable adults or children to live safe and fulfilling lives.
- 1.15 There are approximately 36,000<sup>3</sup> social care workers, 27,000 of whom work in the voluntary and private sectors. Residential care staff constitute 44% of the social care workforce, while domiciliary care workers are estimated to comprise 32% of the workforce. (See Appendix 1 - Fact File.)
- 1.16 Social care has become increasingly demanding and challenging with more people with complex needs now being supported to live at home. Many of these people are supported in the first instance, by family, friends and neighbours as informal carers. It is a key role for the social services to ensure that carers are effectively supported in their turn.
- 1.17 Social care is often part of a wider package of care that includes a range of other services such as social work, community health, housing, benefits and as such social care workers need to be able to communicate and engage effectively with others.

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<sup>3</sup> Workforce Planning Review – Social Services Staff Groups DHSSPS 2006.

- 1.18 The social care worker often works alone in people's own homes dealing directly and personally with individuals in circumstances that are emotionally and often physically demanding.
- 1.19 Education and training opportunities must support all social care workers, wherever they work, to deliver consistently safe, high quality and effective services in these challenging circumstances.

### **Regulation of the workforce**

- 1.20 The social work workforce has had qualification requirements set by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Department) for specific parts of the social work workforce since the mid 1970s and these remain in force. A recognised social work qualification is required by all:
- Social Workers in fieldwork posts (1976);
  - Team Leaders in residential child care (1993);
  - Executive Directors of Social Work (1994); and
  - Directors of Social Services (1994).
- 1.21 It remains the Department's published policy aim that residential child care staff should hold the social work qualification and work is continuing to achieve this policy aim in the near future.
- 1.22 The implementation by the Department, of Protection of Title of social worker from 1 June 2005 means that all social workers in designated posts must be registered on the social work part of the NISCC Register in order to practise.
- 1.23 There is a small number of staff in field social work and residential child care who hold qualifications that are not recognised as a professional social work qualification by the NISCC. Such staff are being encouraged to gain a recognised social work qualification.
- 1.24 The main thrust of registration of the workforce now centres on the introduction of registration for the social care workforce. There will be a phased programme of implementation to register the large numbers of social care staff over the next five years (2006 – 2011). Eligibility for registration of social care workers will be linked to the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers.
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- 1.25 Evidence of continuing learning and development is a requirement for re-registration with the NISCC. At present all registrants are required to undertake a minimum of 15 days of training and learning every 3 years to remain eligible to re-register with the NISCC.
- 1.26 The Strategy needs to support the registration and re-registration requirements of the NISCC including, over time, the achievement of relevant qualifications.

### **Recruitment and retention**

- 1.27 Demand for social services is anticipated to increase over the next 20 years associated with an ageing population and changing social trends<sup>4</sup>. Difficulties have been reported in recruiting and in retaining both social care and social work staff across all programmes of care and all sectors which has resulted in short term and, in some instances, long term vacant posts. This, associated with a high usage of short-term cover and agency staff, may present increased risks for the safety and quality of care of service users.
- 1.28 Recruitment difficulties may be further compounded with social services employers across the statutory, voluntary and private sectors competing to recruit to posts at a time of reducing unemployment and an improving economy. There is therefore increasing pressure on employers to improve retention rates as well as make the most of a skilled workforce.
- 1.29 The Strategy needs to promote comprehensive development and training opportunities for both social care and social work staff to support the recruitment and retention strategies of employers.

### **Social work career structure**

- 1.30 There has been a limited career structure in social work with progression largely dependent on entry into social work management posts.
- 1.31 Senior social work practitioner posts were introduced in 1994 as a social work practitioner career progression route and most employers of social workers now have senior social work practitioner grades as part of their social work workforce. There are 186 senior practitioners<sup>5</sup> in Northern Ireland representing less than 5% of all registered social workers.

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<sup>4</sup> A Healthier Future, A Twenty Year Vision for Health and Well-being in Northern Ireland 2005 – 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Workforce Planning Review – Social Services Staff Groups DHSSPS 2006.

- 1.32 The Department is leading the development of a professional career structure for social workers and is exploring the potential for the introduction of a principal social work practitioner grade in specified service areas.
- 1.33 The Strategy will need to support career progression for social workers, including the development of expertise, competence and appropriate qualifications of senior practitioner posts and, if introduced, of principal practitioner posts. In addition, the Strategy must support the provision of appropriate post qualifying opportunities for social workers across all service user groups and settings.

#### **Social care career structure**

- 1.34 As with social work, a career structure exists for social care staff which also leads to management posts. However, there is no clear progression route for social care workers which recognises that there are increased levels of expertise and competence needed for different social care posts.
- 1.35 Social care needs to be promoted as a positive career choice with opportunities for the development of competence and skills and career mobility within the social care workforce. The Strategy must promote and support the recognition of social care as a profession in its own right with associated qualifications.

#### **Qualification profile of the workforce**

- 1.36 Setting National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) targets for social care workers has had a significant impact on the qualification profile of the social care workforce, with many staff registering for and achieving a qualification relevant to their work since targets were first set in 1997. Improvements in the qualification baseline and competence of the social care workforce is however affected by a high turnover of staff and therefore subject to annual variation.
- 1.37 Agenda for Change, and associated bandings linked to job functions, and the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) provide an opportunity to have a coherent policy on qualification achievement for the social services workforce and to track progress against targets set for specific qualifications.

- 1.38 All social workers are required to hold a recognised social work qualification. There has however been no consistent regional approach to post-qualifying qualification achievement for social workers, apart from a few key functions such as Approved Social Work (Mental Health) and Practice Teaching for social work students. Even the qualifications associated with implementation of the senior practitioner grade have not been consistently applied across all the HSS Trusts.
- 1.39 Qualifications linked to posts across the whole workforce would support the government's aim of ensuring people receive a consistent standard of service, throughout Northern Ireland, delivered by staff assessed as competent at an appropriate level for their job function. Associated with improving consistency in standards is the roll-out of registration across the whole workforce. The Strategy offers an opportunity to link qualifications with registration.

#### **Leadership and management of the personal social services**

- 1.40 While it is difficult to categorize managers in a sector as diverse as the personal social services, the following three levels of management activity can usefully be identified:
- *Senior management* – strategic leadership and vision;
  - *Middle management* – leadership and management of a service area, such as programme of care or project; and
  - *First line management* – management and/or supervision of individuals or teams delivering services.
- 1.41 Spans of management responsibility have increased for managers at all levels in the personal social services owing to flatter management structures and the drive for efficiencies in administrative costs. In smaller organisations, particularly in the voluntary and private sectors, a manager's role may incorporate two or even all three of the above levels of activity.
- 1.42 Staff managing the personal social services come from a variety of professional backgrounds including social work, nursing, allied health professionals, psychologists and administrators and this reflects the drive towards integrated team working and principles of general management. This means that professional supervision for social
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workers carrying out statutory functions may not always be available from the immediate manager. Therefore special arrangements are needed to secure timely access to professional support.

- 1.43 Uptake of leadership and management training and qualifications is reported to vary greatly between and within social services organisations.<sup>6</sup> There is no consensus about the appropriate training or qualifications and many are not linked to the needs of the social services sector or the specific competences required by its leaders and managers. This lack of systematic implementation of leadership development has been found to have a direct negative impact on organisational performance<sup>7</sup>.
- 1.44 The findings from an Audit Commission review<sup>8</sup> on the management of people delivering social services suggested there is significant room for improving management practices, which would include clarifying lines of accountability. This is borne out by Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) inspections where a range of governance issues were identified as significant risk factors in the management of statutory functions and delivery of safe and effective care. Indeed, Lord Laming identified that “the single most important change in the future must be the drawing of clear lines of accountability”<sup>9</sup>.
- 1.45 This Strategy must address the professional leadership capability as well as the management and supervision capability for the personal social services within the context of continuous change.

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<sup>6</sup> Review of Leadership and Management Development Opportunities for PSS, NISCC, March 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Managers and Leaders: raising our game, (Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> The Workforce Audit of the Personal Social Services, EO/IDeA.

<sup>9</sup> The Victoria Climbié Inquiry: Summary Report of an Inquiry (Department of Health, 2003)

## **2. THE PSS DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING STRATEGY 2006 - 2016**

- 2.1 The social services workforce of the future will need to be able to fulfil its statutory responsibilities linked to protection of the public as well as the full range of service provision within the restructured health and personal social services. At the same time, the social services workforce will need to continue to work in close contact and co-operation with relevant services outside the HPSS such as police, courts, education, probation and voluntary and community organisations.
- 2.2 Importantly, the social services workforce will operate as a regulated workforce. This has implications for individual registrants and their personal responsibility for their competence and conduct. It also has implications for employers' responsibility to improve knowledge and skills in the workforce and ensuring that competence is maintained linked to continuing registration. The respective responsibilities of staff and employers are set out in the NISCC Codes of Practice.
- 2.3 The Strategy will therefore support all those employed in delivering personal social services, in any sector and at every level, to access appropriate education and training and to gain appropriate qualifications linked to continuing registration on the NISCC Register.
- 2.4 It is now intended as part of this Strategy that, over time, all staff registered with the NISCC will be working towards specific competence or qualifications to support continuing registration.
- 2.5 Strategic priorities have been identified to support the development of the PSS workforce to enable it to deliver on the modernisation and improvement agenda for social services. The strategic priorities are as follows:
- Leadership and Management;
  - Safety and Accountability;
  - Flexibility and Skills;
  - Motivation and Confidence;
  - Working in Partnership; and
  - Continuous Improvement.
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- 2.6 This Strategy sets out a plan, with strategic priorities and associated policy statements and strategic targets, for developing the social services workforce over the next ten years, **2006 – 2016**. It is designed to provide a policy direction for the development of the PSS workforce through a period of major structural change and into the future.

### **Focus of the Strategy**

- 2.7 The Strategy is aimed at all social work and social care employees and their employers across the statutory, voluntary and private social services sectors.
- 2.8 This Strategy is intended to meet the development and training needs of all social services employees from the point of entry into the workforce and throughout their careers. It therefore covers the following areas:
- (a) ensuring long-term strategic **development and training plans** based on sound workforce information to maintain and develop the competent workforce are in place;
  - (b) providing **induction training** for all staff, including temporary staff, so they are safe to begin work ;
  - (c) ensuring staff hold the appropriate **basic training and/or qualifications** for their post so they are fit to practise and eligible for registration with NISCC;
  - (d) providing access to **ongoing development and training opportunities** for all staff to ensure they remain up-to-date in their knowledge and skills and linked to re-registration requirements;
  - (e) ensuring the **development of specialist expertise** in social services;
  - (f) ensuring the **development of strategic leadership and professional management capability** for the social services function; and
  - (g) realising the potential of **the workplace as a ‘field of continuous learning’**.
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### **Roles and responsibilities of employers**

- 2.9 The requirement for employers to train and develop staff is clearly set out in the NISCC Code of Practice for Social Care Employers and is also an integral part of the clinical and social care governance arrangements which are part of an employer's 'duty of quality'. The Care Standards and associated Regulations reinforce employers' responsibilities to ensure staff receive appropriate development and training for their roles and responsibilities. Employers' compliance with all of these requirements will be monitored by the Regulation, Quality and Improvement Authority (RQIA).

### **Roles and responsibilities of employees**

- 2.10 All employees, under the NISCC Code of Practice for Social Care Employees, are responsible for keeping their knowledge and skills up-to-date and maintaining their registered status with the NISCC as appropriate.

### **3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

#### **3.1 Strategic Priority 1: Leadership and Management**

##### **Rationale**

Social services have changed and will continue to change significantly in the ways that they are commissioned, organised, managed and delivered. Managers are universally recognised as key players in assisting organisations and their staff to plan for, adapt to and implement change. As such, managers of social services need to have the capacity to provide professional leadership, management and supervision for staff with a focus on safe and effective performance and good outcomes for service users.

Improving the safety and quality of the personal social services is at the core of the government's modernisation agenda with a particular emphasis on regulation, governance and performance management. Leading staff through major organisational change and, at the same time, managing the demands for more effective social care governance, improved standards in services and better protection for service users, requires strong professional leadership and management.

First line managers are the leaders and custodians of safe and effective practice at the front line. This requires high level skills in supervising staff and in making professional judgements in complex situations.

All leaders and managers of the personal social services workforce have a particular responsibility to ensure the development of competence, talent and commitment of staff at all levels, in other words to promote the learning organisation. The development of learning organisations (see 2.8(g) above) underpins this Strategy, a theme addressed in more detail later in the document.

Effective leadership and management of the personal social services is a fusion of professional and managerial competence. Accordingly, this Strategy will support senior and operational managers to access appropriate training and qualifications that encompass both professional and managerial competence.

## **Policy statements**

**Employers will put in place by 1 April 2008 a comprehensive and coherent plan to develop leadership and managerial skills for the social services.**

**Continuing registration with the NISCC will be linked to the achievement of skills as identified in the leadership and management development plan.**

### **Leadership and Management**

#### **Strategic targets**

**By 2010**, appropriate leadership and managerial skills training programmes will be available for leaders and managers of social services at all levels.

**By 2016**, all senior, middle and first line managers will have undertaken appropriate leadership and managerial skills training within 2 years of appointment to post.

(See also strategic targets 4.1 and 6.2)

## **Actions**

Employers will identify in co-operation with the Sector Skills Council (SSC) and education and training providers, the skills requirement for strategic leadership and professional management of the PSS and have a development and implementation plan ready to commence by 1 April 2008.

The Plan must also include arrangements for monitoring and reporting annually on achievement including compliance of all relevant staff with the NISCC post-registration training and learning requirements.

As part of the plan, all middle and senior managers of social services, including Directors of Social Work, will undertake appropriate training in leadership and

management skills within 2 years of appointment to post, linked to continuing registration and the particular requirements of the post.

All social services team leaders and line managers will complete training in supervision and appraisal within the personal social services within 2 years of appointment to post, linked to continuing registration.

## 3.2 Strategic Priority 2: Safety and Accountability

### **Rationale**

The policy on registration of the whole social services workforce is part of the government's quality, safety and modernisation agenda and reflects the central importance of protection of the public and improving standards in public services.

The first two phases of registration for social workers and social work students are now complete. Phase 3 of the registration programme will commence in 2006 for identified groups within the social care workforce. For these staff the initial registration requirement will be linked to the NISSC Code of Practice for Employees.

There will be no requirement to hold a specific qualification at the point of initial registration on the social care part of the Register. However, it is recognised that appropriate training and qualifications can support staff in delivering safely, effectively and consistently on the complex range of functions that are an inherent part of the PSS. Additionally, registrants, in carrying a personal responsibility for maintaining their competence, should be facilitated to achieve relevant qualifications. This would also enable employers in discharging their responsibilities to deliver safe and high quality services. Accordingly, the Strategy will support all social services staff to achieve, over time, parts of nationally accredited and assessed work based qualifications or whole qualifications as appropriate. In due course, qualifications or part qualification achievement will be associated with continuing registration.

In turn, qualifications and all education and training provision for social services staff need to be relevant to the work people do, need to be of an appropriate standard and need to include assessment of the competence of the worker in the workplace.

## **Policy statements**

**A phased introduction of qualification or part qualification achievements will be associated with continuing registration with the NISCC and will be introduced over time for those on the social care part of the Register.**

**For those on the social work part of the Register, a phased introduction of post qualifying achievements will be associated with continuing registration with the NISCC and will be introduced over time.**

**All qualifications should be underpinned by relevant National Occupational Standards and include assessment of competence in the workplace.**

**Development and training provision should be based on recognised standards and comply with policy, legislation and service procedures.**

**All staff, including temporary appointments, must receive induction appropriate to their post.**

**All staff should have access to, and be expected to integrate into practice, all Departmentally endorsed Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) good practice guidelines as well as messages from inspections. Staff should also make use of valid and reliable research.**

## **Safety and Accountability**

### **Strategic targets**

**From 2009**, all new social work registrants and re-registrants will be working towards or hold relevant accredited training or qualifications appropriate to job role and associated with continuing registration.

**By 2016**, all new social care registrants and re-registrants will be working towards or hold relevant part or whole NVQs appropriate to job role and associated with continuing registration.

## **Actions**

Employers will ensure that employees are supported throughout their career in accessing appropriate training and qualifications linked to registration requirements.

Employers will ensure that all employees receive induction training, linked to the NISCC endorsed standards and appropriate to post, within 6 months of appointment.

Registrants on the social care part of the Register will be expected, following their first re-registration, to be working towards selected Units of the NVQs appropriate to their job role. Qualification or part qualification achievements will support subsequent re-registration with the NISCC.

Registrants on the social work part of the Register will be expected, following re-registration, to be working towards training or qualifications appropriate to their job role and linked to the Post Qualifying (PQ) Framework to support their continuing fitness to practise and registration with the NISCC.

## **3.3 Strategic Priority 3: Flexibility and Skills**

### **Rationale**

If employers are to have the right workforce in the right place at the right time, comprehensive organisational development plans based on accurate workforce information and linked to service and workforce development needs are essential.

Recruitment practice and deployment of staff should recognise the potential to transfer generic knowledge and skills from one programme of care to another or indeed from other related professions. At the same time recruitment and deployment practices should recognise the need to develop specialist expertise linked to appropriate accredited post qualifying opportunities for social workers or appropriate NVQs and associated skills sets for social care staff.

Social care and social work have always benefited from a diverse range of people joining the workforce who reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Social work in particular has benefited from attracting experienced people seeking a career change from other professions such as nursing, teaching and social care.

A diverse workforce can help promote better multidisciplinary working and more effective integrated service provision.

### **Policy statements**

**Employers will have in place a comprehensive development and training plan by 2008, for the social services workforce which identifies the need for competence and qualifications at all levels with a specified time frame for achievement linked to continuing registration.**

**Employers will support all staff to acquire the core body of generic knowledge, skills and qualifications relevant to job function within specified timescales.**

**Employers will support identified staff across all programmes of care to develop specialist expertise associated with relevant qualifications linked to job function and level of responsibility.**

**Employers will support the flexible deployment and mobility of staff across programmes of care with appropriate training initiatives to support transferability of competence and acquisition of required specific and specialist knowledge.**

**Access routes to facilitate entry into the Degree in Social Work by those seeking a career change or those without the required academic qualifications will be available across Northern Ireland.**

### **Flexibility and Skills**

#### **Strategic targets**

**By 2008**, comprehensive information will be available on the range of appropriate training opportunities from access routes to specialist training programmes for social services staff at all levels across Northern Ireland. This will be updated annually with an action plan and timescales for the development of new learning and training initiatives in line with identified workforce needs.

**By 2011**, systems will be in place to produce reliable regional information on the qualification profile of the social services workforce across all sectors.

## **Actions**

Employers will ensure that workforce information systems are upgraded to record the qualifications of the workforce linked to registration requirements.

All service development plans should factor in the workforce requirements for new or changing services taking account of the need for generic and specialist competence and the lead-in time needed to have those in place in the workforce.

Employers will ensure that organisational development and training plans reflect service needs, workforce needs, personal development plans and continuing registration requirements within the context of the strategic priorities as set out in this Strategy.

Employers will review recruitment practice to ensure it promotes the development of a flexible workforce with capacity to transfer from one work setting to another.

Social work employers, social work training providers and the SSC should co-operate to ensure access routes are available by 1 September 2007, to facilitate diverse entry into the Degree in Social Work.

## **3.4 Strategic Priority 4: Motivation and Confidence**

### **Rationale**

Employers in social services, along with other public services, will be competing to recruit staff as demand for social services increases. Promoting social care work and social work as positive career options, both for students leaving full-time education and for more experienced people wishing to change career at a later stage, will help attract the best candidates to work in the personal social services.

Career structures linked to qualifications need to be more clearly identified so that the social care worker is recognised as a professional in his or her own right, with clear opportunities for job mobility and progression. In addition, a coherent career structure for social work, supported by post qualifying opportunities is needed.

Clearly delineated career structures for social care workers and social workers will assist employers in both attracting and retaining the best staff.

Access to appropriate training and development opportunities also plays a part in motivating and retaining staff in practice.

### **Policy statements**

**Career structures in social care will be more clearly identified linked to agreed competence frameworks and qualifications that clarify workforce standards and facilitate job mobility and career progression within social care.**

**Employers will support the continuous professional development of social workers to facilitate mobility across programmes of care and career progression within the agreed career structure for social work practitioners linked to specified qualifications.**

**Employers must have systems in place to support all staff having planned access to appropriate development and training opportunities.**

### **Motivation and Confidence**

#### **Strategic targets**

**By 2010**, career structures in social work and social care will be linked to agreed accredited training and/or qualifications linked to continuing registration.

**By 2016**, all social services staff, including managers, will have ongoing, planned access to learning and development opportunities, that reflect the different stages of their career, changing service needs and any mandatory requirements, including registration requirements.

## **Actions**

The Department will initiate, in co-operation with employers and the SSC, identification of career structures linked to agreed competence and qualifications for social care professionals.

Employers will ensure that all social services staff have a personal development and training plan, linked to service needs and individual career aspirations and in line with Care Standards and continuing registration requirements.

Employers must have systems in place to support all staff accessing the appropriate training, assessment and qualifications linked to their personal development plan, service needs and individual career aspirations.

## **3.5 Strategic Priority 5: Working in Partnership**

### **Rationale**

Working together within the HPSS, including in partnership with service users and carers and with other related services, is essential in ensuring integrated and holistic responses to individuals, families and communities in need or at risk.

Education and training will support the development of skills of working in partnership with others inside the HPSS, with relevant other agencies outside the HPSS and in local communities.

Working in partnership with service users and carers has been and will remain a central tenet of all social services policies. This requires employers and employees to develop further, and implement, flexible, responsive and person-centred ways of working with service users and carers. Education and training opportunities will support the development of skills in person-centred practice.

The NISCC, in its role as the SSC for the PSS (including children's services) is required to establish partnerships with all stakeholders. It follows that the NISCC, both as a SSC and a Regulator, will have a key role with others in taking forward this Strategy.

Partnership between employers and academia is well established in social work training at graduate and postgraduate levels. It has helped to keep professional training relevant to the changing demands of practice and service development. It plays an important part in securing regional standards and regional consistency across all personal social services. Partnership also should ensure that practice learning for social work students matches the quality and quantity required.

### **Policy statements**

**Employers will work with the SSCs and education providers to identify and develop a comprehensive range of accredited opportunities for shared learning across disciplines and agencies to support improved integration, partnership and team working.**

**Education and training should support person-centred and partnership approaches to working with service users and carers as well as ways of engaging and working with other disciplines and local communities and the wider public.**

**Partnerships between employers, education providers and the SSC will be a key feature in the development and delivery of competence-based training and qualifications underpinned by national standards for social care and social work.**

## **Working in Partnership**

### **Strategic targets**

**By 2008**, there is evidence that the design, delivery and quality assurance of National Occupational Standards and professional social work training are informed by service user and carer perspectives.

**By 2010**, shared accredited learning opportunities for social services across the statutory, voluntary and private sectors will be available in each Trust area with an action plan for further development.

**By 2010**, a range of shared learning and training initiatives will be in place with other key sectors, including health, justice, education and housing with an action plan for further development.

## **Actions**

Social services employers in co-operation with the SSC will identify the opportunities for shared learning with health, criminal justice, education, housing and community sectors as appropriate.

Social work employers will support the NISCC approved partnership arrangements for the planning and delivery of social work training at graduate and post-graduate levels in Northern Ireland.

Employers will ensure practice learning provision including assessment to the NSCC standards for a minimum of 650 social work students per annum.

Employers and training providers should seek to inform the development of standards underpinning qualification development for social care and social work training and the design and delivery of such training through engagement with service users, carers and communities.

## **3.6 Strategic Priority 6: Continuous Learning and Development**

### **Rationale**

All the NISCC registrants have a personal responsibility to maintain and develop their competence throughout their career if they wish to maintain their registration. Employers have the additional responsibility of supporting staff to make use of continuous learning opportunities linked to the duty of quality, risk management and governance arrangements.

Much of the work of social services involves making decisions that may affect the human rights and civil liberties of individuals. Practitioners are expected to exercise judgements about how and when to intervene to safeguard people's well-being and to balance the rights of the individual with the rights of others on a daily basis. Informed decision-making can best take place in the climate of a learning organisation. Being continuously encouraged and enabled to question and learn from practice will support better, safer practice.

The workplace itself and the work that people do offer a constant and rich source of learning opportunities for staff. The workplace needs to be recognised and more fully exploited as a legitimate 'field of learning'. Encouraging, supporting and facilitating work-based learning, as an integral part of everyday practice, requires organisational commitment at all levels. It also means having staff with the appropriate skills and competence to support others' learning and development.

### **Policy statements**

**Social services employees are personally responsible for engaging in continuous learning and development to ensure their competence matches job requirements.**

**All registrants on the NISCC Register have a responsibility to contribute as appropriate to their own level of competence, to the learning and development of others.**

**Employers will ensure policies, procedures and resources including appropriate trained staff are in place to support continuous learning, development and assessment of competence in the workplace.**

**Employers and staff should seek ways to ensure learning is shared at different levels within the organisation and that creative and innovative practice is nurtured and supported.**

## **Continuous Learning and Development**

### **Strategic targets**

**By 2008**, all social services employees will have an annual performance appraisal with their employer and personal development plan.

**By 2010**, all social care providers will, as part of social care governance, have arrangements in place to support the organisation's development as a learning organisation and an action plan to meet further identified development.

## **Actions**

Social services employees, including managers, will ensure they maintain and implement a personal development plan throughout their career, linked to continuing registration requirements.

Social services employees will identify, for the purposes of annual appraisal, the specific contribution they have made to the learning and development of others.

As part of their organisational development plan, employers and professional managers must put in place, and monitor annually the effectiveness of, performance objectives that reflect the key features of a learning organisation as defined by the SCIE<sup>10</sup>.

Employers and professional managers will ensure effective communication processes are in place to share learning, spread innovative practice and celebrate good practice at both team and organisational levels.

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<sup>10</sup> SCIE learning organisation materials

## 4. SECURING THE PRIORITIES OF THE STRATEGY

### Commissioning arrangements

4.1 Revised arrangements for commissioning PSS training are needed to replace those set out in the Departmental Circular *PSS Training Strategy: Securing the Objectives* issued on 27 July 1995. New arrangements are needed to reflect the new structures for the HPSS following the Review of Public Administration (RPA). The commissioning arrangements for PSS training should:

- make best use of scarce resources;
- allow for economies of scale;
- secure regional standards and priorities; and
- allow for local planning and delivery.

4.2 Therefore one body should commission the full set of arrangements for personal social services education and training. Under the reconfiguration of the HPSS, the Regional Authority will be the appropriate body to assume commissioning responsibility for PSS training. The senior officer in the Regional Authority with lead responsibility for the personal social services will be responsible for ensuring that the training commissioned meets social services development priorities, associated workforce requirements and professional regulatory body standards.

### Resources

4.3 Resources currently held in the Department, Boards, Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) (specifically for social work teaching costs) and Trusts will be amalgamated in one source within the Regional Authority. This whole system approach will secure the delivery of regional standards of competence across the social services workforce based on regional standards for social services training. Such resources (including staff) as are currently held in Trusts should be redistributed between the five new Trusts to continue to support local delivery.

4.4. In the first years of the Strategy, it will be necessary to examine the need for redirecting resources to achieve the strategic targets to reflect the scope of the Strategy which now includes the whole social services workforce across all sectors. The distribution of the

social services workforce across sectors has changed considerably with a majority of the social care workforce now employed in the independent sector. The majority of social workers are employed in the statutory sector in the HPSS (Appendix 1 - Fact File). Commissioning and funding of training needs to reflect this changing context of social services provision.

### **Regional partnerships for social work training**

- 4.5 Regional partnership arrangements for the planning and delivery of social work education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels will be maintained. This will ensure the best use of limited specialist expertise. Existing partnership arrangements including the Regional Body for the Degree in Social Work and the Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership (NIPQETP) will come under the auspices of the Regional Authority (see also paragraph 4.6 below). Links will be needed with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and the Department of Education (DE) (who commission for their sectors) to ensure social work training arrangements match workforce needs. It is envisaged that commissioning and associated resources for undergraduate social work training in Further and Higher Education will also transfer from DEL to the Regional Authority.
- 4.6 Partnership arrangements for the continuing professional development of social workers may be appropriately linked with the proposed new arrangements for continuing professional development of other professions within the Regional Authority. Particular attention will need to be paid to the unique role of social work in the discharge of statutory functions and the associated inter-agency training arrangements.

### **Governance**

- 4.7 Streamlining regional commissioning and funding sources for PSS training should reduce administration costs, removing any potential for duplication, and enable a robust financial management and accountability system to be put in place.
- 4.8 In the interests of good social care governance the senior officer with lead responsibility for social services will, in co-operation with the commissioning arm, ensure that PSS training is secured to the required volume and professional standards. In so doing, he or she will support the Chief Executive of the Regional Authority in his or her duty of quality with regard to the provision of the full range of personal social
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services. The Chief Executive of the Regional Authority will be responsible for accounting to the Department and the Minister for the achievement of the regional strategic targets set out in the Strategy.

### **Delivering the Strategy**

#### **Strategic targets**

**By 2008**, commissioning responsibility and associated resources for PSS training will have transferred to the Regional Authority.

**By 2009**, resources required to continue to deliver the strategic targets from 2010 onwards will have been identified and submitted to the Department to inform the 2010 comprehensive spending review.

### **Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in securing the PSS Development and Training Strategy**

4.9 Under the reconfiguration of the HPSS, key functions are being attributed to the Department, the Regional Authority and the new Trusts. The roles and responsibilities outlined below may be subject to amendment when reconfiguration plans are finalised.

#### 4.9.1 Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

The social services workforce delivers public statutory services whether employed in the HPSS, or in the voluntary or private sectors. It follows that government, through its policy function, retains responsibility for specifying standards for that workforce including, through its consent for the NISCC Rules, the regulatory requirements for the whole workforce. Consequently, the roles and responsibilities of the Department are as follows:

- policy and legislative strategic framework;
- standards for service and workforce regulation;

- regional resourcing;
- stewardship and performance management;
- strategic control framework;
- advice to Minister; and
- sponsorship of the NISCC.

#### 4.9.2 Regional Authority

The Regional Authority will need to work with universities, colleges of further and higher education, other relevant service bodies and government departments to ensure regional commissioning arrangements are consistent and avoid duplication of effort. Roles and responsibilities include:

- securing effective commissioning of the PSS training services from social services providers to match service development and human resource plans, to meet national and regional standards and to secure regional priorities including those specified in the Strategy;
  - commissioning the social work degree provision, including the regional partnership, university and college places to match workforce needs, and practice learning from service providers (to match student numbers);
  - liaising with the NIO and the DE to ensure commissioning of social work training reflects their workforce needs as well as the workforce needs of the HPSS;
  - commissioning the NIPQETP arrangements and post-qualifying education and training to match service needs;
  - monitoring the delivery against the Strategy and the regional targets, standards and budget allocations;
  - contributing to a regional information system on the qualification profile of the social services workforce;
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- applying sanctions where required; and
- accounting to the Department for the achievement of regional strategic targets.

#### 4.9.3 Social Services Providers

Social services providers include the five new Trusts and other social services organisations in the voluntary and private sectors. Social services providers working co-operatively will deliver the full range of training arrangements. Roles and responsibilities include:

- producing Social Services Workforce Development and Training Plans;
- contributing to partnership arrangements (including assessment) for all levels of social work and social care education and training;
- supporting staff attendance on training courses and their completion of training and qualifications;
- providing practice learning opportunities to match student numbers as commissioned by the Regional Authority;
- maintaining designated (or associate) practice learning provider status with the NISCC;
- complying with the NISCC Codes and support staff to comply with Codes;
- working in partnership to develop education and training at all levels including shared learning opportunities;
- maintaining an information system on the qualification profile of the workforce and contribute to a regional overview;
- managing, monitoring and reporting on the use of the PSS training resources, including training staff, plant and equipment;

- monitoring achievement at organisational and individual levels and take action to remedy any shortfalls identified; and
- accounting to the Regional Authority for achievement.

#### 4.9.4 Northern Ireland Social Care Council

As part of the government's modernisation agenda, the NISCC was established as a non-departmental public body to secure national standards of competence and conduct in the social services workforce. As the regulator of both the workforce and training it must be and be seen to be independent of both the commissioner and providers of social services, including social services training. The NISCC's roles and responsibilities include:

- regulating social work education, including practice learning and the postgraduate framework;
- regulating the social work and social care workforce;
- promoting education and training development;
- providing information to prospective students and others to promote recruitment to social work training and to promote social care training;
- functioning as the approved SSC; and
- accounting to the Department and Minister for achievement of annual objectives.

#### 4.9.5 Sector Skills Council for Care and Development

The NISCC is part of a UK-wide alliance, licensed by the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) to operate as an SSC for the social services sector, covering both adult and children's services. The SSC will establish collaborative agreements between employers, education providers and funders to support the implementation of the DEL's Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland and this Strategy for the PSS workforce. The roles and responsibilities of the SSC include:

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- producing Sector Skills Agreement to support the achievement of the regional targets in this Strategy;
- negotiating with the Regional Authority and employers to determine priorities for skill development during the period of the Strategy;
- developing modern qualification frameworks and associated quality assurance systems;
- linking with other relevant SSCs, including Skills for Health and Skills for Justice;
- monitoring implementation of the Strategy linked to registration requirements; and
- accounting for achievement of agreed priorities to the SSDA and the Department.

#### 4.9.6 Education and Training Inspection and Regulation

Assuring the quality of education and training for social services staff is an important component in improving the standards of competence of staff. There are a number of bodies who have responsibility for this. It will be important that the different systems co-operate in sharing information and in streamlining quality assurance mechanisms where appropriate. The range of bodies and their responsibilities include:

- **Northern Ireland Social Care Council:** as professional training regulator;
- **Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority:** monitor compliance with staff training and qualifications requirements as set out in care standards, associated regulations and the NISCC rules;
- **Quality Assurance Agency:** monitor at specified intervals the quality of social work courses in Higher Education;
- **Qualifications and Curriculum Authority:** approve and monitor NVQ assessment arrangements; and

- **Education and Training Inspectorate:** inspect training provision in Further Education.

#### 4.9.7 Training Providers, including Universities, Colleges and Social Service Providers

Both education providers and service providers deliver education and training for social services staff, sometimes in partnership and sometimes independently of each other. Working co-operatively these providers should be able to ensure the relevant supply of appropriate training and learning opportunities for social services staff which meet workforce needs and specified competence requirements. Training provider responsibilities include:

- collaboration (service providers, colleges and universities) in developing the full range of education and training for the PSS;
- ensuring education and training provision meets national standards, legislation and agency policy and procedures, and complies with regulatory requirements;
- maintaining partnership arrangements for social work education so that social work education maintains its relevance for the HPSS in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors and for other sectors employing social workers including education, justice and community groups;
- collaborating with other professions and related services to develop multidisciplinary and interagency training opportunities; and
- involvement with service users and carers and other stakeholders in the design, delivery and quality assurance of training.

#### 4.9.8 Staff and Students

All registered social workers, social care workers, including social work students, are accountable for the quality of their work and are expected to take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills and contribute to the learning and development of others. Responsibilities of individual registrants include:

- seeking to develop competence continuously throughout career;

- maintaining a personal development plan throughout training and career;
- complying with registration and re-registration requirements;
- complying with the NISCC Codes; and
- contributing, as appropriate, to the learning and development of others.

### **Transitional arrangements**

4.10 The current commissioning arrangements for PSS Training will continue in 2007/08 pending transfer of arrangements to the Regional Authority from 1 April 2008. The Department will work closely with all relevant stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition of commissioning functions, resources and expertise to the Regional Authority.

## **5. SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC TARGETS**

### **1. Leadership and Management**

Strategic Targets:

- 1.1 **By 2010**, appropriate leadership and managerial skills training programmes will be available for leaders and managers of social services at all levels.
- 1.2 **By 2016**, all senior, middle and first line managers will have undertaken appropriate leadership and managerial skills training within 2 years of appointment to post.

(See also strategic targets 4.1 and 6.2)

### **2. Safety and Accountability**

Strategic targets:

- 2.1 **From 2009**, all new social work registrants and re-registrants will be working towards or hold relevant accredited training or qualifications appropriate to job role and associated with continuing registration.
- 2.2 **By 2016**, all new social care registrants and re-registrants will be required to be working towards or hold relevant part or whole NVQs appropriate to job role and associated with continuing registration.

### 3. Flexibility and Skill

Strategic Targets:

- 3.1 **By 2008**, comprehensive information will be available on the range of appropriate training opportunities from access routes to specialist training programmes for social services staff at all levels across Northern Ireland. This will be updated annually with an action plan and timescales for the development of new learning and training initiatives in line with identified workforce needs.
- 3.2 **By 2011**, systems will be in place to produce reliable regional information on the qualification profile of the social services workforce across all sectors.

### 4. Motivation and Confidence

Strategic Targets:

- 4.1 **By 2010**, career structures in social work and social care will be linked to agreed accredited training and/or qualifications linked to continuing registration.
- 4.2 **By 2016**, all social services staff, including managers, will have ongoing, planned access to learning and development opportunities, that reflect the different stages of their career, changing service needs and any mandatory requirements, including registration requirements.

## 5. Working in Partnership

Strategic Targets:

- 5.1 **By 2008**, there is evidence that the design, delivery and quality assurance of National Occupational Standards and professional social work training are informed by service user and carer perspectives.
- 5.2 **By 2010**, shared accredited learning opportunities for social services across the statutory, voluntary and private sectors will be available in each Trust area with an action plan for further development.
- 5.3 **By 2010**, a range of shared learning and training initiatives will be in place with other key sectors, including health, justice, education and housing with an action plan for further development.

## 6. Continuous Learning and Development

Strategic Targets:

- 6.1 **By 2008**, all social services employees will have an annual performance appraisal with their employer and personal development plan.
- 6.2 **By 2010**, all social care providers will, as part of social care governance, have arrangements in place to support the organisation's development as a learning organisation and an action plan to meet further identified development.

## 7. Delivering the Strategy

Strategic Targets:

- 7.1 **By 2008**, commissioning responsibility and associated resources for PSS training will have transferred to the Regional Authority.
- 7.2 **By 2009**, the resources required to continue to deliver the strategic targets from 2010 – 2016 will have been identified and submitted to the Department to inform the 2010 comprehensive spending review.

## **Appendix 1**

### **FACT FILE**

#### **FACTS ABOUT THE SOCIAL SERVICES WORKFORCE**

##### **The social services workforce**

- there are an estimated 40,140 social services employees in Northern Ireland<sup>11</sup>;
- 12,832 work in the statutory sector (including HPSS, the probation service and education welfare);
- 27,308 work in the voluntary, private sectors and other sectors;
- there are 4000 social workers;
- 83% of the workforce is female; and
- over 50% work of the workforce work part-time.

##### **The social work workforce**

- 4128 registered social workers<sup>12</sup>;
- 3000 (est) are employed in the statutory PSS sector;
- 300 (est) are employed in the criminal justice sector, education welfare sector and the NI Guardian ad Litem Service;
- 500 (est) are employed in the voluntary sector; and
- a small number of social workers work independently.

##### **The social care workforce**

- 90% (36,140) of the social services workforce in Northern Ireland are social care workers;
- 27,308 (75%) of the social care workforce are employed in the voluntary and private sectors;
- 8,500 (25%) are employed in the statutory sector;
- 15,756 (44%)<sup>13</sup> of the social care workforce work in residential care, the majority of whom 13,477 (85%) work in the voluntary and private sectors;
- an estimated 11,744<sup>14</sup> (32%) of the social care workforce are employed as domiciliary care workers; and
- an estimated 7024 (61%) of domiciliary care workers are employed in the statutory sector.

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<sup>11</sup> Workforce Planning Review - Social Services Staff Groups, DHSSPS, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> NISCC registration statistics, 4 August 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Registration & Inspection Unit Report 2003/04.

<sup>14</sup> The actual headcount of domiciliary care workers is difficult to quantify as it is thought significant numbers work less than 10 hours per week, but this may be offset by the fact that some staff work for more than one employer.





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