

## **CEL CIS's response to the Scottish Government's consultation on 'Scottish Social Services Council – proposed register changes'**

CEL CIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection, based at the University of Strathclyde, is a leading improvement and innovation centre. We improve children's lives by supporting people and organisations to drive long-lasting change in the services they need, and the practices used by people responsible for their care. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on the 'Scottish Social Services Council – proposed register changes'. Our response draws on the evidence and expertise developed for our comprehensive [response](#) to the Scottish Social Services Council's consultation on 'A register for the future' in 2022.

### **1. Do you agree that reducing the number of SSSC Register parts will be an improvement to the current structure?**

We welcome any changes to the SSSC Register that reduce complexity for the workforce whilst retaining, where necessary, the distinction between workforces with different skillsets, values, and that meet the specific needs of children and young people – particularly those in residential childcare.

In 2022, CEL CIS responded to a proposal by the SSSC to make changes to the register, including simplification of 'parts' of the Register that categorise the workforce from twenty-three to four. In our response to that consultation, we expressed concern at the proposal to amalgamate the residential child care workforce with the adult social care and housing workforce. The children and families' workforce needs to be clearly and easily recognisable. Residential child care is distinct from all other care settings, with considerable differences in the roles, scope and skills required by residential child care practitioners.

The residential childcare workforce provides alternative parental care to children and young people. The developmental needs of children and young people as they grow are markedly distinct from the needs of adults in residential care homes, and so the requirements on these workforces are very different.

Evidence shows that effective, therapeutic care can only be provided by trained, specialised staff working within multidisciplinary teams who use specific, evidence informed models of care,<sup>13</sup> with distinct qualifying awards to support this. For these reasons, we stated in 2022 that it would not be suitable to include residential child care workers in wider categories alongside practitioners who work in adult care homes, adult day care services, care at home services and housing support services. Residential child care should be retained as an independent category on the SSSC Register.

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<sup>1</sup> [Porter, R. B., Mitchell, F., & Giraldi, M. \(2020\) \*Function, quality and outcomes of residential care: Rapid Evidence Review\*, CEL CIS, Glasgow](#)

We are pleased to see development of the proposal to change and simplify the Register in this new consultation, with the suggestion of a category for the 'children and young people workforce', which would be distinct from the adult social care, social work and social work student workforces. This would address our most urgent concern about the amalgamation of the residential child care workforce into the adult social care and housing workforce. However, it does not retain a distinct category specifically for the residential child care workforce in the SSSC Register. Instead, this workforce would be in the same category in the Register as the early learning and childcare workforce. Again, these workforces have distinct skills and qualifications, and as such they should be listed as distinct in the Register.

If the residential child care workforce is to be clearly and explicitly included in the category of 'children and young people', it will also be important to clarify the age range of young people this category may cover. Children and young people may live in specialist supported housing from 17 to 21 years old, and they may also remain living in residential child care services under their entitlement to continuing care until they are 21.

### **Recruitment, retention and support for the workforce**

Our networks across the residential child care sector have consistently told us that registration of a workforce in the SSSC Register plays a key role in raising the profile, status and morale of these workforces. Recent evidence from CELCIS's Children's Services Reform Research Case Studies on Transformational Reform has also highlighted the importance of registration of the workforce on professionalisation of service across international contexts.<sup>2</sup>

The Children's Services Reform Research study also concluded that the children's services workforce is in crisis, with "unmanageable workloads and high levels of staff sickness, absence, turnover and vacancies"<sup>3</sup>. It is critical to acknowledge this crisis in recruitment and retention within children's services workforces in Scotland. In addressing this crisis, the importance of ensuring that all mechanisms surrounding the workforce, including registration through the SSSC, are as supportive as they can be to uphold the professionalism, skills and morale, should not be underestimated.

### **Data about the children's services workforce**

Scotland needs to improve the data collected and used about the workforce, to understand who the workforce is and what their experiences are, so that we better understand the nature of relationships that surround children, young people and families. Data collection and usage is also necessary to the effective

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<sup>2</sup> McTier, A., Mackinnon, K. and Ottaway, H. (2023) Children's Services Reform Research study: Case Studies of Transformational Reform Programmes, CELCIS; Glasgow

<sup>3</sup> McTier A., Manole M., Scott J., Young E., Fowler N., McIver L., Anderson C.A., Porter R., and Ottaway H. (2023) Children's Services Reform Research, Scotland's children's services landscape: The views and experiences of the children's services workforce, CELCIS; Glasgow (p. 126)

planning of services that respond to the needs of children, young people and families.<sup>4</sup>

Whilst we support the simplification of the SSSC Register to improve its usability for the workforce when registering, we would also highlight that the reduction of categories in the Register from twenty-three to four may limit the data the SSSC can collect about the workforce.

It will therefore be important to ensure there are non-public facing aspects of the SSSC register which collate sufficient detail on the workforce, and that this data is in a format that can be readily anonymised, exported and analysed to support national, regional and local workforce planning. This data could include information such as job role, qualifications, length of time in job, as well as the proportion of agency staff in a workforce.

Platforms to input this data into should be easy to use, with clear information and rationales about how this data is used and stored safely, and the purpose of collecting this information.

## **2. Is three months after starting in their role an appropriate timescale to require workers to apply for registration?**

Yes – we agree that three months is an appropriate timescale. We note our [response](#) to this question in the 2022 consultation by the Scottish Social Services Council.

## **3. Do you agree with SSSC’s proposals to include more information on the searchable public Register?**

Transparent and accurate data is essential for keeping everybody safe, so we are supportive of some aspects of the proposal for the Register to be searchable.

A clear and simple central public Register is welcomed. However, the current processes to find some information on the SSSC Register can be difficult to navigate, as this information is held in separate places.

We are cautious about proposals to include information regarding additional qualifications on the public-facing Register. We are concerned about the potential for unintended consequences on the status of the social work profession. For example, listing multiple additional qualifications on the public-facing register may diminish the status of those social workers without additional qualifications, unintentionally fostering an expectation that a social worker or practitioner that does not have additional qualifications is less competent than those with additional qualifications. Consideration must be made about the purpose of the public-facing Register, whether this is to ascertain that a

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<sup>4</sup> The Independent Care Review (2020) [The Promise](#), Glasgow (p. 13)

practitioner is qualified to practice in a role, or to provide further information about practitioners.

If further qualifications are listed, there will need to be clear information around the purpose of doing so, with information that supports an understanding of the qualifications and standards required to register and practice as a social worker.

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