



National Audit Office

A REVIEW BY THE  
NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE  
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# Skills for Care and Development

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# Part One

## Preface

**1.1** Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are partially publicly funded employer led organisations that cover specific economic sectors in the United Kingdom. They have three key goals:

- Raising employer engagement, demand and investment in skills;
- Ensuring authoritative Labour Market Information for their sectors; and
- Development of National Occupational Standards and ensuring qualifications meet employer needs.

**1.2** There are 25 SSCs, covering about 85 per cent of the British workforce.

### **SSC Relicensing**

**1.3** Sector Skills Councils operate under licence from the UK Government.

**1.4** The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) is responsible for arrangements for relicensing the SSCs with the aim of ensuring the Councils will be more sharply focused on raising employer ambition and investment in skills at all levels, articulating future skills needs of their sector and ensuring that the supply of skills and qualifications is driven by employers.

**1.5** The UK Commissioners will make their recommendations on whether to relicense or not to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities, and Skills, in consultation with Ministers in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland is responsible for awarding a new licence.

### **The National Audit Office Role**

**1.6** The National Audit Office has been asked by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills to undertake an Independent Performance Assessment of each Sector Skills Council to help inform decision making by the Commissioners and not as part of National Audit Office's wider VFM programme to provide assurance to Parliament.

**1.7** In the case of Skills for Care and Development, the National Audit Office were not allocated resources to undertake an assessment against the Relicensing Framework for each of the separate partner organisations that make up the partnership that deliver the SSC remit. We cannot therefore provide assurance against the Relicensing Framework's key tests for each of the separate partner organisations. Instead, we have focused on the added value of the award of the SSC licence in the sector.

# Part Two

## Executive Summary

**2.1** Skills for Care and Development SSC covers the social care, children, early years and young people's workforce. The SSC is a partnership of six organisations, five of which are public bodies and the other a private company and charity. All six partners are recognised by Government as those responsible for workforce development and/or regulation and reform in the social care, children, early years and young people's sector. Many of the responsibilities and functions of the partners are established by statute.

**2.2** Each of the partner organisations is responsible for delivering the SSC remit for the UK nation and sector it covers. There is a partner organisation in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and three partner organisations in England. The SSC also has a small UK team headed by a Director which functions as a secretariat for the SSC and is also responsible for the delivery of the three themes of work which the SSC Board wishes to pursue on a collaborative basis.

**2.3** The partnership approach is a different organisational structure to that adopted by other SSCs. There are six organisations with responsibility for delivering the SSC function in the sector. We have not been allocated resources to undertake an assessment against the Relicensing Framework for each of the separate partner organisations and do not seek to provide assurance against the key tests for each of the separate partner organisations. Instead, we have focused on the added value of the award of the SSC licence in the sector.

**2.4** Skills for Care and Development seeks not to duplicate the work of the individual partners and has identified that it can use their collective expertise to add most value to the sector in three areas of work which they pursue in partnership: on standards and qualifications; the image and value of the workforce; and international issues and migrant workers. In other areas the SSC remit is delivered by the individual partners working alone.

**2.5** We found that:

- There is direct engagement between the partner organisations and the relevant Government, employer and stakeholders, as the partner organisations have established relationships. The Chief Executives of the six partner organisations, senior managers, and the Director of the SSC UK team form the SSC Senior Management Team which meets on a regular basis to oversee the delivery of UK work. These meetings ensure that the SSC is aware of, and able to respond to, issues across the UK. However, there is no direct engagement between the UK team and the nations.

- While awareness of the individual partner organisations is high, there is low awareness of the Skills for Care and Development brand. The SSC's policy is to focus communication via the partner organisations as the partners were already well known in the sector and had established relationships with employers and stakeholders.
- There is confusion among some stakeholders regarding the different roles of the partner organisations (role as SSC and other roles).
- There is a perception among some stakeholders that the partnership approach leads to delays because of the need to seek agreement across six separate organisations.
- Limited evaluation of the impact of the SSC is undertaken, so it is not possible to assess the impact being made by the SSC as a whole or the added value of the award of the licence.

**2.6** Commissioners may like to explore the following issues in more detail:

- What practical benefits accrue to each of the individual partners and the workforce for which they are responsible from the award of the SSC licence, over and above the programmes they have in place for workforce development.
- Whether the work programme pursued in partnership makes the most of the partners' collective expertise and is a sufficiently robust additional benefit of the award of the licence in the sector.
- Whether the current partnership structure is leading to additional bureaucracy and delays.
- What plans the SSC has to improve the understanding of stakeholders about the structure of the SSC.

## **Theme 1: A Well run SSC**

**2.7** Skills for Care and Development works in a highly regulated sector. The six partners are responsible for workforce development and/or regulation and reform in the sectors they cover. This has caused some concern with employers and stakeholders about these responsibilities and the responsibilities as an SSC and potential conflict between them.

**2.8** We heard some concerns that there was no direct engagement between the SSC and the nations. The SSC has taken the decision to use the partner organisations in each nation to engage directly, as these organisations already have a well known brand and well established relationships. Promoting the Skills for Care and Development brand is not undertaken as the SSC considers that it is likely to add confusion. The Chief Executives of the six partner organisations, senior managers, and the Director of the SSC UK team form the SSC Senior Management team which meets on a regular basis to oversee the delivery of UK work. These meetings ensure that the SSC is aware of, and able to respond to, issues across the UK.

**2.9** The SSC has a strategic plan and the partner organisations have their own strategic plans. The partner organisations' strategies include their SSC remit. We heard concerns about limited employer engagement in the SSC's strategic planning process.

**2.10** The partner organisations have total coverage of the UK and have been able to influence policy and address priorities in each of the nations.

**2.11** As the partner organisations are well established and well known, they are responsible for employer engagement and product development. As a result, employer awareness of the Skills for Care and Development brand is low.

## **Theme 2: SSC Core Products and Services**

**2.12** Research is undertaken by the six partner organisations. However, there is no single research strategy for the full sector across the UK. The UK Board is to consider what value would be gained from having such a strategy.

**2.13** Each of the partner organisations has a Sector Skills Agreement in place. There is a UK Sector Qualifications Strategy and action plan and one in place for each of the partner organisations.

**2.14** All of the partner organisations are jointly responsible for seven suites of National Occupational Standards. The SSC considers every three years if a review of the National Occupational Standards is needed. In the last year, three suites have been reviewed. Some stakeholders raised concerns that the language of the National Occupational Standards was not always clear and that the use of consultants to produce them had resulted in a wide range of quality.

**2.15** The migration of qualifications to the Qualifications and Credit Framework appears to be on track. However, some stakeholders considered that they have had limited involvement in the process. Some stakeholders also considered that the complexity and size of the sector was a significant risk to delivery of the migration of qualifications.

**2.16** Two apprenticeships are in place in the sector and the overall completion rate has improved considerably. The SSC has developed a joint diploma which will link to a Level Five foundation degree. Good progress has been made with the development of 14-19 pathways in Wales and a 14-19 strategy in Northern Ireland.

## **Theme 3: SSC Sector Specific Solutions**

**2.17** The SSC identified, following the SSA process, six common skills needs across the UK: management and leadership; capacity building and managing transition; achievement of gateway qualifications; development of specialist expertise; skills to work flexibly in integrated service models; and a need for learners to have improved and simplified access to appropriate qualifications. Work to address these needs has been tailored to each nation and is delivered via the partners.

**2.18** The SSC is working in partnership with Skills for Health, although, feedback from some stakeholders has suggested that the working and relationship between the two SSCs could be improved.

**2.19** The partnership has produced collaboratively and independently sector specific solutions. Examples of the solutions developed collaboratively include the UK careers website and joint National Occupational Standards.

#### **Theme 4: SSC Results and Impacts**

**2.20** The SSC has objectives and targets within its business plan, which are allocated to the partners. Each of the partners also identifies objectives related to their SSC remit within their corporate plans.

**2.21** The SSC does not have an embedded evaluation process in place to measure its overall impact, or the added value of the SSC. Performance in the Devolved Nations is monitored via the SSC review against the objectives within the business plan.

## Part Three

### Context for Skills for Care and Development's work

**3.1** Skills for Care and Development is the SSC for social care, early years, children and young people's workforce. The sector supports 60,000 employers and 1.87 million people, spread across private, public, and voluntary service provision. Core funding received from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills of £1.69 million in 2008 equates to £0.90 per employee.

**3.2** The SSC has adopted a different organisational structure to other SSCs. The SSC is a partnership of six organisations. The partner organisations are:

- Care Council for Wales.
- Children's Workforce Development Council.
- General Social Care Council.
- Northern Ireland Social Care Council.
- Scottish Social Services Council.
- Skills for Care.

**3.3** Five of the six partner organisations are public bodies and the other is a private company and charity. All six partners are recognised by Government as those responsible for workforce development and/or regulation and reform in the social care, children, early years and young people's sector. Many of the responsibilities and functions of the partners are established by statute. Each of the partner organisations is responsible for delivering the SSC remit for the UK nation and sector it covers. There is a partner organisation in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and three partner organisations in England.

**3.4** The SSC was fully licensed in February 2005 as a partnership of five organisations. The General Social Care Council joined the partnership in 2008. The partnership approach aims to build upon the existing organisations and their established links with Government, stakeholders, employers, and workers.

**3.5** In addition, the SSC has a small UK team of ten staff headed by a Director. The UK team initially acted as a secretariat of three staff with a co-ordinating function. The work of the UK team was later expanded to cover responsibility for the delivery of the three themes of work which the SSC Board wishes to pursue on a collaborative basis. These are set out in the UK wide operational plan.

**3.6** Skills for Care and Development is not a legal entity. The SSC licence is held on behalf of the partnership by Skills for Care, one of the six partner organisations. Skills for Care is also responsible for the finance functions of the SSC.

**3.7** The SSC Board is chaired by one of the chairs of the six partner organisations. Chairs are appointed on a two year basis and rotated between the partner organisations.

**3.8** Skills for Care and Development faces a number of sectoral challenges. The SSC identified, following the SSA process, six common skills needs across the UK:

- Management and leadership, including professional management capability.
- Capacity building and managing transitions arising from the changing service models including the need for commissioning skills.
- Achievement of gateway qualifications to meet regulatory frameworks and CPD to support re-registration.
- Development of specialist expertise.
- Skills to work flexibly in integrated service models and partnership and shared learning.
- A need for learners to have improved and simplified access to appropriate qualifications that are demand led.

**3.9** In response to these challenges, and from its own research and work across the UK, Skills for Care and Development has identified the following strategic objectives:

- Promote entry and development opportunities to support a sustainable workforce.
- Understand and articulate the needs of the workforce now and in the future.
- Enhance the skills and knowledge of the workforce through learning opportunities and/or qualifications to meet the needs of those who use services.

**3.10** There is a formal Heads of Agreement in place which identifies the governance arrangements for the partnership.

## Part Four

### A Well Run SSC

The SSC is employer led, has the confidence and support of employers in its sector and is a strategically and operationally effective organisation.

**4.1** The six partner organisations which make up the SSC form a partnership which is UK wide and which covers the full SSC remit. The work of the SSC is informed by the workforce priorities of each of the UK nations. These priorities are located within the public policy context and negotiated with employer, Government, professionals, service users and carers. The sector operates in a fully devolved policy context and there are differing infrastructures for the delivery of services. This means the workforce development needs, regulation and registration differs to meet sector needs.

**4.2** Some stakeholders expressed concerns relating to the structure of the partnership and the potential conflicts between the different roles of the partner organisations.

**4.3** The **UK Board** has 12 members. The Board is made up of representatives of the partner organisations and includes representation of employers, training organisations and professional bodies. The Board's Heads of Agreement governance document specifies that the Board meets at least twice a year. However, Board members also meet via teleconference if required. For 2009, three face to face meetings are planned for all Board members.

**4.4** We observed a UK Board meeting. There appeared to be a minimal amount of challenge and several members were absent. The Chair told us that this was not normally the case.

**4.5** The SSC has a **Senior Management team** which comprises the Chief Executives of the six partner organisations, senior managers and the Director of the UK team. The Senior Management team is responsible for day to day operations of the SSC and reports to the UK Board.

**4.6** The **UK team** of ten staff, led by a Director, is tasked with delivering the SSC's **UK operational plan**. Within the operational plan there are three themes of work (four from 2009-10): Standards and Qualifications; Image and Value; and International issues and Migrant Workers. We were told that these areas are developed on a UK level as there is added value and efficiency in doing so. The areas were developed following the SSA and SQLS research process. There are managers who deliver the commitments set out in the UK operational plan and members of the Senior Management team also undertake "Champion" roles for these collaborative areas of work.

**4.7** The SSCs **UK business plan** outlines how the individual work of the partner organisations contributes to the strategic objectives of the SSC. The SSC's UK business plan is produced on the basis of the partner organisations' consultation and engagement with the sector. The SSC informed us that it was working from a needs based approach within a devolved policy setting. For areas where it is considered sensible for common employer needs to be delivered collaboratively, this work is built into the SSC UK operational plan.

**4.8** The SSC's strategic plan is less than three pages long and identifies three broad strategic objectives. Each of the partner organisations has its own strategic or corporate plan which covers their roles and responsibilities, including those roles and responsibilities as an SSC. There is a general weakness in strategic planning as each of the individual strategies covers a different period and therefore different phases of the SSC's work.

**4.9 Employer engagement** is already embedded within the partner organisations and, in addition, steering groups and consultations take place to ensure delivery of the SSC remit. As there is a good knowledge of the partners within the sector, the SSC has taken the decision to focus engagement via the partners, rather than promote the Skills for Care and Development brand. Employer awareness of the Skills for Care and Development brand is, therefore, low.

**4.10** The SSC considers that it has one of the highest brand awareness among SSCs. This is based on the SSC employer survey 2008. This showed that:

- Nearly half of the establishments within the footprint are aware of the SSC;
- Two in five of the establishments aware of the SSC had a detailed awareness of the SSC's role and objectives.

**4.11** The data from the survey was presented at the UK Board meeting we attended. However, one member asked whether the survey had asked specifically about awareness of the name Skills for Care and Development, or the name of the partner organisation which covered the establishment. The Board member was told that it was the latter.

**4.12** We received positive feedback from local authorities and sector bodies regarding their engagement with the partner organisations. Feedback from private sector employers was mixed.

**4.13** Feedback from stakeholders and employers raised concerns about the visibility of the SSC, especially across the Devolved Administrations where little direct engagement exists, except via the partners. However, it is a conscious decision by the SSC not to promote the SSC brand as it was considered that this would add confusion as the partner organisations are already well known in the different nations. The Chief Executives of the six partner organisations have direct engagement with the relevant UK nation and, along with the Director of the SSC UK team, comprise the SSC Senior Management team. This ensures that the SSC is aware of, and able to respond to, issues across all UK nations.

**4.14** Coverage of the **Devolved Nations** is through the partner organisations. In Northern Ireland, there is a workforce development committee which represents a wide range of employers and stakeholders. This structure is replicated by the bodies in Scotland and Wales, with the addition of regional learning partnerships.

**4.15** In England, the relevant partner organisations engage with employers and stakeholders through various mechanisms. For example:

- For the adult social care workers there are nine regional committees. These include employers from across the country who support and advise on the development of products and services within each region to meet employer needs.
- For the Children's workforce, there are 11 Regional Managers and three Regional Cluster Managers working across the nine Government Office regions supporting workforce reform and integrated working in 152 local Children's Trusts in England. Regional staff work to engage with employers and have a key role in engaging with third and private sector employers and supporting their involvement in workforce reform.

**4.16** Skills for Care and Development is not a legal entity. All of the **financial functions** are carried out through the finance department of Skills for Care. Separate statutory accounts are not produced, but gross income for the SSC is represented as a note to the Skills for Care accounts. Skills for Care also receives the core funding from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and distributes this to the partners.

**4.17** Skills for Care provides the Director of the UK team with a monthly set of management accounts, which are used to assess its current position and performance against budget, and then inform the Board. There is currently an informal hosting agreement where Skills for Care charge the SSC a fee. There are plans to make this more formal. Reserves of some £104,000 are held and are to cover the immediate staff costs, should the SSC cease to exist.

**4.18** The partner organisations are responsible for their own staff. All of the **Human Resources** issues relating to the ten staff in the UK team are dealt with by Skills for Care, as these staff are employed by this partner organisation. A formal appraisal system is in place with five annual meetings, where staff objectives are linked to the strategic objectives of Skills for Care and Development. Skills for Care and four of the other five partner organisations have Investors in People status. Together, the six partner organisations have in excess of 400 staff.

**4.19** In the feedback we received from stakeholders, we heard concerns about the structure of the SSC. Examples of the feedback included:

- The SSC was "structurally dysfunctional".
- The structure caused "massive delays" and was "inefficient".
- The structure was "overly bureaucratic" which caused delays.
- The consultation with partners resulted in "long lead times" and the "inability to make decisions without passing to the partners" caused delays.

**4.20** Skills for Care and Development considers that it is committed to meeting the needs of employers, service users and the devolved policy agendas across the UK. However, it considers that these needs differ and, as a result, agreements can take longer. The SSC considers that this is not necessarily attributable to the partner organisations, but to the diverse and complex range of employer needs in a complex policy context.

**4.21** Communication between employers and stakeholders differs depending upon which of the partner organisations the employer and stakeholder is engaged with. The SSC produces a monthly internal newsletter so messages can be included in the communications of the partner organisations. The SSC has a website and an intranet.

#### **Strengths**

- Strong links with Government and stakeholders via partner organisations.
- Positive approach to employer engagement via partner organisations.
- A good resource pool from the partner organisations.

#### **Areas for Improvement**

- Confusion among some stakeholders regarding the different roles of the partner organisations (SSC role and other roles).
- Low awareness of the Skills for Care and Development brand following the SSC's policy not to promote it.
- Perception among some stakeholders that the structure of the SSC leads to delays and is inefficient.

## Part Five

### SSC Core Product and Services

The SSC provides a clear, credible and coherent voice for employers on the skills and qualifications needs of the sector backed by high quality Labour Market Intelligence, standards and qualifications development.

**5.1 Research** is undertaken by each of the six partner organisations. This includes research for their SSC and other roles. There is no single research strategy for the overall SSC. However, Skills for Care and Development's UK Board is to consider what added value would be provided by having a research strategy for the full sector across the UK.

**5.2** The direction of research is informed by a range of steering groups and stakeholders across the UK. Research is developed to meet the differing needs and infrastructure of each nation.

**5.3** The SSC told us that data is collected from a country specific basis dependent on the infrastructure in place and consultation with employers. Skills for Care and Development investigated the benefits of developing a UK core data set in 2007. However, at the time, Government investment in **Labour Market Intelligence (LMI)** was diverging in the sector and, apart from UK Commission for Employment and Skills, there was limited demand from the sector for UK wide LMI. There are now systems which have been, or are being, developed at a national level. The SSC's operational plan for 2009-10 identifies projects to meet the UK Commission for Employment and Skills' LMI framework and production of high level UK themes and trends report.

**5.4** The research approach underpinning the **Sector Skills Agreements** varies between the partner organisations. The Care Council for Wales used a three stage approach to collecting their primary data. Initial 'scoping interviews' were carried out, followed by employer interviews via a series of focus groups and workshops and finally regional solution workshops throughout the UK. The Northern Ireland Social Care Council used a different approach by carrying out a quantitative survey of workforce skills and training, as well as qualitative research with regional representative employer groups. Although different approaches have been taken, all reports were assessed against quality criteria by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills' predecessor organisation.

**5.5** There is a UK **Sector Qualification Strategy** and action plan and one in place for each of the partners. The individual partners completed their strategies first, prior to the UK action plan being produced. This covers all sub sectors and the Devolved Nations.

**5.6** The SSC informed us that the UK SQS was developed in response to UK stakeholders such as awarding bodies and the UK Commission for Employment and Skills to not only provide a summary, but a UK framework for the delivery of the UK theme for standards and qualifications. We received positive feedback from two stakeholders on the structure of the strategy and the reflection of the similarities and differences between the four countries.

**5.7** A formal review process is in place for the UK action plan. The current action plan was agreed in November 2008, with the refresh planned for June 2009. The strategy will be further updated once qualifications are migrated to the Qualifications and Credit Framework and recognises the fact that it will need to reflect any changes in Government policies and initiatives which regulate the sector. We received positive feedback on the action plan from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

**5.8** The partner organisations are required to monitor their specific country action plans. There is a formal process for monitoring the progress against the action plans, which is undertaken quarterly and annually.

**5.9** All of the partner organisations are jointly responsible for the seven suites of **National Occupational Standards (NOS)**. One of the suites is shared with Skills for Health. However, Skills for Care and Development has taken responsibility for the recent update.

**5.10** The SSC considers, every three years, if a review of the National Occupational Standards is needed. In the last year, three suites have been reviewed: Health and Social Care, Children Learning and Development and Learning and Development Support Services. In addition, two new suites were developed in 2008 to meet emerging sector needs for sensory services and contracting, procurement and commissioning.

**5.11** The SSC's last NOS consultation identified that employers across the UK had different perspectives on NOS and the current presentation of them. The SSC has undertaken a feasibility study to look at the different mechanisms of writing NOS, but is awaiting the UK Commission for Employment and Skills' NOS strategy before undertaking extensive consultation with employers, since this may impact upon the template in use. There are some tools in place, for example, the NOS navigator, to support employers using NOS as well as wider work in development.

**5.12** The SSC expanded its UK team in 2008. One of the reasons for doing this was to increase staffing capacity relating to NOS and reduce reliance on consultants.

**5.13** We received some negative feedback from stakeholders about the NOS. The feedback included:

- The language of the NOS was not always clear.
- The use of consultants to produce NOS has resulted in a wide range of quality.

**5.14** To make the National Occupational Standards more user friendly, a software tool is currently being developed to guide the employers to those sections relevant to them.

**5.15** The SSC has appointed a range of individuals who will be supporting qualification reform. The UK team has been increased to support the activity in the SSC operational plan.

**5.16** There is a UK wide programme Board that is responsible for the **Qualifications and Credit Framework** programme of work. This programme Board agrees the projects to be developed and for which sectors and nations individual qualifications are required.

**5.17** The SSC is using the opportunity of the migration onto the Qualifications and Credit Framework to re-structure and re-assess how the qualifications are developed, rather than just moving them from one framework to another, which has received positive feedback from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

**5.18** The UK Commission for Employment and Skills considers that some 93 per cent of qualifications will be populated onto the QCF by the target date. The SSC is currently rated as 'green' in terms of programme monitoring. The QCF programme Board is managing the overall programme and risks to seek to ensure effective delivery for the sector. The SSC will be working with other SSCs and awarding bodies on the QCF readiness programme.

**5.19** Feedback from some stakeholders raised concerns about the migration onto the QCF. These included concerns that the target date would not be met as only a limited amount of work had been undertaken and that there had been limited involvement of stakeholders. The complexity and size of the sector was seen as a significant risk to delivery.

**5.20** Managing employer expectations is critical during the transition period and, to do this, Skills for Care and Development has produced leaflets for training providers, Higher Education and Further Education institutions and has been working to engage with employers to give them assurance over the new qualifications which are being developed.

**5.21** Two **Apprenticeships** are in place in the sector - Children's Care Learning and Development and Health and Social Care, the latter being jointly owned with Skills for Health. Learning via apprenticeships has traditionally seen poor completion rates. The overall completion rate in 2001-02 was 24 per cent. However, in 2006-07, the completion was 63 per cent as extensive work had been undertaken to reduce the barriers to completion.

**5.22** The apprenticeship has not been as popular as in other sectors as students failed to complete the apprenticeship once their NVQ was completed. The nature of the sector also makes the apprenticeship hard to market with employers. The SSC has also been promoting employer engagement in apprenticeships during 'Apprenticeships Week'.

**5.23** The SSC is working to meet the current demands for mature students being able to work towards an apprenticeship and to raise the level of qualification achieved via an apprenticeship. Positive stakeholder feedback has been received regarding the review and revision of the apprenticeship framework to ensure it meets the requirements of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**5.24** In Scotland, Modern Apprenticeships were popular in the past. However, due to a reduction in funding from Scottish Enterprise, as this is no longer a priority area, the demand has declined.

**5.25** A joint **diploma** is in place with Skills for Health, Health Society and Development, which was piloted in 2008 and will be redeveloped to align with the Qualifications and Credit Framework with the future aim of linking it to the Level Five foundation degree. In Wales, the Sector Skills Council is working towards the development of 14-19 pathways to align with the Welsh Baccalaureate and in Northern Ireland the Social Care Council is working with Department of Employment and Learning to develop a 14-19 strategy.

**5.26** Not all of the **foundation degrees** which exist in the sector are supported by Skills for Care and Development, nor does the completion of the foundation degree provide access to registration within the sector. Skills for Care is working with the National Skills Academy to introduce a kite mark system of quality control to give assurance to students and employers over the standards they can expect to receive.

**5.27** The SSC works with some 20 **awarding bodies** and has two forums, one to look at the implementation of the S/NVQs and another for qualification development. These two forums are run at least quarterly. The SSC attends the Awarding Bodies Quality Forum each quarter. In March 2009, the SSC ran a strategic event with the Chief Executives of awarding bodies working in the sector.

**5.28** Engagement between the SSC and awarding bodies was an issue raised in the feedback received from awarding bodies. Some of the feedback noted that the SSC has resisted from engaging on a one to one level with individual awarding bodies outside the forums, which has meant that they lack personal contact and any informal contact between the organisations. Feedback from the awarding bodies also noted a perceived lack of understanding of the process of qualification development as they believe the SSC often sets inappropriate timescales for the awarding bodies to work within.

#### **Strengths**

- Development of UK Sector Qualification Strategy in response to stakeholders.
- Review and revision of the apprenticeships framework.
- Setting up of Awarding Body Forum.

#### **Areas for Improvement**

- Research strategy for full sector across the UK.
- Concerns by stakeholders about the clarity of the NOS and wide range of quality.
- Perception by some stakeholders that the target to achieve migration of qualifications will not be met and that they had limited involvement in the process.
- Perception by some awarding bodies that the SSC does not appreciate the time needed for qualification development.

## Part Six

### SSC Sector Specific Solutions

The SSC can demonstrate a compelling employer offer which addresses sector skill priorities, including cross sector skills, with defined routes to market.

**6.1** The sector operates in a fully devolved policy context and there are differing infrastructures for the delivery of services. This means the workforce development needs, regulation and registration differs to meet sector needs. The **sector specific solutions** delivered are therefore based upon changes in Government policy and blueprint, perhaps to a greater extent than the other sector skills councils

**6.2** The sector is currently under increasing pressure due to the increased demand for services as the UK faces an ageing population with increasing expectations and due to the personalisation agenda. The personalisation agenda has arisen following changes in the principle of workforce redesign and involves individuals holding their own budgets and commissioning their own services. The skills provision therefore needs to reflect the increase in lone workers and micro employers.

**6.3** As the sector is characterised by many small, and Third Sector employers, the SSC needs to ensure that the training remains accessible to those within this category. This is achieved by providing cheaper training in certain areas for organisations with less than ten paid employees.

**6.4** Between the SSC partners, six common skills needs have been identified to cover the sector and the nations:

- Management and leadership, including professional management capability.
- Capacity building and managing transitions arising from the changing service models including the need for commissioning skills.
- Achievement of gateway qualifications to meet regulatory frameworks and CPD to support reregistration.
- Development of specialist expertise.
- Skills to work flexibly in integrated service models and partnership and shared learning.
- A need for learners to have improved and simplified access to appropriate qualifications that are demand led.

The SSC has also identified a set of four future skills needs.

**6.5** The SSC has a Memorandum Of Understanding with Skills for Health, with whom it works on joint diplomas, joint apprenticeship and a joint suite of National Occupational Standards. Despite the relationships in place with Skills for Health, stakeholder feedback has expressed concerns that information does not appear to be shared effectively between the two organisations and that they do not communicate with each other. The SSC is also working towards a Memorandum Of Understanding with Skills for Justice, with whom they work closely in Scotland, and also proposed and hosted the first meeting of the public sector SSCs to progress on joint areas of work and to share best practice.

**6.6** The main **route to market** is via the partner organisations. The work of the SSC is informed by the workforce priorities of each of the UK nations. These priorities are located within the public policy context and negotiated with employer, Government, professionals, service users and carers. There is a different public policy context in each UK nation which means that the extent of registration and regulation differs. Using the partnership approach means that the SSC is able to support, inform and adapt to devolved policy agendas. This approach also allows it to make use of the existing relationships meaning the solutions are delivered to the widest possible markets. The SSC also chairs the NE Forum and coordinates the Children Workforce Network of SSCs and other stakeholders in England and Wales.

**6.7** The six partner organisations have also developed relationships with the relevant bodies and associations in their sector and attend their events to provide information about the work of the SSC.

**6.8** The **National Skills Academy** is hosted by the Social Care Institute for Excellence and was launched on 30 March 2009.

**6.9** The partnership has produced collaboratively and independently sector specific solutions. Collaborative solutions include the UK careers website which is currently in the test phase and joint National Occupational Standards. Other sector specific solutions include a career development toolkit and a Health and Social Care Apprenticeship Framework.

**6.10** The SSC has been working with the Migration Advisory Committee to brief them on the current skills shortage of senior care workers and social workers with the aim of them being included on the shortage occupations listing. The Migration Advisory Committee has recommended that senior care workers and children's social workers are included on the shortage occupation list.

**6.11** The SSC has recently piloted the European Care Certificate and is awaiting finance from the funding agency. An initial study is also taking place which will review the equivalency of qualifications across Europe.

**Strengths**

- Partnership working with other SSCs.
- Sector specific solutions developed collaboratively and independently.

**Areas for Improvement**

- Perception by some stakeholders that partnership working with Skills for Health SSC could be improved.

## Part Seven

### SSC Results and Impacts

The SSC has set ambitious and realistic targets in relation to skills priorities of the sector which are used to measure the direct results and shared impacts of SSC products, services and solutions.

**7.1** The SSC has corporate performance measures within its strategic plan. More specific and measurable objectives to be delivered in coordination with the partners are set out within its business plan.

**7.2** Specific objectives of cross partner working are identified in the UK operational plan.

**7.3** Targets within the business plan are set on a year by year basis against which progress is measured. Each objective is broken down into the specific tasks which drive its operational plan and against which performance is measured. The targets set out a programme for continuous improvement, starting from the baseline as the current standard. Responsibility for delivering on objectives is allocated in the business plan to one of the partners. It also recognises where coordination is needed with external bodies to achieve the targets, for example, with the Department for Health.

**7.4** Each of the partners has individual **targets** within their corporate plans related to their respective SSC responsibilities.

**7.5** The UK team is responsible for the management and support of directly commissioned work within the operational plan and report to the Senior Management team about this.

**7.6** Key activities have been identified underneath each objective, with the required outputs and timescales noted. Performance measures also exist under each of the key activities. Evidence of discussion of progress was noted by attendance at the UK Board meeting where actions against each key activity were discussed.

**7.7** The Director of the UK team also monitors performance and progress with the programme managers of the SSC on a monthly basis. We found no awareness among employers and stakeholders of the cross sector objectives and targets of the SSC – only the objectives of the individual partners.

**7.8** Although there is a strategic objective in place to improve productivity, the primary focus is upon improving the quality of the service provided. Skills for Care and Development recently commissioned a fact sheet setting out a range of information about the worth of the social care sector, which does contain initial estimates of the gross value added for the sector.

**7.9** The SSC has undertaken some cross partner evaluations of projects and work. The UK Board is aware that further work is required to assess the full impact being made by the collaborative SSC. The operational plan includes activity to work on evaluation and performance indicators further.

**7.10** The SSC told us that the funding received from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills is used to pursue the activities identified in the SSC's UK operational plan. This identifies the added value of the licence in terms of deliverables. The SSC has produced a statement of the added value the SSC licence brings for the sector. For example, giving the SSC the opportunity to inform qualification funding.

#### **Strengths**

- Business plan of the SSC allocates the SSC roles and provides accountability of the six partner organisations.
- Performance against the business plan is monitored by the UK Board and at operational level.

#### **Areas for Improvement**

- Limited evaluation of the impact of the SSC is carried out over and above the impact of the work of the partners.
- No evaluation of the added value of the SSC licence over and above the role of the partner organisations is carried out.

# Technical Annex

## Performance Assessment Methodology

### Background

The National Audit Office (NAO) has undertaken this Independent Performance Assessment of Skills for Care and Development at the request of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

The purpose of the Assessment Framework is to assess the capacity and capability of the Sector Skills Council against four key themes:

- The SSC is employer led, has the confidence and support of employers in its sector and is a strategically and operationally effective organisation;
- The SSC provides a clear, credible and coherent voice for employers on the skills and qualification needs of the sector backed by high quality LMI, standards and qualification development;
- The SSC can demonstrate a compelling employer offer which addresses sector skill priorities, including cross sector skills, with defined routes to market;
- The SSC has set ambitious and realistic targets in relation to skills priorities of the sector which are used to measure the direct results and shared impacts of SSC products, services and solutions.

Each key theme has a number of key tests and assessment questions which we have used to scrutinise the evidence across the four nations and prepare our report.

In the case of Skills for Care and Development, the National Audit Office did not have the resources to test against the themes and key tests for the six separate partner organisations.

We focused on the additional benefits of the award of the Sector Skills Council licence in the sector and the role of the partnership in drawing on the collective experience of the sector to provide benefits in accordance with the award of the licence.

## Evidence

The Commission asked us to conduct our reviews to a very tight timetable and with the least burden on the Sector Skills Council.

We reviewed Sector Skills Council generated evidence for a period of two weeks before collecting evidence more directly from staff, employers and local stakeholders during a one week site visit to the Sector Skills Council. During this week we conducted a number of interviews and focus groups and observed meetings.

We chose a random sample of employers to interview, ensuring we covered as far as possible the full range of Council footprint. We also invited comments from employers and other stakeholders through our and the UK Commission's website. To measure the wider reach and engagement of the footprint, we examined the results of the Sector Skills Development Agency's 2007 census.

We collected information centrally from:

- The UK Commission for Employment and Skills.
- Central Government departments.
- Each of the Devolved Administrations through visits to Belfast, Cardiff and Glasgow.
- The Regional Development Agencies.
- The Learning and Skills Councils.
- Skills plus UK (Local Government Employers).
- Awarding bodies.

To make our assessment we also reviewed a wide range of internal evidence including:

Expressions of Interest, Strategic Plans, Business Plans, Board Constitution, Minutes and attendance, Audit and Remuneration minutes, Operational plans, National and Regional plans, Sector Skills Agreements, Research Strategies, capacity and capability reviews, customer and staff satisfaction surveys, complaints procedures. SQS and SQRPs strategies, Sector Skills Action Plans, Labour Market Intelligence and plans, Employer Engagement Strategies, Take-up statistics, Stakeholder surveys, International Research data, Website materials, Memoranda of Understanding, Compact arrangements, stakeholder maps, performance review records, market assessments and external audit reports.

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