

Response to consultation on Scottish Social Services Council – proposed register changes

Consultation closed on 02 January 2024.

Link to consultation: [Scottish Social Services Council – proposed register changes - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#)

- 1 This consultation seeks your views on proposed changes to the Scottish Social Services Council Register. These changes are to:
 - 1.1 reduce the number of Register parts from 23 to 4
 - 1.2 require employees to apply for registration within three months of starting a new role and be registered within six months
 - 1.3 include more information on the public Register, such as specialist qualifications for social workers, and information relating to fitness to practise which is currently available on different parts of the SSSC website

Questions

- 2 Do you agree that reducing the number of SSSC Register parts will be an improvement to the current structure?
 - 2.1 Yes
 - 2.2 No
 - 2.3 Don't Know
- 3 NMC response: Yes
- 4 Is three months after starting in their role an appropriate timescale to require workers to apply for registration?
 - 4.1 Yes
 - 4.2 No
 - 4.3 Don't Know
- 5 NMC response: No
- 6 Do you agree with SSSC's proposals to include more information on the searchable public Register?
 - 6.1 Yes

6.2 No

6.3 Don't Know

7 NMC response: Yes

8 Do you have any specific views on the proposed changes that you would like us to consider?

Question 1

9 We agree that reducing the number of Register parts from 23 to four will be an improvement to the current structure.

10 The NMC's register has four parts: one each for the three distinct professions we regulate (registered nurses, midwives and nursing associates in England) and one for specialist community public health nurses (SCPHNs) who have an additional post-registration qualification in addition to being a registered nurse and/or midwife.

11 Having one part per profession with direct entry via a qualification brings clarity to the patients they care for, the wider public, their colleagues, their employers and our stakeholders about what we do to regulate, support and influence these professions.

12 It is important that the parts reflect professionals appropriately and that they are reviewed periodically to ensure that they remain relevant to current practice. For example, we know from research we commissioned in 2019 that many SCPHNs felt that the SCHPHN title was outdated and not understood, and participants felt that the nurse and midwife parts of the register, together with our Code of practice, were the most appropriate tools for protecting the public. The helpfulness of the register and the information it currently holds about SCPHNs was viewed as limited, and a more useful register would support public confidence.

13 We therefore recommend that the Scottish Government reflects on whether the proposed parts will support public, patient and practitioner understanding of the roles in social work and social care, using any available research, data and insights to inform their conclusions.

Question 2

14 The NMC has a practising register, which means that everyone in the UK who practises as a registered nurse and/or midwife, and anyone in England who practises as a nursing associate, must be registered with the NMC. In other words, professionals must be registered with us before they take up employment as a registered nurse, midwife or nursing associate.

15 We believe this is paramount for public protection as it allows us to ensure that all practising registered nurses, midwives and nursing associates must uphold the professional standards in our Code, and that we can take fitness to practise action if they fail to do so. We can also ensure that they meet our registration

requirements of having an approved qualification, suitable health and character, English language competence and indemnity arrangements before they take up practice.

- 16 It is particularly important that professionals are supported by their employer in the crucial first months of taking up new employment, which is why we published [Principles of Preceptorship](#) to help ensure that new professionals are welcomed and integrated into their new team and place of work.
- 17 We therefore support the move to reduce the time period for registration for SSSC registrants, but urge the Scottish Government to consider requiring all relevant social work and social care professionals to register with the SSSC before they take up employment to ensure that these services are provided by regulated and supported professionals at all times.

Question 3

- 18 We partially agree with this proposal.
- 19 We understand the intention behind publishing details of displaying qualifications on the public facing Register, starting with certain specialist qualifications with the intention that this is expanded in the future, to promote the importance of qualifications (particularly specialist qualifications).
- 20 However, the NMC does not publish details of qualifications that our registrants used to join our register. We believe having a register entry is sufficient to show patients, the public and others involved in healthcare that a professional has the skills and knowledge required for them to practise safely and effectively, without publishing details of qualifications that may be confusing and potentially misleading.
- 21 There are clear equality, diversity and inclusion implications of publishing details of qualifications as this may allow register users to infer a registrant's nationality if they qualified outside of Scotland. Younger registrants may be less likely to have gained a qualification yet, and socioeconomic status is likely to have an impact on whether registrants have gained a qualification at all.
- 22 Instead we recommend that the SSSC considers alternative ways to promote the importance of qualifications such as requiring a qualification for registration to ensure a level playing field of suitably qualified professionals. At the very least SSSC should conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment, including developing a thorough understanding of the characteristics of those who do and don't hold qualifications and any barriers to gaining them, before it starts to publish any details on its public register.
- 23 The second part of this proposal is for SSSC to publish FtP information on its public register, and it cites the NMC as an example of a regulator that already takes this approach. We strongly support this proposal as it will ensure that register users can easily access a complete picture of any regulatory sanctions that apply to professionals, which is vital for public protection.

- 24 We are required by our legislation to publish details of fitness to practise and registration appeal outcomes, and the SSSC may find our [guidance](#) on our approach helpful. We also make this information available in specific [webpages](#) relating to our fitness to practise function and through our dedicated Employer Confirmation Service.
- 25 We would be very happy to meet with the Scottish Government and/or SSSC to discuss our recommendations and share our experience of maintaining a statutory register of professionals, if this would be helpful.