

We need to talk about Palliative Care

Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

This response is from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The SSSC is a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and was established by the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. We are responsible for registering people who work in social services, regulating their education and training and the collation and publication of data on the size and nature of the sector's workforce. We are also the Scottish partner in Skills for Care and Development, the Sector Skills Councils for the care sector in the UK.

Our work increases the protection of people who use services by ensuring that the workforce is properly trained, appropriately qualified and effectively regulated. We aim to protect people who use services, raise standards of practice, strengthen and support the professionalism of the workforce and improve the outcomes and experience of people who use social services. The social service workforce provides care and support for some of the most vulnerable people in Scottish society. The sector employs more than 189,000 people¹ in Scotland (Scottish Social Services Council, 2014). These workers often deal with complex care needs and make a real difference to individuals' lives.

Our vision is that our work means the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce. Our purpose is to raise standards and protect the public through regulation, innovation and continuous improvement in workforce planning and development for the social service workforce.

We endorse the view set out in the Scottish Government's strategy 'Caring Together' that there are particular complexities attached to the carer's role and that carers who receive appropriate training feel better supported in their caring role and more confident. In particular it is important to recognise there may be issues when a person is already receiving long-term care for other reasons and then requires palliative care. We note the pressures on carers when caring at end of life and endorse the view that the carer may need support after their relative dies.

The SSSC is working to support the aims and objectives on workforce development set out in the Scottish Government's strategy 'Living and Dying Well', which is summarised in the report as:

“to ensure that all health and social care professionals are equipped with the knowledge, skills, competence and confidence to care for the diversity of patients and families living with and dying from any advanced, progressive or incurable condition.”

¹ There are a number of groups of workers not captured by this data. These include child-minding assistants and personal assistants employed by individuals in receipt of a direct payment (Scottish Social Services Council, 2014).

Our response focuses on questions 6 & 8 of the Committee's call for evidence.

Question 6: "What is the role of anticipatory care plans in supporting Palliative Care discussions and how can their uptake be improved?"

Anticipatory care plans

Anticipatory care plans are designed to support patients living with a chronic long-term condition to help plan for an expected change at some time in the future. With improved understanding of this process, social services and health care workers can promote the use of the plans as documents that change as people's circumstances change. Plans would be centred upon and owned by the individual, with family and unpaid carers having input to them in order to best support the person approaching their life's end. This is consistent with a personal outcomes focused (and strengths based) approach, which underpins workforce learning for integration.

The SSSC and NES (NHS Education for Scotland) are working with Health and Social Care Partnerships to engage workers in service improvement. Evidence from recent enquiries highlights the benefit of anticipatory care plans being shared across health and social services. The evidence also shows the value of collaborative learning opportunities for health and social service workers.

Leadership

The Strategy for developing leadership capacity in Scotland's social services 2013-2015 recognises the need for effective leadership at all levels within the workforce, as well as citizen leadership from people who use services and their carers. Developing leadership skills supports all workers and helps the individual experiencing palliative and end of life care, the family and carers to take a more active approach to developing and reviewing anticipatory care plans. Further resources on leadership can be found on the SSSC's step into leadership website².

The SSSC Continuous Learning Framework³ (CLF) sets out what people working in social services need to be able to do their jobs well now and in the future and what their employer needs to do to support them. The Personal Capabilities set out within the CLF underpin good practice and support workers to develop the skills which are needed to manage relationships with others and to develop self-awareness. This is of particular relevance when supporting carers and individuals experiencing palliative and end of life care.

² <http://www.stepintoleadership.info/>

³ <http://www.continuouslearningframework.com/>

Equal Partners in Care (EPiC)

EPiC is a joint project between the SSSC and NHS Education for Scotland (NES) to make sure health and social service workers are aware of carers and know how to work with them as partners. This is part of the Scottish Government's strategy, Caring Together 2010-15.

EPiC has six core principles, each based on outcomes for carers and young carers. The outcomes are linked to the knowledge and skills you need to work effectively with carers and the person they care for. One of the EPiC core principles, 'Carers are fully engaged in the planning and shaping of services', underpins the importance of carers' involvement in Anticipatory Care Planning.

Codes of Practice

The SSSC sets out its requirements for the social services workforce and their employers in the Codes of Practice. The Codes include an obligation on employers to provide training and development opportunities to enable social service workers to strengthen and develop their skills and knowledge. The codes require workers to be accountable for the quality of their work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills.

Social services workers in specialist areas of practice are expected to demonstrate they have the necessary knowledge and skills to work competently within that area of practice. This would include an end of life and palliative care setting. Registered workers are required to have qualifications consistent with the function they carry out, as well as demonstrating a set amount of Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL).

Question 8: "What training and support is provided to Health and Care staff on discussing Palliative Care with patients and families and are there any areas for improvement?"

Learning opportunities

Demographic changes and changes to how people receive services reinforce the need for high quality palliative and end of life care delivered in different settings. We echo the emphasis on the role of education and workforce development in this agenda such as the importance of learning and development.

Workers are supported by a range of SSSC strategies and resources some of which are referred to earlier in Question 6 of this response. Strategies and resources related to learning and development are set out below.

National Occupational Standards (NOS)

The SSSC is responsible with other sector skills councils for developing National Occupational Standards (NOS). NOS underpin benchmark qualifications used by the social service sector for registration with the SSSC.

These qualifications include Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). NOS for social work feature in the Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE).

Some of the SiSWE that are most closely aligned to palliative care are set out below:

- prepare for, and work with, individuals, families, carers, groups and communities to assess their needs and circumstances
- plan, carry out, review and evaluate social work practice with individuals, families, carers, groups, communities and other professionals
- manage and be accountable, with supervision and support, for their own social work practice within their organisation

These are only part of the complex knowledge and skills within the programme which contributes to the learning of a competent and confident social worker.

NOS enable learners through reflection to develop and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills, as well as being used to gain qualifications. Workers are able to use NOS in a manner appropriate to their role and care context. There are both general (communication, reflection on practice) and specific national occupational standards which are relevant to the principles of both end of life and palliative care. Example of specific NOS include: Support individuals through bereavement and Support individuals at the end of life.

Workers using NOS, either as part of a qualification or as professional development, can contextualise their learning in a way that is appropriate to their role within a palliative care setting.

Further information on NOS can be found on the NOS Navigator website⁴.

Promoting Excellence

This framework is jointly developed between SSSC and NHS Education Scotland (NES) and recognises the complexity of staff knowledge and skill will differ depending on the support needs/choices of people with dementia, their families and carers at different points in their journey.

The four Stages of the 'dementia journey' identified in the Promoting Excellence framework are:

- keeping well, prevention, and finding out it's dementia
- living well
- living well with increasing help and support
- end of life and dying well

⁴ <http://workforcesolutions.sssc.uk.com/nos/about.html>

Learning and development related to palliative care is offered within the Promoting Excellence workforce development programme. Learning can be accessed through a number of routes. Programmes have been delivered on a regional basis to a total of 288 health and social care staff working in a range of settings including:

- primary care
- community hospitals
- care homes
- mental health services
- the third sector
- specialist palliative care services

An additional programme of learning and development was delivered in March 2015. The target audience was staff working in care homes and care at home services. Evaluation of the programme has indicated ways in which participants have made changes to their practice or service provision and/or influenced the practice of team colleagues.

Further examples of Promoting Excellence project work in promoting and embedding the framework includes activity relating to palliative and end of life care for people with dementia are featured below:

- the SSSC and NES are working in partnership with Alzheimer Scotland to support the development of health and social services workforce capacity and capability in palliative and end of life care for people with dementia
- the palliative care programme is part of the wider workforce development plan that NES and the SSSC have been taking forward to support implementation of Promoting Excellence, the Dementia Standards and delivery on the National Dementia Strategy 2013-2016
- under Promoting Excellence funding for 2015/2016, the priority for provision of the programme on palliative and end of life care for people with dementia is to support delivery of Commitment 11 of the National Dementia Strategy (such as extending the work on quality of care in general hospitals to other hospitals and NHS settings)
- within the Promoting Excellence project work, the SSSC is encouraging and helping employers, workers and educators in the sector to make links between the learning achieved using the Promoting Excellence framework and the NOS in Social Services and Healthcare which underpin the SVQ Qualifications that are required for registration with SSSC. For example, the evidence generated from participation in such training or courses as the palliative and end of life care programme⁵ can also contribute to the achievement of required qualifications. This is not

⁵<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/dementia/advanced-dementia-and-end-of-life-care/end-of-life-care/introduction.asp>

just an efficiency measure but one that is effective in helping people to make connections in their learning, to recognise the transferable knowledge, skills and values that underpin best practice and to become more competent, confident and effective practitioners

- within the scope of the Promoting Excellence project work it is not just the specific palliative care training that addresses end of life care, but also elements of the Dementia Champions Programme⁶. The aim of this Programme is to support the development of champions as “change agents” who can help improve the experience for people with dementia, their families and carers. They would aim to improve the care, treatment and outcomes for people in general hospitals and when they move between hospital and community settings.

Scottish Social Services Council

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⁶<http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-theme-initiative/mental-health-and-learning-disabilities/our-work/dementia/dementia-champions-programme.aspx>