



<https://news.sssc.uk.com/news/regulatory-changes-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic>

We recognise that the social service sector is on the frontline of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and we want to support you to continue to deliver your vital work during this challenging time. As you need to change your services to meet demand, we've agreed regulatory changes with Scottish Government to enable an effective response by services. These are effective from today (18 March 2020).

Current flexibility regarding registration and redeployment between services

People working in social service roles in nurseries, care homes, care at home and housing support services, residential childcare services and school care accommodation service can currently work for six months without being registered. We understand that for people working in these services applying for registration will not be a priority. We will update this information if there is any change to this time period.

Workers registered to work in one kind of service can be immediately redeployed to work in another kind of service without any need to change their registration status with the SSSC. They would currently have six months in which to register to work in a different service.

- For example, a care home worker could be immediately deployed to work in a care at home service, as long as the provider is satisfied they have the appropriate skills and experience for the work.
- Similarly, a healthcare worker can be redeployed immediately into a registered care service and would currently have six months before there was a requirement to register with the SSSC.

We are working with COSLA and care providers to develop a learning and development pack to support those moving and working across care services.

Changes in regulatory practice we are implementing immediately **Prioritising registration of social workers**

Social workers have to be registered with us before they can practise. We have prioritised processing social work applications.

Keeping as many people on the Register as possible

People on our Register have to pay an annual fee and have to submit a renewal application at the end of their registration period. If they don't, we normally remove them from the Register. We will continue accepting fees and renewals, but if people don't pay, or don't send in their renewal they will stay on the Register. We will contact people in due course when appropriate to do so.

Focusing on high risk fitness to practise matters

The safety and wellbeing of people who use services remains our priority. We will be changing our referral guidance for the sector, and only requiring them to refer the highest risk situations, such as abusive behaviour. We will delay investigating lower risk cases so the workforce can concentrate on responding to the pandemic.

We will only hold fitness to practise hearings for temporary suspension orders, when we feel somebody should be temporarily suspended from the Register to protect people who use services. We will hold these hearings remotely using video conferencing and support the worker to take part.

Registration qualifications

We understand that some of our workforce may be worried about completing their qualification. We can extend the amount of time people need to complete their qualification and will not remove people from the Register at the end of their period of registration during the pandemic. They can carry on working as normal. We will be in touch at a later time and will discuss with them what time period they need to complete their qualification.

Social work students

We are working with universities to decide if students should continue to go on practice placements and will have a statement on this later this week.

People who have been removed from the Register for not completing their qualification

Anyone who has been removed from the Register for not completing their qualification can apply and we can look at putting them back on.

If someone previously left work (and the Register) because they were approaching the end of the period required to gain qualifications, you can re-employ these workers. They will have the normal period in which to apply for registration, which is currently six months.

People who have left the workforce

We are planning to contact people who have recently left the Register to make sure they are aware that they can still work in the sector (other than as a social worker) even if they are no longer on the Register.

We will issue more detailed guidance shortly.