

## **IMPROVING AND SAFEGUARDING SOCIAL WELLBEING**

### **PUTTING IMPROVEMENT AT THE HEART OF SOCIAL WORK**

#### **PROPOSALS PAPER STAGE 2 DELIVERY**

**MARCH 2016**





## FOREWORD

Improving and Safeguarding Social Wellbeing, the first ever Strategy for Social Work in Northern Ireland (the Strategy) was launched in 2012. A review of the first 4 years of implementation confirms that a lot has been achieved.

We have strengthened practice, led innovation, improved services and embraced social media. There is a real sense of a strong and vibrant social work community in Northern Ireland and we have enthusiastically grasped the opportunities the Strategy has provided us to strengthen supports for social workers and to improve services. We have begun to put pride back into the profession.

We have also learned a lot. We have learned that social workers and people who use our services have lots of great ideas about how to improve social work and create new services. We have learned that improving and changing how we work is not easy and takes time as does scaling up and adopting initiatives that work. We have learned that evaluating and evidencing the difference we make in people's lives is challenging.

We have also learned that if we want to make a sustainable impact on the quality and effectiveness of social work we need a sustained focus, over time, on key priorities that will equip and empower social workers to be responsive and adaptable in the context of growing demand, changing needs and new ways of working.

This is why for the next 5 years the focus of Improving and Safeguarding Social Wellbeing will be to make co-production and improvement an integral part of every social worker's practice. We will continue to support social workers to do what they do everyday which is to help people improve their lives and social wellbeing. We will build the capacity and capability of social workers to improve practice and services in partnership with those who use them. And we will scale up initiatives that are proven to make a difference.

Feedback consistently tells us that those who use social work services value being listened to, respected as experts in their own lives and trusted and supported to make choices about how they want to live their lives. And I want the same to be true for social workers. I want social workers to be listened to, to be respected as experts and to be trusted and supported to make improvements in social work practice and services. And, importantly, I want social workers and those who use their services to work together to do this.

If we can harness the talents of those closest to the point of delivery, I believe we can strengthen the effectiveness of social work in improving social wellbeing and social workers will be recognised for adding value to the lives of people in Northern Ireland.



**SEAN HOLLAND**  
Chief Social Work Officer

## OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS

The 10 proposals set out below for future Strategy implementation are based on a review and learning from the first 4 years of implementation.

**PROPOSAL 1** - We will adopt a strategic, systems-wide approach to put improvement at the heart of social work.

**PROPOSAL 2** - We will use the Strategy to create a shared vision for social work in Northern Ireland.

**PROPOSAL 3** - We will take a regional approach to the delivery of key priorities for the Strategy and rolling out initiatives that improve social work.

**PROPOSAL 4** - We will align priorities from relevant strategies and develop a single integrated framework for Improving and Safeguarding Social Wellbeing.

**PROPOSAL 5** - We will have a strong focus on gathering and sharing stories about the difference social work has made in people's lives.

**PROPOSAL 6** - We will develop an Outcomes Framework for Social Work with key indicators to monitor, evaluate and measure impact and outcomes.

**PROPOSAL 7** - We will streamline and simplify the programme structures with key decision makers accountable for delivery.

**PROPOSAL 8** - We will enhance and maximize the effectiveness of communication and engagement with all key stakeholders.

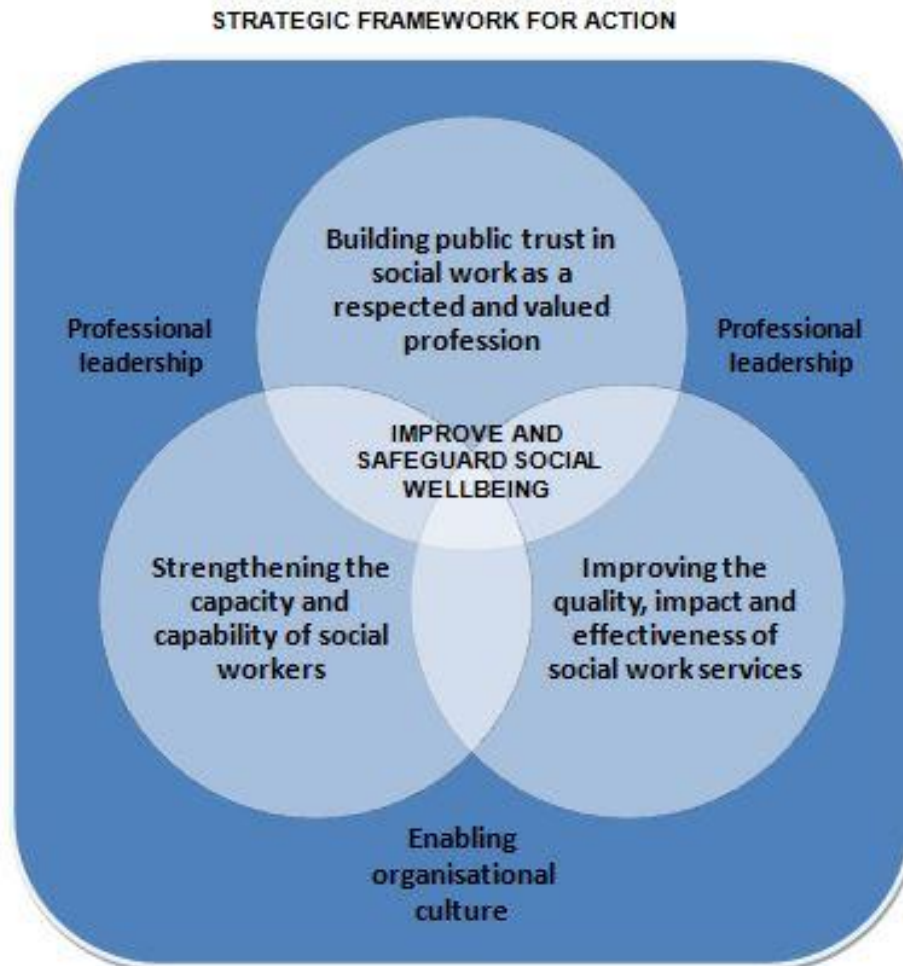
**PROPOSAL 9** - We will make the most efficient use of all available resources, including those already in the system, and monitor for best value and impact.

**PROPOSAL 10** - We will develop an Evaluation Framework to monitor progress and measure impact and outcomes of delivery of key priorities.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Improving and Safeguarding Social Wellbeing: A Strategy for Social Work (the Strategy) was launched in April 2012. It provides a vision and strategic direction for social work in all sectors and settings in Northern Ireland, but in particular for social work in the HSC sector where the majority of social workers are employed. Figure 1 below sets out the overarching aim and goals of the Strategy.



**Figure 1**

- 1.2 As a Departmental Strategy, there is an explicit Ministerial mandate to focus on strengthening and improving social work within the HSC. The Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO), as the Departmental sponsor for the Strategy, is accountable to the Minister for its delivery. This involves providing strategic leadership, direction, oversight and governance of Strategy implementation.
- 1.3 The Department delegated responsibility for the co-ordination and management of Strategy implementation to the HSCB given its regional-wide remit for quality improvement across all Programmes of Care, its commissioning role for social work learning and development and its legal responsibilities for professional oversight of Schemes of delegated statutory functions, including adult safeguarding and child protection.

- 1.4 A Programme Manager (PM) was appointed to drive, manage and co-ordinate strategy implementation and is employed by and located in the HSCB. The PM reports to the Director of Social Care and Children and is accountable to the CSWO/Strategy Steering Group.
- 1.5 Trusts, as the main employers and providers of social work services, are responsible for the provision of social work services to improve and safeguard the social wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. They are also responsible for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of their services and for embedding these into mainstream practice and are therefore key players in implementation.
- 1.6 The Strategy is relevant as a framework for action for employers of social workers in the criminal justice, education and voluntary sectors as well as for other social work organisations such as NIASW and the NISCC. It provides a vision and focus for the whole social work system to unify around shared priorities and can be used by all as a framework to strengthen and improve social work.
- 1.7 The initial approach to implementation was designed to be as inclusive as possible but with an expectation that the HSC sector would be central to implementation as this is where the potential impact on social work is greatest given the size of workforce.

## **2. THE REVIEW**

- 2.1 This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year of implementation and the end of Stage 1 which focused on set-up and initial implementation.
- 2.2 Stage 2 will focus on integrating and embedding delivery into mainstream activity and processes so that work to strengthen the impact and effectiveness of social work in improving people's social wellbeing will become self-sustaining.
- 2.3 A review of implementation has been carried out to learn the lessons and assess the effectiveness of the implementation arrangements in Stage 1 with a view to making recommendations for Stage 2 delivery arrangements.
- 2.4 The scope of the review includes:
  - (a) the context of delivery;
  - (b) impact of implementation;
  - (c) the effectiveness of the approach to implementation; and
  - (d) the strategic direction and key priorities for delivery
- 2.5 The methodology included:
  - a scoping of the internal and external environment;
  - a desktop review of the Programme Initiation Document;
  - questionnaire to members of groups/forums (26 returns);
  - interviews with Chairs of groups/forums and other stakeholders (12 in total);
  - discussions with groups/forums;
  - a desktop review of reports, feedback and evaluations about innovations and initiatives;

- review of strategic direction and priorities.

### 3. THE REPORT

3.1 This report provides a summary of:

- the current **context for delivery** (Section 4);
- the **impact of implementation** on social workers, on those who use social work services and on the public (Section 5);
- the **effectiveness of the approach to implementation** in Stage 1 (Section 6);
- the **effectiveness of Communication and Engagement** (Section 7);
- the **use of resources** (Section 8);
- the **strategic direction and key priorities** (Section 9); and
- **transition arrangements** (Section 10).

3.2 Based on the analysis of the findings and on evidence of how to achieve and embed sustainable change 10 proposals are made for Stage 2.

3.3 Direct quotes from individuals are presented as highlighted italics within the report.

3.4 This is not a report about the full range of activities and achievements of the Strategy, details of which can be accessed in **The Story So Far**<sup>1</sup>.

### 4. THE CONTEXT FOR DELIVERY

4.1 Since the Strategy was launched in 2012 the context for delivery has changed.

4.2 On a UK wide basis changes include:

- Financial austerity – reduced public spending;
- Continuing drive for innovation, improved effectiveness and efficiency in public services;
- Greater recognition of impact of social determinants on inequalities and health and wellbeing and need for cross-government and inter-agency responses;
- Growing interest in community collectivism and action to build and sustain self help as a response to current socio-economic challenges;
- Growing focus on personal responsibility for health and wellbeing and self-directed support as a response to changing demographics and increasing need;
- Increasing cultural diversity and displaced populations;
- Growing divergence between devolved administrations and Westminster policy in respect of social work education and social care provision.

4.3 In Northern Ireland changes include:

- A Fresh Start: the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan (2015);

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.knowledge.hscni.net/Content/Uploads/file/97011%20%20HSC20Annual%20Report%20\(3\).PDF](http://www.knowledge.hscni.net/Content/Uploads/file/97011%20%20HSC20Annual%20Report%20(3).PDF)



- Cross-Departmental Delivering Social Change Programmes, including Early Intervention, Active Ageing and Child Poverty;
- Reform of local government and introduction of Community Planning;
- Review and reform of Adult Social Care;
- Growing emphasis on co-production and self-directed support; and
- Ongoing organisational and structural changes in health and social care in Northern Ireland.

*Social workers need to be resilient to manage the challenges, pressures and uncertainties inherent in their work and confident to lead, adapt to and cope with change and improvement in ways of working.*

- 4.4 Within this context, it is crucial that social work remains responsive to meet changing needs, growing demand and new ways of working. This means that social workers need to be able to lead, adapt to and cope with change. They need to be at the forefront of new and improved ways of working. And they need to be deployed in ways that makes the best use of their skills and expertise.

*The Strategy provides an opportunity to future proof and position social work in a continuously changing world.*

- 4.5 Work has already commenced to equip and empower social workers to lead and support change and improvement in the effectiveness of social work to secure better outcomes for individuals, families and communities and we need to build on this.

## **PROPOSAL 1**

**We will adopt a strategic, systems-wide approach to put improvement at the heart of social work.**

## **5. IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTATION**

- 5.1 Implementation of the Strategy was intended to create a shared vision for social work, have a strong focus on improving outcomes for those who use social work services and on embedding what works into mainstream practice. This section considers the impact of implementation against these intentions and against the overarching aim and goals of the Strategy.

### *A shared vision for social work in Northern Ireland*

- 5.2 The vision and framework for social work practice have not been widely used to articulate the role of social work in improving and safeguarding social wellbeing. The potential to create a shared vision and unifying sense of direction for social work in Northern Ireland has not been fully realized.

## PROPOSAL 2

### **We will use the Strategy to create a shared vision for social work in Northern Ireland.**

#### *Strengthening capacity and improving services*

- 5.3 Many projects and pilots have been initiated and funded by the Strategy to strengthen capacity and improve services, including those supported through the Innovation Scheme.
- 5.4 One of the first decisions of the Steering Group was to focus on issues impacting on frontline workers. Reducing unnecessary bureaucracy was identified as the key 'big ticket' issue. Progress was initially slow, but following the appointment of a project lead in 2015, there is now an overarching regional plan in place and Trusts are taking responsibility for implementation to reflect local variations and priorities.
- 5.5 The first and most significant service development in Stage 1 was the establishment of the Regional Emergency Social Work Service in 2012. The Department provided bridge funding from the Strategy budget to support development and transition from the former out of hours arrangements. A review of this service is to be undertaken by RQIA in 2016/17.
- 5.6 A Social Work Research Advisory Group, chaired by the Department, was established in 2014 to ensure a co-ordinated, regional approach in respect of social work/social care research. A Social Work Research and Continuous Improvement Strategy was published in 2015, reflecting the emphasis in the Strategy for Social Work on evidence-informed practice development and service improvement. There is a natural synergy between the goals of these two Strategies.
- 5.7 A review of the role and deployment of senior and principal practitioners was carried out in 2014. Progress has been slow to take recommendations forward, but plans and timescales for implementation are now being drawn up by the Department and HSCB.
- 5.8 Pilots to strengthen the capacity of social workers through the use of technology have had varied success. There has tended to be a permissive approach to adopting new practices using technology so the impact is slow and, at present, embraced largely by 'champions' and 'early adopters'. The lack of a regional IT infrastructure impacts on the potential of technology to support social workers at a systemic level.
- 5.9 Progress in setting up pilots in respect of flexible working and job rotation has proved problematic for a variety of reasons. There are examples of flexible working having been introduced as part of Trusts' own service improvements. Job rotation operates effectively in the Probation Service. Sharing the learning and evaluations of successful initiatives is a constructive way of stimulating interest and encouraging others to adopt new ways of working as part of their own workforce and service improvement plans.

- 5.10 Most of the more successful initiatives have been those which are based on issues that directly impact on frontline staff and have the endorsement/support of managers within the organization, such as the workload management tools for social work in Adults Services.

***The Strategy has provided a mandate to work with social workers across the Trust and particularly those in integrated teams.***

- 5.11 The outcomes from projects, pilots and innovations have been variable which is to be expected. The quality of evaluation and measurement has also been variable. Apart from the Innovation Scheme we have not routinely gathered, analysed or published the evaluations of the outcomes of other initiatives, with some exceptions. Evidence suggests that initiatives that have been robustly evaluated are more likely to be successfully scaled up.
- 5.12 Proposals and plans have not always been explicitly linked to improving outcomes for service users. Progress and impact measurement have tended to focus more on the benefits for social workers and, in some instances, the experiences of service users.
- 5.13 There needs to be a stronger focus on monitoring, evaluating and measuring improvements in social work and how they make a difference to people's lives.

***Need a stronger focus on evidencing outcomes and benefits for service users.***

- 5.14 The impact of successful initiatives on social work practice and on those who use services has also been variable and has mostly remained localized.
- 5.15 There was frustration that successful innovations that demonstrated a real impact, particularly but not exclusively about reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, have not been scaled up and rolled out. Several stakeholders referenced the economic case for making sure when something works that it carries on and is adopted in other areas rather than setting up and investing in another *new* initiative. There was a strong view that there needed to be a collective approach with key decision makers agreeing what the next steps for successful initiatives are in order to realise benefits across the system.

***We've no shortage of ideas or examples of good practice, the challenge is getting them adopted and embedded as 'usual practice' beyond the pilot site.***

### **PROPOSAL 3**

**We will take a regional approach to the delivery of key priorities for the Strategy and rolling out initiatives that improve social work.**

- 5.16 There was a view that there were too many initiatives. Some had struggled or got 'lost' as they were seen as external to and competing with Trusts' own priorities for service improvement and placed an additional 'ask' of staff creating an element of 'initiative fatigue'.

***Too many initiatives on top of those initiated within Trusts and not always 'owned' by staff or senior leaders as a priority.***

- 5.17 Since the Strategy was launched, a range of actions have also been initiated and progressed by the Department, the HSCB and Trusts as part of their core business but aligned with and supportive of the strategic direction of the Strategy. In 2016/17, up to 15 improvement projects will be progressed as part of development programmes.

***The strategy doesn't need to be involved in everything that is going on to say it is making a difference.***

- 5.18 Trusts are using the Strategy as an 'umbrella' framework within their respective organisations to align and delivery key priorities from other strategies, such as Quality 2020, Making Life Better, Transforming Your Care, the Social Work Research Strategy, the PSS Education and Training Strategy and the E-Health Strategy. This joined up approach is reported to make better use of existing resources and promote collaboration and partnership working.

#### **PROPOSAL 4**

**We will align priorities from relevant strategies and develop a single, integrated framework for Improving and Safeguarding Social Wellbeing.**

- 5.19 Local implementation was seen to be more effective in reaching and engaging social workers and making the Strategy 'real' for them. The Innovation Scheme has been particularly successful in this regard with informal feedback indicating a positive impact on social workers' capacity to lead change that is making a difference to people who use these services. The strength of the Strategy is felt most when individuals are empowered to effect change which is supported by evidence that people are more supportive of *what they create themselves*.

***We have learned that we need to get all managers and staff engaged in designing and implementing the priorities otherwise they will not commit to them.***

- 5.20 There is a strong view that we now need to focus more effort on embedding and consolidating successful projects that have made a difference and agreeing how to scale up and extend their reach and impact, rather than initiating more new ones. This also means stopping doing things that are not working.

***Focus on actions that add value. Need to be brave and stop what isn't adding value.***

#### ***Impact of Building Public Trust***

- 5.21 Raising public awareness and understanding about the role and contribution of social work is an area which has been gaining greater momentum through a range of local and regional initiatives and positive media coverage, much of which has been co-ordinated by the Raising the Profile Group (RtP Group). This momentum has been

very much assisted and bolstered by NIASW and supported by the expertise Communications staff from the HSCB and Trusts.

- 5.22 The RtP Group has also been working to co-ordinate and support a cohort of social workers to represent social work in the media and there has been an increased positive profile about social work in the media including social work representation on ‘live’ issues on radio and in news coverage.

***Latterly has been more effective in raising awareness of positive impact of social work.***

- 5.23 It is difficult to assess the impact of this work on the wider public but anecdotally it is making an impact. One social worker’s relative commented that he understood more about social work having watched the **Find Me A Family** documentary than listening to his son talking about social work over the past 30 years. The higher positive public profile is also reported to have a positive impact on those social workers who have seen or heard media coverage or attended events.

- 5.24 The Citizen’s Forum believe that the stories and lived experience of service users are a powerful, but underutilised, way of raising awareness of how social workers help people. The Citizen’s Forum identified recipients of social work services as an untapped resource who could be strong partners in building better public awareness and respect for what social workers do. This is exemplified by the coverage of Jenny Malloy’s (Hackney Child) recent visit to Northern Ireland. Jenny, as a former child in care, is a strong advocate for social workers and the difference they made in her life. The RtP Group has been working with Trusts to identify service user stories to share more widely with the public.

***We’re (service users and social workers) all on the same side. We have a shared agenda but from different perspectives. The resources are there to be tapped into.***

- 5.25 Publicising the difference social workers make in people’s lives was seen as crucial to raising public awareness and appreciation of the role of social work in our society. It was also seen as a way of making social workers proud of what they do.

***The Strategy provides a platform to publicise the positive difference social work makes in people’s lives.***

## PROPOSAL 5

**We will have a strong focus on gathering and sharing stories about the difference social work has made in people’s lives.**

### *Summary of impact of implementation*

- 5.26 There has been a lot of activity in Stage 1 and strong foundations are now in place to build upon going forward. It will be important to focus and target resources on the right areas to achieve real and sustainable systems-wide change in Stage 2 with measurable outcomes for service users.

- 5.27 The impact of implementation in terms of making improvements, with a small number of notable exceptions, is either unknown or has not been fully measured or evaluated.
- 5.28 There is a genuine desire for the Strategy to make a real impact and to create a lasting and positive legacy where social work is an effective, valued and respected profession. In order to achieve this we need to be able to demonstrate the outcomes and the difference social workers make in people's lives. This should be linked to the shared vision for social work (Para 5.2) and will require a more rigorous and systematic approach to data analysis, monitoring, evaluation and measurement.

## PROPOSAL 6

**We will develop an Outcomes Framework for Social Work with key indicators to monitor, evaluate and measure impact and outcomes.**

### 6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### *Effectiveness of the Programme Structure*

- 6.1 Formal implementation arrangements were established in accordance with the Programme Initiation Document (PID). The approach was based on a traditional, hierarchical programme management structure with inclusive representation of all stakeholders. There was general consensus this approach was right for the set up stage.

***Approach was right for initial stages to create momentum and get support of key stakeholders and put in place foundations.***

- 6.2 Six formal groups/forums were proposed in the PID. All were established, except for the Engagement and Communications Group which was intended to secure and promote participation in the planning and implementation of the Strategy.
- 6.3 Membership of the majority of groups/forums is made up of social workers. It is noteworthy that Trusts and frontline social workers are under-represented in membership and/or attendance.
- 6.4 The Steering Group and the Citizen's Forum have been the most well attended groups and their respective performance was rated positively by members. There were some suggestions that the Steering Group meetings could perhaps be managed differently to facilitate more discussion and dialogue about issues.

***The Steering Group provided the necessary level of authority for people to take note that this was an important Strategy with full support of key stakeholders.***

- 6.5 Membership of the Citizen's Forum is small with a big task. Rather than extend membership to secure the different voices and experiences of the broad range of

people who use social services, the Forum has suggested it could play a more proactive and purposeful role in communication and engagement with the many representative groups at local levels. Members have been energized and motivated when they have been able to make a tangible difference such as speaking at events and, notably, the production of **What I Need from my Social Worker** prompt card.

- 6.6 Attendance at the other groups, while initially good, dropped significantly to a small core committed membership over time. The Professional Forum's original membership was large to reflect the diversity of social work. This proved problematic in terms of the group being able to find common ground and agreement.
- 6.7 The Voluntary Sector Forum also experienced difficulties in sustaining membership and finding common ground. The Chair is supportive of a different approach to engage with and involve the sector that recognizes its diversity.
- 6.8 There has been a lack of clarity regarding the roles and remit of the Implementation Group and the Professionals Forum respectively. Members expressed a sense of frustration at not having a distinct purpose or authority to make decisions and make a tangible difference.
- 6.9 There were mixed views about the relevance or usefulness of some of the groups/forums, with some feeling they were largely talking shops and not a productive use of people's time.

***Why do you need a separate forum for social workers when they are represented on every group?***

- 6.10 Others were of the view that being a member of a group/forum had created space and opportunity to discuss professional issues with colleagues from a range of different perspectives and backgrounds which would not be available within a normal working day. This raises the question about the opportunities, permission and space for social workers to engage in professional debate both within the workplace and as part of a professional community and may be something that should be explored further.
- 6.11 All groups/forums are represented on the Steering Group. Representation is mostly, but not exclusively, by Chairs which doubles the commitment required of some individuals. The majority of those representing groups/forums on the Steering Group were positive about the opportunity to get a broad overview of what was going on. However, there was also a view that there was a high degree of overlap and duplication of agendas, particularly those of the Implementation and Steering Groups.
- 6.12 The Steering Group is organized and supported by Departmental staff. The PM attends and reports to the Steering Group. The PM also attends the Implementation Group as part of her role.
- 6.13 All other groups/forums were intended to operate under the leadership of their respective Chairs. In practice, and apart from the Voluntary Sector Forum, the PM attends and 'services' all of the other groups/forums, playing a significant role alongside the Chair in leading the meetings. Many members value the PM's updates regarding implementation, but others queried why the members representing groups/forums on the Steering Group could not take responsibility for these updates.

There is also an expectation and, to some extent a reliance, on the PM and her team to follow up on actions on behalf of all of the groups/forums.

- 6.14 In addition to attending the formal groups, the PM also attends the RtP Group and a number of the Task and Finish teams. The RtP Group was set up by the HSCB prior to the publication of the Strategy, in partnership with Trusts and the NISCC, with specific responsibility for organizing the annual Regional Social Work Awards and for raising the profile of social work. It is chaired by a Trust Director of Social Work and social workers from across the system are represented on the group as are communications staff from the HSCB and Trusts.
- 6.15 The RtP Group agreed to incorporate delivery of the Strategy's priority to build public trust and confidence in social work and strengthen social worker's ability to engage with the media as part of its remit. This was in line with the original intention of Strategy implementation to build on existing forums. In practice, the PM and her team have become actively involved in supporting actions arising from this group which has added to their workloads.
- 6.16 There was a view that there were too many 'cooks' all allocating or expecting work to be progressed by the PM on top of the substantive duties of the role. The PM and her team have been working hard to challenge and reverse this trend. This is proving challenging and has resulted, at times, resulted in lack of clarity regarding lead responsibility for organizing events with the PM, her staff and, on occasion, Departmental staff having to step in to keep things on track.
- 6.17 The CSWO, the DCSWO and the Directors of Social Work have been key players in supporting implementation. The CSWO and DCSWO have provided strategic direction, advice, guidance and support to the PM and others. The Directors, supported by their Governance and Training leads, have been key to successful delivery - unlocking and removing barriers, committing resources and holding people to account for delivery. The PM has successfully engaged individually and collectively with these key players outwith the formal groups/forums to progress delivery. There is a strong view that these key players should be formally represented on the programme structures and accountable for driving and leading delivery within the system in Stage 2.

***Key decision makers should be around the table.***

- 6.18 There has been a degree of duplication in terms of governance arrangements for Strategy delivery and budget management with both the internal HSCB and the Department's processes requiring information and assurance. This required regular communication between the PM and Departmental staff. There was, at times, confusion about the respective roles and authority of the Department and the HSCB in respect of leadership, authority and direction for the Strategy. Some Strategy products were subject to dual approval processes involving both the HSCB Board and the Strategy Steering Group. Good working relationships have helped to manage the inherent tensions in this situation, but have not eliminated the duplication.



### *Summary of effectiveness of programme structure*

- 6.19 While there is broad consensus that the structure was right for set up, we now need to streamline and simplify arrangements. The structure is complex and bureaucratic, has created duplication and too much time is spent in meetings rather than focusing on purposeful activity.

#### ***Too many cooks, too many groups.***

- 6.20 The Chairs and members of all the groups/forums are very committed to the Strategy, however responsibility for delivery appears to be largely seen as someone else's responsibility.

#### ***Responsibility for delivery is seen as someone else's responsibility.***

- 6.21 The PM's role is highly valued, but there is recognition that the structures and approach to implementation have pulled the PM into operational delivery. There was support for bringing the key decision makers around the table and finding alternative ways to meaningfully engage and involve others, including other key partners who contribute to improving social wellbeing.

### **PROPOSAL 7**

**We will streamline and simplify the programme structures with key decision makers accountable for delivery.**

- 6.22 A number of proposals in respect of the future structure are presented below, based on feedback and the evidence base for effective implementation.
- (a) continued **Departmental leadership and oversight**;
  - (b) a **strong sustained regional approach** to create systems-wide change and put improvement at the heart of social work;
  - (c) a **distributed leadership approach** with a social work leaders network collaborating to deliver agreed regional priorities and, where relevant, taking ownership and responsibility for delivery within their own organizations;
  - (d) a **social work outcomes delivery board** with key decision-makers accountable for improving the impact and effectiveness of social work as a whole system;
  - (e) retention of the **Citizen's Forum and the Professionals Forum** with a clear role and purpose to support delivery;
  - (f) **continued and extended use of existing infrastructure and resources** to mainstream delivery rather than superimposing an additional system; and
  - (g) a **single reporting line of governance and accountability**.

**Annex A** sets out proposals for a revised Programme Structure.

## 7. EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

7.1 Communication and engagement with key stakeholders were recognized as crucial for the successful implementation of the Strategy and were prioritized from the outset. There was to be an Engagement Strategy and Communication Plan and a specific Engagement and Communication Group which would be accountable to the Implementation Group. It was acknowledged that expertise such as communications, technology and marketing, would be required to support this work.

7.2 A dedicated group was not established and recruitment of necessary expertise proved difficult with a temporary, part-time Communications Officer only recently appointed.

*I worked with communications people who constantly had great ideas and this should be utilized as much as possible.*

7.3 Use of social media was initially impeded by an HSCB embargo pending a review. The CSWO and some Directors of Social Work paved the way, opening personal Twitter accounts, for others to follow and the use of Twitter to communicate is proving increasingly popular and successful. The potential of technology has, in the view of technically savvy social workers, not been fully exploited and specific expertise will be needed to progress this agenda further.

*We're missing a trick – need to make better use of technology as a tool for communication.*

7.4 A communication plan was developed and has been recently updated. More regular communications about what is happening have been introduced which have been welcomed. This, along with more consistent 'branding' of Strategy activity, has increased the visibility and awareness of the Strategy and how it is supporting social workers. Of particular note, Message of the Week, regular updates on progress, pop-ups and posters. Initiatives, such as the Innovation Scheme, the development of the Research Strategy and focus groups on Reducing Bureaucracy have successfully engaged social workers and raised awareness about the Strategy as have the sustained efforts of the CSWO, the DCSWO, the Directors, the PM, Governance and Training leads and others. Of particular note in engaging with frontline staff was the Directors' Roadshow in 2015.

*All communication regarding the Strategy comes from the Director of Social Work's office to underline the mandate and assure Corporate buy-in.*

7.5 While initially slow, momentum has built over the past four years and there is now good awareness of the Strategy among social workers and, to a lesser degree, other key stakeholders. This has created a positive buzz throughout the profession.

*It is the best thing the Department has done professionally. It provides a mandate for action and is instilling pride and confidence in the profession*

7.6 There have been many events over the past four years, all of which have provided opportunities for communication and engagement. These have been positively evaluated by those who attend, however the reach has not always been as great as

hoped, particularly with frontline social workers. This is possibly due to travel embargos and/or work pressures. The opportunity for Ministerial and/or Departmental has also not been fully exploited.

- 7.7 Given events play an important role in communications and engagement there needs to be a better understanding of their actual impact to inform future planning and communication and engagement strategies to reach target audiences.
- 7.8 There is also a view that communication and engagement now needs to reach out more widely to other disciplines such as public health, police, education and housing given the interdependencies in improving and safeguarding social wellbeing.
- 7.9 It was suggested that there needed to be a range of different approaches to communication and engagement considering the diverse range of stakeholders.

***Need a robust, differentiated engagement strategy and a co-ordinated communications and PR plan.***

- 7.10 In Stage 2, we need a planned, co-ordinated and sustained approach to engagement and communications, including professional branding and marketing, to demonstrate how the Strategy is making a difference and to win hearts and minds. It will be important to co-ordinate all of the efforts to engage and communicate including those of the RtP Group, NIASW, the Department, HSCB, Trusts and others in order to avoid duplication and maximize reach and impact.

***A central implementation team should be centred on communications.***

#### ***Summary of effectiveness of communication and engagement***

- 7.11 A wide range of activities over the past four years has resulted in good awareness among social workers about the Strategy, but there now needs to be a co-ordinated and planned approach to communicating and engaging with frontline social workers, those who use services and other key stakeholders to highlight the positive difference the Strategy is making.
- 7.12 Securing the right expertise and dedicating a central resource and expertise to planning and co-ordination of communication and engagement would potentially enhance the effectiveness and impact.

### **PROPOSAL 8**

**We will enhance and maximize the effectiveness of communication and engagement with all key stakeholders.**

## 8. USE OF RESOURCES

- 8.1 A dedicated budget has been available to support implementation since 2012. The highest proportion of spend has been on staff to support implementation, all of whom are based in the HSCB or in the Trusts.
- 8.2 Investment in the establishment of the Regional Emergency Social Work Service and in the Innovation Scheme represent the next highest proportion of spend.
- 8.3 Each year there has been an underspend of the Strategy budget for a range of reasons, but most notably overestimation of costs, ability to spend within the financial year, delays in appointment of staff or readiness to progress work.
- 8.4 Many requests are made directly to the PM throughout the year for funding for a specific project or new development which may or may not be related to the priorities of the Strategy. Requests may be due to lack of funding from any other source. There is no formal process in place for consideration of such requests.
- 8.5 Funding and additional staff have been very welcome, but there was a view that we are in danger of becoming overly reliant on them along with the PM and her team. This is not sustainable and in the current financial climate we cannot depend on the continued availability of funding.
- 8.6 There was broad consensus that we now need to mainstream delivery within the existing infrastructure so when the resource dissipates the momentum will be sustained. And this is already happening in the Department, the HSCB and Trusts, for example in respect of the Improvement Adviser and Leadership programmes which are commissioned, funded and co-ordinated through existing arrangements.

*Need to move from a project/pilot approach to implementation to a whole systems approach to effect lasting and sustainable changes in how the profession continuously improves its impact and effectiveness.*

- 8.7 Consideration also needs to be given to resources within the system and how these can be harnessed or reconfigured to support delivery. This is already happening in some areas. For example, the potential for SCIE and the NICS DFP Innovation Lab to support Strategy delivery are being explored.
- 8.8 It is recognized that some resources will be needed to enable improvement as part of mainstream activity. We need to ensure that the right resources are deployed and used to support delivery of the strategic goals. The right resources may mean securing different expertise and skills.

### *Summary of effectiveness of use of resources*

- 8.9 Significant resources have used to progress implementation. It is important that resources are used effectively and targeted where they will have the greatest impact on social work and ultimately on people who use the services. There are opportunities to use resources more efficiently and effectively, to harness or reconfigure resources and to mainstream activity within the system.

- 8.10 The biggest gap in determining whether the use of resources has been effective relates to evaluation and outcomes measurement. If we are investing in activity designed to make improvements we need to have ways of evidencing whether this is happening or not. Evaluation has tended to be qualitative with less evidence of quantitative measurement. There has been activity where data has been used to inform planning and to measure outcomes, but this appears to be the exception. Monitoring, evaluation and measurement of the effectiveness and impact of improvement activity needs to be built into the overall approach to implementation.

## PROPOSAL 9

**We will make the most efficient use of all available resources, including those already in the system, and monitor for best value and impact.**

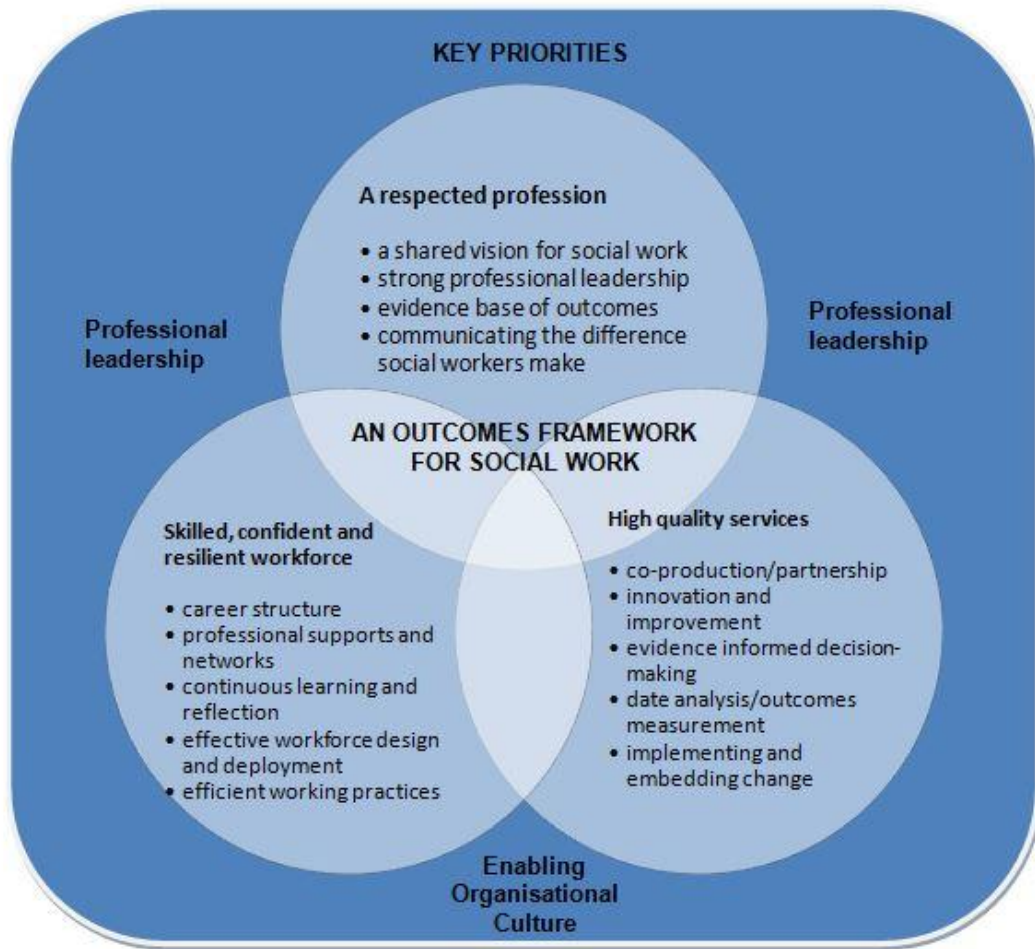
### 9. THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND KEY PRIORITIES

- 9.1 The Strategy was intended to provide a strategic direction for the future of social work in terms of strengthening the capacity of the workforce, improving social work services and building confidence and trust in the profession by promoting an understanding of its role and positive contribution within our society.

*The Strategy provides a clear statement about what social work is about and direction of travel.*

- 9.2 There is consensus that the strategic direction remains relevant for Stage 2, but that there now needs to be a spotlight on specific priorities that will strengthen the effectiveness and impact of social work in improving social wellbeing and outcomes.
- 9.3 A number of initiatives to build social workers' capacity and capability to strengthen and improve social work have already commenced. These include initiatives to:
- build leadership and management capacity;
  - build a small cadre of social work improvement advisers;
  - ensure senior managers can support improvement and implementation;
  - build a critical mass of social workers trained in Safety, Quality and Experience;
  - build a culture of research and evidence-mindedness; and
  - build the research and evidence base for social work in Northern Ireland.
- 9.4 It is proposed that there will be a focus on the continued delivery of these key priorities, along with other agreed activities, in Stage 2 with the aim of effecting sustainable systems-wide change in how social work operates.

9.5 The activities are presented within the strategic framework for action in **Figure 2**.



**Figure 2**

9.6 Some of these priorities will require a regional lead such as the development of a shared vision, an outcomes framework and a career structure for social work. Others are already being, or can be, delivered as part of mainstream business within organisations, such as continuous learning and reflection, efficient working practices, and effective workforce design and deployment.

9.7 Of vital importance will be arrangements to monitor, measure and evaluate the impact of the delivery of all of the priorities on strengthening the effectiveness of social work in improving people’s lives across Northern Ireland. There will therefore need to be clarity regarding what is expected in terms of evaluation, reporting and accountability of initiatives and a process to collate and analyse their impact and outcomes.

### **PROPOSAL 10**

**We will develop an Evaluation Framework to monitor progress and measure impact and outcomes of delivery of key priorities.**

## **10. TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS**

- 10.1 The purpose of the review of Stage 1 was to learn the lessons and assess the effectiveness of implementation with a view to ascertaining what we need to do in Stage 2 to strengthen the impact and effectiveness of social work in improving people's lives and to effect sustainable systems-wide change in how social work operates.
- 10.2 Ten proposals are set out for Stage 2 delivery in this paper. All require a shift in focus and new or different ways of working. Key priorities to support the strategic intent of the Strategy are also identified with a recommendation that there should be a sustained focus in Stage 2 on building the capacity and capability of social workers to improve practice and services in partnership with those who use them.
- 10.3 Stage 2 will be for a 5 year period in recognition of the time required to integrate change into mainstream practice. Stage 3 will be the final phase of Strategy delivery and signify a new era for social work in Northern Ireland where co-production and improvement will be an integral part of every social worker's work.
- 10.4 A transition period will now be required during which time a revised programme structure will be put in place along with agreed governance and reporting arrangements. Plans and frameworks to support delivery will need to be updated or developed. Decisions will need to be made about which activities will be discontinued, which will continue, which will be mainstreamed and what new ones will be initiated. Consideration will also need to be given to the future delivery in the context of the proposed closure of the HSCB in 2017.
- 10.5 The Department will lead the transition phase to put in place the infrastructure for Stage 2. It is proposed that the PM and staff funded by the Strategy to support implementation in Stage 1 will be reconfigured as a time-limited Transition Team (the Team) to assist the Department in this work. The Team will be led by the Deputy CSWO. This will mean a change of role and working arrangements for some staff from a specific brief to a broader role. It is envisaged that other key stakeholders, including those involved throughout Stage 1, will be consulted. Where necessary individuals may be co-opted on to the Team or commissioned to assist this process.
- 10.6 Based on the new plans and arrangements, resource requirements, including human resources, to support delivery in Stage 2 will be agreed and secured from existing resources.
- 10.7 An initial meeting of the Transition Team is planned for 21 April 2016 to begin the process of developing a Transition and Delivery Plan for 2016/17. This will include plans for communication and engagement with key stakeholders about arrangements for Stage 2 delivery.
- 10.8 While the proposed closure of the HSCB is likely to impact on future delivery arrangements, it is proposed, during the transition phase in 2016/17 that the HSCB will continue to lead on existing and new activities that require a regional lead and can be mainstreamed as part of HSCB activity. Decisions regarding the future location of these activities will be made as part of the wider deliberations about the future location of agreed regional functions currently delivered by the HSCB.

- 10.9 It will be important for the Department and HSCB to work closely throughout the transition phase. It is therefore proposed that the CSWO, HSCB Director of Social Care and Children, the DCSWO and PM will have regular bi-monthly meetings to oversee this transition phase and ensure new arrangements are in place within agreed timelines.



## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

1. The programme structure is based on the outcomes of the review.
2. The intention to equip social workers to work with people who use services to strengthen the effectiveness of social work in improving their lives and social wellbeing will be challenging. It will involve major contributions from the DHSSPS, the HSCB and Trusts as well as from all parts of the social work system in Northern Ireland.
3. There will be a **Social Work Outcomes Delivery Board** (Outcomes Board). It will be chaired by the CSWO who is accountable to the Minister. It will meet at least quarterly and its core membership will be the HSCB and Trust Executive Directors of Social Work.
4. The Outcomes Board will be informed by a **Social Work Leaders Network** (the Network) which will include social work leaders from all sectors. The Network will provide a forum for social work leadership in Northern Ireland and a supportive environment for professional dialogue. Members of the Network will be responsible for how they use the Strategy as a framework to strengthen and improve social work within their respective organisations.
5. The Network will advise the Outcomes Board on key issues, challenges, developments and opportunities. There will be at least one formal meeting annually between the Outcomes Board and the Network. Members of the Outcomes Board will engage with the Network and/or individual members of the Network as frequently as required throughout the year on specific issues.
6. The **Citizens Forum** and **Professional Forum** will be reconfigured with a clear remit to support delivery of the Communication and Engagement plans in Trust areas. It is anticipated the two Forums will work together to plan and deliver agreed aspects of Communication and Engagement and, as such, become role models for co-design and co-production.
7. Membership of the Professional Forum will be reviewed and refreshed. Employers will be required to nominate/endorse individuals for membership of the Professional Forum and agree to the commitment required in terms of attendance and contribution to local communication and engagement activity.
8. **The Raising the Profile Group** will continue to operate as part of mainstream business. Its Chair (Director of Social Work) will provide the link between the Outcomes Board and the RtP Group. Links will be established between the RtP Group and those responsible for Communications and Engagement.

9. The Outcomes Board, the Network, the Citizens and Professional Forums ***depicted in black on the programme structure*** represent the formal programme structure. There will be agreed communication, engagement and information sharing arrangements between the Outcomes Board and the Network and between the Outcomes Board and the Citizen's and Professionals Forums.
10. All of the other organisations/constituencies ***depicted in blue on the programme structure diagram*** are part of the social work delivery system and represent bodies with responsibility for the direct provision of social work or a specific role in respect of social workers and/or social work services. Agreed priorities may be led by any of these bodies where these are congruent with the body's core business.
11. The role the Outcomes Board and the implementation of a single, integrated delivery framework to improve social wellbeing will not replace existing arrangements for performance management and accountability of HSC bodies.
12. Reporting and governance arrangements for Strategy implementation will take account of existing arrangements and interdependencies within the system. The main reporting lines will be from the Trusts through the Executive Directors of Social Work to the Outcomes Board.
13. Decisions regarding resource requirements to support the formal programme structure and Stage 2 delivery, including any new or specific developmental work, will be considered as part of transition planning and take into account opportunities to harness or reconfigure existing resources within the system.

**PROGRAMME STRUCTURE**

