

Safe Staffing Programme End of Year Report 2023/24

April 2024



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Introduction

This report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Safe Staffing Programme (SSP) team between April 2023 and April 2024. It has been informed by feedback from people who contributed, collaborated and participated in the work.

The Safe Staffing Programme team published end of year reports for 2021 -2022 and 2022 - 2023. [202122- \(careinspectorate.com\)](https://www.careinspectorate.com/202122/)
[22-23 \(careinspectorate.com\)](https://www.careinspectorate.com/22-23/)

We would like to thank everyone who gave their time, engaged, contributed and participated in the work of the Safe Staffing Programme. Thanks to:

- people who experience care, their families and friends
- staff, managers and providers of social care services in Scotland
- members of our programme boards and sub-groups
- policy officers from Scottish Government and representatives of the Chief Nursing Directorate
- our partner agencies and our colleagues at the Care Inspectorate.

1. Overview

The Safe Staffing Programme (SSP) was commissioned by the Scottish Government in December 2019 to prepare the social care sector, and the Care Inspectorate, for commencement of [the Health and Care \(Staffing\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) (the Act). This legislation enables the development of suitable workload and workforce planning approaches in different care settings.

The objectives of the programme are agreed with Scottish Government on an annual basis and are designed to support stakeholders through the provision of advice, guidance and learning opportunities (see appendix one).

During 2023/24, the SSP team delivered 498 events, meetings and webinars across local authority and health board areas. You can read more about the SSP on the Care Inspectorate's [Hub website](#).

Across Scotland, 7,721 people attended and participated in events, meetings and webinars

Including:

- Local in-person visits and local online events
- Regional in-person events and regional online events
- A national webinar series
- Bespoke events for individual provider groups
- Participation in events and conferences organised by others

93% of participants said attendance improved their knowledge and understanding of the Act

Achievements in 2023/24

A key objective of the Safe Staffing Programme (SSP) is stakeholder engagement. The SSP team engaged with people who volunteered to collaborate and contribute to the work. Stakeholders told us participating was a way to increase their knowledge and understanding of the Act, their duties and responsibilities.

Events took place nationally. Participants in island and remote areas said they appreciated events and in-person visits which took place in their localities.

Participants said arranging events at times and locations that suited them worked well. For example, in some area's events were held as part of existing group meetings or forums. This improved accessibility and reduced time away from workplaces.

“It was really good. They were willing to come up and to speak to childminders. And they came out in the evening for us.”
Event participant

“They are going out of their way to do a more personal approach.”
Event participant

Feedback indicated that the events were helpful, informative and interesting. Many events included good discussions, lots of networking, conversations and questions. Participants valued the discussion and the opportunity to reflect on practice.

Participants found in-person events supported their learning and enabled discussion about their specific area of work.

Some people said there was a lot of information provided in the time available, and more time to discuss issues would have been useful.

“They had really pulled out the bits relevant to us.”
Event participant

“It is breaking it down to what it really means for regulated services.”
Event participant

Adult services

The SSP team used programme sub-groups, a mailing list, provider updates, letters and emails to offer individual and group support to adult services.

Support also including strategic level meetings, in-person and virtual events to raise awareness and support quality improvement.



Some events were hosted by Health Boards and held in health and social care partnership localities. For example, six events were hosted by NHS Ayrshire and Arran and with our partners from the Healthcare Staffing Programme at Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS).

The SSP team joined an Act Programme Board set up by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to provide support and guidance about the Act in six health and social care partnerships (HSCP). This collaboration helped to support consistency in their preparations for commencement in April 2024.

Early learning and childcare services

The SSP team contacted all 32 local authorities and offered support including meetings, in-person and virtual events designed to raise awareness and support quality improvement. The same support was offered to larger care service providers and membership organisations.



In some local authority areas, events were provided for individual funded providers. Service provider briefings, local authority briefings and internal updates were also delivered.

Three national online webinars were delivered, to improve knowledge and understanding of the guiding principles of the Act and the duties of each specialism within the early learning and childcare sector.

Services for children and young people

The SSP team contacted organisations and stakeholders and provided opportunities for meetings, individual, online or group support.



Care services were offered a short presentation, bespoke events or meetings. Two national webinars were also designed and delivered.

The SSP team presented information at the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) Independent Boarding School Conference. This supported discussion with all independent boarding schools across Scotland.

The webinar series

The SSP team developed and delivered a national webinar series. Feedback was positive.

“I have come to know the expectation of the law strategically and it has helped me to future plan for my care services.”
Webinar participant

“The Act was explained very well.”
Webinar participant

The SSP team also contributed to webinars hosted by the Healthcare Staffing Programme at Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) and Scottish Government.

Regional in-person events

A series of 12 regional in-person events were delivered in February and March 2024.

316 stakeholders attended

“I feel more comfortable in my understanding of the Act.”
Event participant

“It was great to learn more about the Act and have the opportunity to meet with fellow workers and ask face to face questions if needed.”
Event participant

Participants said they enjoyed the opportunity to meet with peers from across the sector. Participants explored good practice and shared ideas.

“Interacting with people face to face, chatting with other like-minded people and sharing ideas from our settings.”
Event participant

Attendees said events were well facilitated and presentations were engaging. The small, themed workshop sessions worked well. Attendees valued materials provided at the events.

“I thought the presenters did really well.”
Event participant

“The team were very informative, and the materials helped to clarify my /our understanding of the Safe Staffing Act. I am using the posters and cards to support, consult and inform staff about requirements, and will use the tool to monitor our setting.”
Event participant

Participants enjoyed the opportunity to talk and explore aspects of the Act. In-person events helped people to connect and interact and this was important to them. Participants felt more confident about meeting the requirements of the Act.

“I have come back to my setting and started to note down things that we actively do to meet the requirements of the Act.”
Event participant

“I feel more knowledgeable and confident in sharing the model with staff teams and explaining the principles.”
Event participant

Ensuring the wellbeing of staff

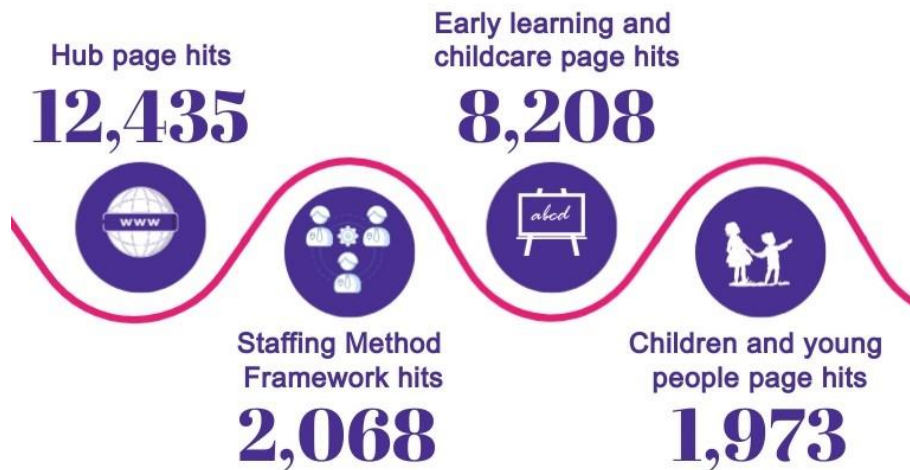


During events, word clouds were used to explore the guiding principles of the Act. Participants shared ideas. This example is about the theme of ensuring staff wellbeing.

Multimedia support for services

The SSP team uses media and web-based resources to ensure the Programme shares key messages, consults and reaches as many people as possible.

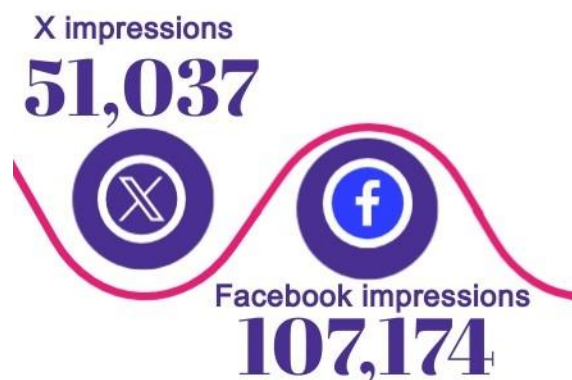
There is a dedicated Safe Staffing Programme Hub online, with individual sections for the adult, early learning, and childcare (ELC) and children and young people's sector. A QR code directs people to the relevant pages on the Hub.



Through the Care Inspectorate provider updates, key messages were sent to every registered care service between April 2023 and March 2024.



The Safe Staffing Programme team made use of social media, including X, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube.



The Programme also has a dedicated mailbox and email address:

safestaffingproject@careinspectorate.gov.scot

The SSP team used the [CitizenLab platform](#) for large consultations during the year. CitizenLab is a digital participation platform which used to consult about the Staffing Method Framework.

Learning resources

The Programme Learning and Development subgroup is co-chaired by partners from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). Learning resources are published by the SSSC, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and on Care Inspectorate [Hub pages](#).

The SSP team developed and published easy read cards to support stakeholders to develop their knowledge and understanding of the legislation.

“I found that having the cards was a fantastic tool to support translating how to apply the Act.” In-person event participant

A short guide to the Act was developed and published by the SSP team. This provides information about the purpose of the Act, the guiding principles, the sections relevant to the social care sector, the Staffing Method Framework, and the roles of various stakeholders: [HCSS Act - Short guide \(cloud.microsoft\)](#)

Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 - Short guide



The Safe Staffing Programme team worked with partner agencies to support the development of the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) for health and care staff in Scotland. This was published by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) on [KSF](#) and reflects the guiding principles for health and care staffing.

The purpose of the framework is to support staff to have a clear understanding of information relevant to their role. The module domains:

- fundamentals of health and care staffing
- workload and workforce planning
- managing and using workload and workforce planning data
- quality assurance and governance.

The Safe Staffing Programme will continue to work with partner agencies to support further development of the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) in 2024/25.

Engaging people with lived experience

The SSP team consulted with people who experience social care services by:

- inviting a Care Homes Relatives Group representative to join the External Programme Board
- engaging with Inspection Volunteers to equip them with knowledge and understanding of the Act that enabled them to discuss this with people who experience care during inspection visits
- exploring ways to use the information collected from satisfaction surveys to improve understanding of the experiences of people in relation to staffing levels and workforce planning

- inviting guest speakers with lived experience of care services speaking at Safe Staffing Programme in-person events.

554 people with lived experience participated and contributed to the SSP in 2023/24

285 people with lived experience of care homes for older people and adults responded to surveys about staffing through the Safe Staffing Programme.

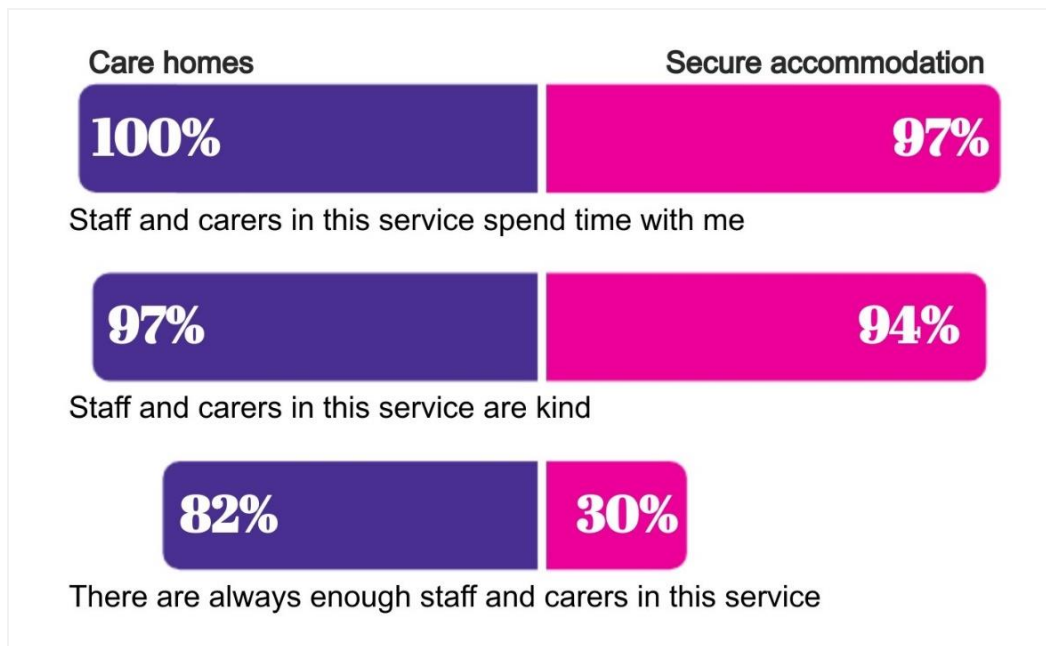


Source: Analysis of those saying strongly agree or agree, based on 285 responses to 18 March 2024

“All staff are extremely helpful and are always on hand to assist with my requests. No request goes unanswered.”
Care home resident

“All the staff I have interacted with are friendly and caring.”
Care home resident

A total of 269 children and young people responded to surveys about staffing through the Safe Staffing Programme.



Source: Analysis of those saying strongly agree or agree, based on 236 responses to 12 March 2024

“All they do is care for me and I like most of my adults.”
Child/young person

“Staff make me feel safe in this home.”
Child/young person

“Having extra staff we could get to do more activities.”
Child/young person

Inspection volunteers gathered feedback from 18 residents or service users, and 53 relatives.

“Staff are great, kind, and compassionate.”
Feedback to Inspection Volunteer

A sample of parents who use ELC services, including day care of children and childminders, responded to surveys sent by the Safe Staffing Programme.



Source: Analysis of those saying strongly agree or agree, up to 31 March 2024

“Photos and learning journal completed daily so can always see how my child has got on that day.”
Parent/carer of child

“All staff are so friendly. Lots of different activities for the kids to do.”
Parent/carer of child

“My kids feel safe and happy when they are there.”
Parent/carer of child

“They are just amazing at what they do.”
Parent/carer of child

Guidance and resources

Guidance

During 2023/24, the SSP team published guidance about the assessment of staffing for premises-based and non premises-based care services. This guidance was reviewed before commencement.

Information guides

The SSP team developed six information guides to support the social care sector:

- guiding principles
- appropriate staffing
- staff training, qualifications, and registration
- the wellbeing of staff
- staffing method framework
- planning commissioning reporting

Statutory guidance

Scottish Government prepared statutory legislative guidance. The SSP team worked with ten health and social care partnerships and local authorities who volunteered to test the statutory guidance chapter specific to the social care sector.

Strategic Inspectors supported this work in their link local authority areas. Local authority areas tested the guidance chapter and provided feedback. Testing concluded in February 2024. Commissioners said participation supported them to make changes to their practice to enable them to meet their duties under the Act.

Staffing Method Framework (SMF) and staffing level tools

The Act states that the Care Inspectorate may develop and recommend staffing methods for use by adult care home services. The SSP team used a range of methods to consult with the sector about the development of a staffing method.

Do you agree that the Care Inspectorate needs to develop a staffing method for use across all adult and older people's care homes in Scotland?

Yes

91%

Source: Safe Staffing Programme data from January 2023 to 25 March 2024. Total respondents 1,517.

Consultation led to the co-production of a Staffing Method Framework (SMF). Six prototypes were tested in collaboration with 43 adult care homes and other stakeholders who supported this work.

- Prototype five was designed and tested during until June 2023.
- Prototype six was developed and tested until February 2024.
- In April 2024, the Staffing Method Framework was published.



The Staffing Method Framework was published in April 2024.

An app of the Staffing Method Framework is being developed with the support of the Digital Health and Care Innovation Centre. This will be available later in 2024.

The SSP team explored the staffing level tools currently used in adult care homes. The [Annual Returns to the Care Inspectorate](#) indicate that 80% of adult care homes use a range of staffing level tools. There is no tool validated for use in adult care home settings.

An appraisal was commissioned to explore options about adapting existing staffing level tools or designing, developing, and building a new staffing level tool for adult care homes. Further user research is required to ensure the criteria, business and technical requirements of a staffing level tool meet the needs of the whole adult care home sector.

The experience of testing the Staffing Method Framework

Test sites included voluntary, independent, and local authority care homes who provide care and support to adults in urban, rural and island locations. Care homes ranged in size and occupancy, had different funding models and staffing structures, and provided both long and short-term care.

Participants reported that as a result of using the Staffing Method Framework:

- staff skills and skills mix improved
- confidence in leadership roles increased
- staff wellbeing improved
- documentation and recording improved
- person centred care improved, with positive feedback from clients
- learning about change processes improved.

All test sites said the Staffing Method Framework provided useful support for workforce planning. Participants favoured an agreed staffing method for use in all adult care homes. Some highlighted the need to take account of the variety of care home provision, including the size of the service. Other participants expressed concern about costs and resources.

Participation in the work of the Programme supported improvement. For example, one care home introduced a change idea about staff and resident wellbeing. The service then spread their change idea and were able to introduce the improvement throughout the service.

In one locality, all local authority care homes took part in testing the Staffing Method Framework across a range of care home services.

“It was a transformative experience for that team.”
Local authority lead

The experience of testing the Staffing Method Framework, encouraged participants to promote the use of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Open Badge across care homes. [SSSC Open Badges | CI Safe and effective staffing](#)

Engaging Care Inspectorate colleagues

To prepare for commencement of the Act, the Safe Staffing Programme team worked closely with colleagues in the Care Inspectorate to:

- align Care Inspectorate methodology to the Act
- revise the Quality Frameworks used for inspections and self-evaluation to include specific reference to the Act
- decide how to refer to the Act in publications and communications
- review and update the induction programme for new staff to include the Act
- ensure the Practice Development Award takes account of the Act.

The SSP team delivered regular information sharing and learning events for colleagues.



Engagement with colleagues also took place through the Internal Programme Board, External Programme Board, and the Practice Development Group for inspectors



“ They really raised inspectors’ awareness and helped us to prepare.”
Care Inspectorate colleague

2. Impact

Poll of participants

The SSP team undertook a poll with participants before and after every event.

The poll asked if participants were ready for implementation of the Act:
“Are you ready for the Health and Care Staffing Scotland Act 2019?”

The table illustrates that most people viewed engagement as a way of supporting them to feel ready for the Act.

Answer	Before Event	After Event
Completely Ready	3%	10%
Somewhat Ready	31%	75%
Not Sure	56%	12%
Not Ready	9%	3%

After the events, more people said they were somewhat ready or completely ready.

Source: Safe Staffing Programme evaluation data from April 2023 to 25 March 2024. Total respondents before event 4,023, after event 3,389.

Event and webinar feedback

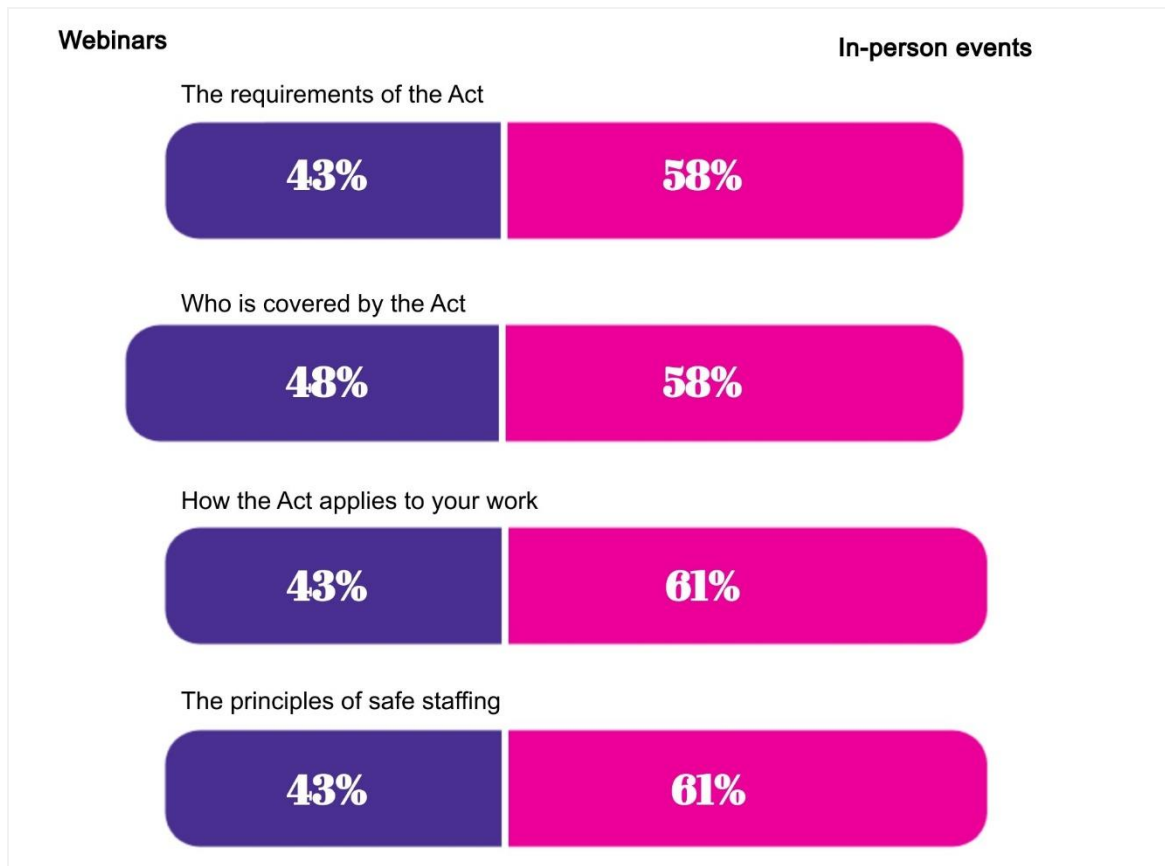
Overall, event feedback shows that most participants improved their knowledge of the Act and enhanced their learning.



Source: 1,680 people responded to the first question, and 1,087 to the second question.

A follow up survey of webinar and in-person events found that attendance made a difference to most participants understanding of the Act.

Percentage of people saying the events made **a lot** of difference to their understanding of the Act



Survey extract taken 26 March 2024, 44 webinar respondents and 58 in-person event respondents.

Participants said they learned:

- the detail of the Act including the guiding principles
- the reasons for the Act
- how the Act applies to their situation
- what they need to do to meet the requirements of the Act
- the importance of considering staff wellbeing
- practice examples of how they could comply with the Act
- how to evidence that they comply with the Act
- how safe staffing would be considered during inspections.

“It was beneficial to go through the guiding principles and learn about the plans for the Staffing Method Framework.”
Event participant

“I understand the Act and its implications for me much better.”
Event participant

Some said that the webinars and events provided reassurance that their service operated in line with expectations, building their confidence in existing approaches.

“Much of what is being proposed we already adopt into our processes and policies.”

Event participant

“For me, it made me relax. I looked at how I show that I do the safe staffing, what I already do and how I can highlight that.”

Event participant

“It helped to validate the way we had interpreted it, that we had the right approach.”

Event participant

A few said that through the webinars and events they realised there was more to learn about the Act and what was required. A few said that they would welcome further briefings and events because they felt uncertain.

Participants said that because of the webinars they would:

- raise awareness of the Act and its implications
- share learning with others
- introduce staff training on the Act
- encourage staff to complete safe staffing modules online
- explore new ways to support staff wellbeing
- review and revise arrangements in place
- keep up to date with changes in legislation and best practice
- attend further webinars and events
- gather evidence of compliance with requirements
- feel more confident about the implementation of the Act.

“Keep connected with the expertise and wonderful resources in, and produced by, the team. Their reach out, support offered and clear information provided have all been excellent.”

Event participant

“I can explain what the Act is now and feel I will be able to get others involved in its launch.”

Event participant

Sub-group member reflections on impact

Sub-group members felt the SSP made a difference to sector understanding of the Act, particularly in terms of supporting awareness of the requirements of the Act and how it applies in practice.

“The widespread training, web series and links to providers has helped increase awareness and understanding.”
Sub-group member

“The programme has provided information on the legislation in a number of ways and over a period. The website provides good information and resources in an engaging format. Care services that have been involved with the programme will be better prepared as they have benefitted from local input and relationships with the programme advisers.”
Sub-group member

3. Success factors

Key success factors were described as:

- **Voluntary approach**
The programme engaged and collaborated with large numbers of participants across the sector. Participants valued engaging with the Care Inspectorate and found contact with the Safe Staffing Programme supportive.
- **Tailored approach**
Participants valued opportunities offered locally and tailored to their needs.
- **In-person opportunities**
Participants were very positive about the reach of the SSP team across Scotland, including rural and remote areas and urban locations. The opportunities to network helped build confidence, share practice and generating ideas.
- **Focus**
Most participants felt messages conveyed through the programme were focused and clearly explained. Many participants felt reassured by the programme, through clear explanation of the current requirements and how the new Act compares.
- **Leadership**
Stakeholders felt that there was clear leadership and direction on the SSP within the Care Inspectorate. Colleagues felt that the programme helped them to prepare for commencement.

 They have done well to keep the messages simple.”
Board member

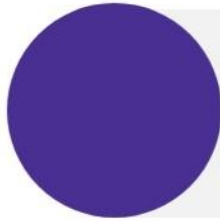
Wider challenges

- Stakeholders, sub-group, and board members highlighted the size of and diversity of the social care sector, the range of organisations and staff.
- Many discussed the fragile status of the sector post-pandemic. Issues highlighted were staff recruitment, retention, staff shortages, low staff morale and fiscal challenges.
- Stakeholders commented that the Safe Staffing Programme team was small and has a significant job in preparing the sector for the Act.

Appendix One: Additional information

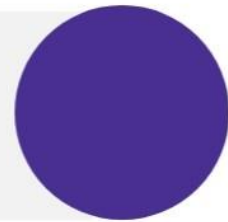
Programme objectives

Each year, the Safe Staffing Programme agrees objectives with the Chief Nursing Officers Directorate (CNOD) of Scottish Government. The 2023/24 objectives:



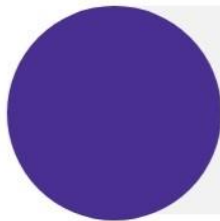
Increase engagement with the entire social care sector, Care Inspectorate staff and a range of health and social care partnerships, health boards, people experiencing care and those important to them.

Review our existing guidance and agree a range of core resources to prepare the sector for enactment of the Act.



Support stakeholders by contributing to the development of learning resources about workload and workforce planning.

Organise an assessment of what is required to develop a staffing tool then present options to Scottish Government of whether a tool could be adapted, bought or built from scratch to suit the requirements of the Act.



Collaborate with the adult care home sector to develop a Staffing Method Framework which informs assessment and decision-making about workload and workforce planning.

Work with a sample of health and social care partnerships to test the chapters of the Act.



Programme team

The Safe Staffing Programme team comprises: a Programme Lead, an Improvement Support Officer and six Safe Staffing Advisers. The team is overseen by the Care Inspectorate's Chief Nurse.



The Safe Staffing Team from left to right: Glo, Helen, Melissa, Joanne, Candice, Steph, David, Tom

Governance 2023/24

The Safe Staffing Programme has robust governance arrangements which include:

- a Programme Oversight Board for the Act
- an External Programme Board
- an Internal Programme Board
- Programme sub-groups.

Boards include representation from all services covered by the Act – including early learning and childcare and children and young people.

The Safe Staffing Programme team works with colleagues from the Healthcare Staffing Programme at HIS, to identify opportunities to align objectives and plans.

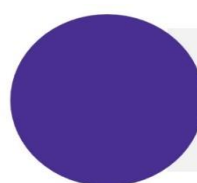
The Safe Staffing Programme adheres to the Care Inspectorate's robust information governance and equality arrangements. A lead staff member supports the SSP team on data protection and equality issues. The Internal Programme Board includes the Equalities Professional Advisor and the Involvement and Equalities Team Manager.

Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Programme Oversight Board

The Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Programme Oversight Board was established in February 2023 and meets every month. The purpose of the Programme Oversight Board is to assure Scottish Government that plans are in place to meet the requirements of the Act. It agrees overarching strategic direction, reviews risks, and ensures alignment with other national policy.

External Programme Board

The Safe Staffing External Programme Board is the overall governance group for the Programme, leading and directing Programme activity and providing assurance to the Oversight Board. It advises on long term strategic direction, ensures alignment of the Programme with other national policy and strategies, approves, and monitors operational plans, provides leadership and direction, ensures risks are managed and ensures stakeholders shape all aspects of the work.



External Programme Board

Membership includes representatives from health boards, health and social care partnerships, Office of the Chief Social Worker, the Chief Officers Group, the Care Home Relatives Group, Allied Health Professionals, private and third sector providers and:

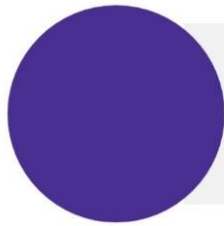


Internal Programme Board

The Internal Programme Board provides guidance on the overall strategic direction of the Programme.

Sub-groups

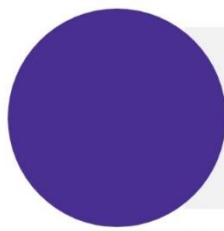
Sub-groups are a key route for engaging wider stakeholders and are an important way of widening the reach of the small SSP team. The sub-groups include representatives from partner agencies, employer associations, employee representatives and membership organisations.



Special Interest Group

The Special Interest Group contributes the work of the Safe Staffing Programme. The group meets quarterly. Membership is from across a range of organisations including:





Learning and Development Subgroup

The Learning and Development Sub-group provides direction on the national approach to the review and development of learning resources to support social care staff to prepare for the requirements of the Act. The group is chaired by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and works closely with the Healthcare Staffing Programme at Healthcare Improvement Scotland. Membership is from across the social care sector including providers from the independent and voluntary sector.



Appendix Two: Method

The production of this report involved:

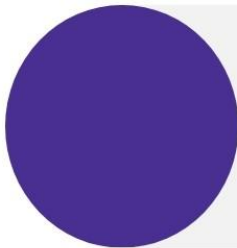
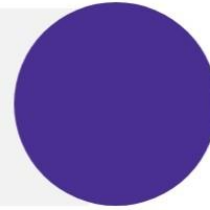


Desktop review

A review of papers, briefings, presentations, evaluations and reports gathered and produced by the Safe Staffing Programme.

Staff interviews

Interviews with nine staff members involved in the Safe Staffing Programme.

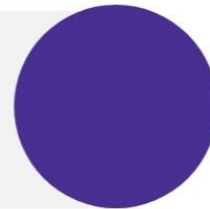


Stakeholder interviews

Interviews and discussions with 27 stakeholders involved in the Programme. This included sub-group members, board members, Care Inspectorate colleagues, care homes testing the Staffing Method Framework, webinar participants and in-person event attendees.

Online surveys

Short surveys were conducted with webinar attendees (44 responses), sub-group members (19 responses) and in-person event attendees (58 responses).



Comments from participants included within this report are taken from interviews conducted by an independent researcher during 2023/24, and from evaluation feedback gathered by the Safe Staffing Programme team.

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