



Safe Staffing Programme End of Year Report 2024-25

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government improvement in Scotland*

Executive summary

The Safe Staffing Programme was established in December 2019 to support the Care Sector to prepare for the implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 which came into force on 1 April 2024. Delivered by the Care Inspectorate, and funded by the Scottish Government, the programme continues to support quality improvement across the Care Sector to help ensure the best outcomes are delivered for people experiencing care.

In 2024-25, the Safe Staffing Programme (SSP) delivered the following activities.

- ✓ 99 external sessions providing information and advice - 10 sessions on a face-to-face basis and 89 online.
- ✓ 140 internal meetings to raise awareness, improve understanding, and to share information and resources were provided for Care Inspectorate staff.
- ✓ An online newsletter was produced that was viewed 2480 times.

Access to activities and support was viewed positively:

- ✓ 64% of social care providers who responded to a survey carried out by the Improvement Service agreed that the wide range of information and support provided by the Care Inspectorate's Safe Staffing Programme improved their understanding of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019.
- ✓ 96% of Care Inspectorate staff who had participated in information or training sessions when surveyed by the SSP team, said that the session had improved or refreshed their learning on the impact of staffing and that this would enable them to improve outcomes for people who experience care.

There is a role for the SSP team in providing ongoing support:

- ✓ 70 respondents to a survey carried out by the Improvement Service identified information and support that they would like to access over the next 12 months - the SSP Team will have a crucial role to play in providing this.
- ✓ Enablers to implementing the Act identified by social care providers include - having structured operational tools and systems in place and providing a comprehensive training and education framework.

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Introduction

The Safe Staffing Programme (SSP) was established in 2019 to support the implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 (hereafter called the Act). The purpose of the Act is to provide:

- “ ‘a statutory basis for the provision of appropriate staffing in health and care services, enabling safe and high quality care and improved outcomes for service users and to embed a culture of openness and transparency, ensuring staff are informed about decisions relating to staffing and able to raise concerns.¹’
- “ ‘The Safe Staffing Programme works in collaboration with service providers, people who experience care, relatives, representation groups and other key stakeholders to deliver their vision.
- “ ‘The vision is to help ensure that care services in Scotland have the right people, in the right place, with the right skills at the right time working to ensure people experience the best health and care outcomes.²’

This report sets out how the Safe Staffing Programme (hereafter referred to as the programme) has delivered the objectives agreed with the Scottish Government between April 2024 and March 2025.

1 [Health and Care \(Staffing\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019: overview - gov.scot](#)

2 [Safe Staffing Project | Care Inspectorate Hub](#)

Purpose

This report sets out the range of activities and resource delivered by the programme and the ways this has benefited external and internal stakeholders as well as people experiencing care. The period covered is 2024-25.

Context

The Care Inspectorate's [quality improvement strategy](#) is based on four pillars. This underpins both the approach that is adopted and the way that support is delivered to assist the social care sector with quality improvement:

- ▶ building quality improvement capacity and capability
- ▶ growing innovation
- ▶ growing involvement and equalities
- ▶ providing targeted quality improvement support



“These pillars describe how we aim to support services, providers, and partnerships to develop more skills to make lasting improvements and involve those who experience care and support throughout the process.³”

The vision of the programme is:



“To ensure that in care services in Scotland, there are the right people, in the right place, with the right skills at the right time, working to ensure people experience the best health and care outcomes.⁴”

The objectives of the programme:

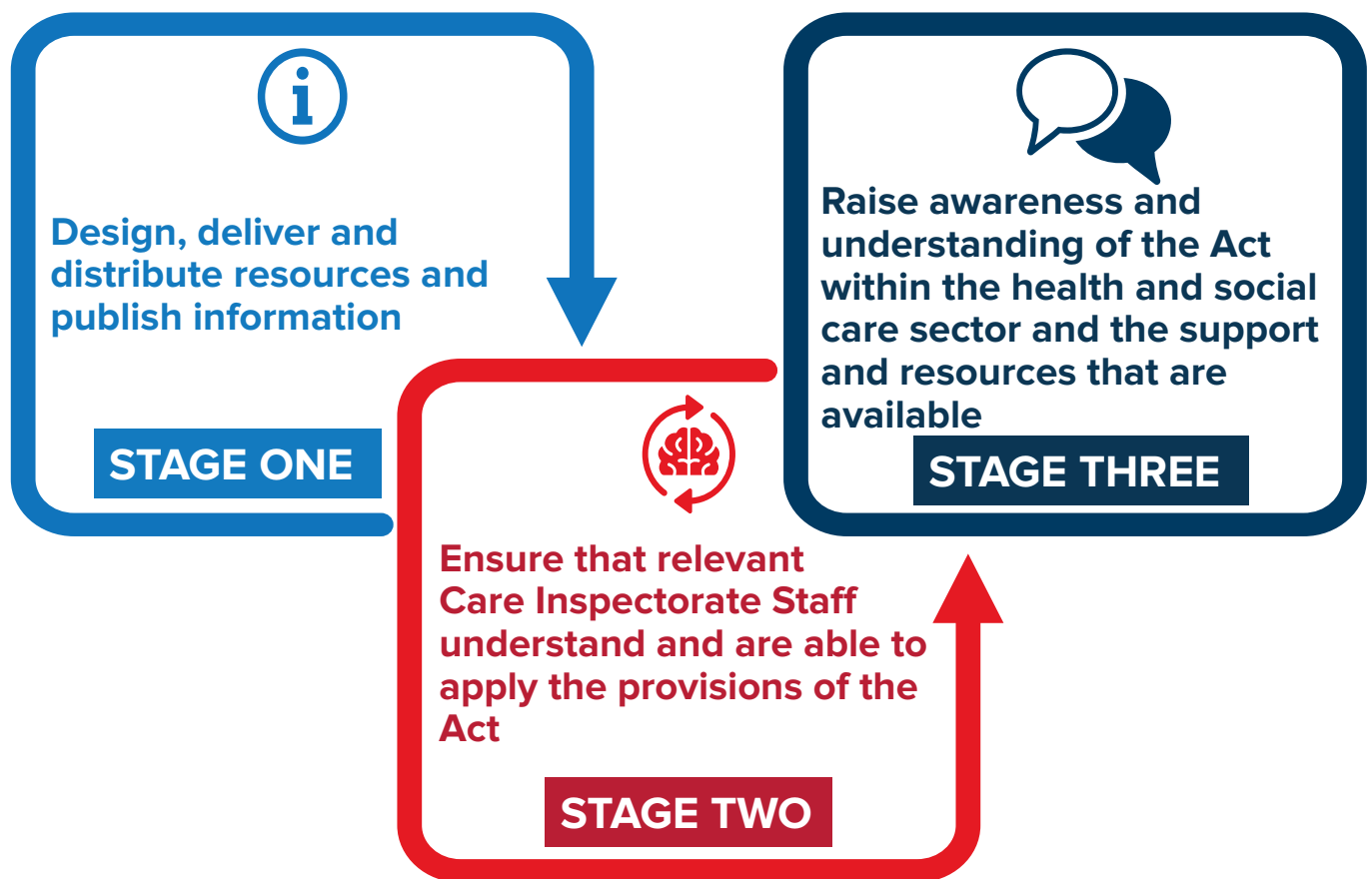
- ▶ The programme is overseen by the Scottish Government which ensures effective governance, reporting and monitoring arrangements are in place and that there is public accountability. The workplan of the programme is reviewed to ensure that is effective and complies with legal and regulatory requirements.
- ▶ The programme continues to increase stakeholder engagement both internally and externally. This is done by using a range of media platforms, continuing to develop and create resources and delivering external and internal tailored information sessions. The purpose of all engagement activities is to embed the Act into everyday practice.

3 [How we support improvement | Care Inspectorate Hub](#)

4 [Safe Staffing Project | Care Inspectorate Hub](#)

- ▶ To ensure all information, guidance and resources continue to be in line with the Act, and any other relevant legislation and good practice, the programme carries out regular reviews. Support and guidance is provided on an ongoing basis to meet the needs of social care providers and people who experience care and support beyond enactment.
- ▶ The programme continues to help support and ensure compliance with the Act on behalf of the Scottish Government and the Care Inspectorate. This includes sourcing data, working with external stakeholders and developing systems to capture data collection.

The programme continues to work towards the agreed objectives for 2024-25 which were:



As the process moves through the stages, the activities carried out at each stage are continuously evaluated and refined. For example, the resources and information developed in Stage One are regularly updated based on feedback received from users during Stage Three.

The Act became a legal requirement in April 2024. Due to this, the Safe Staffing Programme objectives and funding changed which meant there was a reduction in the staff team by around 50%, which impacted on the type of support that could subsequently be offered.

The programme also provides strategic support and act as a conduit between the Scottish Government and health and social care stakeholders in relation to the Act.

In its strategic role, the programme leads or supports the following key activities in relation to the Act:

- ▶ identifying, collecting, and analysing relevant key data
- ▶ producing regular reports and briefings for the Scottish Government
- ▶ developing, preparing, and sharing intelligence reports with relevant stakeholders
- ▶ maintaining strong engagement with the Scottish Government to ensure coordinated and effective implementation of the Act
- ▶ collaborating closely with the Act Implementation Group within the Scottish Government
- ▶ supporting Local and Integrated Authorities with the reporting requirements of the Act
- ▶ creating tailored resources for a wide range of stakeholders
- ▶ undertaking improvement activities with registered care services in line with the statutory duties set out in the Act
- ▶ contributing to the development of national learning resources to support the implementation of the Act
- ▶ developing and disseminating communications on agreed topics to ensure consistent messaging and raising stakeholder awareness.

Methodology

For the purpose of producing this report, access was provided to information about the activities of the programme that were planned and delivered along with supporting evidence.

This information was used as the basis of a desktop review.

In addition, the Improvement Service prepared two surveys in March 2025. One was used to gather the views of social care providers and the other the views of Care Inspectorate staff. It was clear that the voice of those with lived experience was missing. To try to address this, the findings from evidence gathered by Inspection Volunteers was used as a proxy.

All the information and data shared or provided was analysed and the findings are set out in this report.

Findings

1. External sessions delivered by the programme in 2024-25

A total of 99 external sessions were delivered, 10 on a face-to-face basis and 89 online.

387 individuals attended these sessions on a face to face basis and 1388 participated online.

The programme develops each external session in advance and uses information received from the social care provider on areas they need to develop to meet the requirements of the Act. It is important that all participants are able to benefit from the sessions. By creating bespoke sessions the programme supports participants with relevant information to develop their skills and understanding of the Act which, in turn, can be shared with their wider teams.

All external sessions are designed to support social care providers in the implementation of the Act specifically in relation to their knowledge and the duties to be carried out, in preparation for regulation. The work is ongoing and has evolved over the four years of the programme. This has informed, upskilled and strengthened the knowledge and understanding of the Act in the social care sector.

Face-to-face sessions included attending:

- ▶ Hospice UK's National Conference in Glasgow
- ▶ a Royal College of Nursing event
- ▶ events organised by Scottish Care
- ▶ meetings with Health and Social Care Partnerships
- ▶ National Provider Forums
- ▶ The Annual General Meeting of the Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland.

Online events took place at national, regional and local levels throughout September 2024. These included six tailored webinars aimed at all registered care services focusing on implementing the Act:

- ▶ Early learning and childcare
- ▶ Childminders
- ▶ Children and young people services
- ▶ Adult care homes
- ▶ All other adult services.

Sessions were held during the working day with additional options in the evening being offered. In total over 500 individuals attended one of the sessions.

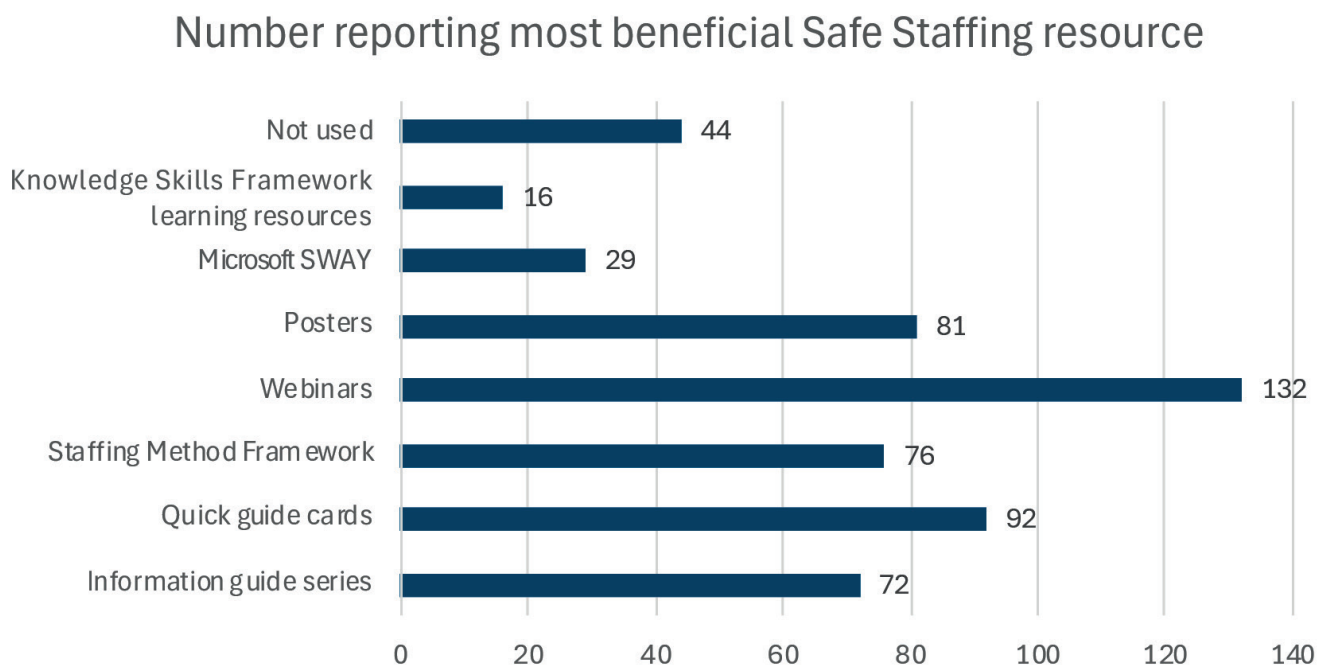
The webinars were wide ranging and provided the following:

- ▶ an overview of the Act
- ▶ an outline of the resources and support that was available
- ▶ explained the Scottish Government’s reporting requirements
- ▶ opportunities to ask questions, share practice and highlight suggested solutions.

As well as sharing information and highlighting the current resources that were available, the webinars sought to actively involve participants, drawing on their experience and knowledge. Participants were invited to make suggestions about other types of resources that would help embed the Act. The suggestions will be used to co-produce additional resources during 2025-26.

Figure 1, sets out the types of resources which were considered to be most beneficial.

Figure 1. Number reporting most beneficial type of resource



- ▶ 90% agreed that the event had ‘Improved my knowledge of the Act’
- ▶ 90% said that it had ‘Improved/refreshed my learning on the impact on staffing’
- ▶ 69% of care homes for adults said that they had ‘used or were aware of the Staffing Method Framework’.

Six months after the webinars the recordings had received 1204 views (on YouTube).

The programme has co-produced six [podcasts](#) about several internal and external stakeholders, highlighting different aspects and the implementation of the Act within the social care sector. These are currently undergoing quality assurance processes and will be published when finalised.

2. Resources for external use provided by the programme

The programme has developed and co-produced online materials which can be accessed along with all other relevant stakeholder guidance on the dedicated [SSP Hub Pages](#).

There is evidence that these resources are well used. Between 17 July 2024 and 1 April 2025, the Staffing Method Framework was viewed 1757 times. In the responses submitted in the 2024 Annual Returns to the question on ‘Staffing methods and tools, care homes for adults and older people’, 58% of respondents said they had used the Staffing Framework and a further 19% said they had made partial use of it.

It is worth noting that there was increased uptake of these resources after a series of webinars delivered by the programme during September 2024.

In addition, there were a total of 2480 views of the regular newsletter, issued during the autumn and winter of 2024-25, increasing between issues from 987 to 1493.

3. Support for Care Inspectorate staff

- ▶ The programme has attended over 140 internal workshops to raise awareness, improve understanding, and share information and resources.
- ▶ The programme designed and delivered an induction for new inspectors. This was viewed positively by participants and will continue to be provided for new recruits.
- ▶ The programme designed and published resources for the internal Care Inspectorate intranet pages.
- ▶ Training resources are provided for Care Inspectorate staff to inform their understanding of the Act via the learning and development system.
- ▶ The programme designed, piloted and launched an internal electronic peer resource for inspectors covering key aspects of the Act in relation to regulatory activity. The resource was utilised by over 50% of inspectors following its release in March 2025.

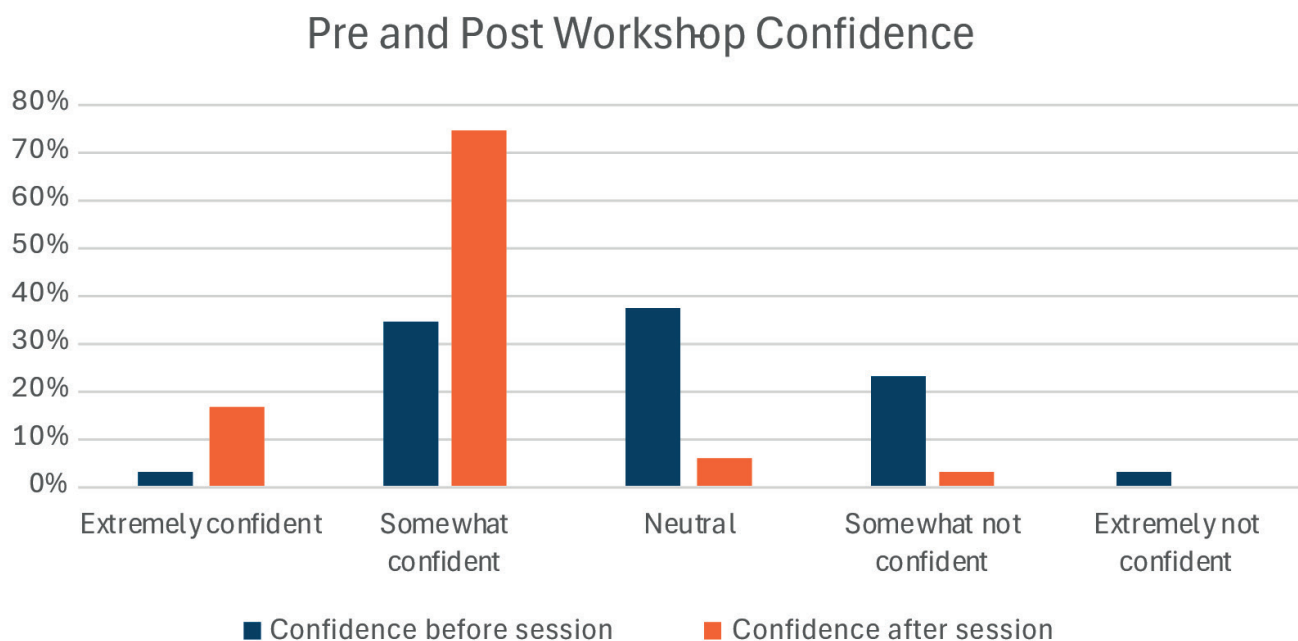
- ▶ The team have participated in one [podcast around meaningful engagement in supporting the Act and Anne's Law⁵](#)

The feedback from the 12 internal learning events designed and delivered by the team found that:

- ▶ all participants who responded to the evaluation said that the session had improved their understanding of the Act
- ▶ 96% said that the session had improved, or refreshed, their learning on the impact of staffing and that this would enable them to improve outcomes for people who experience care
- ▶ the knowledge of the team in running the session and the range of information and guidance provided was well received by participants
- ▶ one suggestion for improvement was the provision of more sessions.

Feedback from polls used pre and post sessions delivered by the team showed that participants reported increased levels of confidence about the Act. As illustrated in Figure 2, 92% of workshop participants reported an improvement in confidence levels.

Figure 2. Self reported confidence before and after session



⁵ Legal recognition that residents in adult care homes can connect with the people who are important to them

4. Care Inspectorate staff views of the programme

The Improvement Service carried out an analysis of an internal survey into the implementation of the Act that was conducted by the Care Inspectorate’s SSP team in March 2025.

It covered a wide range of areas and received 37 responses from inspectors and team managers, representing a response rate of 11%.

The majority of respondents to the survey were inspectors (86%) with the remainder being team managers (14%).

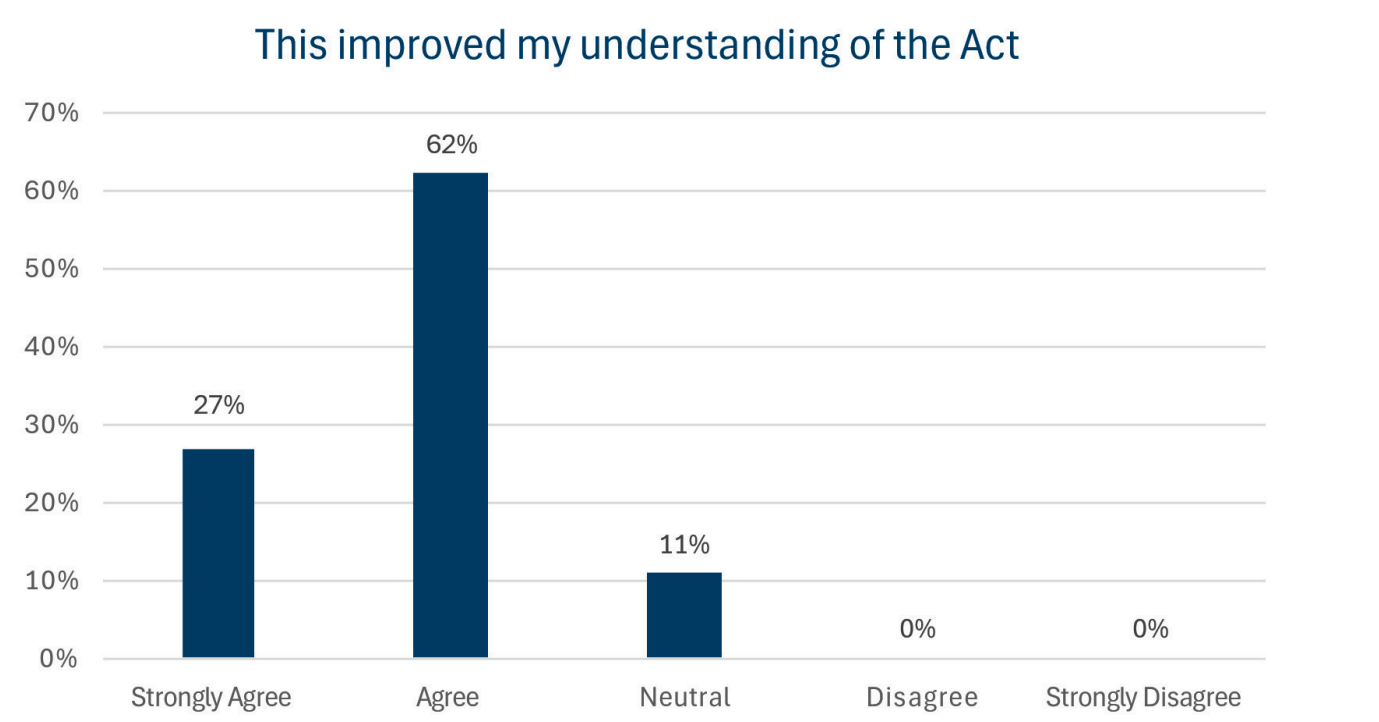
From the responses received from CI staff, there was representation from those who had caseloads in all 32 Scottish local authority areas.

In terms of both implementing and complying with the Act, most respondents were either ‘somewhat confident’ (62%), or ‘very confident’ (11%). 5% were not confident with either.

Nearly 90% agreed, or strongly agreed, that the wide range of information and support for the Act provided by the Care Inspectorate’s prog improved their understanding.

All respondents requested further information and support on an ongoing basis. This included the provision of regular updates, guidance on staffing assessments, practical examples of legislation application, and opportunities for peer learning.

Figure 3. Agreement with improved understanding of the Act



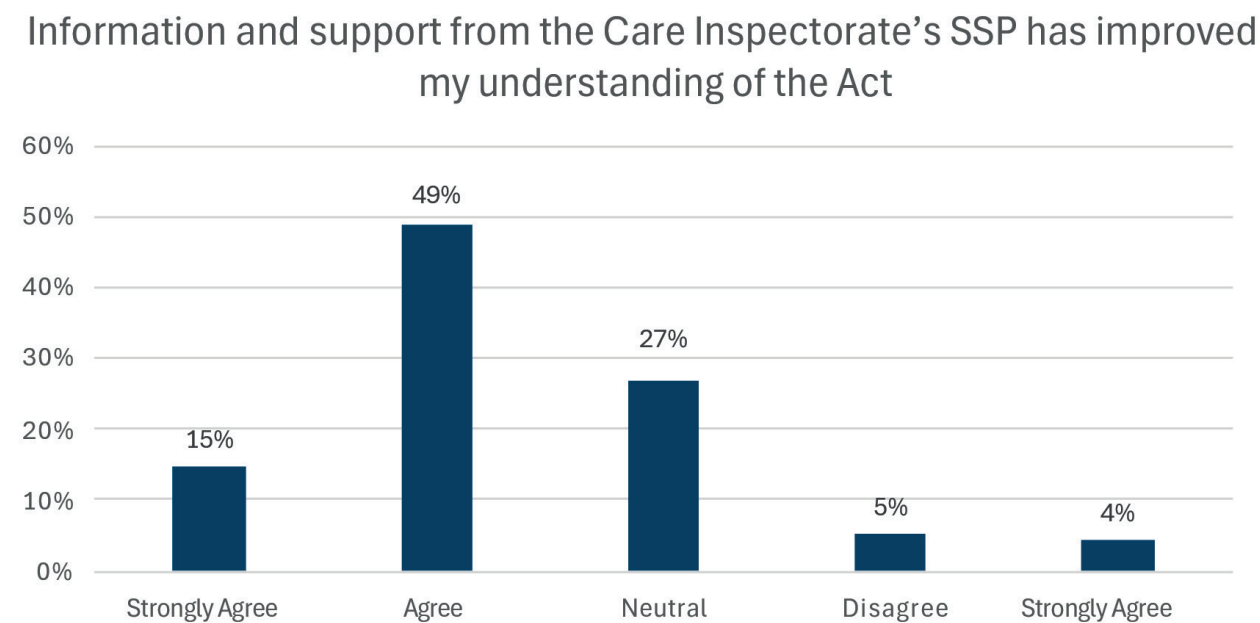
5. Social care providers' views of the programme

A survey to seek the views of providers was issued by the Improvement Service on behalf of the SSP team to the programme's mailing list (814) and Implementation group contacts (155). The Care Inspectorate also included information in their provider updates and the SSP newsletter. There were 122 replies to the survey, a response rate of nearly 13%. The survey questions covered a range of topics, and not all the responses were relevant for this report. The respondents were representative of the diversity of the sector.

Most respondents agreed (49%) or strongly agreed (15%) that the wide range of information and support for the Act provided by the Care Inspectorate's Safe Staffing Programme improved their understanding of the Act.

When asked, "What type/s of information and support would you like over the next 12 months?" 70 respondents identified types of information and support that they would like to access over the next 12 months. The team intend to address these in 2025-26.

Figure 4. Numbers reporting improved understanding of the Act as a result of support from the programme



These have been categorised into the following areas:

Practical implementation guidance

This focused on guidance on implementing regulations and adopting best practice and include:

- ▶ real-life good practice examples from care services
- ▶ case studies demonstrating successful implementation
- ▶ practical examples from multiple services, specifically including frontline staff perspectives
- ▶ clear guidance on implementing the Act.

Communication and reporting

- ▶ Accessible information leaflets and updates.
- ▶ Clearer reporting requirements, particularly for social care provision.

Operational tools and resources

- ▶ Templates and tools for operational management: staffing calculation tools, risk assessment templates, data tracking templates.
- ▶ Resources specifically focused on ensuring effective staffing schedules.

Training and educational resources

- ▶ Online training modules.
- ▶ Webinar sessions.
- ▶ Staff training opportunities to improve understanding.
- ▶ Bite-sized information videos.

As has already been stated in agreement with the Scottish Government, it should be noted that in relation to the development of a staffing tool for adult care homes this will not be developed at present.

Staff wellbeing support and regulatory understanding

There were also calls for resources to support staff wellbeing, such as assessment tools, and to improve understanding of regulatory requirements, including clearer communication for local and integration authorities about reporting requirements from the Scottish Government.

6. People who experience care and support

To ensure feedback from people experiencing care and their relatives/carers was gathered on staffing in services, the SSP team use relevant questions from customer satisfaction questionnaires on staffing. Information collected by Care Inspectorate Inspection Volunteers is also considered.

127 interviews were carried out by Inspection Volunteers with both care homes and housing support service staff between April 2024 and January 2025. Whilst covering a wide range of areas, the interviews included questions around staffing.

The Improvement Service analysed a random selection of the relevant findings.

Completed inspection forms capture the views of both people experiencing care and their relative/s or carer/s.

99 forms were analysed. 37 were from care homes and 62 from housing support settings.

The inspection interviews gather a wide range of information, but for the purposes of this evaluation, only questions that relate to staffing were considered. These are categorised and are set out below.

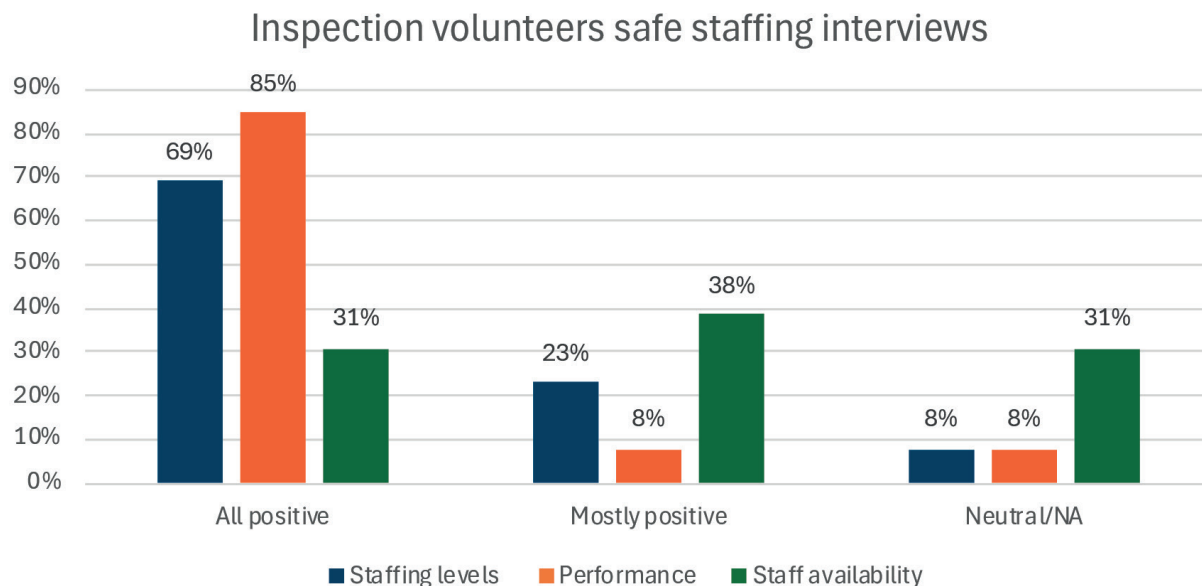
Overall, responses to the questions were positive across staffing levels, performance and staff availability. There were few, if any, improvements suggested, however, 7% suggested that additional staff were required.

The only area that was more neutral than positive was in staff availability. This is based on a question that was only asked of relatives or carers of persons experiencing care.

Staffing levels



Figure 5. Findings from Inspection Volunteers on staffing levels, availability and performance. This analysis is based on an assessment of the number of usable files in the sample (13) and not the number of forms they contain, so are only indicative



7. Perceived barriers and risks when implementing the Act

The main barriers to implementing the Act identified by external stakeholders in the survey conducted by the Improvement Service are set out below and more detail is provided in Figure 6.

This includes:

- ▶ recruitment/sector shortages (64%)
- ▶ staff costs (49%)
- ▶ time to train staff (43%).



“Sector wide challenge in staff recruitment and retention.” - Senior Manager

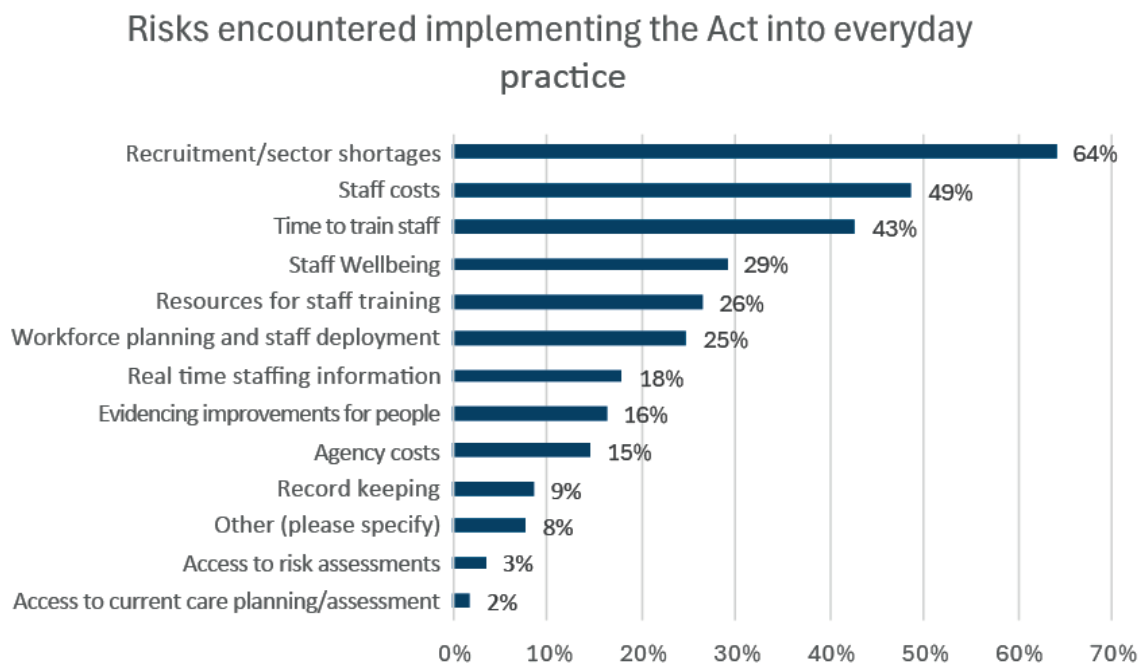


“We are reliant on funding and the cost of meeting the requirements of the act exceed the value of the funding.” - Senior Manager

Other risks were:

- ▶ staff wellbeing (29%)
- ▶ resources for staff training (27%)
- ▶ workforce planning and staff deployment (25%).

Figure 6. Risks encountered implementing the Act into everyday practice by % reported



8. Enablers to implementing the Act

The areas identified by external stakeholders that would help with implementation are set out below.

1. Management and peer support

Key elements included:

- ▶ supportive management practices
- ▶ trust between staff and management
- ▶ open and transparent communication
- ▶ peer support networks
- ▶ management support during challenging periods.

2. Financial resources

It was suggested that funding and financial stability were key.

- ▶ financial capacity for staff recruitment and retention
- ▶ increased investment in services.

“Financial stability will allow capacity to deliver, and ability to recruit/retain staff.”

- Senior Manager

3. Operational systems and tools

Having systems in place and access to tools were seen as necessary to support effective implementation. Specific examples provided included:

- ▶ structured staffing management tools
- ▶ robust staff rota systems
- ▶ daily duty scheduling frameworks.

4. Training and professional development

It was suggested that having a comprehensive approach to training was required and should include the following elements:

- ▶ holistic college-based learning programmes
- ▶ E-Learning opportunities
- ▶ in-house training sessions
- ▶ robust induction processes
- ▶ ongoing discussions and training about regulatory requirements.



“A more structured staffing tool would help greatly.” - Director

Underpinning all aspects, clear guidance and effective communication are important. Maintaining appropriate staffing levels was critical to workforce planning.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to add other comments. These highlighted the negative effects of increased demands on professional staff. This included the struggle to maintain quality care amidst budget constraints, and the urgent need for better support and funding from government. Key issues included the negative impact of ratios on childcare, the rising costs of staffing, and a perceived disconnect between legislative intentions and the realities of service delivery. Some called for a more supportive approach from governing bodies to address these issues.

Although referenced, there was less emphasis on workforce management, guidance and communication.



“Lots of training and discussion about the importance of points made in the Act.

- Salaried Employee

9. Conclusions – The impact of the SSP

This report provides evidence, from a range of sources, of the benefits delivered by the activities of the programme, the training offered, and the accessible support delivered. The Safe Staffing Programme has improved the confidence, understanding and ability of health and social care providers, local and integration authorities and Care Inspectorate staff to ensure that the provisions of the Act are understood and as a result its implementation is supported.

In the responses to a survey carried out by the Improvement Service, 64% of social care providers agreed that the wide range of information and support for the Act provided by the Care Inspectorate's Safe Staffing Programme improved their understanding of the Act.

96% of Care Inspectorate staff who had participated in information or training sessions said that the session had improved or refreshed their learning on the impact of staffing and that this would enable them to improve outcomes for people who experience care.

Using inspection volunteers as a substitute, or proxy, it was found that service users and their "relatives" or "carers" felt positively about staffing levels, performance and staff availability. Given the findings set out above it can be said, with a degree of confidence, that the activities of the team will have contributed to this.

The programme cannot address all of the identified barriers to implementing the Act, for example staff recruitment and funding. However, they used quality improvement methods to tap into the wisdom and experience of participants, shared ideas about potential improvements and highlighted workforce and workload planning solutions.

This evaluation has been able to demonstrate, from the perspective of both Care Inspectorate staff and social care providers, that the programme was able to help address the need for information, resources and learning. This has had a positive impact on the ability of both to ensure that safe and high-quality care services are provided which will ultimately result in improved outcomes for people who use services.



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