

A Strategy and Action Plan for embedding knowledge in practice in Scotland's Social Services 2012-15



October 2012

A shared development facilitated and supported by “the Social Services Knowledge Collaboration” comprising the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW), NHS Education for Scotland, the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS), the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), the Scottish Government and the Improvement Service for Local Government (IS).

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2012-2013

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

We want Scotland to be the best place in the world for children to grow up. We want a Scotland where public services support children, young people and families to meet life's challenges and the consequences when those challenges are overwhelming. We need services which better meet the needs of people and communities.

This is a huge ambition and the social services workforce has a critical role to play in making it happen. As reflected on the *Changing Lives* programme, the social services workforce needs to be competent, confident and valued and we have in place a range of approaches to support this aspiration. As part of this we need the social services workforce to have the resources, skills and confidence to translate knowledge into practice. Staff must be able to ask questions about how things might be done more effectively. They must be able to find and to share knowledge and finally and most importantly, to use that knowledge as a vital ingredient in improving day-to-day work and outcomes for people.

Scotland's Knowledge Strategy for social services was launched in March 2012 and since then significant progress has been made. The national online knowledge service provided by Social Services Knowledge Scotland has been expanded, with more resources available than ever before. A programme of face-to-face and online training was delivered to front line staff and managers. Specific portals have been developed to help front line workers, carers and those receiving services in particular for those concerned with the Early Years, Older People, Criminal Justice and Drugs and Alcohol. I am grateful to all of those involved and am keen to maintain the momentum in this crucial area.

Despite the tough economic times, the Scottish Government, in collaboration with a range of partners continues to invest resource into implementing the social services knowledge strategy. In 2012 partners have worked to refresh the strategy to better reflect the current context – increasing demand, requirements for personalised delivery, more integrated working across services. There is a robust strategic depth to the infrastructure supporting the delivery of the strategy and we need to ensure this is exploited to its full potential. The refreshed strategy therefore seeks to obtain added value for staff, carers, those who use services and the public through closer collaboration across delivery partners.

This strategy will enable people involved with social services to use knowledge of "what works" to deliver the best quality care and support. Sharing knowledge and improving practice will change lives and whether you work in Social Services or depend on the role the sector plays in Scotland, I commend this strategy to you.

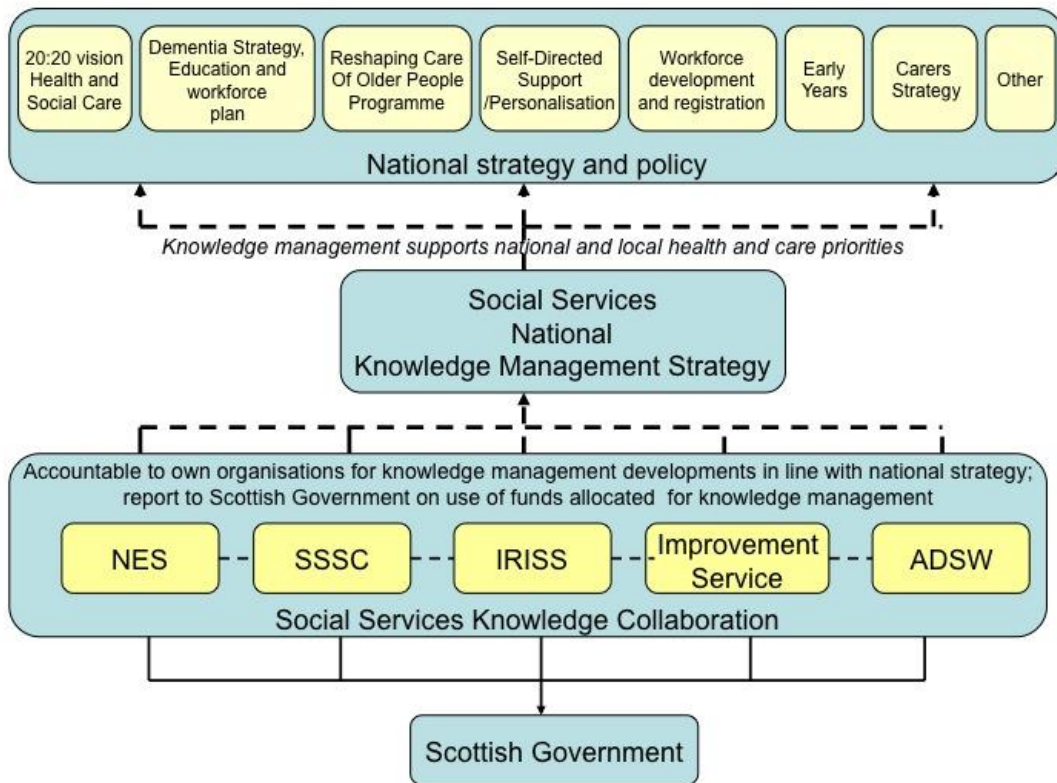
Aileen Campbell

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This strategy and action plan for 2012-15 builds on the solid foundation laid down by the first knowledge strategy for social services – “**Sharing knowledge, improving practice, changing lives 2009-11**”.

1.2 The strategy is relevant to all those with responsibility for, or an interest in, any aspect of Scotland’s social services – how they are delivered and improved and the outcomes that they achieve for people, families and communities. It is of particular relevance for those, and in particular employers, who have a role in building the capacity and capability of the workforce in order to improve practice.

1.3 Recognising the increasingly close working of staff across the health and care sectors this strategy is intended to align wherever appropriate and possible with the implementation phase of NHSScotland’s Knowledge into Action Review – supporting multi-agency and cross-professions working and maximising shared use of resources. The strategy is an integral part of the broader set of activity designed to build a social services workforce which is competent, confident and valued.



2. WHY DO WE NEED A KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY?

2.1 Effective delivery of social services faces a number of critical challenges: social and demographic changes are driving up expectations of what social services can deliver; users of services are becoming more well informed and expecting higher quality and seamless services; and there is increasing pressure on resources.

2.2 Transformation of services in order to meet these challenges means building the capacity for innovation and improvement, moving on from “doing what we have always done”. This requires:

- a strong focus on ensuring that decisions about service design, development and delivery are based on sound evidence.
- making best use of the published knowledge and evidence base, combined with sharing, reflecting and learning from experience, and using knowledge gained.

The challenge is to connect the world of research and knowledge on the one hand, and the world of day to day practice on the other so that we continue to improve the way we do things. This strategy is intended to build the capacity of staff to work in this way and to make sure that there is infrastructure and resources available to help them.

2.3 *Changing Lives* (2006) highlighted the need for social services to evolve and transform to address the challenges of the 21st century and led to development of the first knowledge strategy. The drive for transformation and improvement based on knowledge of “**what works**” has continued over the last five years both strategically – Public Service Reform post-Christie and the Government’s 20:20 vision for health and social care – and operationally at practice level.

2.4 Having a strategy enables us to build a shared understanding of what still needs to be done and – even more importantly – provides a basis for collaborative action.

3. PROGRESS TO DATE

3.1 The first strategy recognised the importance of supporting people and organisations to find, evaluate, share and apply knowledge in order to build a confident and competent workforce, comfortable with evidence based practice. The ultimate objective was, and remains, to improve practice in social services and, thereby, deliver better outcomes for people and communities.

3.2 Significant progress was made in:

- engaging with organisations throughout the sector – including the third and independent sector – to raise awareness of the importance of building capacity to make better use of knowledge.

- adapting the existing infrastructure provided by The Knowledge Network to develop the Social Services Knowledge Scotland Portal <http://ssks.org.uk>.
- engaging directly with practitioners to create and share knowledge using shared spaces such as communities of practice – for example on topics such as dementia, care of older people and learning disabilities.
- providing events, tools and resources to build workforce capabilities in finding, sharing and using knowledge.
- fostering collaboration between ADSW, SSSC, NHS Education for Scotland’s Knowledge Services Group and IRISS to maximise the use and impact of their wide ranging skills, expertise and resources.

3.3 Fuller details of progress is provided in the report “Achievements and activities to date 2007-2012”.

3.4 The challenge now is to build on the progress to date and increase efforts to engage and up skill organisations and individuals to make best use of the knowledge, tools and learning opportunities available – recognising the responsibility at all levels to embed the application of knowledge as an integral part of day to day practice.

4. VISION AND PURPOSE

4.1 The **vision guiding this strategy** is of:

“ High quality social services whose staff and organisations continuously improve and innovate by applying new knowledge to policy, planning and practice in order to deliver better outcomes for people who use services and for the wider community.”

4.2 The **purpose of the strategy** is to continue the drive to ensure better outcomes for the people and communities which rely on Scotland’s social services through ensuring that practice and service delivery is underpinned by staff making best use of robust evidence and effectively applying knowledge – in all its forms.

4.3 Recognising the aspirations set out in “*Scotland’s Digital Future*” the strategy continues to focus on helping people to build their skills and confidence in using the full range of knowledge-sharing and communication technologies now widely available. In respect to the social services workforce, these include managed services such as the Social Services Knowledge Scotland Portal (SSKS), the Knowledge Network and associated services; as well as “user-managed” social media such as news feeds, social bookmarking and online communities.

4.4 The strategy is set within the context of, and aligned with, the key purposes of all of the partners in the Knowledge Collaboration.

4.5 The strategy will be taken forward through the actions outlined in the Action Plan (Annex A). The Action Plan will be “a work in progress” reflecting

the need to respond to changing priorities, make use of limited resources and link, where possible and useful, with knowledge developments taking place throughout health services. (*Knowledge into Action review 2011/12*).

4.6 The strategy is inclusive – based on the recognition that knowledge comes in many forms, including:

- learning from experience of practitioners, people who use services and carers
- examples of how others have solved problems
- summaries of research evidence
- practitioner experience and wisdom
- user and carer perspectives
- interpretation of data and information on activity, costs, quality, performance, external scrutiny

4.7 Effective use and application of all of these forms of knowledge will deliver a range of outcomes.

For services it will:

- build capacity for delivery of safe, flexible, continuously improving and personalised services.
- develop a competent and confident workforce with staff at all levels leading service improvement.
- support sustainable service modernisation and re-design.

For staff it will:

- ensure that they have access to, and are supported to use, a range of useful and up-to-date evidence and knowledge
- help build their confidence that the work they undertake is evidence-based and built on good practice

For people and communities it will:

- lead to improved experience of using services which are of higher quality
- increase access to information and self-determination, personalised services and “citizen leadership”

- ensure that services are focussed on building resilient communities, where inequalities are reduced and local strengths and capacity are recognised and built on

5. STRATEGIC ENABLERS OF EVIDENCE INFORMED PRACTICE

5.1 This strategy recognises the need to go beyond the focus to date on infrastructure, processes and access to information, to now help practitioners apply knowledge in practice in order to improve better outcomes. The evidence base indicates that enablers of translating knowledge into practice include:

- a. Bringing together and making available evidence from research, practice and individual experience of care providers and users of services.
- b. Creating “actionable knowledge”, structured to integrate with day to day procedures and processes. This includes, for example, prompts, checklists, reminders, mobile apps and text messages, pathways, and care bundles.
- c. Methods that support person to person exchange and dissemination of knowledge – e.g. communities of practice, use of champions, practice-based learning, one to one knowledge transfer, mentoring and coaching, social networking tools, etc.
- d. Building organisational capacity for use of knowledge through:
 - Implementation of social, technological and cultural policy and processes that will enable best use of knowledge.
 - Building workforce competencies in using knowledge to support the goals of organisations and improved outcomes for people and communities.

5.2 These specific approaches to embedding knowledge in practice build on the underpinning framework of developing people, technology and organisational systems, as originally outlined in the first *Sharing Knowledge* strategy:

- **People:** the workforce is made up of people with widely differing skills, competencies and professional backgrounds. The strategy aims to help and encourage all staff, whatever their role or position, to develop a culture in which using and sharing knowledge becomes an integral part of their day to day practice. Increasingly this involves working across professional groupings and organisational structures.
- **Technology:** the strategy seeks to demystify ‘technology’ and bring clarity to the knowledge landscape by building competence and confidence in the use of online tools for finding, sharing and using

knowledge. Social Services Knowledge Scotland plays a pivotal role, highlighting important sources, developing specialist collections, providing access to training materials and fostering the development of communities. Web-based tools – such as Google search, Facebook, Twitter and social bookmarking – are now widely used by community groups. Organisations should therefore aim to provide a technical infrastructure that encourages and nurtures the innovative use of web-based interactive tools for communication, collaboration and learning.

- **Organisational processes and systems:** The Framework for Continuous Learning in Social Services defines four stages of organisational capability: engaged, established, accomplished and exemplary. The members of the Knowledge Collaboration will work with and encourage organisations to strive for the top level – *exemplary* – which recognises expertise and innovative approaches to the continuous improvement of organisational capability, learning from others and regularly sharing what has been learned other organisations.

6. HOW WILL THE STRATEGY BE DELIVERED?

6.1 The Action Plan at Annex A describes the programme of activity to implement this strategy and the resources available to support it. Delivery of the plan will require effort from the full range of social services organisations and the workforce as outlined in the Implementation Plan.

6.2 The partners in the Knowledge Collaboration will specifically contribute their specialist knowledge and expertise in a number of ways:

NHS Education for Scotland:

- technical infrastructure including development of the Social Services Knowledge Scotland portal
- expertise, education and outreach in building national workforce capability and organisational capacity
- the ability to facilitate cross-sectoral sharing of knowledge between health and social care for example in mental health, long term conditions, early years, care and support for older people
- close relationships with further and higher education sectors
- expertise and resources on quality improvement as well as on building capability and capacity for embedding knowledge in practice

The Scottish Social Services Council:

- its position as the Government's NDPB with a lead responsibility for development and regulation of the social services workforce
- support for implementation of the Continuous Learning Framework for the social services workforce – building organisation capability to be continuously improving, learning from others and regularly sharing with others what has been learned

- facilitation of a range of approaches to leadership development. Effective leadership requires the ability to find, share and use knowledge, and to integrate the principles outlined in this strategy into the culture of organisations and teams
- direct engagement with employers and representative bodies through registration and capacity building activities – including the Workforce Solutions portal
- an approach to learning which recognises the need to build on ‘interactive capacity’, the ability to connect with information and people, as and when needed

IRISS:

- knowledge broker capacity to bridge the gap between the world of research and evidence development and the world of practice and service delivery
- co-production of evidence: bringing research producers, people supported by services, carers, practitioner and policy-makers together to collectively identify issues in need of exploration and to research these issues
- expertise in demonstrating the role of social media in embedding knowledge in practice
- testing evidence: providing spaces where practitioners can test evidence and explore whether this relates to their practice
- evidence-based products: producing evidence based products related to practice needs (guides, toolkits etc)
- provision of ad hoc advice and support for social service stakeholders seeking to identify evidence, undertake research or embed evidence in their organisation
- creation of web-based interactive training resources

ADSW:

- strategic leadership and “ownership” of the strategy
- a direct route to engagement with employers
- its commitment to the development of the social services workforce to meet modern policy drivers

Scottish Government:

- strategic context setting and leadership
- financial and other resources
- facilitation of cross-cutting engagement with SG policy and with wider workforce developments

The Improvement Service for Local Government:

- technical infrastructure including the development of Knowledge Hub

- provision of a robust and useful website that hosts relevant content, utilises social media tools, and provides a gateway to a range of tools, data and information
- encourage and support active practitioner networks and communities of practice that promote leading practice and support common areas of change
- provide journalistic and support capacity to ensure capture and publicise initiatives and share knowledge across the public service and relevant stakeholder organisations

Other partners, including Scotland's Colleges, Scottish Care and CCPS will also provide support delivery of the strategy through their ongoing activity with stakeholders across the sector.

7. Case examples of why the strategy is important (and what it will mean for people)

What was the challenge?

Lucy is a learning and development manager for large care home franchise. She identified a gap in understanding of emotional intelligence among managers and practitioners in the organization. Lucy saw this gap as an opportunity to develop a more person-centred approach to practice among staff working face to face with service users. Initially she was not aware of a suitable course to support staff in this area.

Finding solutions

Using the Social Services Knowledge Scotland (SSKS) library search, Lucy identified a number of articles and a book to support her in devising content and approach for a course in emotional intelligence. From the SSKS main search she found a number of management resources (e.g. from the Goodpractice Management Toolkit) to signpost learners to additional information. She incorporated these as links within the learning package.

Outcome

Using this material, Lucy developed a package of learning with supporting material which has been used internally and by other organisations as part of a reciprocal agreement to share resources. In this way, using the SSKS portal to help her to find, create and share knowledge, she has been able to offer many staff a wider range of opportunities for learning and development than her organization could offer internally.

What was the challenge?

A social work team in a remote Scottish local authority is keen to find out more about assistive technology. Some team members have heard positive experiences from colleagues in neighbouring areas, but others are concerned about the risks in trying to replace real people with technology. Overall the

team would like to feel more informed about the benefits and risks of assistive technology so they can be confident in their decisions, pass their knowledge on to their service users and carers, and influence practice in their service.

Finding solutions

The team brainstorm the issues to arrive at a focused question: 'What impact does assistive technology have on the quality of life for people living at home?' One team member searches the SSKS portal, which research, provides policy, best practice guides and case studies. Other team members collaborate to apply a critical appraisal checklist to assess the quality of the research retrieved. When the information is fed back to the team, they agree that the evidence indicates assistive technology has an overall positive impact on quality of life for people living at home. The populations and the contexts of the studies are similar enough to apply this evidence to their own practice in a remote part of Scotland.

Outcome

Following further discussion of the evidence, the team decide it is worth testing assistive technology in a pilot project. They work together to prepare a business case to present the knowledge they have uncovered through the search and evaluation process to their service manager. In this business case, they bring together different types of knowledge – policy, research findings, an economic assessment showing potential savings, and examples of using assistive technologies in other parts of Scotland. They also highlight podcasts in which service users describe how telecare has improved their quality of life.

Within the business case, they outline how they will gather baseline data and data showing changes in practice and service user outcomes, so that the pilot will add to the evidence base for effectiveness of assistive technologies. Their service manager is impressed by the quality and range of the evidence they present, and by their considered approach to gathering new evidence of impact. She agrees to take the case to the senior management team.

What was the challenge?

The policy manager in a care charity needed a simple way to create a guide to policy, evidence and best practice tools on palliative and end of life care for use in care homes. He had created a Microsoft Word document with a series of links, grouped by topic, to the resources on the web. The problem with this approach was keeping it up to date and making sure users had the latest version.

Finding solutions

Following discussion with IRISS it was decided to use Pearltrees (<http://www.pearltrees.com>), a social bookmarking website for organising and sharing the addresses of websites. Pearltrees offers a visually attractive,

mindmap style of interface that anyone may use to curate the own collection by grouping web sites into a hierarchy of topics and sub-topics. Updating is simple. Using an 'add to pearltrees' button on the web browser, the curator can new resources with one click. New topics can be added as required and out of date resources can removed. Collaborative curation is also possible using a feature called Pearltrees Teams.

Outcome

The user does not have to worry about where they stored the Word document or whether the version they have is the latest. And the time required by the administrator to keep the Pearltrees website up to date is trivial compared to the time required to copy and paste into a Word document. Social bookmarking is a simple and effective way of building and sharing resource lists.

8. MANAGEMENT OF THE STRATEGY

8.1 The Implementation Plan will be dynamic, evolving to meet emerging challenges and maximising use of resources across Knowledge Collaboration partners and the wider group of stakeholders. The Collaboration will encourage and support sharing and learning for partner organisations.

8.2 The strategy recognises the present context of economic constraint and focuses on maximising use of the existing national knowledge infrastructure to create a whole system of managing and sharing knowledge across organisations and sectors. Specific resource provided by the Scottish Government will also be allocated as appropriate to support delivery of the strategy.

8.3 Governance to support delivery and monitor progress will be provided through the Knowledge Board. Board members will be responsible for providing updates to the organisations they represent as required. The Board also has a standing invitation to provide regular reports to the NES/SSSC Collaboration Strategic Group. (The group which has been established to support joint-working between these two organisations.)

8.4 Programme Management support for delivery of the strategy will be provided by the Knowledge Services Team at NHS Education Scotland under the direction of the Knowledge Board and in line with funding parameters as agreed with the Scottish Government.

ANNEX A

Summary Overview of Knowledge into Practice Action Plan 2012-2013.

Introduction

This table summarises key developments and deliverables defined by partners within the Social Services Knowledge Collaboration – NES, IRISS and SSSC – as their contribution to the 2012-2013 Knowledge into Practice Action Plan. It groups developments under themes for ease of reference, to highlight the major areas of focus and the potential for synergies across the partners in the Knowledge Collaboration. This summary is not designed to be fully comprehensive, and a more detailed plan is available if required. Together, these developments will support delivery of better outcomes for service users and carers, practitioners and services, as outlined within the Knowledge into Practice strategy.

Deliverables/Activities	Lead	Partners
Theme 1: Self-Directed Support (SDS) and Personalisation.		
1.1 Self-Directed Support Knowledge Portal within SSKS.	NES	
1.2 Report, case studies and IRISS Insight on SDS and micro care and support provision	IRISS	
1.3 SDS Evidence Explorers – Report, Blog, IRISS Insight.	IRISS	
1.4 Workforce of the future: Workshops, blog, community, idea generation materials for personalized care and support.	SSSC	IRISS ADSW, Care Inspectorate
Theme 2: Supporting Carers		
2.1 Implement first phase of workforce training and education plan for Caring Together and Getting it Right for Young Carers Strategies for Scotland. Includes development of Carers Knowledge Portal.	NES, SSSC	
Theme 3: Reshaping Care of Older People		
3.1 Review and optimisation of Older People’s Portal; programme of training and outreach to improve usage to support RCOP outcomes.	NES	SSSC
3.2 Practitioner Research: Reshaping care for older people – research project, practitioner support, reports and articles, impact and evaluation events. Aim to extend practical understanding of knowledge translation, brokerage and exchange processes to improve the design and delivery of care for older people.	IRISS	Edinburgh University; W Lothian C; Glasgow CC; Alzheimer Scotland; Scottish Care
3.3 Three local capacity building/outcomes focused pilots in Change Fund partnerships	SSSC	NES, JIT
3.4 Demonstrator to define cross-agency knowledge into practice roles and processes to support RCOP outcomes in Change Fund Partnership (proposal stage at present).	NES	SSSC, Scottish Care, JIT.
Theme 4: Mental Health, Dementia, Learning Disabilities.		
4.1 Deliver implementation plan for Dementia Promoting Excellence Framework. Includes programme of development and training for Dementia Managed Knowledge Network,	NES, SSSC	
4.2 Report, tools and training resources to support strengths based approach using asset mapping to support individuals with mental	IRISS	East Dunbartons

health problems.		hire Council
4.3 Programme of development and training for Learning Disabilities MKN. Includes promotion for Better Info, Better Lives website.	NES	SCLD
Theme 5: Early Years		
5.1 Enhancement of Early Years Portal through reference group review and contribution. Training and outreach to increase usage of portal across sectors for practice and continuous learning.	NES	SSSC, Education Scotland.
5.2 Early Years Evidence on early interventions in work with children and families: IRISS Insight, Case studies, Event, Digital stories.	IRISS	
5.3 Research report and stakeholder workshop on learning from Significant Case Reviews of child protection.	IRISS	
Theme 6: Criminal Justice		
6.1 Enhancement of Criminal Justice Portal through reference group review and contribution. Training and outreach to increase usage of portal across sectors for practice and continuous learning.	NES	SSSC; Criminal Justice Centre for Excellence.
6.2 Use of Evidence in Criminal Justice: Film, blog and knowledge exchange workshops	IRISS	APEX
Theme 7: Leadership development		
7.1 Develop leadership at all levels through awareness and usage of the Step into Leadership website and underpinning SSKS Leadership portal.	SSSC	NES
Theme 8: Developing the workforce to use knowledge in learning and practice		
8.1 Programme of communication and training for SSKS and all its portals, including Support Workers.	NES	SSSC Higher Education
8.2 Evaluation of SSKS and planning for future engagement, training and application in practice.	NES	ADSW
8.3 Support and promote the implementation of Recognition of Prior learning (RPL) guidance and tools in the sector	SSSC	
8.4 Promote use of the Continuous Learning Framework	SSSC	
8.5 Co-creation workforce summit events to create new ideas and knowledge to address the challenges facing the sector	SSSC	ADSW/Care Inspectorate
8.6 Student and research engagement around embedding research in practice; Events and meetings; Presentations; Student and educator webpages;	IRISS	SCoPT Local authorities FE and HE
8.7 Resources and briefing paper on reflecting on evidence use.	IRISS	
8.8 Research advice service – online requesting system	IRISS	
8.9 Developing and applying skills in using data as evidence: Working with SSSC to discern patterns and trends in workforce data; Working with voluntary sector to capture qualitative data from people who use services.	IRISS	SSSC
8.10 Driving forward knowledge, innovation and evidence. Guides, events, blogs and workshops (in conjunction with SSSC) to encourage and educate in the use of web-based tools for finding,		

managing and sharing knowledge. Campaign in conjunction with Improvement Service to unblock access to services such as streaming video		
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