

**SSSC AND SQA; LAUNCH OF PRACTICE LEARNING  
QUALIFICATIONS (SOCIAL SERVICES): 6 February, 2008,  
EICC, Edinburgh**

**Minister for Children & Early Years, Adam Ingram**

**Speaking Note**

Thank you Garry. I would like to start by thanking the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and Scottish Qualifications Authority for giving me the opportunity to be involved in the launch of the new Practice Learning Qualifications. I am particularly pleased to see so many of you who are not only involved in the provision and delivery of social services but also representatives from universities, colleges and training providers. You are all crucial to the success of delivering these new qualifications across Scotland.

We have an ambitious vision for the social services workforce. We want to achieve a competent, confident and valued workforce. A workforce who can deliver the crucial services we demand. I believe it is impossible to deliver the quality services we want if we do not invest in the skills of the people delivering those services. Workforce development, supporting the learning of others is everyone's responsibility – employers, managers, individual employees, training providers – in fact **ALL** of us here today. It means developing and embedding a learning culture across the sector. We need a sector that

commits all individuals and organisations to lifelong learning and development. The support we give to the workforce, investing in their skills, will go a long way to delivering our ambitions in ‘Skills for Scotland’, our lifelong skills strategy.

The Skills Strategy focuses on 3 themes:

- Individual Development – placing the individual at the centre of learning and skills development
- Economic Pull – increasing demands for skills and improving the utilisation of skills; and
- Cohesive Structures – making it easier for people to access the learning, training and development they need

The development of the new Practice Learning Qualifications will help us deliver on these themes.

I was delighted to learn that the framework for the new qualifications was developed through a collaborative approach which included SQA, universities, colleges, employers, students, related professions and service users and carers, admirably co-ordinated by the Institute. It is obvious that a lot of hard work has gone into the development of the framework and would like to commend the collaborative approach taken and to thank all of those involved, many of whom are here today.

It is heartening to know that this joint approach to working will continue through the delivery of the courses and that the range of qualifications available are both accessible and flexible enough to enable providers to utilise their specific strengths and preferences in delivering the qualifications.

The qualifications reflect the importance of practice learning throughout the workforce. This is not about just supporting social work degree students in their practice placements but supporting the wider workforce. The qualifications are staged at different levels to reflect the range of roles people undertake. It will enable those involved in supporting practice learning **AT ALL LEVELS** in their organisation to gain recognition for their knowledge and skills. The flexibility and accessibility of the qualifications gives considerable scope for the recognition of prior learning and experience – an important factor when dealing with staff who have many years of experience and learning but with no recognised qualification to support this. The recent published guidance by the SSSC on the recognition of prior learning and experience will help employers in this matter.

I expect the qualifications to play a significant role for many staff as part of their Continuous Professional Development and Post Registration Training and Learning requirements where they are

registered with the SSSC. I expect employers to encourage and support staff to undertake these qualifications.

I am pleased to see that the qualifications will be available to not just social service workers, but other related professionals who are involved in practice learning. It is also very pleasing to see that the qualification will also be open to service users and carers. This is the first time such an opportunity has been open to users and carers and I commend this approach.

The collaborative approach to the development and delivery of the Practice Learning Qualifications reflects the hope for its scope and impact on the workforce. It is a credit to all and I know that this approach will continue as the qualifications are further developed.

In closing, I want to reflect briefly on our vision for the social service workforce. Confidence comes from staff feeling well supported and properly equipped with the skills and knowledge they require to provide high quality services. To know they are making a difference. Confidence also comes from the public valuing the contribution of social services. People who use services, and carers, who **know that**

**we take seriously** the development of our workforce, and are involved in that development, will have greater confidence in that workforce and value their contribution. These qualifications reflect some of the visions of Changing Lives, and are a further step in helping us as we strive to achieve a competent, confident and valued workforce delivering services fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland. I wish you a successful day.

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