COVID-19 Recruitment Portal for Social Care: Guidance for Employers

This guidance is for social care employers across Local Government, third and independent sectors, who may have a need for additional staffing at this time.

As you may already know, SSSC have been working together with Scottish Government, COSLA, the Care Inspectorate and other partners to set up a system to help social care services in Scotland to recruit and deploy staff during this critical time. This system is for social care services and does not include day care of children services at this time.

SSSC have written to 50,000 social service workers who have left the register in the last 5 years to offer the opportunity for people to express their interest in returning to the sector and signposting them to the portal. Applicants register to the Health and Social Care Accelerated Recruitment Portal. The SSSC will process expressions of interest from people who have indicated they would like to work in social care.

Employers should always follow the latest Health Protection Scotland guidance for their care setting.

Please read the information below which tells you how the system will work and what you need to do as an employer.

Managing supply and demand

On 17 April 2020 the portal was opened on an interim basis to give immediate access to employers particularly in care homes where there was a critical need. However, on an ongoing basis it will be necessary to manage supply and demand to ensure that access to available staff is equitable and there is governance in place to support this.

Services will be aware of the pressure across multiple organisations in Local Government, the third and independent sector with particular challenges in some geographical areas.

Providers should ensure they have Business Continuity Plans in place to deal with higher than normal staffing absences. Services should also contact their local Health and Social Care Partnership as soon as possible to advise of staffing pressures and to ask whether support can be provided.

Services should continue to consider **all** options to manage staffing in their services such as:

- reviewing shift patterns
- making best use of existing volunteers linked to the service
- accessing bank staff and agency staff, particularly where services have an established relationship with agencies which may be able to source staff who are already familiar with the service
- expediting any recruitment of new staff; and
- where relevant, notifying their group provider at the earliest possible opportunity to explore any sources of support from the provider or mutual aid from other services in the group.

Having or developing local processes for these considerations is recommended to ensure decisions can be taken quickly and there are no barriers, in order to fill gaps quickly.

Given the pressures it is necessary to monitor staff shortages and the use of the portal at a local and national level. **Registered services should complete the Care Inspectorate Red-Amber-Green (RAG) status to alert to staffing pressures**. **They should also ensure they use the same notifications process to tell the Care Inspectorate when their staffing situation returns to 'green'.** This information is vital and will inform the Care Inspectorate and SSSC discussions on pressures in services on a daily basis to ensure that providers who have a critical need have priority access to the portal. This may also include a follow up with individual providers and health and social care partnerships.

Services should ensure they are notifying the Care Inspectorate and SSSC of anticipated staffing pressures to ensure a preventative approach can be taken and not wait until the situation becomes critical to complete the RAG status.

Which care services can access the recruitment portal to search for suitable staff?

The recruitment portal is available to all social care services in Scotland in Local Government, the third and independent sector.

How can I get access to staff if I need them in my service at this time?

The recruitment portal is available to all social care services to access to help you prepare for and manage changes to your staffing levels during the crisis. You can access the portal through the MySSSC accounts set up for your countersignatories.

You will then have access to a new section on MySSSC for the COVID-19 portal where you can see the list of available social care staff in your area and can match them to your service. Please see the process flow chart Appendix 1 for further information.

What should I do if there are no available staff in my area?

If you have a critical need that cannot be met you should contact the Health and Social Care Partnership in your area directly so that support can be provided.

The Care Inspectorate should also be notified so they can support and liaise with the Health and Social Care Partnership.

Will anyone from the NES Health and Social Care COVID-19 Accelerated Recruitment Portal be placed in a social care setting?

People applying through the NES portal who identify as returning to or interested in a placement in social care settings are automatically passed to SSSC to carry out checks and place on portal. In addition, local protocols have been developed to move people who are allocated to Health Boards but wish or need to be placed in a social care setting if they have the relevant skills. This will follow the standard SSSC processes. For final year students NES will act as the employer.

Who in the service will get access to the new portal?

Only the SSSC countersignatories for the service will have access to the new portal.

As part of your local arrangements please make sure that you have more than one countersignatory in your service. There is no limit to the number each organisation can have. Your lead countersignatory can set up more easily through their MySSSC account and we would ask you to do that now so that you are prepared should you need to get access the portal.

Larger organisations where there are multiple services may need to implement local processes to ensure this is done in a managed way and staff can be onboarded in a streamlined process with relevant employer checks carried out. Services should contact their parent organisation to ensure they are following correct procedure before accessing the portal.

Who will carry out checks on the staff before they are available for work?

The SSSC are carrying out pre-employment checks before anyone goes live onto the portal. Checks include:

- identity check
- Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check, fees have been waived for COVID workers and volunteers.
- the worker has declared they are eligible to work in the UK
- the person has confirmed they do not have underlying health condition which may have an impact on their ability to work.

Once the pre-employment checks are completed individuals will be added to the COVID-19 recruitment portal hosted in MySSSC. SSSC are completing these checks to support quicker recruitment however the decision to employ the individual rest entirely with the employer. The employee will receive an email notification when they have been placed on the portal to advise that their details are now available for prospective employers and that they will be contacted directly by the employer.

Employers should request a copy of the PVG from the employee as this cannot be shared through the portal. If the employer requires any additional checks to those completed by SSSC this as at their own discretion.

How does the contract of employment work?

The employer will use their own organisational contract and equivalent terms and conditions and pay the person directly.

The organisations terms and conditions should be used to pay the employee however they should always receive fair work terms and conditions.

The length of the contract will be a matter for employers taking into account their immediate and continuing needs. If the need continues beyond the original contract period, then it would be open to the employer to extend any short-term arrangements.

Who pays the employee recruited through the portal?

The employer should pay the employee directly through their organisations internal processes. Where additional staff have been recruited to cover increased levels of staff absence through sickness or staff self isolating during the COVID-19 period then Scottish Government will fund reasonable additional costs. This will be done by invoicing the Health and Social Care Partnership who will align these additional costs to local Health and Social Care mobilisation plans.

Health and Social Care Partnerships require to consider where costs have reduced as a result of COVD 19 and review all payments to employers, retrospectively, and adjustments applied, where other areas of cost reduction have been experienced.

Where a person is employed to cover a vacant post then the employing organisation is responsible for paying the employee and this cannot be reclaimed.

What happens when the employee is no longer required?

Contracts will often be awarded on a short term or relief basis to cover peak times of staff shortage. When the employee's contract ends and if additional staff are no longer required, employers should ensure the person is happy to be employed in another service and update the COVID-19 Recruitment Portal when the person's contract has ended to ensure the employee can be added back to the portal.

If there is a vacant position and the person would like to remain in the organisation, then normal recruitment processes should be followed. The organisation would be responsible for paying the employee as per normal processes.

How do we induct and train the new employee?

It is recognised that normal recruitment processes will need to be streamlined to ensure staff can be employed as quickly and as safely as possible.

It will be up to the employer to decide whether they want to interview the new employee if they choose to a virtual interview can be used. NHS NES have produced an online resource to support remote recruitment.

It is the organisation employing the individual who has responsibility to ensure the employee has the relevant training and skills to carry out the role required and specific inhouse training should be followed.

There are a number of national resources to support the training of staff who have been deployed or employed to work in different frontline care services they may be unfamiliar with. SSSC have produced guidance in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland which provides useful resources and links to support employers with training for redeployed workers, temporary workers and volunteers. The guidance is a national resource which will support the frontline workforce in health and social care. It will support safe practice when addressing the needs of vulnerable people receiving care services **Guidance for employers on core training for redeployed workers, temporary workers and volunteers** https://www.sssc.uk.com/knowledgebase/article/KA-02880/en-us

The SSSC's Learning Zone has lots of free resources to support the sector on a wide range of topics including:

- adult support and protection
- carers
- dementia
- digital skills
- administration of medication
- palliative end of life care.

SSSC are developing a further suite of resources which will shortly be available on the Learning Zone to support the induction of new staff with a focus on:

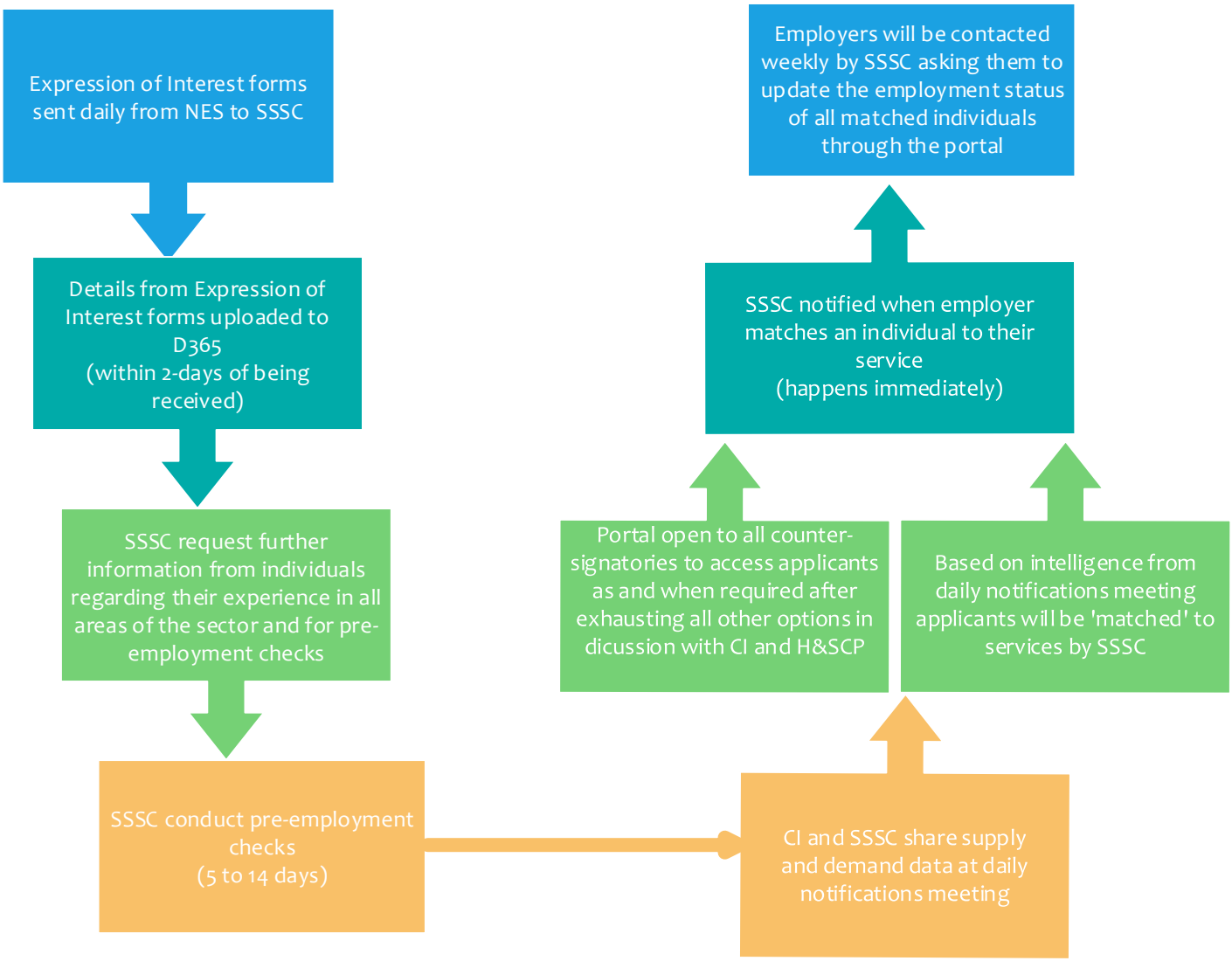
- person centred care
- health and safety
- infection control with a focus on PPE and hand washing.

You will also find links to support worker COVID-19 resources created by NHS NES including resources to support communication, record keeping and identifying a deterioration in a person's condition.

NES are developing an educational programme to support social care staff to undertake clinical skills such as administering oxygen and monitoring and assessing an individual's condition.

It's important that the workforce look after their own health and wellbeing during this challenging time. Get lots of ideas and support in SSSC's new staff wellbeing resource - https://learn.sssc.uk.com/wellbeing/

SSSC RECRUITMENT PORTAL PROCESS



Taking place throughout the process

CI confirm Amber and Red status with individual services (to gain a clear picture of the immediacy of need and any strategies already employed)

CI Link Inspector liaise with local H&SC Partnerships to share information about outbreak and staffing position across all providers to assist planning and support

SSSC 'portal' / MySSSC - Steps to Follow:

1 - Counter signatories access MySSSC - Registration can add counter signatories names as required
2 - Select 'My Employees'
3 - Select 'COVID19 Recruitment Portal'
4 - All applicants listed but can be filtered on certain categories
5 - Select 'Further Details' of the applicant you're interested in
6 - Select 'Role of Counter Signatory'
7 - Select 'Match'
8 - Counter signatory recieves automated email with contact details of matched applicant
9 - Matched applicant disappears from SSSC portal (unless 'unmatched' or looking for further employment)