**Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Presentation at SCVO Research Conference: Understanding the voluntary sector social services workforce in urban and rural settings: similarities and differences**

Context

Let’s start with a definition - the social services sector in Scotland includes all local authority social work services and all registered care services in Scotland (as defined by the Registration of Care Scotland Act 2001). This includes a wide range of services and this slide sets out a list of what these are – as you can see (from **slide 2**) they include care homes for adults care through to day care services for children.

**Slide 3** presents the proportion of the sector’s total workforce employed by public, private or voluntary employers. **Slide 4** highlights the proportions of public, private and voluntary sector workers in sub-sectors. The voluntary sector is particularly prominent in some sub-sectors such as residential childcare, offender accommodation services and child care agencies. **Slide 5** highlights the scale of the workforce. It confirms that a sub-sector where the voluntary sector plays a major role (housing support and care at home sub-sector) is also one of the largest sub-sectors.

The data on the sector’s workforce used in these slides come from two sources. One is the Scottish Government which undertakes an annual census of all staff working in local authority social work services and the other is the Care Commission which gathers data annually on all people working in registered care services. The SSSC in line with its duties under the Regulation of Care Act (and as a Sector Skills Council) has since summer 2009 had access to this data for analysis and dissemination of findings. It is this data which provides the basis of our presentation. The data from these sources are comparable because we have worked with the Government and Commission over a number of years to ensure that they use essentially the same data set and standards (core minimum data set). The quality of data gathered varies by data item and there is thought to be some double-counting (approx. 2%) of the “headcount” figure.

Data is also available from the Office of National Statistics on the sector’s workforce via the Labour Force Survey/Annual Population Survey and the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI). Unfortunately the definitions they use for the sector are based not on the definition in operation in Scotland but on the Standard Industrial Classification system. These figures suggest a workforce of between 130,000 and 162,000. We prefer figures from the Scottish Government / Care Commission which suggest a workforce of nearly 200,000 workers.

When we were considering how to present differences in services provision between urban and rural settings, we envisaged using the Scottish Government’s 6 or 8-fold urban-rural classification scheme to define the urban-rural status of individual services. However, this presented us with a problem. Service planning decisions are made on a local authority-wide basis, but local authorities may have a range of urban-rural settings within their jurisdiction. In addition, the most rural of the classification scheme was really not that rural in the context of the most rural of the local authorities – i.e. the islands.

We have to define rural workers as someone who works at a rural service rather than lives at a rural address. For these reasons we decided to examine data at local authority level. **Slides 6 and 7** outline our split of urban and rural local authorities.

We defined whether a local authority was urban or rural on the proportion of population in the 2 most urban categories (specifically, a local authority is urban if this quantity is greater than 50%).

**Slide 8** outlines proportions of public, private and voluntary sector workers in each local authority. It suggests that the voluntary sector is most prevalent in what we term urban authorities. It also highlights greater proportions of local authority workers in some parts of Scotland, particularly most rural areas. Remember our earlier slide which indicated that only 36% of the overall workforce are in the public sector.

Indeed, looking at data from the perspective of the sectors, we find that the voluntary sector has the largest proportion of its workforce in urban areas. **Slide 9**.

Now we look at where the voluntary sector fits into the social services workforce as a whole and what differences there are between urban and rural areas, we shall focus in detail on the voluntary sector – looking at its sub-sectoral composition, size of services, and age and gender split of workforce. Looking at sub-sectoral break down (**Slide 10),** we see that the majority of the voluntary sector social services workforce are in housing support, care at home or combined services. A significant number of people work in care homes for adults, day care of children, adult day care and residential child care. Rather unsurprisingly, all of these sectors employ the majority of their workforce in urban local authorities.

In fact, of all sub-sectors, only school care accommodation employs more than 30% of its employees in rural local authorities, but the size of this sub-sector is very small. **Slide 11**

Service size is something that varies greatly by sub-sector, with housing support/care at home and adult residential care services being the largest. So when modelling, this is something that needs to be taken into account. The model we produced found that urban establishments were larger, by around 23% **Slide 12**

The age breakdown of a workforce has many contributory factors. For instance, different sub-sectors may attract different types of workers, and age is a consequence of taking time to develop skills and experience required for more advanced job roles. Factoring these things in, we find that employees in urban settings tend to be slightly younger (by around 1 year). [It should be noted that that even taking these factors into account, a large degree of variability remains]. **Slide 13**

Finally, we look at the gender split within the voluntary sector **<Slide 14>**. Again we expect that different sub-sectors will attract men and women differently. In particular childcare is dominated by women, while males tend to be more prevalent in residential and offender settings. Similarly, different job roles tend to affect gender splits. By modelling effects we find that men are likely to make up a greater share of the workforce in urban local authorities, though the effect is small compared to some of the other factors and the model is not as good a fit as for the age characteristic.

We’ve focussed on whether there are major differences between the rural and urban social services workforce. We’ve focused on the voluntary sector social services workforce but also looked at public and private sector because it is difficult to examine parts of the workforce in isolation. We recognise our approach to defining rural and urban local authorities (as outlined earlier) is not perfect. For example, we defined East Lothian (a short bus ride from here) as rural, while Angus residents might query suggestion that they derive from urban area.

**<Slide 15>**  The evidence confirms limited differences in rural and urban areas. Where there is a difference, it tends to be employer type. For example, services in some of Scotland’s rural areas (including Shetland, Orkney and Eilean Siar) are still predominantly delivered by public sector. In Orkney and Shetland over 80% of the workforce are employed by public sector. Nationally the third biggest employer is the voluntary sector but in these local authorities it is the second biggest employer, albeit a distant second to the public sector.

This breakdown in public-private-voluntary services is not purely about whether you work in a rural or urban area. Our definition of rural includes Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway, Highlands and Aberdeenshire. The workforce in these areas conforms to the national norm, i.e. approximately a third delivered by public, private and voluntary sector respectively. Some areas that we define as urban (including West Dunbartonshire and Fife) have an above average percentage of public sector workers. There are, of course, other factors which influence how much of the workforce is employed by voluntary and private sector, not least commissioning. One interesting trend to monitor will be future proportions of public / private / voluntary sector workers across Scotland, particularly in rural areas.

**<slide 16>**

There is little evidence of an age difference between rural and urban voluntary sector social services workers.

Rural social services (in common with urban services) tend to be delivered by women. It is interesting to note, however, that there are some rural services which employ a greater percentage of males than urban counterparts. This was evident in school care accommodation and nursing agencies. Services in these sub-sectors are delivered largely by the private sector. Our conclusion that there is little difference (in gender ratios) between voluntary sector urban and rural workforce.

Scotland’s social services are increasingly delivered by voluntary and private sector providers. The private sector is now the biggest employer, employing 38% of the total. The voluntary sector employs 26% of the workforce. The sector is a key player in a range of services, including Residential Child Care, Offender Accommodation Services, Child Care Agencies, Housing Support and Care at Home services.

**<Slide 17>**

Workforce data provides a greater understanding of who delivers services across Scotland. It also (when combined with demographic data) highlights current and future challenges. The demographic challenge of an aging population is an issue that most people are familiar with, but there isn’t always an appreciation of how it varies throughout Scotland. COSLA developed a toolkit to help local authorities understand how their population may evolve over a decade and demographic challenges that could follow:

Their typology suggests some local authorities are in a healthier position than others. All local authorities face increased levels of service demand but main challenges are faced by clusters 3 and 4 which are experiencing a drop in the percentage of their working population as a percentage of the total population. These local authorities may have a smaller workforce to provide social services (and indeed other services) in future. The first two categories contain local authorities which are deemed to be in a healthier position as the percentage of working age population is increasing as a percentage of the total population.

The final cluster is described as possibly the worst case scenario. These authorities anticipate a decrease in total population in their area AND a decrease in proportion of working age population within total population.

There is no hard and fast rule determining where local authorities sit. Local authorities which incorporate Scotland’s biggest two cities (and Stirling) are in cluster one, but local authorities which contain remaining cities are split between clusters three and four. Many rural local authorities sit within three and four. What does this tell us? It may give us an indication of how the workforce must evolve to respond to local challenges.

**<Slide 18>**

One area not included in our workforce figures are workers involved in delivery of Self-Directed Support (SDS). SDS “provides individual budgets for people to buy their own support packages to meet their assessed personal, social and healthcare needs”. In some cases budgets are used to purchase services or recruit a personal assistant to deliver care and other personal tasks. The numbers of people in receipt of SDS in Scotland is relatively small, approximately 3,700 as at March 2010. Approximately 2/3 of individuals with personal budgets are under 65 years of age and have either physical or learning disabilities. It is interesting to note that SDS take-up is more frequent in rural areas, including Orkney, Shetland Islands and Eilean Siar. Edinburgh and Highland are only two local authorities with a city which feature in top 14 local authorities for rate of SDS clients per 10,000 population. Orkney and Scottish Borders residents appear to be most willing or able to access SDS. The Scottish Government is looking at various ways of supporting more people to consider taking SDS packages. The success of that policy could be a factor which reduces proportions of public sector workers in some areas. The voluntary and private sector may not have made in-roads into reducing the percentage of local authority social services workers in Shetland and Orkney, but perhaps figures will change as more people take control of budgets. Arguably the most interesting area to monitor will be Scottish Borders, where there is already the highest take-up of SDS and a fairly even split in total numbers of workers across public, private and voluntary sector. What would a substantial increase in numbers of people accessing SDS mean for proportions of people employed there?

Perhaps in future we should be less concerned about similarities and differences between voluntary sector social service urban and rural workforce and instead looking for differences across the entire urban and rural social services workforce – whether they be based in public sector, private sector, voluntary sector, or involved in delivering SDS.

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To conclude:

* Annual Returns and the Annual Survey of Local Authorities provide a new level of workforce data and highlight changes to service provision.
* The national public / private / voluntary sector workforce split is replicated in many local authorities, but there are rural areas which retain a greater proportion of public sector workers.
* There are few differences between the voluntary sector social services urban and rural workers. They are roughly the same age and have a similar male / female split in service delivery.
* The demographic changes faced by local authorities vary across Scotland.
* It is unclear what implications of new forms of service delivery (SDS) will mean for public, private and voluntary sector social services workforce, whether they are based in rural areas or not.

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