



Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Corporate Plan 2008 – 2011

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Mission

“We will protect the public by promoting and supporting confidence, competence and credibility in the social care workforce”

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Foreword

This Corporate Plan for the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) sets out the strategic direction for the Council over the period April 2008 to March 2011 and highlights our priorities for action. The Council, which was formally established by the NI Assembly in 2001, was given the responsibility for ensuring that users of social care services in Northern Ireland have confidence in and are protected during delivery of these services.

The Plan is set within the changing and developing context within which the Council works. With the significant changes being implemented across the commissioning and delivery of health and social care following the Review of Public Administration throughout the period of this Plan, the importance of the Council's remit in raising standards of practice, and strengthening and supporting the professionalism of the workforce, could not be more important.

A new Council for NISCC was appointed by the Minister in the autumn of 2007, and it has responsibility for this Corporate Plan. The Plan builds on the significant achievements Council has already made. Since our launch in October 2007, we have built a robust framework of regulation designed to assist us in meeting our goal – that is, raising standards in social care, and providing better protection for the many thousands of people in Northern Ireland, who depend, daily, on the continuing and vital support of social care workers.

This Plan indicates how, with our partners, we will be working to complete the comprehensive Register of over 30,000 social care workers and how that workforce will be regulated; it describes how we will support and regulate education and training for the workforce; and it outlines how we, as a component of the UK Skills for Care and Development Sector Skills Council, will promote workforce development to ensure that there will be sufficient properly qualified workers in coming years to meet Northern Ireland's social care needs.

Integral to all the work of Council is the involvement of service users and carers. The Council will continue to develop its capacity at all levels to deliver on this, and to ensure that the governance of Council itself promotes the achievement of its core objectives as well as ensuring that we, as a public body, work efficiently and effectively to make a difference for users of social care. My colleagues and I on the Council, supported by our expert and committed staff, will work vigorously with all our partners to achieve the objectives outlined in this Plan, which we believe will contribute to the highest quality social care for all in Northern Ireland.



Dr Jeremy Harbison CB
NISCC Chair

The Council

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) was established by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) in October 2001 under Part 1 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Act 2001. The status and constitution of the Council is set out in Schedule 1 of the Act.

The overall aim of the NISCC is to protect the public through improving safeguards for service users, raising the standards of social care practice and strengthening the professionalism of the workforce.

The NISCC has a statutory responsibility for promoting high standards of conduct and practice among social care workers and high standards in their training. In so doing, the NISCC registers and regulates the social care workforce, sets and monitors standards for professional social work training and promotes training within the broader social care workforce. Similar Councils have been established in England, Scotland and Wales.

NISCC Council

The Council's membership reflects three broad groups of interests which will enable the Council to discharge its functions successfully.

Lay people (including users of services and carers)

Registrants (staff eligible to be registered)

Stakeholders (employers, trade unions, education providers etc.)

Members have been appointed by the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety under the Public Appointments system for either two, three or four year terms of office.

NISCC Council Members:

Dr Jeremy Harbison CB (Chair)

Mr Joseph Blake

Mrs Geraldine Campbell

Mrs Julie Erskine

Mr Glenn Houston

Mrs Miriam Karp

Mrs Ruth Lavery

Mrs Gillian McGaughey

Mr Brendan McKeever

Mrs Maire McMahan

Mr James Perry

Dr Trevor Spratt

Mrs Eleanor Taggart

Accountability Arrangements

The NISCC is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) accountable to the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety via the DHSSPS. The Office of Social Services is the sponsoring department for the NISCC. Membership of the Council currently comprises a Chair plus twelve non-executive Members.

The NISCC will be monitored by the DHSSPS against the Corporate and Business Plans, through a series of accountability meetings, an Annual Report and an Accountability Review.

The NISCC acknowledges that it is resourced through public funding and, as such, recognises that it is required to be responsible and accountable for all its activities. We will continue to strengthen our internal control environment by complying with key controls assurance standards as applied throughout the HPSS. This will provide assurances to stakeholders that an effective accountability framework exists, within which the internal control system operates and which encompasses the management structure and practices.

This Corporate Plan sets out the key strategic objectives for the NISCC for the period April 2008 - March 2011. The Business Plan 2008 - 2009 details the shorter-term objectives and priorities, along with key performance indicators and targets/timescales which will be used to measure and evaluate progress against the strategic objectives set out in this Plan.

Principles and Values

The NISCC is committed to contributing to making a difference to the quality of life for users of services and their carers based on research, evidence and feedback from service users about what they want and what works.

This commitment is enshrined within five core principles and values which underpin how we conduct our business and how we aim to improve standards:

- **Enabling, supporting and valuing:**

Appreciating, recognising and rewarding others for their achievements and contributions.

- **Inclusive Leadership:**

Working with all stakeholders, users of services and carers in a spirit of constructive partnership.

- **Service User and Carer Involvement:**

Ensuring that service users and carers are directly involved in the development and work of the NISCC.

- **Equity and Fairness:**

Supporting equality of opportunity and valuing diversity.

- **Committed to Excellence:**

Seeking continually to improve what we do and how we do it.

In delivering on this Corporate Plan, one of the most critical success factors will be the Council Members and staff who work for the NISCC. The NISCC is committed to maintaining a supportive and challenging environment, where everyone is enabled to use their full potential to achieve the NISCC's current and future goals, and where everyone's contribution is valued.

The integration of service users and carers in all areas and components of the NISCC's work is a fundamental tenet. This principle is reflected in each of the six strategic objectives.

Our commitment to the Investor in People (IiP) principles and standards is further enhanced within our values which link directly to our corporate principles.

Strategic Context

The NISCC, as an executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), is committed to the aim, objectives and targets as set out by the DHSSPS. This aim and its associated objectives and targets supports the wider strategic aims, outcomes and targets of the DHSSPS as contained within its Public Service Agreement (PSA).

The Changing Environment

There are a number of important changes occurring within the wider external environment which will have significant implications for the NISCC. These include:

- *Review of Public Administration:*

The organisational re-structuring within the Health and Social Services Sector is well underway following the Government's 'Review of Public Administration' (RPA).

The Review recognised the importance of the functions of the NISCC in terms of regulation and acting as an independent professional lead organisation for the social care workforce.

The major changes within the Trust structures, following the establishment of the five new Health and Social Care Trusts within Northern Ireland, presents opportunities for improving communications with them as key NISCC stakeholders.

The NISCC will continue to maintain the key role in setting standards for and ensuring the quality of the education, training and practice of social workers and social care workers. It will also work in close co-operation with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to maintain and improve the quality of social care for all the citizens within Northern Ireland.

- *Reform of Professional Regulation:*

The publication of the White Paper on the Reform of Professional Regulation and Clinical Governance marks the first comprehensive overhaul of the system in more than three decades. The Paper "Trust, Assurance and Safety" deals with the regulation of health care professionals. However, the principles of good practice which it contains will have implications for social care and it will influence the professional regulatory framework for both health and social care during the life of this Corporate Plan. The NISCC will review the proposals for change by health regulators and will ensure that social care regulation meets agreed standards and is fit for purpose.

- *The Skills Agenda:*

As the Northern Ireland partner of Skills for Care and Development, the NISCC is responsible for leading on the skills agenda for the Social Care and Children's Workforce. The NISCC will continue to provide leadership and direction via the

implementation of the Sector Skills Agreement which sets out the framework for the education and training of the workforce over the years ahead.

The PSS Development and Training Strategy 2006-2016

The PSS Development and Training Strategy sets out the Government policy for workforce development in the social care workforce up until the year 2016. This strategy constitutes a vital component of the overall strategic framework within which the NISCC will conduct its business throughout the period of this Corporate Plan.

Key amongst the recommendations and targets within the PSS Development and Training Strategy are the links between training, qualifications and ongoing registration. The strategy establishes the key areas around which workforce development initiatives will be focused and presents an exciting and challenging agenda for the NISCC over the period of this plan.

Registration and Regulation

Registration is the critical building block that enables the NISCC to work towards increasing the status of social care, improving and, where necessary, taking action against misconduct. Over the period of the Corporate Plan, the NISCC will be rolling out the final phase of registration to all social care workers.

The NISCC has a statutory responsibility to regulate the social care workforce. This requires the NISCC to investigate complaints about alleged misconduct by registrants and to take action where misconduct is proven. To date, the NISCC has received 77 complaints about registered social care workers and 81 referrals about those who are eligible to be registered. As the numbers of social care workers on the Register grow, the volume of work associated with complaints about misconduct will also increase.

A key theme for the NISCC during this Corporate Plan will be the further engagement of registrants in the business of the Council. The NISCC will seek to put in place additional mechanisms to ensure that registrants have the opportunity to engage effectively in the work of the NISCC.

Other key themes will be the compulsion of registration for social care workers, linking registration more closely to accredited training and learning, and ensuring that sufficient resources are available to discharge the NISCC's statutory functions effectively.

Education and Training Developments

The NISCC has a responsibility to regulate qualifying and post-qualifying social work education and training. Improved arrangements are in place to deliver both qualifying and post-qualifying training, and the NISCC's position during this Corporate Plan will be to evaluate the benefits of these new arrangements in terms of fitness for purpose and value for money.

The NISCC has a responsibility to promote ongoing professional development for social work and social care staff. During this Corporate Plan, work will continue in agreeing an appropriate 'fitness for practice' framework linked to registration and post-registration training and learning requirements.

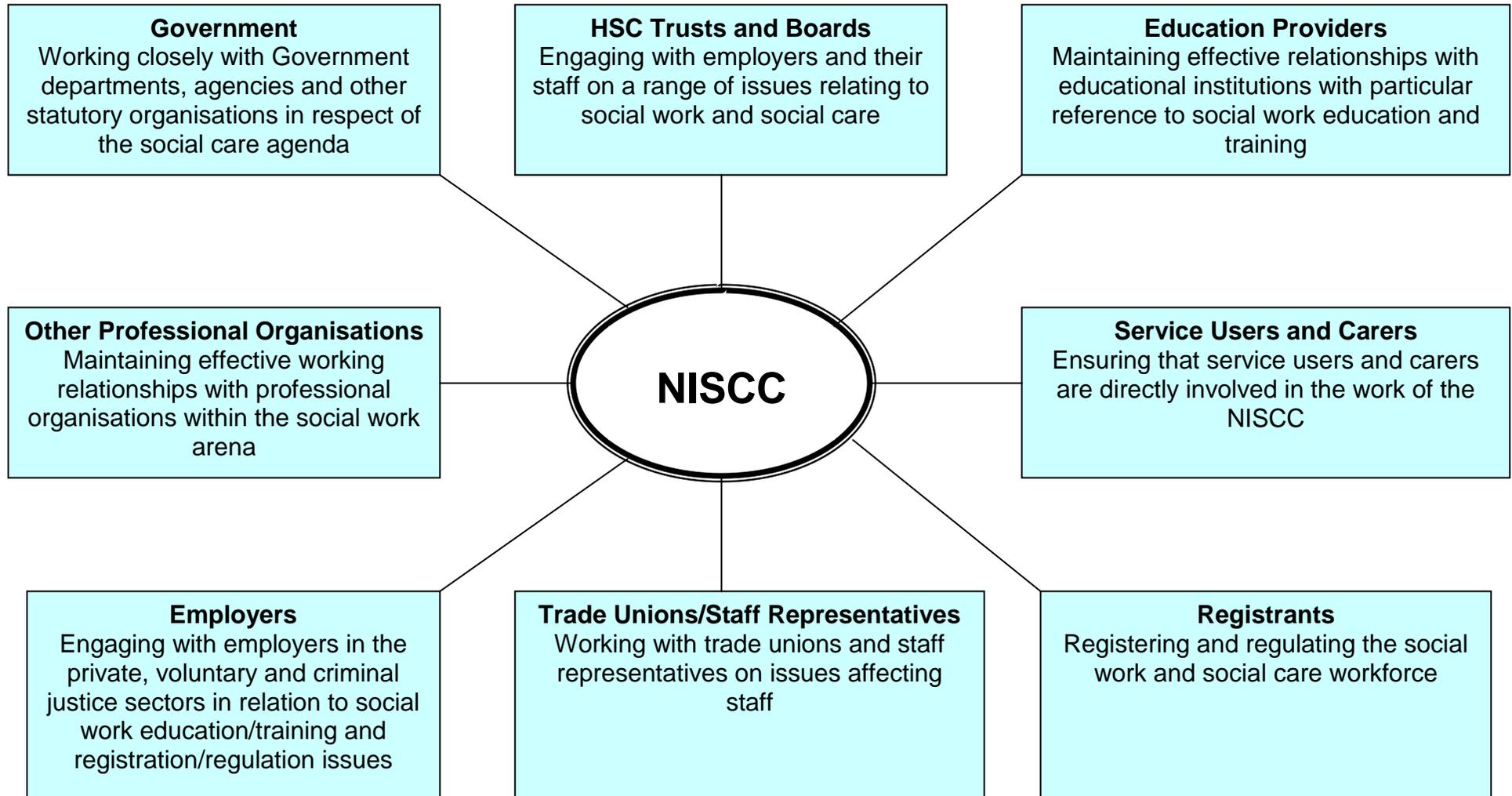
The NISCC is also responsible for promoting social work and social care as careers that make a valuable contribution to the lives of service users.

Service Users and Carers

A founding principle of the NISCC is working in partnership with service users and carers. This is reflected in two ways – firstly, through the Council's basic structure, one third of which is made up of lay members; and secondly, through the existence of Service User and Carers Reference Groups, whose aims are to help shape the work of the NISCC.

The NISCC will continue to make optimum use of the contributions offered by these groups and ensure that service users and carers continue to form part of the work ethos and organisational culture. The NISCC continues to work closely with RQIA and SCIE to improve the effectiveness of its engagement with service users and carers and will develop its approach in light of the findings emanating from an independent user involvement consultation, expected to be published late in 2007.

NISCC's impact with its Stakeholders



Strategic Objectives

The NISCC's Strategic Objectives are as follows:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

To ensure public protection through registering the social care workforce and maintaining the social care register (Ref Management Statement Objective 4).

We aim to:

- Commence registration domiciliary care workers, day care workers, social work assistants and all outstanding groups of social care workers by 31 March 2009;
- Complete the registration of domiciliary care managers, including those within the supporting people initiative and adult residential care staff,;
- Monitor and review the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) for students graduating from the Degree in Social Work;
- Implement the NISCC Induction Standards as the requirement for entry to the Social Care Worker Part of the Register;
- Monitor and review arrangements for Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL);
- Review costs of registration and put in place financial strategy to resource registration activity;
- Monitor and review the Registration ICT system.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

To ensure public protection though regulating the social care workforce in accordance with the highest standards of public accountability (Ref Management Statement Objectives 1 and 4).

We aim to:

- Implement revisions to the Codes of Practice, following the review in 2007/08, in collaboration with the other UK Social Care Councils;
- Establish and maintain a robust and efficient infrastructure to support the regulation of social care workers;
- Process complaints and employer referrals in accordance with NISCC Conduct Rules and Policies;
- Monitor and review the new IT system for Conduct (OSCAR).

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

To develop and promote high standards of education and training across the whole social care workforce (Ref Management Statement Objectives 2 and 3).

We aim to:

- Work with key strategic partners to take forward the Development and Training Strategy for the Personal Social Services(PSS) Workforce;
- Agree future direction of Sector Skills Council (SSC) activity within NI and across the UK;
- Manage funding to support delivery of SSC activity;
- Implement the Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) for the PSS and Childcare And Early Years (CCEY) workforces;
- Agree a Sector Qualification Strategy (SQS) for NI which promotes appropriate qualifications and quality assurance mechanisms for the social care sector;
- Manage and co-ordinate an information service for education, training and career opportunities in social work, social care and early years sectors.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

To regulate the delivery of social work education and training at qualifying and post-qualifying levels (Ref Management Statement Objectives 2 and 5).

We aim to:

- Ensure that the NISCC quality standards for social work qualifying education and training are met;
- Carry out a formal, 5 Year Review of the Degree in Social Work;
- Work with course providers to widen access to the Honours Degree in Social Work;
- Develop practice learning arrangements which will support the Degree in Social Work;
- Disburse and manage funding which will support the delivery of social work education and training provision thus ensuring value for money;
- Ensure that the NISCC standards for post qualifying education and training are met;
- Plan and implement a series of thematic reviews of approved education and training provision.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

To raise the profile of the social work and social care profession through building knowledge, understanding and confidence in the sector among the general public and the workforce (Ref Management Statement Objectives 2 and 3).

We aim to:

- Promote the NISCC as the workforce regulator and the professional voice of the social care sector;
- Work in partnership with key stakeholders to raise the profile of the social care sector.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6

To maximise the contribution of our human and financial resources by investing in our people and delivering value for money in all our activities, whilst ensuring the highest levels of governance in Council (Ref Management Statement Objective 5).

We aim to:

- Work in partnership with stakeholders to inform our business planning and ensure that we maintain strategic focus;
- Ensure that risks are managed effectively at all levels throughout the organisation;
- Ensure regularity and propriety in the stewardship of public funds;
- Deliver, support and maintain information and communication technologies to support the changing needs of the NISCC business;
- Deliver a platform for compliance and accountability of NISCC records and effective lifecycle management;
- Promote equality, diversity and good relations throughout the NISCC;
- Improve the effectiveness of organisational systems, policies and procedures to support enhanced business performance;
- Enhance learning and development within NISCC to deliver business outcomes;
- Ensure maximum return on all resources;
- Achieve high levels of compliance against key performance indicators.

The NISCC's Supporting Resources

The NISCC will deliver its Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan within its revenue budget.

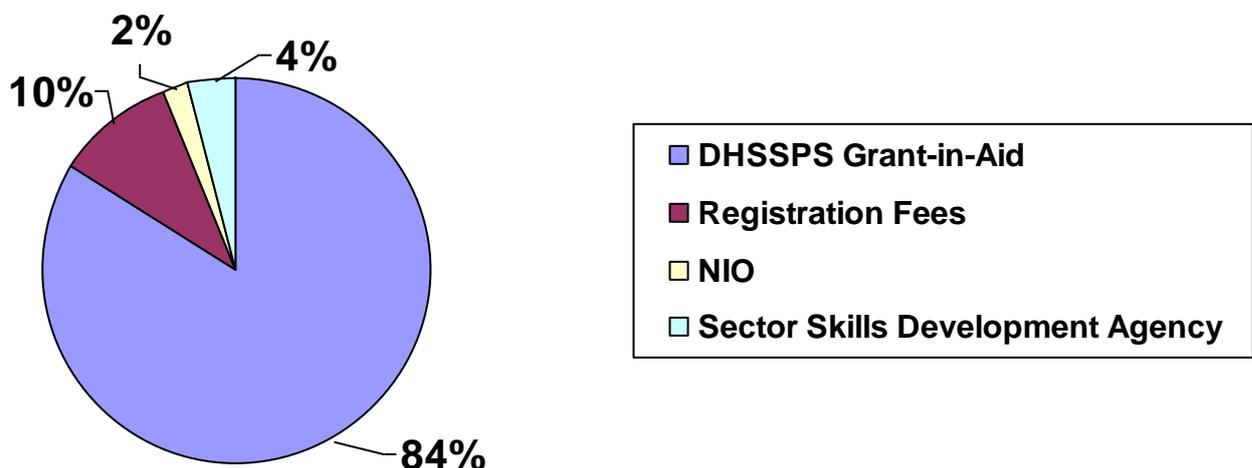
The NISCC is funded from a number of sources, principally the DHSSPS, but also via registration fees, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) (in relation to practice learning opportunities and placements for social work students in the Criminal Justice Sector) and the Sector Skills Development Agency.

The NISCC's current revenue commitments (2007/08) amount to £3,054,000. This figure is further broken down as follows in Table 1 and Figure 1:

Table 1

	£
DHSSPS Grant-in-Aid	2,572,000
Registration Fees	300,000
NIO	64,000
Sector Skills Development Agency	118,000
	<hr/>
	3,054,000

Figure 1



The NISCC will continue to outsource a number of core support services to other organisations under Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

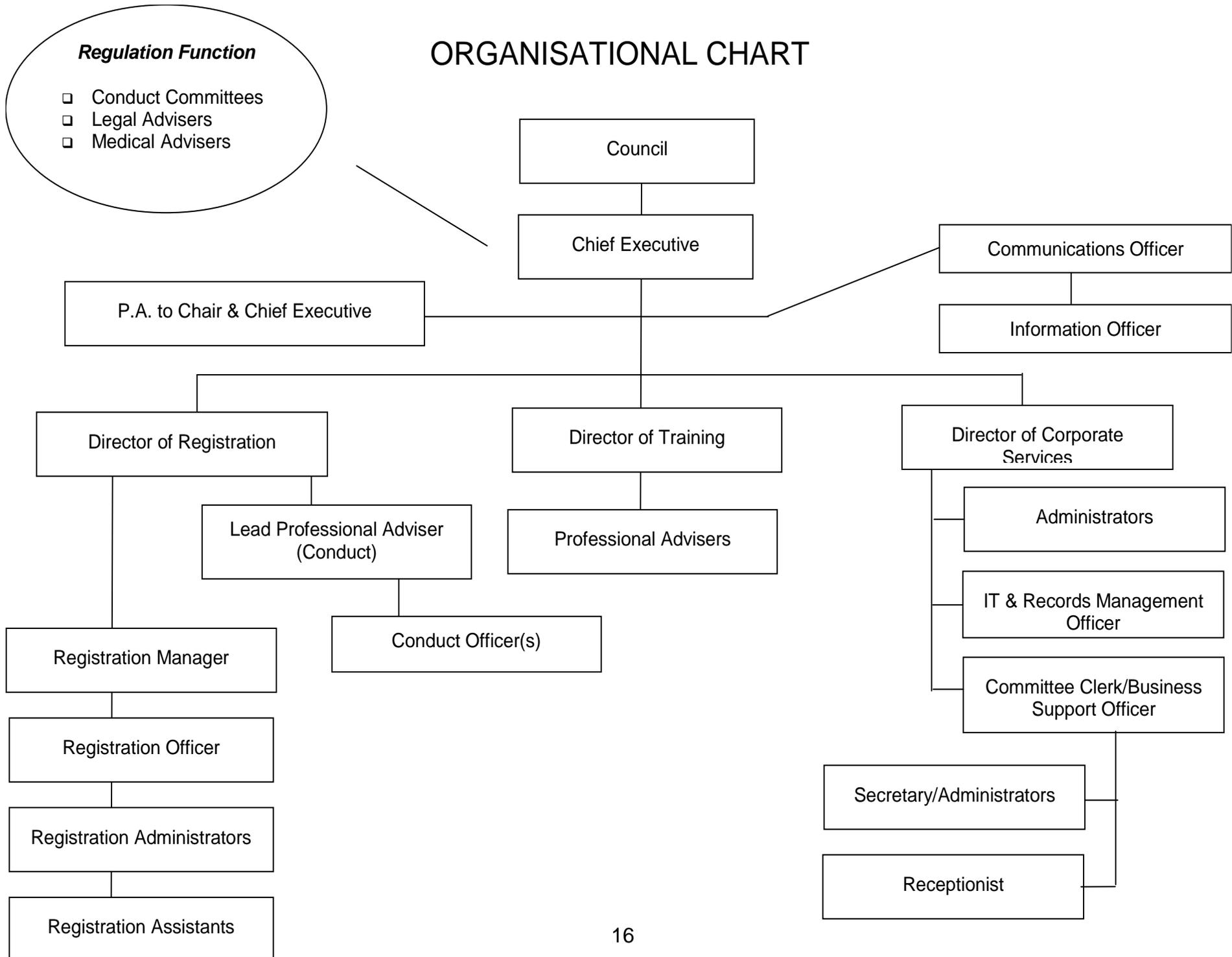
In the context of the ongoing Review of Public Administration, the NISCC will contribute to the debate surrounding the issue of shared services, and will take a pro-active approach in assessing the impact of any new or revised shared services arrangements to ensure that such services continue to offer value for money and meet the NISCC's high expectations regarding the efficiency, effectiveness and delivery of service.

The NISCC will continue to maintain robust financial management practices and procedures, including monthly financial monitoring, and will report directly to the Senior Management Team, Council and the DHSSPS.

Risks to Delivery of Strategy

The NISCC reviews its Business Risk Register on a quarterly basis in conjunction with the review of progress against objectives within the Annual Business Plan. This holistic approach to risk management ensures that the organisation is equipped to manage the changes and challenges which arrive and which may impact upon the successful achievement of corporate objectives.

ORGANISATIONAL CHART



List of Abbreviations

CCEY	Child Care and Early Years
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
HPSS	Health & Personal Social Services
HSC	Health and Social Care
IIP	Investor in People
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NISCC	Northern Ireland Social Care Council
PSA	Public Services Agreement
PSS	Personal Social Services
RPA	Review of Public Administration
RQIA	Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
SCIE	Social Care Institute for Excellence
SLA	Service Level Agreement