

Agenda Item	11
Report No	HCW-14-26

The Highland Council

Committee: Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

Date: 27 May 2026

Report Title: National Social Work Agency and Scottish Social Work Partnership

Report By: Chief Social Work Officer

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the newly created National Social Work Agency (NSWA) and Scottish Social Work Partnership. The NSWA will operate as an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government.
- 1.2 The Agency will be led by the newly appointed Chief Executive, Joanna Macdonald, who is Chief Social Work Adviser to the Scottish Government.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. Note the creation of the National Social Work Agency and the Scottish Social Work Partnership;
 - ii. Agree further updates will come to Committee with regard workforce developments and practice improvements in social work – on a national and local level.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report. However, a key aim of the NSWA is to increase social worker numbers across Scotland. This will be closely monitored and reported back to Committee.
- 3.2 **Legal** - There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.
- 3.3 **Risk** - There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.

3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.

4 **Impacts**

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children’s Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 **The Agency and Partnership**

5.1 The NSWA was launched in March 2026. It is a new Scottish Government body designed to provide national leadership and support for the social work profession in Scotland. It will be led by the new National Chief Social Work Advisor.

5.2 The agency intends to provide national oversight of social work, co-ordinate policy, advise the Scottish Government, and drive improvements in education and practice. This new dedicated national body, focused on supporting and developing the profession, will work to help ensure social workers have the skills, training and professional backing they need to improve outcomes for people who rely on social work services.

5.3 In terms of governance, Scottish Ministers will outline the NSWA’s roles and responsibilities, budget, accountability and governance – all as part of an executive agency of the Scottish Government.

5.4 The National Chief Social Work Advisor will have to produce an annual national report for Scottish Ministers.

5.5 The NSWA will collaborate closely with COSLA and Social Work Scotland through the Scottish Social Work Partnership (SSWP), providing unified leadership and aligning national priorities for a skilled, sustainable workforce. The corporate plan (which is currently being created) will be collaborated on and delivered through the SSWP.

Designation: Chief Social Work Officer

Date: 26 April 2026

Author: Fiona Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer

Background Papers: N/A

Appendices: N/A