Sharing knowledge,
improving practice,
changing lives

**Sharing Knowledge,
Improving Practice, Changing Lives**

A knowledge management strategy and action plan
for social services in Scotland

2010-2012

Contents

Foreword

from **Adam Ingram** Minister for Children and Early Years

Sharing knowledge, improving practice, changing lives

Knowledge management underpins the delivery of the Scottish Government's social care policies. Access to knowledge, and the skills to use that knowledge effectively, are essential to realising the benefits to people's lives which we aim to achieve.

In particular, effective use of knowledge is central to realising the vision set out in *Changing Lives* of person-centred social services, delivered in partnership with service users and carers by a confident and competent workforce. It complements and underpins other products of *Changing Lives,* such as the Continuous Learning Framework, guidance on the role of the Chief Social Work Officers, the Practice Governance framework for social work services and it will help us to deliver our aims in the early years framework, where a knowledgeable, highly skilled workforce is key to transforming outcomes for children and families.

As the Minister with responsibility for social work services I welcome this knowledge management strategy for Scotland. It demonstrates the importance of translating knowledge into practice to transform care and support. It recognises the role of knowledge in empowering the workforce, service users and carers with the resources, skills and confidence to ask questions, find and share knowledge, and use it as a vital part of day-to-day work and learning.

The strategy features three principal work strands.

- Encouraging social service employers to develop and lead on knowledge management strategies, as part of a national network.

- Providing the workforce with a range of on-line knowledge services and training in information skills, to support them with their day-to-day work and learning.

- Improving access to information for service users and carers and facilitating sharing of information between practitioners, service users and carers.

These work strands aim to ensure that knowledge is easily accessible when and where people need it, and that it becomes an integral part of delivering social services. This will require

a shift in how social service practitioners, managers and employers work and think. It also requires the promotion of skills in accessing and using knowledge to enable the workforce to deliver the right care and support at the right time, based on evidence and best practice.

This strategy has been developed jointly by the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) and by NHS Education for Scotland Knowledge Services.It demonstrates the benefits of sharing information and learning resources and technology across the health and social service sectors. This sharing of knowledge and learning across organisations and sectors will help to deliver continuity of care, ensuring care journeys are as straightforward and smooth as possible.

Social services staff will require strong support and leadership from their employers to make this happen. This strategy aims to support organisations in developing strategies, identifying knowledge champions and where appropriate, Chief Knowledge Officers, to provide leadership, vision and impetus for translating knowledge into practice. They will promote the cultural change required at strategic level, to ensure that knowledge is embedded in social service practice and help to fulfil the aspirations of *Changing Lives* and the Early Years framework.

It is essential that this strategy and its recommendations are implemented locally and nationally. That is why we have set up a Social Service Managed Knowledge Network and Steering Group to oversee progress across the country and to share experience in improving knowledge management locally. This agenda will be supported by Social Services Knowledge Scotland, the new national online knowledge service, available to all social services staff.

The strategy builds on Scotland's strong tradition of putting knowledge to work to deliver the best quality care and support for vulnerable people. I believe that it provides the necessary infrastructure to make this happen, through social service organisations, practitioners and managers, service users and carers coming together to share knowledge, to improve practice and to change lives.

Adam Ingram
Minister for Children and Early Years
March 2010

Overview

Knowledge management is about getting the **right information** to the **right people** at the **right time**. This Knowledge Management Strategy and Action Plan has been developed to help individuals and social services organisations throughout Scotland to access, share and use knowledge. This is important to prevent individuals and organisations reinventing the wheel rather than sharing what they know. Using what you know is fundamental to improving outcomes for people who use services and carers.

The Strategy and Action Plan, *Sharing Knowledge, Improving Practice, Changing Lives,* has been developed by NES (NHS Education Scotland) and IRISS (Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services). It responds to the Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review, *Changing* Lives, which set out a future vision for future social services in which staff, people who use services and carers are using different sources of knowledge in their day-to-day lives and for making decisions. A more detailed version of the Strategy can be found at http://www.ssks.org.uk/km-strategy.aspx; this document provides a summary of the key elements.

The Strategy has three components.

- Social Services Knowledge Scotland (SSKS), a gateway on the web to a range of information, learning resources and tools for sharing knowledge

- A network of organisations known as the Social Services Managed Knowledge Network (MKN)

- A programme to develop people's skills in accessing, sharing and using knowledge (often referred to as information literacy).

It responds to the changing context of social services by defining:

- a vision for knowledge management becoming an integral part of the delivery of social services

- how organisations can collaborate within a national network to support the vision and action plan

- systems and methods to support individuals and organisations to use knowledge to support service delivery

- how knowledge management helps to build capacity for personalised services.

These activities will support the development of a competent, confident and valued workforce, as well as service modernisation and sustainable redesign.

Key messages

1. The purpose of the Knowledge Management Strategy and Action Plan is to help our sector to manage and share knowledge in order to improve outcomes for people who use services and carers.

2. The vision is to:

   Empower organisations, staff, people who use services, and carers, with resources, skills and confidence to ask questions, find and share knowledge and use it as a vital part of day-to-day work and learning in social services.

3. Social services organisations will work together as a national network to help to realise this vision.

4. In a climate of financial constraint, IRISS and NES will work with partners to maximise use of Social Services Knowledge Scotland.

5. Development of information literacy will empower practitioners, people who use services, and carers, to ask questions, find, share and use information.

6. This will help to:

   • build capacity for personalised services

   • develop a competent, confident workforce and valued workforce

   • support sustainable service modernisation and redesign.

Introduction

The purpose of the Strategy and Action Plan is to show how individuals and organisations can help realise a vision in which all stakeholders can access, share and use knowledge to improve outcomes for people who use services and carers. The Action Plan will help you consider what your role might be in pursuing this vision.

This plan describes a knowledge infrastructure that will help achieve the goals of *Changing Lives*. It responds to the changing context of social services by defining:

- a vision for knowledge management becoming an integral part of delivery of social services

- how organisations can collaborate within a national network to support the vision and action plan

- systems and methods to support individuals and organisations to use knowledge to support service delivery

- how knowledge management helps to build capacity for personalised services.

These activities will support the development of a competent, confident and valued workforce, service modernisation and sustainable redesign.

What is knowledge management?

Knowledge management is about how people and organisations access, store and organise different sources of knowledge and how they use it to achieve their goals. There are three key ingredients for successful knowledge management.
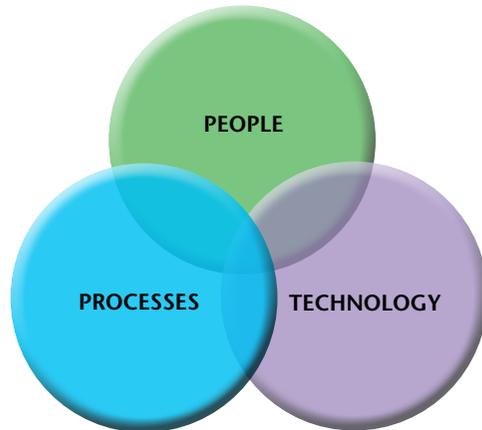

Figure 1: Three ingredients of knowledge management

- **People:** require knowledge management skills and an understanding of their importance and relevance to daily work

- **Technology**: understanding how best to use technology to access, organise and share information and knowledge

- **Processes:** organisations need to implement processes that will make best use of knowledge to support their goals.

Knowledge management is about taking decisions based on knowledge, emphasising the role of learning from experience and the systematic sharing of good practice.

Sharing knowledge is important in many contexts:

- between practitioner, people who use services, and carers

- among practitioners

- between practitioners and managers

- within teams of practitioners and managers

- between organisations in the public, voluntary and private sectors

- between social services and health sectors.

Knowledge management and *Changing Lives*

The four key themes of *Changing Lives* all depend on effective knowledge management.

1. **Developing a whole systems approach** – Sharing and applying knowledge across all social service organisations is crucial in ensuring the adoption of best practice. Sharing knowledge effectively across the sector will help to achieve integrated support for people who use services and their carers.

2. **Workforce development** – Maximising the knowledge and skills of social services staff depends on equitable access to the knowledge base, a culture that facilitates sharing of learning and experience, and competence and confidence in using knowledge effectively. The routine application of knowledge to practice will help practitioners deliver better support to people who use services and carers. Knowledge management is also essential in encouraging innovation and enabling staff to cope with the rapid pace of change in their roles and responsibilities.

3. **Service development** – Ongoing service redesign and transformation are essential to deliver personalised services. The principles of identifying and sharing knowledge and applying it to practice are integral to effective service improvement. Knowledge management helps find new ways of working and breaks down barriers between different parts of the system.

4. **Personalised services** – 'Personalisation means that people become more involved in how services are designed and they receive support that is most suited to them.' For workers this means helping people to take more control over their own care and support, and sharing decision-making with the practitioner. Practitioners need to combine their own practice experience (what has been termed 'tacit' knowledge) with other relevant information (such as polices and procedures) and evaluate it with the service user. For people who use services, personalisation involves gaining confidence in the basic knowledge management skills of asking questions, finding and evaluating information, and sharing it with their practitioner.

Knowledge management supporting leadership, research and continuous learning

The diagram shows how knowledge management provides the foundation for continuous learning, research and leadership. Together, these should support the development of the confident, competent and valued workforce heralded in *Changing Lives*, and focused on delivering personalised outcomes for individuals and communities. Key links here include the Continuous Learning Framework (CLF) developed by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and IRISS; the leadership programmes building on the Leading to Deliver initiative; and the recognition in *Changing Lives* of the importance of conducting and applying research to underpin social services practice. The crucial link between knowledge management and leadership is reflected in the development of the online leadership framework as an integral part of Social Services Knowledge Scotland.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

CAPACITY TO DELIVER PERSONALISED SERVICES

COMPETENT, CONFIDENT, VALUED WORKFORCE

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Figure 2: Knowledge management as a cornerstone of social services transformation

How will the strategy be delivered?

The strategy has four strands which cover the three ingredients of effective knowledge management – organisational processes, technology and people.

- Managing knowledge to build workforce capacity.

- Sharing knowledge with people who use services and carers.

- Managing knowledge to support sustainable service change.

- Building a collaborative national knowledge infrastructure - through organisations (the Managed Knowledge Network) and technology (Social Services Knowledge Scotland).

PEOPLE

SKILLS AND VALUES

Communities of practice
Information literacy and IT training
Knowledge worker role development

ORGANISATIONS

MANAGED KNOWLEDGE NETWORK (MKN)

Collection of organisations working together to improve the information, learning and knowledge landscape in the social services sector

TECHNOLOGY

SOCIAL SERVICES KNOWLEDGE SCOTLAND

An integrated online knowledge platform

Online tools for collaboration and sharing knowledge

Figure 3: Organisations, people and technology as themes within this strategy

> *The social services workforce roles tend to be multidisciplinary, requiring them to have a little knowledge of a wide range of subjects and therefore they need to be able to access, apply and share this knowledge in a timely fashion. However, there is an issue in terms of enabling and facilitating the workforce to access information, but also to develop the skills for them to evaluate the information that they do access in terms of its appropriateness to particular issues that they want to address.*

Strand One:

Managing knowledge to build workforce capacity

The strategy aims to create a confident and competent workforce, able to ask questions, make decisions based on evidence and good practice, share knowledge with colleagues, people who use services and carers, and innovate and adapt in response to the changing needs of the service. Local cultures should be developed which value the use of knowledge and seek to embed it at the heart of practice.

This work strand centres on four areas for development:

> *The workforce need to be inquisitive and enquiring and be up for the fact that they need to be accessing information.*

- **Information literacy** - enabling people to define an information need, find, evaluate, combine and share information, and put it into practice

- **Sharing personal knowledge and experience**

- **Facilitating offline as well as online access to information and learning**

- **Embedding knowledge management in formal and informal learning** – including through the Continuous Learning Framework promoted by SSSC and partners.

The resources to be delivered by this work strand include:

- a programme of work-based information literacy training

- a network of knowledge champions based within social services organisations

- tools and resources within Social Services Knowledge Scotland linked with the Continuous Learning Framework

- a personal webspace to record personal and professional learning

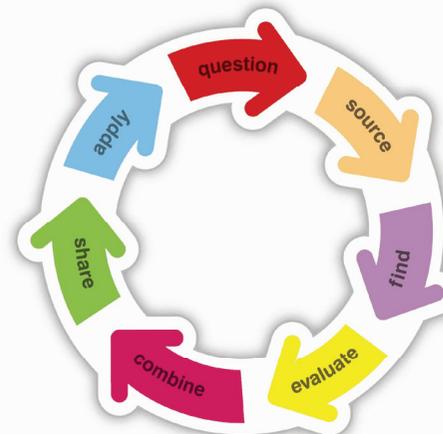- group learning materials for developing learning communities.

Figure 4:
Information literacy cycle

What will this mean for me?

Geoffrey is the manager of a residential childcare unit. As staff have only limited access to one, shared computer, Geoffrey is aware that he has to act as the information provider. This is a role that Geoffrey takes seriously as he knows that it is crucial that his staff are kept up to date. However, he finds it frustrating that he has to hunt about for information and isn't very confident in doing so. The idea of news briefings and alerts is one that appeals to Geoffrey as he would then be able to quickly assess what is new and relevant for his staff without too much difficulty.

Geoffrey has undertaken the information literacy training programme. His organisation offers this course to middle managers to equip them with the skills of finding and sharing information with teams and empowering team members to make better use of information for themselves. He is also part of the national network of knowledge champions and discusses with them possible solutions to keeping himself and his team up to date with new knowledge relevant to their

practice. Using SSKS he sets up a news alerting service which will email him with updates on topics of interest. To read more about these topics he can find full text journal articles on SSKS. He selects relevant news summaries to be placed on the notice board in the staff room or discussed at weekly team meetings as appropriate. Using SSKS as a quality assured source, Geoffrey is confident that he is sharing not only relevant but reliable information.

Strand Two:
Sharing knowledge with people who use services and carers: creating personalised social services

Changing Lives highlights the fact that the 21st century is a time of great choice and opportunity, in which people expect social services to enable them to achieve their goals. Everyone should be treated with respect, as individuals with their own aspirations, hopes and fears. A personalised approach supports people to make changes, regain their independence and fulfil their personal potential.

Partnership and shared decision-making between people who use services and practitioners are likely to work better if both parties have access to good quality and reliable information and knowledge. Support in finding, sharing and using that knowledge helps to empower people to make decisions, take action to find their own solutions and to develop self-directed support.

This strand focuses on:

- enabling access to quality assured information for people who use services and their carers

- two-way, person-centred communication between social services staff and and by people who use services or carers. Sharing of knowledge depends on support in asking questions and providing information in an accessible format

- developing the information support role of social services staff at all levels.

The resources to be delivered by this strand include:

- Information resources for people who use services and carers

- A framework to develop the information support role of social services workers

- Training materials to support people who use services and carers in developing the information support role of social services staff at all levels. The information support role comprises the workforce skills and values of sharing information with people who use services and carers, and helping them to find, evaluate, share and use information for themselves.

> **"** *The primary focus (in knowledge management) has to be on what people do to deliver, personalised, relevant, accessible services. The voice of the service users has to be a real voice in determining some of that.* **"**

What will this mean for me?

Working in a day care centre, Bev regularly has people coming to her with their bills or prescriptions to ask her for further explanation. The relationship that Bev has built up with the service users over time means that they trust her and feel relaxed about talking to her about personal matters. On one occasion, Alan asked her why his doctor had changed his prescription from one type of drug to another. All that Bev could do was suggest that Alan go back and speak to his doctor, only to be told that, 'I don't like to ask my Doctor, he's a busy man and doesn't need his time taken up with my silly questions... He probably told me anyway and I've just forgotten'. Sensing Alan was upset at this suggestion, Bev was questioning her handling of the situation.

Bev discusses the incident with her line manager, and they realise together that helping people to find information is an intrinsic part of Bev's role. Bev's line manager suggests that Bev undertakes the information support role training programme, which focuses on person-centred information literacy. This builds Bev's skills in finding and sharing information and in helping service users to ask questions and find information for themselves. Bev feels much easier in her mind that helping people to find information is a core part of her role and that she has the knowledge and skills to do this effectively.

Strand Three:
Managing knowledge to support sustainable service change

This strand focuses on developing resources, skills and culture to ensure that knowledge is embedded at the heart of organisations, and that knowledge management underpins the strategic priorities for modernising social services. This will enable organisations to use knowledge effectively to support service improvement.

"

Structures and procedures (need to be) created to support learning, research and development and knowledge sharing' **"**

The resources to be delivered by this work strand include knowledge management packages to support priority areas for service modernisation, such as dementia, learning disability, children's residential services, care homes, criminal justice, alcohol and addictions, community rehabilitation and telecare. These packages will focus on translating knowledge into practice to achieve measurable improvement in service delivery and service outcomes. They will be developed in partnership with acknowledged centres of expertise and experience by including the Centres for Excellence such as the Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) and STRADA. The packages will include elements from all work strands in the action plan: gateways within SSKS, information literacy training, development of communities of practice and building on the role of libraries and learning centres.

What will this mean for me?

Catriona is the commissioner for older people's services in a remote rural authority. She has a short time to report to the Senior Management Team on the development of a local dementia strategy for the next three years and wants to find out about new ways of supporting people with dementia and their carers. A quick web search returns an overwhelming variety of resources. How can she find a way to access evidence she can trust?

Catriona logs on to SSKS and finds a topic room for dementia. A series of evidence summaries gives her an overview and enables her to locate resources to compare the effectiveness of different models. At her presentation to the Senior Management Team there is a lot of interest in pursuing the use of telecare as a key element of redesign. A sub-group is established with health and housing colleagues. Catriona e-mails them all, giving them details of how to access resources through SSKS and setting up a community of practice. One member posts a query to the Dementia Services Development Centre and now the sub-group is linked to a new national telecare network.

Strand Four:
Building a collaborative national knowledge infrastructure

A collaborative organisational infrastructure for managing knowledge

A Social Services Managed Knowledge Network (MKN) is being established to oversee implementation of this strategy. A Managed Knowledge Network (MKN) is a group of organisations which undertake to work and learn together to:

- promote the uptake and use of information and knowledge to support a shared vision and values centred on transfer of knowledge into practice

- actively support implementation of a network strategy and work plan designed to support this common vision

- share information and knowledge across organisations

- continuously improve the management of knowledge within organisations - this involves supporting the definition of common standards for knowledge management, and applying these standards within organisations

- facilitate education and training to improve knowledge management within organisations.

Participating organisations will sign a Memorandum of Understanding. A Network Coordinator will take responsibility for supporting the development of the MKN by providing learning opportunities, tools and standards for organisational knowledge management.

A system-wide technology infrastructure for managing knowledge

Social Services Knowledge Scotland (www.ssks.org.uk) was developed during 2007 as a single, integrated point of access to information and knowledge. It uses technology provided by NHS Education for Scotland Knowledge Services to enable organisations to share information and learning resources. In this way it provides seamless access to selected content from the The Knowledge Network (formerly NHS Scotland e-Library), the IRISS Learning Exchange, the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and many other sources. It also provides online community tools to support practitioners, managers and teams to capture and share personal and local knowledge and experience through communities of practice.

What will this mean for me?

As a newly qualified social worker, Andrew sometimes feels overwhelmed with the diversity and complexity of problems he encounters and the questions he is asked by people who use services and by colleagues. Being new into the post, most of the questions that are asked are new to Andrew, and reluctant to give the wrong information, he often calls Jim a fellow social worker to ask for advice. Jim has been a social worker for 15 years and has built up a wealth of experience, experience that Andrew doesn't have.

Jim suggests that Andrew uses Social Services Knowledge Scotland (SSKS) to join a community of practice where newly qualified social workers come together online to share experience and key resources. This helps these newly qualified staff to learn from each other, identify new approaches and solutions that can be combined with the experience of long serving employees. SSKS also provides bite-sized information summaries on key topics that Andrew can access himself and can also make available to people who use services. His learning and development is formalised though supervision.

How can I get involved?

The scenarios presented throughout this document provide practical illustrations of how the action plan will support day to day working.

Promote information literacy
IT and information literacy training will become part of day-to-day work and learning for social services organisations, including use of Social Services Knowledge Scotland for accessing evidence and information. As a result staff will regard finding and sharing knowledge as a routine part of day-to-day practice. Staff will become increasingly confident in helping people who use services, and their carers, to ask questions, find and evaluate information, and consider their options so that they can take more control over their choices about support and care.

**Make use of all relevant knowledge sources**
Confidence and competence in the use of the knowledge sharing technologies available not only through SSKS but also on other specialist portals will help establish new organisational partnerships and a more joined-up approach to service delivery.

Become a knowledge champion
The strategy envisages the emergence of knowledge champions within each organisation to implement their organisation's knowledge management strategy. These individuals will support the efficient use of knowledge as an integrated part of day-to-day activity rather than an additional task. Crucially, their task will also include ensuring that knowledge management contributes to delivering better outcomes.

Join the SSKS user group
Find out more at: www.ssks.org.uk/user-group.aspx
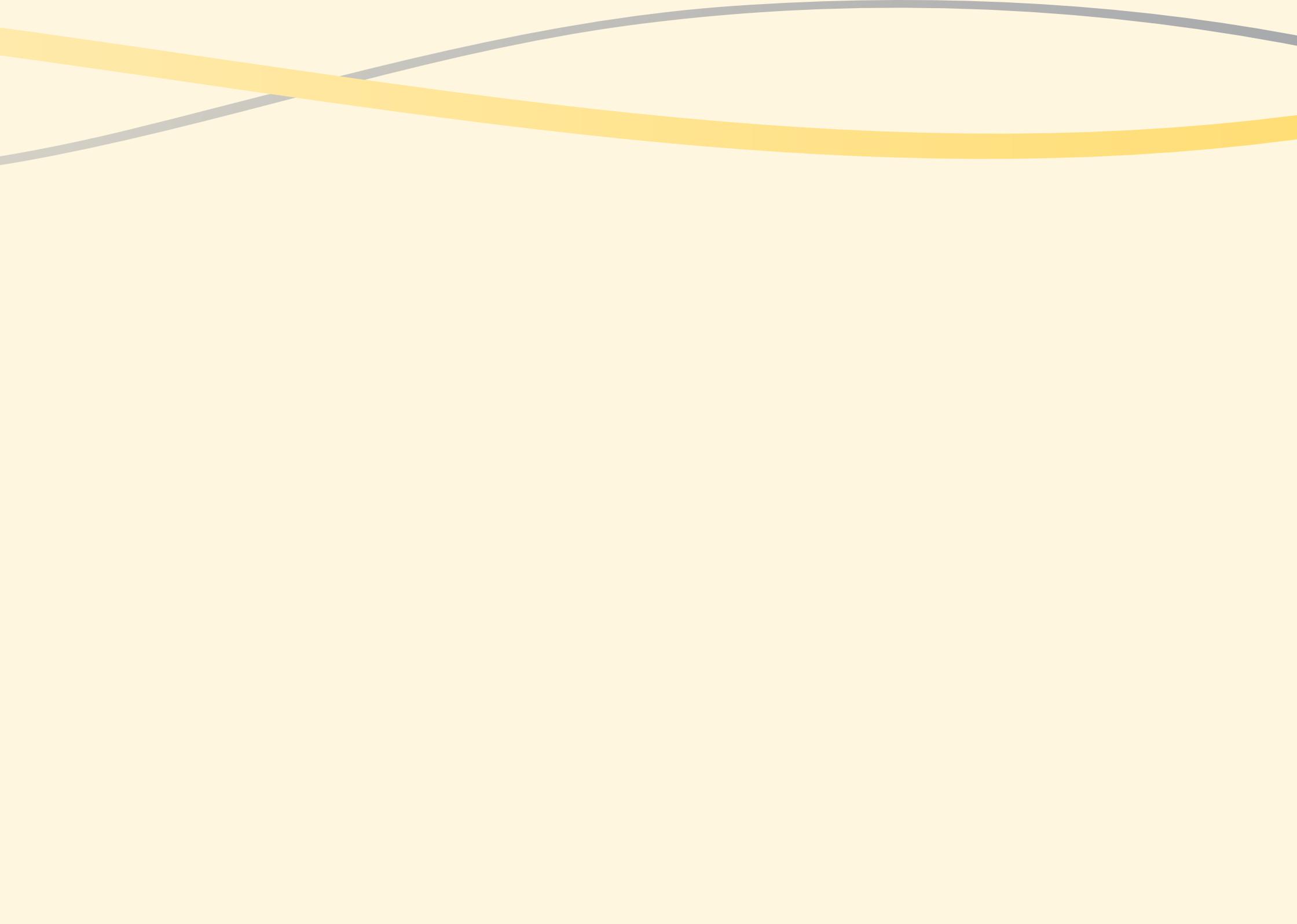
For more information about any of the work strands discussed in this document, and what this could mean for your organisation, please contact us:

www.ssks.org.uk/footer/contact-us.aspx

This resource can be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on 0131 313 8061 or email altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk to discuss how we can best meet your requirements.