



# SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES AWARDS

Handy Hints

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SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES AWARDS





# SSSA 2023

The Scottish Social Services Awards have been celebrating individuals and organisations who demonstrate best practice in the social services sector since 2017. These awards exist to highlight commitment, innovative approaches, and ultimately raise the profile and value of the sector. Sector partners promote the event and support the judging process.

The Awards invite individual and organisational nominations from across Scotland to showcase examples of best practice in the social services sector. Applications will be scored by a judging panel comprised of Scottish Government policy officials and key sector stakeholders. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an in-person awards ceremony on the evening of 23 November 2023 where winners will be announced.

All shortlisted candidates will be required to take part in a short video outlining their work and the reason they are nominated. Filming will take place in October.

For more information about the Scottish Social Services Awards, please email [SSSA@speak.co.uk](mailto:SSSA@speak.co.uk)  
For press enquiries, please email: [OCSWA@gov.scot](mailto:OCSWA@gov.scot)

## Key Dates

**Awards open – 07 August**

**Entry deadline – 6pm, 01 September**

**Shortlist announced – Late September**

**Filming of Shortlisted applications – October**

**Winners announced – 23 November**

If you are experiencing problems with the online entry form or have any questions about the entry process please contact [SSSA@speak.co.uk](mailto:SSSA@speak.co.uk)



## All entrants must:

**Read all the categories carefully and make sure you enter the most appropriate one:** you must be able to answer the questions and provide evidence or examples of how you are meeting the criteria, which is different for each category.

**Get permission from your team, organisation or a person you want to nominate:** an email would be ideal. Make sure you allow plenty of time to get approval.

**Don't leave it to the last minute:** you can start preparing now by planning what you want to say and gather details of examples or evidence you want to include in your written submission.

**Before you start,** you can [download a word version of the entry form](#) to work on a draft offline - although all applications must be submitted online.

**Tell a story:** help your entry stand out to the judges by having a clear beginning, middle and end so it reads like an interesting story. Check out our plain English guide and avoid jargon so a lay person can understand it.

**Provide evidence:** use information from research, practice, wisdom, service data or lived experience to demonstrate how the person, team or organisation has specifically met the award criteria. Try to avoid generalisation or assumptions. Select quotes and data from reports, surveys, feedback or testimonials from people who use services or other individuals involved – judges will be looking for clear evidence of the difference this project or person has made to the people it supports.

**Edit your entry more than once:** leave time between re-writing drafts. Don't waste words and don't use jargon or technical terms. Ask a colleague to proof the final version for errors and make sure it reads well.

**Stick to the rules:** don't use more than the allocated word count per question. Don't attach images of supporting information (apart from optional testimonials). Don't create or submit a film at this stage – only shortlisted entries will be asked to do this.

**Allow plenty of time to complete the online entry form:** we recommend that you register in advance and get familiar with the system. Once you have started your entry you will be able to save a draft and return to it at another time. However, once it has been submitted as the final version you will no longer be able to edit it.

**Be on time:** all entries must be in before **6pm on Friday 01 September**

## All entrants must NOT:

**Enter the wrong category:** take time to read all the categories and criteria listed in each of the bullet points before deciding what you could enter. Only enter a category if you can evidence meeting the criteria.

**Make mistakes:** once you have prepared your application, check all your details before you submit the form online and double check and save a copy of your entry after receiving the confirmation email. Always edit and proof your entry and use plain English to avoid social services jargon.

**Not provide evidence:** if you make a claim, be sure to back it up with evidence. This could be statistics such as number of people who use services who benefitted or comments from feedback reports, testimonials from colleagues etc. Judges will look for clear evidence of the change or impact the project or person has had on the people supported.

**Not answer the questions:** each category lists a series of bullet points of 'what we are looking for'. Your answers to questions 2 and 3 in particular should say where possible how you have met each of these criteria. You might want to list your answers in similar bullet point format. You will be marked on how well you meet the criteria in each bullet point. Please note, if you fail to provide information for one of these you will receive a score of zero.

**Submit old work:** we understand that social services projects develop over time but we want to recognise current work and practice so are looking for entries to use evidence of positive results obtained within the last two years.



# How to Write a Successful Awards Entry

**You can create more impact if you:**

**Write in plain English** – use everyday language and short sentences (between 15-23 words)

**Tell a compelling story** – especially important when you're writing an award entry; judges will read dozens of entries and you want yours to stand out – and win!

**Cut out the jargon and abbreviations** you normally use in official reports that can make your writing sound a bit bureaucratic.

**Be clear and avoid using too many words** - say what you mean and don't pad out your writing by using unnecessary words and phrases

Most people write using a lot of passive verbs which can sound bureaucratic, impersonal and cold. Make your writing more active by putting in words like I/we/you, to make it clear who is 'doing the doing'. For example:

Passive: Our tenants are supported to make informed choices

Active: We help our tenants to make informed choices

Passive: Care and support is provided

Active: We provide care and support

Passive: Consideration was given to

Active: We considered

Passive: There was huge commitment demonstrated by staff

Active: Staff demonstrated huge commitment

Avoid hidden verbs

Spot them by ...ion endings and passive verbs.

For example: An analysis of the system was performed in order to facilitate a comparison with the implementation of

Could become: We analysed the system to compare how we had implemented....

# How to Write a Successful Awards Entry

Have a look at our examples below for some Plain English hints and tips. If you read your writing back it should sound like how you would normally speak. Avoid double negatives (phrases like 'not only' and 'but also')

For example, instead of writing: This has informed not only the daily work of the team when delivering interventions, but also enabled us to develop...

Say: This has informed the daily work of the team and enabled us to...

<b><u>Instead of writing</u></b>	<b><u>You would say</u></b>
in the near future	soon
at this point in time	now
a wide range	many
due to the fact that	because
in order to	so
this affords us the opportunity to	this allows us to/we can
in the event that	if
with regard to	about
future plans	plans
consensus of opinion	consensus
end result	result
summarise briefly	summarise
cooperate together	cooperate
key initiatives	initiatives
positive regard	positive
integral part of	important

# How to Write a Successful Awards Entry

## **Try and avoid jargon**

Social services can be full of lots of words and phrases other people don't understand. Assume your reader does not work in social care, so use everyday language to explain concepts. Sometimes this may mean using more words, not less. For example:

<b><u>Instead of writing</u></b>	<b><u>You might say</u></b>
Service users	People who use services
Person-centred approach	Put people first
Improving outcomes	Make things better
Personalised care package	Care for their needs
Re-enablement	Help them get better
Service delivery	Our service

## **And finally...editing**

It's easy to check the average number of words per sentence by using the spell checker in Word. Proof your entry a couple of times to find and cut padding words you don't need.

# Terms & Conditions

## **Have permission to enter**

If you are entering as an individual, you must have permission from your organisation and if you are nominating someone else you should also obtain their permission in writing. You will not be able to complete your online application unless you can confirm that you have permission.

## **Be registered with the SSSC**

Or work for an organisation which is inspected by the Care Inspectorate.

## **Fall within the timeframe**

Entries must be current and you should be able to provide evidence of practice or work carried out within the last two years (up to 31 July 2023). You will also be asked to provide details of any awards your entry has already won.

## **Use plain English**

Avoid the use of jargon, use of acronyms or social services words and phrases – imagine that you are explaining it to a stranger.

## **Have to be within the word count**

No more than 600, or you risk being disqualified.

## **Be on time**

Entries must be submitted before the deadline of 6.00pm on Friday 01 September 2023.

## **Attend the Awards if shortlisted**

You should be able to send a representative to the ceremony on Thursday 23 November 2023.

## **Give permission to be published**

We may mention you in press releases sent to the media, if shortlisted.

## **Be contactable**

Cooperate to produce a short promotional film, agree to being filmed at a location of your choice and provide supporting information (pictures and logos) if shortlisted.

## **Judging process**

Entries are judged by a panel comprised of Scottish Government policy officials and key sector stakeholders. They will meet to judge and agree a shortlist of three finalists in each category. The shortlist is expected to be announced late September.