

Consultation on professional standards

Launch date 21 February 2019

Respond by 1 May 2019, 5pm



Introduction

1. Social Work England is preparing to become the new regulator for social workers in England, taking over from the Health and Care Professions Council. Our purpose is to protect the public by setting and promoting high standards of education and professional conduct amongst social workers. Our ambition is to provide a smooth and seamless transition of regulation and to maximise the opportunities of being both new and specialist to engage with the sector and listen to the public.
2. We were established by the Children and Social Work Act (2017) and The Social Workers Regulations (2018). This legislation requires us to consult on the rules that govern the way we will work and the standards which we will expect social workers and education and training providers to meet. Over and above that, we see consultation as an important means of us talking to you about our approach to regulation and hearing your views. This consultation represents a significant milestone on our journey to becoming the new regulator for social workers in England.
3. This document is one of five setting out the rules and standards we need to establish before taking over the regulation of social workers in England. The other four documents address:
 - i. qualifying education and training standards;
 - ii. education and training rules;
 - iii. registration rules; and
 - iv. fitness to practise rules.

What we are consulting on

4. Our professional standards set out the requirements we expect social workers to meet. They set out what a social worker in England must know, understand and do. Standards are different to rules. Our rules outline what we do, and our standards set out what we expect those we regulate to do.
5. The professional standards serve several important functions. Qualifying social workers must be able to meet the professional standards when entering onto the register for the first time, education and training providers must ensure courses enable their graduating students to meet the professional standards, and all registered social workers are required to continue to meet the professional standards throughout their career. The

professional standards will apply to all social workers in England from the day we begin regulating the profession.

6. These standards are the threshold standards necessary for safe and effective practice. They set out what a social worker in England must know, understand and be able to do following the completion of their social work degree. Social workers must meet the standards to stay on the register. We will use these standards to decide whether a social worker is fit to practise.
7. Ahead of this consultation, we worked with the social work regulators in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland to understand their standards journey and to ensure that our standards were aligned. We also worked collaboratively with our professional expert group¹ and our experts by experience group² during the development of the professional standards. From this, we identified that it was important for us to provide one set of clear, relatable and relevant professional standards.
8. Our professional standards sit alongside both the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and the Knowledge and Skills Statements for adults and child and family social workers (KSS). The PCF is designed to support social workers throughout each stage of their career, beyond the threshold standards. The PCF acts as an overarching framework by setting out key capabilities expected of a social worker as they develop in their career. These include professionalism, values and ethics, knowledge, intervention and skills and professional leadership. The KSS were developed by the Chief Social Workers to set out what is expected of qualified social workers in specific practice settings in specific roles and at different levels of seniority. The KSS map onto the practice domains of the PCF (Knowledge, Critical Reflection and Analysis, Interventions and Skills) and should help guide everyday practice. The relationship between our standards, the KSS and PCF will evolve. We are keen to hear your views on the kind of guidance we could produce on social work practice and values that would support the implementation of our professional standards.
9. We hope this early collaboration presents you with a set of professional standards that are relevant to current social work practice and puts into sharp focus our commitment to protecting the public.

¹ Association of Directors of Adults Social Services, Association of Directors of Children's Services, Association of Professors of Social Work, Become, British Association of Social Workers, CAF/CASS, Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, Chief Social Worker for Adults, Frontline, Goldsmiths University London, Joint Social Work Education Council, Local Government Association, Northern Ireland Social Care Council, NSPCC, Principal Adult Social Worker Network, Principal Child and Family Social Worker Network, Professional Standards Authority, Scottish Social Services Council, Shaping Our Lives, Skills for Care, Social Care Institute for Excellence, Social Care Wales, Think Local Act Personal, Unison, University of Bradford, University of Central Lancashire, University of Sheffield and Youth Justice Board.

² The experts by experience group are comprised of people with a wide variety of lived experience of social work. The group is facilitated by us and its purpose is to inform and challenge our thinking, increase communication and understanding of different perspectives, and create real opportunities for engagement in order to make effective change happen.

10. As part of our commitment to collaboration, we will appoint regional engagement leads. As registered and practising social workers, they will work with a range of stakeholders, including employers, people with lived experience of social work, social workers, and education and training providers. They will raise awareness and ensure the consistent implementation of our standards, including sharing analysis of when social workers or education and training providers fall short of standards, and they will drive forward our engagement across regions.
11. Our draft professional standards are at **Annex A** with a graphic showing how they fit together at **Annex B**.

How do I take part?

12. The aim of this consultation is to invite your feedback and to test our thinking on the proposed professional standards. We welcome feedback on all the standards, but we have asked a number of targeted questions in an online survey, which you can find [here](#).
13. The survey makes use of open and scaling questions (1: strongly disagree - 5: strongly agree). For reference, the survey questions are reproduced below. Please see the 'how to respond' section for information about how to complete the survey, or for assistance in responding to these questions.

Questions

1. To what extent do you agree that the standards are relevant to current social work practice?
2. To what extent do you agree that the standards reflect the relationship social workers have with people³?
3. To what extent do you agree that the language is appropriate?
4. Is there anything in the standards you don't understand?
5. Is there anything missing?
6. Do you have any other comments?

³ In this context the definition for people is 'people with lived experience of social work.'

Impact assessment

14. Our aim is to enable change and ultimately improve people's lives by providing clear, effective and responsive regulation of social workers. The proposals are designed with people who use social work services in mind, ultimately striving for better public protection and increased confidence in social work as a profession.
15. We expect that any impact would be beneficial but will be felt most immediately by social workers and their employers, by education and training providers, by students and by people who use social work services.
16. The impact assessment questions can be found at the end of the online survey, but are also listed in the grey box below, for reference.

Impact assessment questions

Do you think that the proposed changes will:

1. bring benefits for your organisation or those you represent?
2. impact differently on people based on protected characteristics⁴?

How to respond

17. The consultation is open until 5pm on Wednesday 1 May 2019.
18. You can answer the questions online via the survey found [here](#).
19. Or you can email us at consultation.responses@socialworkengland.org.uk
20. Or by post to: Consultation Responses, Social Work England, 1st floor, 1 North Bank, Blonk Street, Sheffield, S3 8JY.
21. If you need any reasonable adjustments to help you respond, please contact us at consultation.responses@socialworkengland.org.uk.

⁴ The Equality Act (2010) lists nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

What will happen next

22. Once the consultation period is completed, we will analyse the responses we have received. We will then publish a document which summarises the responses and explains the decisions we have taken as a result.

23. All standards require approval and rules are subject to review by the Secretary of State before publication. The final sets of rules and standards will be published on our website. The rules will govern how we operate as a regulator and will come into force on the day we assume regulatory responsibility. Social workers and education and training providers will be expected to meet the professional and qualifying education and training standards once we assume regulatory responsibility.

Annex A

Draft professional standards

1 Promote the rights, interests and wellbeing of people⁵.	As a social worker, I will:
	1.1 Treat each person as an individual.
	1.2 Respect and promote the human rights, views and wishes of people, balancing responsibilities and risk, working in partnership to achieve best outcomes.
	1.3 Promote the independence of people and empower them to understand and exercise their rights.
	1.4 Advocate the rights of people to make informed choices and live the life they choose.
	1.5 Respect and maintain the dignity and privacy of people.
	1.6 Recognise that I work in diverse communities, take account of the impact of inequality, disadvantage and discrimination on people.
	1.7 Respect differences and demonstrate social work values and principles, including by promoting social justice, equality and inclusion.
	1.8 Be aware of the impact of my own values on my practice and recognise, and use responsibly, the power and authority I have when working with people.
2 Establish and maintain the trust and confidence of people to effect change.	As a social worker, I will:
	2.1 Be truthful, open, honest, ethical and trustworthy.
	2.2 Actively listen and use a range of appropriate and accessible communication methods to build relationships.
	2.3 Be reliable and dependable.
	2.4 Treat information about people with sensitivity and handle confidential information in line with the law.
	2.5 Declare issues that might create conflicts of interest and make sure they do not influence my judgement or practice.
	2.6 Keep to policies and procedures about accepting gifts, money and hospitality from people.

⁵ In this context the definition for people is 'people with lived experience of social work.'

	2.7 Work and cooperate with colleagues and treat them with respect.
	2.8 Maintain professional relationships.

3 Challenge unethical practice and report concerns.	As a social worker, I will:
	3.1 Report allegations of harm and challenge and report exploitation and any dangerous, abusive or discriminatory behaviour or practice.
	3.2 Follow practices and procedures designed to keep me and other people safe from violent and abusive behaviour at work.
	3.3 Tell my employer, or the appropriate authority, about any resourcing or operational difficulties that might get in the way of safe practice.
	3.4 Be open and honest when things go wrong which have or may have caused physical, emotional, financial or any other harm or loss.
	3.5 Inform people of the right to complain and provide support to do it.
	3.6 Record and act on concerns raised to me and follow them up.
	3.7 Take appropriate action when a social worker's fitness to practise may be impaired.
	3.8 Tell my employer, Social Work England, and/or the appropriate authority about anything that might affect my ability to do my job competently and safely and may affect my fitness to practise.
	3.9 Inform Social Work England if I am subject to criminal proceedings or a regulatory finding is made against me, anywhere in the world.
	3.10 Raise concerns about organisational wrongdoing and cultures of inappropriate and unsafe practice, which could include whistleblowing.
3.11 Cooperate with any investigations by my employer, Social Work England, or another agency into my fitness to practise or the fitness to practise of others.	

4 Uphold trust and confidence in my practice and in the social work profession.	As a social worker, I will not:
	4.1 Abuse, neglect, discriminate, exploit or harm anyone, or condone this being done by others.
	4.2 Abuse the trust of people or access to personal information about them or their property, home or workplace.

	4.3 Falsify records or condone this being done by others.
	4.4 Put me or other people at unnecessary risk.
	4.5 Behave in a way that would bring into question my suitability to work as a social worker while at work, or outside of work.
	4.6 Allow someone's complaint to adversely affect support that is provided to them.
	4.7 Use technology, social media or other forms of electronic communication unlawfully, unethically, or in a way that brings the profession into disrepute.

5 Be accountable for the quality of my work and the decisions I make.	As a social worker, I will:
	5.1 Exercise authority and professional judgement as a social worker within the appropriate legal and ethical frameworks.
	5.2 Maintain clear, accurate and up-to-date records, documenting how I arrive at my decisions.
	5.3 Ask for help from my employer or the appropriate authority if I do not feel able to, or well enough prepared to, carry out any part of my work or if I am not sure about how to proceed.
	5.4 Clarify where the accountability lies for delegated work and fulfil that responsibility when it lies with me.
	5.5 Recognise the knowledge and skills of workers from my own and other professions and work in collaboration with them.
	5.6 Challenge practice, systems and processes that conflict with Social Work England's professional standards.
	5.7 Use information from a range of sources to inform assessments and analysis of risk to make a professional decision.
	5.8 Establish and maintain skills in information and communication technology and adapt my practice to new ways of working, as appropriate.
	5.9 Make sure that relevant colleagues and agencies are informed about identified risks and the outcomes and implications of assessments, and decisions I make.
	5.10 Exercise professional judgement whilst holding different explanations in mind.
5.11 Contribute to an open and learning culture in the workplace to discuss, reflect on and share best practice.	

6 Take responsibility for maintaining my professional identity and developing my knowledge and skills.	As a social worker, I will:
	6.1 Ask for different feedback and critically reflect on, and improve, my practice.
	6.2 Seek out learning opportunities that enable me to reflect on my professional values, development needs and demonstrate the impact on my practice.
	6.3 Keep my practice up to date and record how I use research, theories and models to evidence and inform my practice and my professional judgement.
	6.4 Evidence what impact continuous professional development has on the quality of my practice.

Annex B

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS



1. **Promote the rights, interests and wellbeing of people with lived experience of social work**



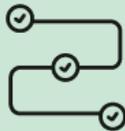
2. **Establish and maintain the trust and confidence of people to effect positive change**



3. **Challenge unethical practice and report concerns**



4. **Uphold trust and confidence in my practice and in the social work profession**



5. **Be accountable for the quality of my work and the decisions I make**



6. **Take responsibility for maintaining my professional identity and developing my knowledge and skills**