



# Guidance for Applicants from the EEA and Switzerland

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## Introduction

This guidance is for people who have completed their social work qualification and would like to apply to join the Social Work England register. All social workers who want to work in England have to be registered.

If you are a citizen of Switzerland or a European Economic Area (EEA) member state, or if you have EU enforceable rights (for example through marriage), you can use your social work qualifications to practise social work in England.<sup>1</sup>

### Our register

The Social Work England register is available at [socialworkengland.org.uk](https://socialworkengland.org.uk).<sup>2</sup> Anybody can search the register to check that a social worker is registered and find out:

- Their Social Work England registration number.
- Whether they are subject to any registration conditions.
- The postal town in which they work.
- Whether they are subject to any fitness to practise sanctions.

‘Social worker’ is a protected title, meaning that only people on the register can practise as a social worker in England.<sup>3</sup> Anyone who isn’t registered is breaking the law and can be prosecuted.

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<sup>1</sup> The European Union (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2015.

<sup>2</sup> This will be available from 2 December 2019.

<sup>3</sup> The Social Workers Regulations 2018, regulation 28.

## How to apply

If you are applying to register with us for the first time you will need to [create an online account](#).<sup>4</sup>

You can use your Social Work England account to:

- Apply to be a registered social worker.
- Pay your scrutiny and registration fees.
- Record your continuing professional development (CPD).
- Renew your registration annually.
- Update some of your personal details when you need to.

To complete the application process, you will need:

- A personal email address that we can use to contact you;
- To verify your identity via [GOV.UK Verify](#), or send us documents so we can confirm your identity;
- Evidence that you are a citizen, or married to a citizen, of Switzerland or an EEA member state;
- Details of the qualification that entitles you to join the register;
- Evidence to demonstrate your knowledge of English;
- Details of any criminal convictions or cautions (except those that are 'protected' – see below for details on protected convictions and cautions);
- Details of any health conditions you have that may affect your practice as a social worker; and
- Details of any occasions when your fitness to practise has been found to be impaired by any regulatory body.

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<sup>4</sup> This webpage is still under construction.

## Your documents

Throughout the process, you can upload documents such as your qualification certificate. If you are unable to upload your documents, or if we request further evidence, you must send us a certified copy of the original document. You can find out how to certify your documents [here](#).<sup>5</sup>

Any documents that are not written in English must be accompanied by a certified translation.<sup>6</sup>

## Fees

To begin assessing your application we require a non-refundable scrutiny fee.

If your application is successful you will also need to pay a registration fee.<sup>7</sup> When your fees are due, we will let you know via your online account and you will then have 14 days to make your payment.

If you don't pay your fees within 14 days, we will close your application.<sup>8</sup> If you still wish to practise as a social worker you will need to make a new application to join the register.

Registration fees are due annually.<sup>9</sup> The renewal period is 1 September to 30 November.

You can find more information about registration and scrutiny fees [here](#).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This guidance is still under preparation.

<sup>6</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 23.

<sup>7</sup> The Social Workers Regulations 2018, regulation 17.

<sup>8</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 24(2) and 26(2).

<sup>9</sup> The Social Workers Regulations 2018, regulation 17.

<sup>10</sup> This guidance is still under preparation.

## Verifying your identity

If you have a UK address, you may be able to verify your identity using [GOV.UK Verify](#). This is a secure way to prove who you are online. It is guaranteed by the government to hold your data securely and usually takes between 20 and 45 minutes to verify your identity for the first time.

If you don't live in the UK, or if you are unable to use GOV.UK Verify, you will need to provide documents that prove your identity and address, for example your passport and a recent utility bill.

We will also need to see additional documents to verify that you are an EEA or Swiss citizen, or otherwise entitled to EU enforceable rights.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The European Union (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2015, regulation 38(1)(a).

## Qualification requirements

To register as a social worker, you must have completed a recognised social work qualification.<sup>12</sup>

### Mutual recognition of professional qualifications

The mutual recognition of professional qualifications (MRPQ) directive 2005/36/EC enables people to have their professional qualifications recognised across the EEA and Switzerland. This is to enable citizens to move freely between these states to practise their profession.

You will be eligible to apply for registration under the MRPQ directive if:

- You are a citizen of an EEA member state or Switzerland, or you have EU enforceable rights which mean that you can be treated no less favourably than an EEA or Swiss national, for example through marriage. (Please note this is a complicated area of law, and we suggest seeking independent legal advice in relation to this area).
- You are a fully qualified social worker in an EEA member state or Switzerland (if social work is not regulated in that state you must also have practised there for at least one year within the last 10 years).<sup>13</sup>
- You qualified in the EEA or Switzerland, or you have qualifications which have been recognised in the EEA or Switzerland (for the latter you must also have practised as a social worker in the recognising state for at least three years within the last 10 years).<sup>14</sup>

### Evidence of your qualification

If your qualification was gained in England, we will usually be able to check your qualification against course provider records. If your qualification was gained anywhere other than England, you will need to provide us with evidence of your qualification.

For qualifications gained outside of England you will need to provide:

- Your certificate.
- The name and address of your course provider.
- The name and address of the awarding body.
- A full transcript showing all the modules you studied (unless you qualified in the UK).

Your certificate must show the date your qualification was awarded. If it doesn't, you will need a letter from your institution confirming this date.

If your qualification was received outside of the UK, we may contact your course provider to gather information about the areas you covered throughout your studies. Our advisers will

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<sup>12</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 14.

<sup>13</sup> The European Union (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2015, regulation 29(1)(b).

<sup>14</sup> The European Union (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2015, regulation 27(a)(i).

assess your qualifications and experience to determine whether they meet our standards for registration.<sup>15</sup>

If we feel that there are significant areas in which your skills, knowledge and experience do not meet our standards, we may ask you to undertake a period of adaptation, or alternatively, a test of competence.<sup>16</sup> This is a period of supervised practice and/or academic training intended to make up for the shortfalls that have been identified. You can find out more about periods of adaptation, and how we test competence [here](#).<sup>17</sup>

## Qualifications awarded more than five years ago

### **If you have been practising as a social worker**

If you have been practising as a registered social worker outside of England, you need to tell us:

- The regulatory body you were, or are, registered with.
- Your registration number with that body.
- The dates of your registration period.

If there was not a registration body in the country in which you practised, you must provide us with information about the work you were doing. More information about what we require can be found [here](#).<sup>18</sup>

### **If you have not been practising as a social worker since you qualified**

If you gained your recognised social work qualification more than five years ago, and you have not been practising as a social worker, you will need to give us evidence to show how you have kept your skills, knowledge and experience up to date.<sup>19</sup>

You can do this by providing evidence that you have completed relevant education and/or training. This must cover at least 60 days within the 12 months before you make your application.<sup>20</sup> A day is defined as a minimum of six hours. The 60 days do not need to be continuous.

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<sup>15</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 25 (1).

<sup>16</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 25 (5), in line with The European Union (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2015, regulation 32.

<sup>17</sup> This guidance is still under preparation.

<sup>18</sup> This guidance is still under preparation.

<sup>19</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 14(2).

<sup>20</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 14(2)(a) and 14(4).



You can use one or more of the following to update your skills, knowledge and experience.

### 1. Supervised practice

Supervised practice involves working with the supervision of a registered social worker in a social work role. You can undertake supervised practice in the UK or another country. Your supervisor must be registered with the relevant regulatory body for the duration of your supervised practice, and have been registered as a social worker for at least three years. For each period of supervised practice you undertake during the 12 month period, you will need to provide:

- The contact details of your supervisor.
- The name of the regulatory body they are registered with.
- The dates of your supervised practice.

### 2. Formal study

A postgraduate course will be accepted as formal study as long as a qualification in social work was necessary to enrol on the course. You will need to send us a certified copy of your certificate or upload a scan of the original so that we can verify your qualification. We may also contact your course provider for confirmation.

### 3. Private study

We have separate guidance about what we consider acceptable CPD in social work, which you can find [here](#).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This guidance is still under preparation.

## Knowledge of English

Before we can add you to our register, we need to be confident that your English is of a suitable standard. This means that you need to be able to speak and write in English, understand people when they speak to you in English, and understand documents written in English.

### Evidence to demonstrate your knowledge of English

You can give us any evidence that you feel demonstrates your knowledge of English. If your evidence is not recent, it is more likely to be accepted if you provide additional evidence showing that you have kept your English skills up to date. This could include a reference from an employer or evidence that you have recently worked in a country where English is the first and native language.

We will consider all the evidence you provide when making a decision about your application. There are certain types of evidence that are more likely to satisfy us that your knowledge of English meets the necessary standard.<sup>22</sup> These are outlined below.

#### 1. IELTS certificates

For us to accept an international English language testing system (IELTS) qualification, your certificate must show:

- That you took the academic version of the test.
- That you got an overall score of at least 7.0.
- The original stamp and test report form number.

If you received your IELTS qualification more than five years ago your application is more likely to be accepted if you also provide more recent evidence of your knowledge of English.

#### 2. Social work qualifications gained in the UK

If you have a UK social work qualification that is recognised by Social Work England, you can use it as evidence of your knowledge of English. If you received your qualification more than five years ago you should also provide more recent supporting evidence.

#### 3. Social work qualifications gained outside the UK and taught in English

In some circumstances it is possible to use a social work qualification gained outside the UK as evidence of your knowledge of English. Your qualification is more likely to be accepted for this purpose if it was obtained:

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<sup>22</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 16.

- Within the last 5 years; and
- In a country where English is the first and native language.

We will contact your course provider directly to confirm that the qualification was entirely taught and examined in English.

#### 4. Practising social work in English

If you have been registered and practising as a social worker in a country where English is the first and native language, this may be used as evidence of your knowledge of English. We are more likely to accept this evidence if:

- You were registered and practising for at least one year within the last five years; and
- An English language assessment was required for registration.

You will need to provide details of the regulatory body you were registered with, as well as contact details for your employer so that we can confirm you have been practising using English.

## Convictions, cautions and penalty notices

### Convictions and cautions

You must declare any convictions or cautions that have been issued in the UK or any other country.<sup>23</sup> We have powers to require all applicants to disclose these matters.

You must declare:

- All convictions and cautions, including spent convictions and cautions, issued in the UK or any other country unless they are 'protected' (see below for details on protected convictions and cautions).
- All road traffic convictions or cautions unless they are 'protected' (see below for details on protected convictions and cautions).
- All offences for which you have been convicted in a military court or tribunal.

You should provide as much information as possible about any convictions or cautions you have to enable us to make a decision about your application. If we need to ask for additional information your application will take longer to process.

You must provide the following information in relation to each of the convictions or cautions you have:

- Whether you received a caution or were convicted of an offence.
- The offence the conviction or caution relates to.
- The date of the conviction or caution.
- The name and address of the issuing court or police authority, if known.
- Any other information that you believe will help to explain the circumstances that led to the conviction or caution.

### Penalty notices

You must also declare any fixed penalty notices, penalty notices for disorder, or harassment notices issued to you in the UK or any other country, with the exception of:

- Any road traffic offences where you have paid a fixed penalty notice, for example for speeding offences or civil matters such as parking tickets.
- Any fixed penalty notices, penalty notices for disorder, or harassment notices issued in Scotland (these are protected from disclosure by amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974).

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<sup>23</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 15 (1) and (2).

Please provide the following information in relation to each of the above notices you have received:

- The offence the notice was issued for.
- The date you received the notice.
- The name and address of the authority who issued you with the notice, if known.
- Any other information that will help to explain the circumstances that led to the notice being issued.

## Protected convictions and cautions

Some convictions and cautions are protected by law meaning you do not need to declare them to us. If you do tell us about a protected offence, we won't take it into account when we assess your application for registration.

### **Protected cautions**

A caution is protected, and you don't need to tell us about it, if both of the following apply:

- More than six years have passed since you received the caution (or more than two years have passed if you were under the age of 18 at the time of the caution); and
- It is not for a 'listed offence' (see below).

### **Protected convictions**

A conviction is protected, and you don't need to tell us about it, if all of the following apply:

- More than 11 years have passed since the date of conviction (or more than five years and six months have passed if you were under the age of 18 when convicted).
- It is not for a 'listed offence' (see below).
- You did not receive a custodial sentence (regardless of whether served).
- You have not been convicted of any other offence at any time.

## Listed offences

Listed offences have been taken from legislation and include serious violent or sexual offences as well as other offences that are relevant to the role of a social worker. These offences will never be removed from a criminal record. You will not be eligible for registration if you have been convicted of a listed offence, unless this conviction has been quashed.<sup>24</sup>

You can find out whether an offence is a listed offence by going to the [Disclosure and Barring Service website](#).

This list also includes equivalent offences committed outside of the UK. However, it is not possible for the disclosure and barring service to capture a definitive list of all equivalent offences under the law of all other jurisdictions. If you are aware that you have committed an offence overseas which may be equivalent to an offence in the UK, you should seek independent expert or legal advice to check whether you need to tell us about it.

## Disclosure of a conviction, caution or penalty notice

If you disclose a conviction, caution or penalty notice we will assess whether this is likely to impact on your ability to practise safely and effectively. We will take into account the type of offence, when it occurred, and whether you have committed any other offences. We will also take into account the details you provide about the circumstances surrounding the offence.

We will contact the police to verify any details you provide about your convictions, cautions or penalty notices to help us determine whether your fitness to practise will be affected.

## Safeguarding vulnerable groups legislation

During the application process you will also be asked to disclose whether you are, or have ever been:

- Listed on the adult's and/or children's list under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007.
- Listed on the adult's and/or children's list under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.
- Subject to a barring order under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006).
- Barred from working with vulnerable people in any other country.

If any of these apply to you, you will need to provide us with full details.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 13.

<sup>25</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 15(4).

## Health conditions

When you apply to join the register, you will also need to tell us about any physical or mental health conditions which may impact on your practice as a social worker.<sup>26</sup> We use the term ‘health condition’ to mean an illness, injury, disability, or impairment.

### Why we ask about health conditions

We ask about health conditions because we need to know that the people on our register are able to fulfil their role as a social worker safely and effectively. Our focus is whether you have a health condition that could adversely affect your practice, not whether you have any health conditions that you are able to manage effectively.

Many people with health conditions are able to practise safely and effectively. You may receive support or treatment from a health care professional. Additionally, your employer has a responsibility to discuss what reasonable adjustments they can provide to support you at work.

### Which conditions to disclose

You must tell us about a health condition if both of the following apply:

- Your health condition affects, or could affect, your ability to perform your role as a social worker safely and effectively (this includes any episodic conditions that may affect your ability to practise safely and effectively if you experience a recurrence); and
- You do not have arrangements in place that manage the health condition and enable you to perform your role as a social worker safely and effectively.

If the above criteria apply to your health condition, we will need to know more about the effect that your health condition may have on your ability to perform your role, and what steps you are taking towards managing the condition. You should include the following information in your application:

- The nature and seriousness of your health condition.
- Whether it is an ongoing or episodic condition.
- How your condition may affect your ability to practise safely and effectively.
- What steps you are taking to manage your health condition (for example medication, reduced hours) and how effective these are.
- Whether you have made your employer aware of your condition.
- Any relevant dates of occurrences and treatment.

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<sup>26</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 15(5).

## What happens if I disclose a health condition?

If you declare a health condition to us, we will need to be sure that you have insight and understanding into your condition and its effects. We need to know that you have considered the ways in which certain aspects of your practice may be affected, and that you have taken appropriate steps to ensure that you do not put yourself or others at risk.

We consider each application on a case by case basis. In some cases, we may need to speak with your doctor or other treating clinician, but we will never do this without your permission. All information regarding your health will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be shared with those who need it to deal with your application.



## Fitness to practise history

During the application process we will ask you whether your fitness to practise has ever been found to be impaired. You must tell us if any regulator has ruled against you in fitness to practise proceedings either in the UK or abroad.<sup>27</sup> This includes regulators outside of the social work profession.

If a regulatory body has ever found your fitness to practise to be impaired, you must provide the following information:

- The name of the regulatory body.
- The date that they made their decision.
- The outcome of your fitness to practise case (for example whether you were suspended, removed from the register etc.).
- Any further details about the case that will help us to understand the circumstances that led to the decision.

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<sup>27</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 15(3).

## Submitting your application

It is important to be honest when applying to join our register. Before you submit your application, you will be asked to confirm that the information you have provided is accurate. If you give false or misleading information, we may deny your application for registration or remove you from the register.<sup>28</sup>

You must tell us as soon as possible if any of your details change. Failure to do this could lead to suspension or removal from the register.<sup>29</sup>

### Professional standards

Before you submit your application you will be asked to confirm that you have read our professional standards and agree to abide by them.<sup>30</sup> These are the standards that we will expect you to meet and uphold throughout your registration and are the threshold standards necessary for safe and effective practice. They set out what a social worker in England must know, understand, and do throughout their career. Compliance with these standards is a requirement for continued registration, and any failure to comply may be taken into account in fitness to practise proceedings.<sup>31</sup> You can read the standards [here](#).

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<sup>28</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 21(2)(b).

<sup>29</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 21(2)(b).

<sup>30</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 22(7).

<sup>31</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 21(2)(c).

## Making a decision about your application

Once we have received your application, we will review the information you have provided. We will contact you if we require any additional documents or information. Please return this within 14 days if you would like to continue with your application.<sup>32</sup>

When making a decision about your application, we have three options. We may:

- Accept your application to join the register;
- Refuse your application to join the register; or
- Accept your application with conditions.

You must not carry out any work as a social worker unless your application for registration has been accepted and you have received confirmation that you have been added to the Social Work England register.

For any further information or support with the application process please contact us on 0000 000000 or by emailing [enquiries@socialworkengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@socialworkengland.org.uk). You can also visit our website at [socialworkengland.org.uk](https://socialworkengland.org.uk).

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<sup>32</sup> The Social Work England (Registration) Rules 2019, rule 24(2) and 26(2).