

## Additional statements for social workers in fostering and adoption

### **Introduction**

The Professional Capability Framework (PCF) sets the professional standards for social workers throughout their career at all levels, from entry to professional qualifying training to senior, strategic roles. The PCF is a generic framework, applicable to social work practice in all settings and specialisms and at all levels.

### **The Professional Capabilities Framework**

The PCF comprises nine domains with significant interdependency between the domains. The PCF has nine levels, starting with level 1, which addresses beginning social worker training, through to level 9, which addresses strategic social work practice. The PCF establishes the knowledge, skills and values for effective social work practice at whatever level it is practised. (These following statements only relate to the post qualifying levels.)

Within each level distinct capabilities have been identified that practitioners are expected to be able to evidence. This paper sets out some additional statements to support these capabilities for professionals working in settings concerned with fostering and adoption. The details of the capability statement at each level are intended to be used diagnostically to help identify strengths and areas for development, rather than as a list of areas for which evidence must be produced.

### **Audience**

These statements demonstrate how the PCF domains and levels can be applied to fostering and adoption practice. They are applicable to all social workers who work in fostering and adoption irrespective of setting (independent, voluntary, private and local authority) and including children and family social workers with responsibility for children in family placements. They can be used by those who are newly qualified, through to directors and senior managers of organisations. For purposes of

simplicity, terms such as supervising social workers are not used, as that is specific to fostering.

### **PCF levels**

**ASYE** Newly qualified social workers (NQSWS) must be provided with the supervision, support and direction that enables them to link the underpinning expectations for ASYE with the specific values, knowledge and skills required to practise in family placement. This will depend in part on their specific role and the work that this entails, from the recruitment and support of foster carers and adopters to direct work with children for whom the care plan is an alternative family placement. By the end of the ASYE, social workers will have a good overview of the legal framework, objectives, procedures, resources, skills and challenges of family placements in order to engage directly in this area of practice.

The ASYE capabilities should have been reached by the end of the year so the additional statements for ASYE should be read with that in mind.

**Social workers** will exercise more confident, detailed and analytical judgements and decision making in situations of increasing complexity, risk, uncertainty and challenge. They should develop a more detailed and evidence-based knowledge base (of child development, parenting, the legal processes and intervention strategies) and an ability to ensure that placement planning and making are centred on the welfare and needs of the child. They will build confidence and independence (while accessing supervision and support when needed) and use their initiative to broaden their repertoire of knowledge and skills. They will be managing their own caseload and be able to demonstrate a range of skills in working sensitively and professionally with children and families (e.g. birth, foster and adoptive). They should have a thorough understanding of the roles of other professionals and systems and be able to work in effective collaboration with them.

**Experienced social workers** in fostering and adoption will be able to manage complex cases where there are higher levels of identified complex need and risk.

They should be able to work more autonomously and demonstrate expert, effective and reflective practice. They will manage their own caseload and be able to offer expert opinion within the organisation and to others. This role includes modelling good practice, co-working and setting standards for other practitioners to follow. They will offer supervision, consultation, support and mentoring to others (e.g. NQSWs and less experienced staff). They will have well developed, evidence-based expertise in child placement and be a source of reliable knowledge and advice for others. They will use their CPD to revisit topics where the knowledge base has developed (e.g. law, special guardianship, attachment, cognitive neuroscience, contact).

**Advanced level social workers** (practitioner, manager and/or professional development) will contribute to the professional development of others, supporting staff individually or in teams to ensure high quality and child-centred outcomes for children, families, carers and communities. They will have excellent working relationships with all relevant disciplines and professionals and be able to identify and contribute to training to enhance provision, as well as contributing to improvements to relevant agency policy and procedures. The advanced practitioners will manage or co-work in the most complex cases, modelling and encouraging reflective, evidence-based practice, and offer expert opinion to others. They will facilitate less experienced social workers to develop evidence-based, child-centred judgement and decision making knowledge and skills.

**Strategic level social workers** (principal social worker, strategic social work manager and/or workforce development/education) provide effective professional leadership within their organisations. They play a key role in ensuring that emerging policy, legislation, evidence and best practice in family placement is incorporated into the agency's strategic direction, policy, planning and procedures and is effectively resourced in a way that maximises the child-centred effectiveness of the agency. They champion research and evidence-informed practice and inspire practitioners at all levels. They update their research informed knowledge about child placement to ensure that their organisation promotes positive outcomes and experiences for

children, families, carers and communities. They maintain an overview of risk management both within their organisation and through inter-agency collaboration and partnership. They should ensure that national knowledge and learning is aligned with local and regional priorities and issues: this would include commissioning strategic and evidenced-based needs analysis.

### **How to use the additional statements**

The PCF sets out capability statements to aid social workers in understanding what is expected from them at the level at which they practise. This paper supplements this with a descriptor for each domain to support and facilitate the application of the PCF to fostering and adoption. It has also been cross-referenced with the *Curriculum guide for planning and supporting permanence* (2013)<sup>1</sup> which sets out the curriculum content and resources for professional development in this area.

The paper can be used to:

- Support discussion and action to enhance professional development, identifying current strengths and future priorities for development.
- Support managers in developing role and job descriptions.

It is important to remember that these additional statements support the PCF and are not intended to replace them. The additional statements should be used alongside the statements for each level and domain.

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[http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/Social\\_Work\\_Education/CurriculumFrameworkCPDPlanningSupportingPermanence.pdf](http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/Social_Work_Education/CurriculumFrameworkCPDPlanningSupportingPermanence.pdf)

<b>PCF domain statements</b>	<b>Additional statements for ASYE (A+F)</b>	<b>Additional statements for social worker (A+F)</b>
<b>Professionalism</b>		
<p>Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession, a title protected in UK law. Social workers demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for their conduct, practice and learning, with support through supervision. As representatives of the social work profession they safeguard its reputation and are accountable to the professional regulator.</p>	<p>Adoption and fostering NQSWs (A+F NQSWs) model the social worker role by contributing to the public face of the organisation through recruitment activities and responding to enquiries. They recognise the impact of their behaviours in interaction with foster carers, adopters, children and parents and others. (V4)</p>	<p>Adoption and fostering social workers (A+F SWs) undertake their professional role in the context of local authority, voluntary and private sector providers. They are able to work with respect and integrity with children, birth families, prospective foster carers and adopters, parents, and other professionals. (V4)</p>
<b>Values and ethics</b>		
<p>Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision making, including through partnership</p>	<p>A+F NQSWs recognise the range of values and ethics that foster carers and adopters may have. They demonstrate respect and work</p>	<p>A+F SWs recognise and manage appropriately the range of values that foster carers and adopters may have. They work in</p>

<p>with people who use their services. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of their profession, its ethical standards and relevant law.</p>	<p>sensitively with the values that are held by children and young people. They promote and protect the privacy of children, young people, foster carers and adopters. (V2,V3)</p>	<p>partnership with foster carers and adopters and within the context of the law, while ensuring that their focus is child centred. (V2,V3)</p>
<p><b>Diversity</b></p>		
<p>Social workers understand that diversity characterises and shapes human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. Diversity is multidimensional and includes race, disability, class, economic status, age, sexuality, gender and transgender, faith and belief. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experience may include oppression, marginalisation and alienation as well as privilege, power and acclaim, and are able to challenge appropriately.</p>	<p>A+F NQSWs positively apply their professional values and understanding of diversity to their work with children and young people, adopters and foster carers and potential carers. (V2)</p>	<p>A+F SWs recognise and respect the complex issues arising from identity and the diversity of experience of children and prospective foster carers and adopters. They take account of the significance of diversity and discrimination in the history of many fostered and adopted children and are able to consider the impact on children of living with families that may be very different from their birth family. They are able to recognise discrimination and challenge colleagues (foster carers and adopters) and senior staff. (V2,V3)</p>

<p><b>Social justice and economic rights</b></p>		
<p>Social workers recognise the fundamental principles of human rights and equality, and that these are protected in national and international law, conventions and policies. They ensure these principles underpin their practice. Social workers understand the importance of using and contributing to case law and applying these rights in their own practice. They understand the effects of oppression, discrimination and poverty.</p>	<p>A+F NQSWs understand the impact of social exclusion, inequality and lack of social justice within a fostering/adoption setting.</p>	<p>A+F SWs uphold and apply the principles of human rights and equalities in their work with birth families, children, foster carers and adopters. They manage the dynamics of power and powerlessness in their work with children, young people, foster carers and adopters, and birth families. They enable and support carers and children to identify and pursue a range of options that may enhance their status (through access to education, learning, work, housing, health services and welfare benefits). (K4,K1)</p>
<p><b>Knowledge</b></p>	<p>The <i>CPD Curriculum guide for supporting permanence</i> (see footnote 1) is an important document in considering the knowledge that social workers require in fostering and adoption.</p>	<p>The <i>CPD Curriculum guide for supporting permanence</i> (see footnote 1) is an important document in considering the knowledge that social workers require in fostering and adoption.</p>

<p>Social workers understand psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and physical influences on people, human development throughout the life span and the legal framework for practice. They apply this knowledge in their work with individuals, families and communities. They know and use theories and methods of social work practice.</p>	<p>A+F NQSWs understand the range of permanence options in the context of evidence about outcomes in care (e.g. stability, education, offending, wellbeing); they demonstrate knowledge and application of legal and policy frameworks and guidance that inform and govern practice in fostering and adoption. They start to recognise the short- and long-term impact of psychological, socio-economic, environmental and physiological factors on the lives of children, young people, foster carers and adopters, and how this informs assessment, support and supervision. They understand the range of agencies and teams, their roles and responsibilities. They understand forms of harm and their impact on people, and the implications for practice. (K1-4,K6-11,K13-20)</p>	<p>A+F SWs demonstrate knowledge and application of appropriate legal and policy frameworks and guidance that inform and govern practice in fostering and adoption. They have knowledge of human growth and development (focusing particularly on child development including physical health, mental health, education, emotional and behavioural difficulty and identity) and can apply this in practice. They draw on concepts of strength, resilience, vulnerability, risk and resistance, and apply these in practice. They use knowledge about forms of abuse and their impact on children and adults (e.g. attachment). They are familiar with a range of models to assess parenting capacity and they support carers through their knowledge of parenting interventions. They value and take account of the expertise of service users, carers and professionals, including foster</p>
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		carers and adopters. (K7-1-21)
<b>Critical reflection</b>		
Social workers are knowledgeable about and apply the principles of critical thinking and reasoned discernment. They identify, distinguish, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence. These include practice evidence, their own practice experience, service user and carer experience together with research-based, organisational, policy and legal knowledge. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity.	A+F NQSWs (A+F) are analytical and accountable for judgements and long term impacts (i.e. assessments of adopters) work with others internally and across disciplines and agencies in order to ensure good outcomes for children and families. (K5)	A+F SW's reflect on their practice and are able to challenge themselves, other professionals and carers. They are able to differentiate between the support and supervisory functions of their roles. They understand the importance of timeliness in planning for care and permanence. (K5,C1-3)
<b>Skills and intervention</b>	The <i>CPD Curriculum guide for supporting permanence</i> (see footnote 1) is an important document in considering the skills social workers require in fostering and adoption.	The <i>CPD Curriculum guide for supporting permanence</i> (see footnote 1) is an important document in considering the skills social workers require in fostering and adoption.

<p>Social workers engage with individuals, families, groups and communities, working alongside people to assess and intervene. They enable effective relationships and are effective communicators, using appropriate skills. Using their professional judgement, they employ a range of interventions: promoting independence, providing support and protection, taking preventative action and ensuring safety while balancing rights and risks. They understand and take account of differentials in power and are able to use authority appropriately. They evaluate their own practice and the outcomes for those they work with.</p>	<p>A+F NQSWs work in partnership with birth families, children, foster carers and adopters while maintaining a clear focus on the current and future welfare of the child. They communicate clearly in their work (both verbally and in writing); they build effective relationships with children, young people and foster carers and adopters; they identify possible interventions and are able to use at least one appropriate assessment framework to assess prospective carers. With support they are able to undertake group work. They understand the risk factors in fostering and adoption. They record information in a timely, respectful and accurate manner; they write records and reports for a variety of purposes with language suited to function. With supervision, they clearly report and record analyses and judgements. (S1-9,COL2)</p>	<p>A+F SWs work with the different dynamics that pertain to partnership work with prospective and approved foster carers and adopters and with children in this context. They model good communication with children and carers; they supervise foster carers; they build relationships while both managing boundary issues for carers and providing support. They gather the range of information necessary to assess prospective carers and draw this into well evidenced, analytical reports. They lead and facilitate in groups for preparation and support groups, deliver training and support carers in learning the necessary skills. (S1-9,COL1-3)</p>
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<b>Contexts and organisations</b>		
<p>Social workers are informed about and proactively responsive to the challenges and opportunities that come with changing social contexts and constructs. They fulfil this responsibility in accordance with their professional values and ethics, both as individual professionals and as members of the organisation in which they work. They collaborate, inform and are informed by their work with others, inter-professionally and with communities.</p>	<p>A+F NQSWs understand and work to the legal obligations, structures and behaviours required within a fostering and adoption context. They know when and how to access legal advice where necessary. They liaise effectively with foster carers and adopters, working with others internally and across disciplines and agencies (e.g. health, education, court) in order to ensure good outcomes for children. (COL1)</p>	<p>A+F SWs recognise the implications of law and guidance for practice and are able to explain these to foster carers and adopters. They establish good working relationships across agencies and professions relevant to fostering and adoption and help foster carers and adopters navigate their way through. (COL1-3)</p>
<b>Leadership</b>		
<p>The social work profession evolves through the contribution of its members in activities such as practice research, supervision, assessment of practice, teaching and management. An individual's contribution will</p>	<p>A+F NQSWs are able to promote the learning and development of self, carers and adopters.</p>	<p>A+F SWs deliver training and support carers in learning the necessary skills. (V1-2)</p>

<p>gain influence when undertaken as part of a learning, practice-focused organisation. Learning may be facilitated with a wide range of people including social work colleagues, service users and carers, volunteers, foster carers and other professionals.</p>		
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<b>Additional statements for experienced social worker</b>	<b>Additional statements for advanced social worker</b>	<b>Additional statements for strategic social worker</b>
<b>Professionalism</b>		
<p>Experienced social workers demonstrate professionalism through their modelling of good practice, the support they provide to other staff and professionals as well as to foster carers and adopters. They enable and facilitate solutions that acknowledge the vulnerabilities that children, parents and carers experience. They facilitate and encourage learning environments for themselves, their teams, foster carers and adopters. (V4)</p>	<p>They identify concerns/issues within practice e.g. 'dealing with drift or significant delay in decision making' and collaborate effectively across the system to resolve them. (V4)</p>	<p>Strategic level social workers ensure professional social work standards are promoted and enhanced throughout the organisation, including the scrutiny role of panels. They manage the relationship with elected members, panels, boards and commissioners within and outside the organisation. (V4)</p>
<b>Values and ethics</b>		
<p>They model and support others to reflect on and manage their values; and they are able to</p>		<p>Strategic level social workers lead on devising and implementing strategies to ensure the</p>

<p>promote service user, children, young people, carer, adopter and birth parent participation in developing service delivery. (V2,V3)</p>		<p>organisation learns from the experience of children, young people, foster carers and adopters and creating a culture that promotes meaningful participation of individuals, communities, families and carers. (V3)</p>
<p><b>Diversity</b></p>		
<p>They demonstrate and model the effective and positive use of power and authority in their work with birth families, children, foster carers and adopters, i.e. in dealing with conflicts between children and their carers. (V2,V3)</p>	<p>They support the team/organisation in developing a culture that values and is able to work with difference. They positively manage complex issues of diversity.</p>	
<p><b>Social justice and economic rights</b></p>		
<p>Experienced social workers ensure relationships with children, young people, foster carers and adopters are based on an understanding of roles and limitations. They support others to reflect on how power imbalances impinge on</p>	<p>Advanced social workers support others to identify when independent advocacy is appropriate for children or carers and advocate for necessary resources.</p>	

<p>relationships, assessment and support. They confidently communicate legislative and procedural issues to other professionals, carers and adopters.</p>		
<p><b>Knowledge</b></p>		
<p>The <i>CPD Curriculum guide for supporting permanence</i> (see footnote 1) is an important document in considering the knowledge that social workers require in fostering and adoption.</p>		
<p>Social workers are competent and confident with an ability to share learning from their knowledge. They use a range of models to assess parenting and provide clear and robust intervention plans. They understand the concept and techniques of therapeutic parenting and know when these are applicable. They are able to support social workers and carers in developing their understanding of child</p>	<p>Advanced social workers acknowledge the criticality of relationships for children and those caring for them; the importance of considering how links between a child and their family origins are kept 'real'. They value and take account of the expertise of service users, carers and professionals and apply it to practice in assessment, matching and possibly lifelong learning. (K2-4,13-20)</p>	<p>Strategic level social workers ensure that staff, carers and adopters are able to access knowledge on law, policy and guidance. They promote a workforce (including foster carers) that values learning and development. They commission knowledge development on assessment, matching and care planning and use organisational and local data to inform planning (recruitment support, training etc.).</p>

<p>development and the implications of trauma and poor parenting. (K10-21)</p>		
<p><b>Critical reflection</b></p>		
<p>They are confident in providing professional opinion, e.g. recommending adoption, based on their reflections. They are able to support others in making decisions in a timely manner. (K5,C1-3)</p>	<p>Advanced social workers maintain an environment where critical reflection and analysis is valued and supported by social workers, foster carers and adopters. (K5,K11-13,C2-3)</p>	
<p><b>Skills and intervention</b></p>		
<p>The <i>CPD Curriculum guide for supporting permanence</i> (see footnote 1) is an important document in considering the skills social</p>		

workers require in fostering and adoption.		
<p>Experienced social workers model the range of assessment skills, interventions, support and supervision skills for their colleagues and other professionals. They are able to communicate skilfully and confidently both verbally and in writing in making recommendations for courts, assessment and matching panels. They demonstrate how to build relationships while managing the boundary issues for carers and provide support; they model and sustain good engagement and supervision with foster carers and adopters; they are skilled in assessing and intervening including situations where adopters or foster carers are subject to allegations. (S1-9, COL1-3)</p>	<p>Advanced social workers support the development of effective communication skills in others. They communicate effectively in a wide range of situations (from assessing prospective carers to dealing with allegations), including public speaking. They model effective assessment and management of risk in complex situations, including positive risk taking approaches. They develop and maintain a culture that supports social/professional networks for foster carers, children and adopters. (S1-9,COL1-4)</p>	<p>They ensure that strategic decisions are informed by relevant knowledge and practice in fostering and adoption and the need to develop positive outcomes for children and young people, adopters and foster carers. (COL1,5)</p>
<b>Contexts and organisations</b>		

<p>Experienced social workers help colleagues, foster carers and adopters make sense of legal and organisational changes and are active in implementing changes that may be required. They support and advise others in interpreting and using the guidance and law to promote the best outcomes for the child. They model and encourage positive relationships with relevant teams and organisations (e.g. private fostering or adoption agencies, schools, colleges).          (COL1-3)</p>	<p>Advanced social workers have a sophisticated knowledge of fostering and/or adoption law and are able to advise others. They positively influence developments that affect fostering and/or adoption practice and contribute to and provide professional leadership through organisational change and development, including the identification of gaps in service. They have a good understanding of local communities and the demographics of the local population.          (COL1-4)</p>	<p>Strategic social workers maintain a sophisticated knowledge of the law relevant to fostering and adoption, using it to support strategic decision making. They initiate and facilitate effective multi-agency partnership working to drive improvements in performance and outcomes for foster carers, adopters and children and young people. They promote positive working relationships across and outside the organisation. (COL1-4)</p>
<p><b>Leadership</b></p>		
<p>Social workers contribute to developing a learning culture with colleagues, foster carers and adopters. They may be involved in mentoring and coaching, as well as providing professional, reflective supervision and support</p>	<p>Advanced social workers promote effective supervision of foster carers and support for adopters, but also more generally in providing expertise in family placement issues within and across agencies. They ensure duty of care to foster carers and for</p>	<p>They are able to use data and knowledge to inform strategic direction, i.e. recruitment campaigns, training and development strategies for staff and carers.</p>

<p>to foster carers and others. (COL4,V1-3)</p>	<p>adopters, promoting the rights for full information as a resource for the child. They recognise the variation and difference in starting points for prospective foster carers and adopters and can identify and develop their potential. They encourage carer involvement. They are able to use data and knowledge to inform strategic direction, i.e. recruitment campaigns, training and development strategies for staff, carers and adopters, in improving the service. (COL1-4)</p>	
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## Appendix

### Additional statements for social workers in fostering and adoption

The statements have been cross-referenced to the Curriculum guide on planning and supporting permanence: reunification, family and friends care, long-term foster care, special guardianship and adoption. The table below provides a key for the cross-referencing. Full details can be found in the curriculum guide.

	<b>Values, ethics, diversity and rights</b>
V1	Taking a child-centred approach that has a clear focus on rights, developmental needs and potential of the child through to adulthood
V2	Having a commitment to working collaboratively with all members of all families – birth, family and friends, foster, adoptive, special guardians.
V3	Valuing diversity: awareness of the significance in family placement of gender, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation and disability, and a capacity to reflect on experience and attitudes/practice and to challenge discrimination.
V4	Demonstrating professionalism in all aspects of work with children, families and agencies.
	<b>Knowledge</b>
K1	Policy context of child placement in fostering and adoption.  The development of and rationale for the range of permanence options in the context of evidence about outcomes in care.
K2	Recent developments in foster care.

K3	Recent developments in adoption.
K4	Law, regulation and guidance: family placement, role of the courts and care planning/the independent reviewing officer (IRO)
K5	Family placement theory and research for practice.  A critical approach to research methodology, research findings and their application.
K6	Care planning.
K7	Permanence options and outcomes.
K8	Decision making and practice in moving children.
K9	Contact: risks/benefits for infants, children and adolescents in foster care/adoption.
K10	Specific issues: leaving care/staying on with foster carers, siblings, role of the independent reviewing officer (IRO), placement stability, transitions to adulthood from care.
K11	Assessment of the parents' capacity to change.
K12	Interventions/care giving models: social learning (e.g. MTFC, KEEP, Webster-Stratton).
K13	Child development theory and research.  Health: physical.
K14	Health: mental.
K15	Education.
K16	Emotional and behavioural development.

K17	Family and social relationships.
K18	Identity.
K19	Social presentation.
K20	Self-care.
K21	Caregiving/parenting.
	<b>Critical reflection and analysis</b>
C1	Open-minded/capacity to be curious about behaviour, thoughts and feelings of children and caregivers.
C2	Use of research evidence: linking knowledge of theory and research.
C3	Professional judgement, planning and proactive decision making.
	Skills and interventions
S1	Assessment and care planning for children.
S2	Assessment of families.
S3	Matching children and foster carers/adopters – matching linked to support plans.
S4	Supporting and working with children.
S5	Supporting birth families.
S6	Supporting family and friends carers.
S7	Supervising and supporting foster carers.
S8	Supporting special guardians.
S9	Supporting adoptive parents.

	<b>Contexts, organisations and leadership</b>
COL1	Promoting multi-agency working in care planning, review and supporting the family placement.
COL2	Working in partnership with agencies in the statutory and independent sectors to recruit carers, adopters and special guardians; adequate support for children and awareness of their needs in universal and specialist services.
COL3	Supporting children, carers and adopters in their roles/relationships within professional networks.
COL4	Taking up strategic leadership roles to maximise benefits and minimise risks in child placement.