

**The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer**

**The Role of the Registered Social Worker in Statutory Interventions: Guidance for Local Authorities**

**Practice Governance Framework: Responsibility and Accountability in Social Work Practice**

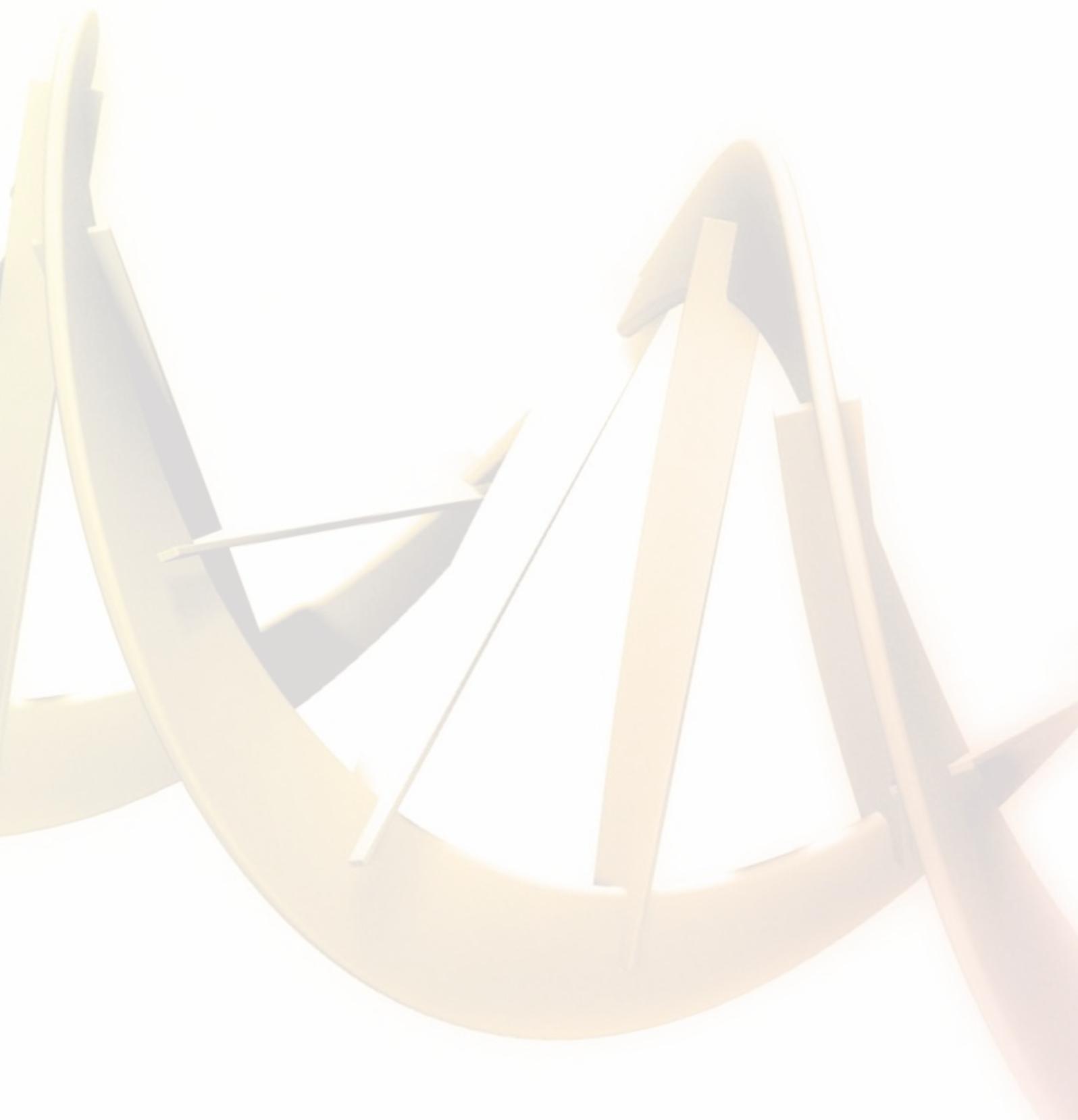


**Changing Lives**

Practice Governance Group



The Scottish  
Government



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**Practice Governance Framework: Responsibility and Accountability in Social Work Practice**

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ISBN: 978-0-7559-9734-3

The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Produced for the Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland  
DPPAS10889 (03/11)

Published by the Scottish Government, March 2011

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# Ministerial Foreword



Achieving good outcomes for people and communities depends on having a confident, competent and valued social services workforce with effective frontline practitioners delivering safe and personalised support and services. To do this, employers and practitioners need to work together to develop a supportive and creative environment where people have a shared vision, clarity on accountabilities and responsibilities, good leadership and supervision, manage risk and work effectively with each other, other agencies and the people who need support and help.



This Practice Governance Framework, in conjunction with the guidance on The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer and The Role of the Registered Social Worker in Statutory Interventions, provides a suite of materials to help employers and practitioners achieve this.

The Framework recognises that there are complex interdependencies and relationships in delivering safe, effective, accountable and professional practice within the variously configured governance and organisational structures that exist. One size does not fit all, however, the Framework provides a prompt which employers and practitioners can use locally to assess whether there is clarity of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities; that the conditions, organisational environment, leadership and professional support are in place to promote wellbeing; and to take responsibility for their own practice and learning and development.

In talking about 'safe' practice, let's be clear this is not about being cautious or unenterprising, which might be the default position of some especially in a challenging financial climate. This is about balancing risks, rights and responsibilities in a way that supports well-informed decision making, using professional judgement and discretion, empowering creativity and opportunities to do things differently and more efficiently and effectively, within a framework of accountability.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Andrew Lowe for his commitment, tenacity and leadership in taking this work forward. Also, the members of the Practice Governance Group who, I know, have been challenging, constructive and highly motivated in developing and delivering these materials. From the ongoing engagement and drive, it is clear the importance the group attaches to providing clear, practical and accessible support for those responsible; at all levels, for developing and delivering support and services. I commend their work to you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Ingram', written in a cursive style.

**Adam Ingram**

Minister for Children and Early Years

**ANDREW LOWE, CHAIR OF THE  
PRACTICE GOVERNANCE GROUP**



I am delighted to publish this suite of materials to aid practitioners and employers further develop and sustain a confident, competent and valued workforce which delivers safe, effective and personalised support and services.



The publication of the Practice Governance Framework completes the final task for the Practice Governance Group, one of five Change Programmes set up following *Changing Lives* to develop some national resources and tools to promote and support change in social services to improve outcomes for the people and communities we support. Our first publication, in May 2008, was the Principles and Standards for Citizen Leadership. This work, developed by the User and Carer Forum, led to a booklet, a DVD and training events and has contributed effectively to shifting the balance of leadership. In my own area, Scottish Borders, the citizen leadership group has effectively campaigned to get a large local bank to make its entrance accessible.

In developing this Framework and the guidance on The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer and The Role of the Registered Social Worker in Statutory Interventions which complement it, we have endeavoured to provide accessible, clear and pragmatic advice to promote an understanding of the key accountabilities of practitioners and employers and what needs to be in place to discharge these statutory roles.

The underpinning principles of social work are readily accepted. However, the task of translating these into practical guidance for the day-to-day environment with the complex relationships and responsibilities that exist between employers and practitioners, and practitioners and the people they work with, was indeed a challenge. I think, however, we have managed to produce a suite of materials which can add value in highlighting what good arrangements look like and what needs to be in place to achieve these.

While we have focussed these materials on the registered social worker, there is resonance and applicability for other practitioners delivering social services, and indeed for employers, whether dealing with social workers or allied staff.

I thank the group for their constructive engagement, unwavering commitment and good natured discourse. As ever, while this marks the end of the work of this group, it is only a step on the road to realising the aspirations of *Changing Lives* and requires all of us to seize the opportunities to continue to learn, build on good practice and new ways of working to achieve that.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Lowe', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

**Andrew Lowe**

Chair of the Practice Governance Group

# **THE ROLE OF THE CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER**

**Principles, Requirements and Guidance  
pursuant to Section 5(1) of the Social Work  
(Scotland) Act 1968**



## Introduction

1. The 21st Century Social Work Review, *Changing Lives*, described the changing social environment in which we operate and the complexities, challenges and expectations this brings. Engaging with people in developing the solutions which best meet their needs in line with local priorities will make a significant contribution to improved outcomes for individuals and communities. This requires a confident, competent and valued social care workforce, capable of working flexibly in a variety of settings. Particular challenges are raised for staff working in integrated service delivery arrangements whether they be internal, interdepartmental settings or multi agency partnerships with NHS or Police partners. While these matrix arrangements can carry great benefits for effective service delivery, they do re-emphasise the need for clarity of accountability and professional leadership.
2. Clarification of the role and function of the Chief Social Work Officer will support local authorities and elected members in ensuring that this statutory post not only enhances professional leadership and accountability, but provides a key support and added value to a local authority and its partners in delivering positive outcomes locally.

## Background

3. The requirement for every local authority to appoint a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) is contained within Section 3 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. The particular qualifications are set down in regulations. This is one of a number of statutory requirements in relation to posts, roles or duties, with which local authorities must comply.
4. The overall objective of the CSWO post is to ensure the provision of effective, professional advice to local authorities – elected members and officers – in the authorities' provision of social work services. The post should assist authorities in understanding the complexities of social work service delivery – including in relation to particular issues such as corporate parenting, child protection, adult protection and the management of high risk offenders – and the key role social work plays in contributing to the achievement of national and local outcomes. The CSWO also has a role to play in overall performance improvement and the identification and management of corporate risk insofar as they relate to social work services. Clarity and consistency as to the purpose and contribution of the CSWO is particularly important given the diversity of organisational structures that exist.
5. *Changing Lives* concluded that there was a need to strengthen the governance and professional leadership roles of the CSWO to oversee social work services and ensure the delivery of safe, effective and innovative practice. In doing this, there are a number of key issues to be clarified and addressed:

- (a) Role and function;
  - (b) Competencies, scope and responsibilities;
  - (c) Accountability and reporting arrangements.
6. This guidance:
- (a) will assist local authorities in the discharge of their social work responsibilities;
  - (b) will help local authorities maximise the added value of the CSWO – both at a corporate and professional level;
  - (c) acknowledges that local authorities operate with very different management and organisational structures;
  - (d) provides advice on how best to locate the CSWO role within operational structures to maximise its effectiveness; and
  - (e) is sufficiently generic to remain relevant in the event of future management or organisational structural change.

## Role and Function

7. The CSWO is required to ensure the provision of appropriate professional advice in the discharge of local authorities' statutory social work duties. For the role to be effective in the varying circumstances and configurations of Scottish local authorities, a focus on role and function rather than position or structures is appropriate. However, the CSWO should be positioned at a level of seniority commensurate with being able to advise the local authority and undertake the complex duties described in this guidance.
8. The CSWO is a 'proper officer' in relation to the social work function: an officer given particular responsibility on behalf of a local authority, where the law requires the function to be discharged by a specified post holder.

## Competencies, Scope and Responsibilities of the CSWO

9. Clarification of competence, scope, responsibilities and access, should maximise the effectiveness of the post and the corporate and professional contribution it makes.

### 9.1 **Competencies**

The qualifications of the CSWO are set down in regulations<sup>1</sup>. The post holder must be a qualified social worker, registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. Local authorities will want to ensure that the CSWO can demonstrate extensive experience at a senior level of both operational and strategic management of social work and social care services.

### 9.2 **Scope**

The scope of the role relates to all social work and social care services, whether provided directly by the local authority or in partnership with other agencies. Where services are purchased on behalf of the authority, including from the private and voluntary sector, the CSWO has a responsibility to advise on the specification, quality and standards of services commissioned.

### 9.3 **Responsibility for values and standards**

The CSWO should:

- (a) promote values and standards of professional practice, including relevant National Standards, and provide a clear statement of expectation of social services workers and employers (consistent with the SSSC Codes of Practice) to be agreed with the Chief Executive and elected members;
- (b) ensure that these values and standards are communicated on a regular basis, adhered to and reviewed periodically;
- (c) work with Human Resources (or equivalent support function) to ensure that all social service workers meet the requirements of the SSSC's Code of Practice and that all registered workers meet the requirements of their regulatory body;
- (d) support and advise managers in maintaining and developing high standards of practice and supervision;
- (e) ensure that only registered social workers undertake those functions reserved in legislation or are accountable for those functions described in guidance;
- (f) ensure that there are effective governance arrangements for the management of the complex balance of need, risk and civil liberties, in accordance with professional standards. Where the council's corporate policy on risk does not reflect this balance, the CSWO is required to bring this to the attention of the Chief Executive and to contribute to the development of appropriate governance arrangements;
- (g) ensure appropriate advice is provided on corporate workforce planning and quality assurance, including safe recruitment practice, probation/mentoring arrangements, managing poor performance and promoting continuous learning and development for staff;

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<sup>1</sup> **1996 No. 515 (S.49)** The Qualifications of Chief Social Work Officers (Scotland) Regulations 1996 HMSO

- (h) actively promote continuous improvement, raising standards and evidence-informed good practice, including the development of person-centred services that are focussed on the needs of the service user;
- (i) oversee the quality of practice learning experiences for social work students and effective workplace assessment arrangements, in accordance with the SSSC Code of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers;
- (j) ensure that appropriate systems are in place both to promote good practice and to identify and address weak and poor practice. The CSWO should work with managers to ensure these systems are effective and, where this is not the case, the CSWO has the responsibility for bringing this to the attention of the Chief Executive and contributing to the development or improvement of such systems;
- (k) ensure that significant case reviews are undertaken into all critical incidents either resulting in – or which may have resulted in – death or serious harm;
- (l) take final decisions on behalf of the local authority in relation to a range of social work matters, including adoption, secure accommodation, guardianship and other statutory decisions required from time to time;
- (m) contribute to reports to the Chief Executive and elected members – providing independent comment where necessary – on the findings of relevant performance reports, setting out:
  - i. implications for the local authority, for services, for service users and carers, for individual teams/members of staff/partners as appropriate;
  - ii. implications for delivery of national and local outcomes;
  - iii. proposals for remedial action;
  - iv. means for sharing good practice and learning;
  - v. monitoring and reporting arrangements for identified improvement activity;
- (n) report to the local authority on any other social work related issues;
- (o) prepare an annual report to the local authority on all of the statutory, governance and leadership functions of the role.

#### 9.4 Access

To discharge these responsibilities effectively, the CSWO needs:

- (a) **access** to people and information across the local authority, including the Chief Executive, elected members, managers and frontline practitioners, partner services and agencies. These arrangements will vary according to individual councils, but should be clearly articulated;

- (b) to be able to bring matters to the attention of the Chief Executive to ensure that professional standards and values are maintained;
- (c) to **be visible and available** to any social services worker and ensure the availability of professional advice and guidance;
- (d) to provide professional advice as required to senior managers across the authority in support of corporate agendas.

### 9.5 *Leadership responsibilities*

The CSWO is responsible for providing professional leadership. The CSWO should:

- (a) support and contribute to evidence-informed decision making and practice – at professional or corporate level – by providing appropriate professional advice;
- (b) seek to enhance professional leadership and accountability throughout the organisation to support the quality of service and delivery;
- (c) support the delivery of social work's contribution to achieving local outcomes;
- (d) promote partnership working across professions and agencies to support the delivery of suitably integrated social work services; and
- (e) promote social work values across corporate agendas.

## Accountability and Reporting Arrangements

10. Local authorities will need to agree:

- (a) how the CSWO is enabled to influence corporate issues, such as managing risk, setting budget priorities and public service reform;
- (b) access arrangements for the CSWO to the Chief Executive and elected members;
- (c) how the CSWO reports to the Chief Executive;
- (d) a statement on how any potential conflict of interest will be recognised and resolved;
- (e) the relationships, responsibilities and respective accountabilities of managers and the CSWO;
- (f) a mechanism to include an independent, professional perspective to the appointment of the CSWO;
- (g) procedures for removal of a CSWO postholder, bearing in mind the need for continuity in the provision of the CSWO functions, the value of independent professional advice and the arrangements for the appointment and removal of the local authority's other proper officers;
- (h) formal deputising arrangements to cover any period of absence by the CSWO.

# **The Role of the Registered Social Worker in Statutory Interventions: Guidance for Local Authorities**



## Introduction

1. The overarching purpose of the Scottish Government<sup>1</sup> is to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.
2. The purpose of this guidance for local authorities is to set out those social work functions which only registered social workers should be accountable for.
3. Highly trained and skilled social workers make specific contributions to a range of complex circumstances which may or may not involve formal statutory intervention, and it is essential that that continue. It is not the purpose of this guidance to reflect every aspect of what social workers contribute to achieving better outcomes for individuals, families and communities. The scope is limited to where there is a need for statutory intervention. Identifying the role of the registered social worker in those areas where there is a need for statutory intervention does not constrain using social work skills creatively, often working with others, in early intervention and preventing risk factors developing into crises. Nothing in this guidance is intended to detract from the engagement of social workers, often working with others, in non statutory interventions.
4. This guidance complements the *Guidance on the Role of Chief Social Work Officer*<sup>2</sup> and the Practice Governance Framework produced as part of a national suite of materials from *Changing Lives*<sup>3</sup>.

## Context

5. “The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work”<sup>4</sup>
6. To make changes in their lives, people assess how to meet need, recognise and manage risk to themselves and others and do this in the context of balancing often competing rights and responsibilities. Through their relationships, social workers help people analyse where they are, work out where they want or need to be, and can be the catalyst for change.

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1 *National Performance Framework*, November 2007

2 Published March 2009 and available at <http://www.socialworkscotland.org.uk/resources/pub/GuidanceRoleCSWODocMarch2009.pdf>

3 *Changing Lives*, Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/02/02094408/0>

4 Definition of Social Work from the International Federation of Social Workers.

7. Alongside other key professions, social work has an important contribution to make to realising notions of citizenship, inclusivity, fairness and service improvement embedded in the national outcomes in the Performance Framework. While social work can justifiably claim to play some part in all the national outcomes, there are some where this contribution is central.
8. While not exclusive to social work, promotion of personalised solutions has always been important; engaging with people who use support or services, carers, families and communities being the hallmark of effective social work practice. Personalisation is a key means of ensuring that people have the support or services that meet their needs and priorities and address their personal circumstances. The promotion of Citizen Leadership<sup>5</sup> supports this as does a focus on outcomes rather than process or procedure.
9. Effective social work requires a range of professional skills, in particular the ability to make and contribute to holistic, often multi-agency, assessments of the circumstances with people. It also requires co-operation and close working relationships between social workers, people who use services, carers, providers of care in the private and third sector and other professionals – in health, education, housing, employment and justice services. The ability to draw together a diverse range of opinions, develop and agree solutions that both promote the wellbeing of the individual and manage the risk to an individual and/or the public, particularly where risks and needs are complex, is a key skill of the social worker. Promotion of health and well-being is important as well as the provision of care and support. It is essential that an appropriate balance is struck between managing risk and encouraging self determination. Whilst the former is critical, it is also vital that supports offered to individuals encourage them to be all they can.

## The Role of the Registered Social Worker in Statutory Interventions

10. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to promote social welfare and partnership working is key to providing high quality and effective support and services. In protecting and promoting the welfare and wellbeing of children, adults at risk and communities, statutory powers may be exercised to address very serious, complex issues. This requires balancing competing needs, risks and rights. In these circumstances, given the far-reaching significance of the decisions being made, it is important that accountability for the exercise of these functions should rest with a registered social worker.
11. Some tasks required in respect of statutory interventions may be undertaken by others than a registered social worker. However, final decisions/making recommendations for statutory intervention drawing on information held by others and work done by them

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<sup>5</sup> *Principles and Standards of Citizen Leadership*, encourages people who use services and their carers to become involved as leaders in the planning, development and monitoring of their services, published April 2008. It can be accessed through:  
<http://www.socialworkscotland.org.uk/resources/pub/CitizenLeadershipPrinciples&StandardsPaper.pdf>

as appropriate, lies with the accountable registered social worker. All social service workers must be able to explain and account for their practice and to have their thinking challenged appropriately<sup>6</sup>. Registered social workers are accountable for their own competence and performance and that of those they line manage. Where they don't have line management responsibility for others who may be involved, accountability for competence and performance remains with the individual and their employer. However, the registered social worker does have responsibility for helping ensure everyone plays their part in discharging their role in respect of the statutory intervention.

## Care and Protection

12. Careful and complex decisions as to when and how there may be intervention in the lives of individuals and families may have far-reaching consequences for those concerned and fundamentally affect the future course of their lives. A number of agencies and professionals will contribute to the process. However, it is important for the assurance of all involved, that *accountability* for these important decisions and the subsequent exercise of statutory functions lies with a suitably qualified and trained professional – a registered social worker.
13. So, where either children or adults are:
  - in need of protection; and/or
  - in danger of serious exploitation or significant harm; and/or
  - at risk of causing significant harm to themselves or others; and/or
  - unable to give informed consent;

a registered social worker must retain accountability for:

- carrying out enquiries and making recommendations where necessary as to whether or not a person requires to be the subject of compulsory protection measures;
- implementation of the social work component of a risk management plan and take appropriate action where there is concern that a multi-agency plan is not being actioned;
- making recommendations to a children's hearing or court about whether a child should be accommodated away from home;
- making recommendations on behalf of the local authority to a children's hearing or court about permanence or the termination/variation of supervision requirements;
- carrying out the measures identified in the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 and The Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009.

14. The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 does not require that a 'Council Officer' be a registered social worker. However, where this is the case they, as others deemed as 'Council Officers' for this purpose, must retain accountability for carrying out the measures contained in the Act.

## Criminal Justice

15. Criminal justice social work relies on partnership working and so intervention with an offender can be undertaken by a range of professionals, with or without qualifications. However, the functions set out below inform significant judgments impacting on, for example, whether individuals should be returned to prison or be permitted to remain in the community. The requirement for effective risk assessment and risk management means that registered social workers are best placed to ensure safe and accountable practice.
16. Within criminal justice, a registered social worker must retain accountability for:
  - provision of all reports to courts which could have an impact on an individual's liberty;
  - provision of all reports to the Victims, Witnesses, Parole and Life Sentence division of government as they could impact on public safety and/or on an individual's liberty;
  - investigation, assessment, review and implementation of risk management plans and the supervision of those who will be subject to statutory supervision on release from prison;
  - while directly undertaking case management work in respect of those who are subject to statutory orders or licences and who are considered to pose a high risk of serious harm.

## Mental Health and Adults with Incapacity

17. Mental Health was the first practice area to reserve functions to suitably qualified social workers.
18. Only registered social workers with additional appropriate qualification may:
  - carry out the duties of a Mental Health Officer as set out in the Adults with Incapacity Act 2000, Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007;
  - carry out the duty to enquire into individual cases where adults with mental disorder may be at risk from others or whose property is at risk or who are putting themselves at risk.

## Professional Leadership

19. The requirement for every local authority to appoint a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer is contained within Section 3 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. The qualifications of the Chief Social Work Officer are set down in regulations<sup>7</sup> and there is guidance on the Role of the Chief Social Work Officer<sup>8</sup>. Only a registered social worker may carry out the role of Chief Social Work Officer.

## Why a Registered Social Worker

20. Social workers are trained to make assessments taking account of a range of factors including identifying and balancing need, risk, and rights; to deal with behaviour which is abusive; and to intervene to assist and to protect either individuals or communities.
21. To qualify as a registered social worker, an individual must hold an entitling qualification in social work, be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and comply with the SSSC Code of Practice for Social Service Workers.
22. This provides both probity of actions and assurance to individuals and the wider public interest that judgments about intervening in families to provide protection, depriving individuals of their liberty for periods of time or managing offenders are being taken by people who are suitably trained, experienced and professionally qualified to make crucial decisions which will have a major impact on people's lives.
23. This does not in any way diminish the contribution of anyone else involved in an individual's support or supervision, nor mean that it is only in this way that registered social workers make a contribution. But rather it clarifies the lines of accountability for specific statutory social work functions. It is for Chief Executives, elected members, Chief Social Work Officers and line managers to ensure that, whatever the configuration of services or functions, only registered social workers are delegated accountability for the exercise of these particular functions. This should be the case even where some tasks within the function may be carried out by other staff, the employer retains overall responsibility for the competence and performance of such staff.

**December 2009**

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7 **1996 No. 515 (S.49)** The Qualifications of Chief Social Work Officers (Scotland) Regulations 1996 HMSO

8 *Role of the Chief Social Work Officer*, March 2009

# Practice Governance Framework: Responsibility and Accountability in Social Work Practice



# Introduction

1. This Practice Governance Framework complements guidance on the Role of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) (February 2009) and the Role of the Registered Social Worker in Statutory Interventions: Guidance for Local Authorities. It draws on the Scottish Social Services Council's Codes of Practice, SWIA's guide to Supported Self-Evaluation, COSLA's guidance to elected members and the Framework for Continuous Learning in Social Services, to highlight the reciprocal responsibilities in delivering safe, effective and personalised practice.
2. The purpose of the Framework is to:
  - Outline the key accountabilities of employers and practitioners and what should be in place to discharge these;
  - Provide a prompt or tool which employers and practitioners can use to assess whether the appropriate conditions are met to ensure safe and effective practice.
3. This can help:
  - Develop and sustain a confident, competent and valued workforce;
  - Ensure an environment and culture that promotes creativity, taking responsibility and the delivery of safe and effective practice;
  - Promote wellbeing and retention of a healthy work/life balance;
  - More effective working with colleagues, other agencies and with people who use services to improve outcomes for individuals, families and communities.
4. While the Framework focuses on the social worker, it also has relevance to other practitioners who work in the social services sector. Similarly, while the assumed employer in the Framework is within the statutory sector, there is resonance and relevance for employers in the private and third sector.

- 5 The Framework covers 5 key areas:
  1. Risk, Discretion and Decision Making
  2. Self and Self Regulation
  3. Developing Knowledge and Skills
  4. Guidance, Consultation and Supervision
  5. Information Sharing and Joint Working.

For each of these it provides an overarching statement on the area, describes responsibilities for Employers/CSWOs, social workers (much of which is relevant to other practitioners also) and provides a descriptor of what this looks like in operation. It can be used as a tool for assessment of whether everyone is clear on their responsibilities and key accountabilities, whether personal or corporate, and if the necessary conditions have been established to promote safe, effective and personalised practice, meet performance objectives and make sure people get the sort of support and services we would like to see for ourselves and our families.

**January 2011**

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## 1. Risk, Discretion and Decision Making

**Risk is an essential and unavoidable part of everyday life. Social Workers are accountable for maintaining professional standards and the quality of their work. A focus on assessment and prevention helps to identify and manage risk. Social Workers need to be empowered and supported to make well informed decisions, using their professional judgement and discretion within a framework of accountability.**

### Employers, in conjunction with Chief Social Work Officers as appropriate, should ensure:

- Clear strategic objectives and a robust operational framework are in place to deliver social work services;
- There is clear guidance about balancing risk, needs and human rights;
- Social Workers are supported to exercise professional judgement and take risks;
- There is a structured approach to assessing and managing risk, drawing on evidence based approaches and supported by robust risk assessment and risk management systems that are routinely audited and monitored; and
- That a framework exists for the development of innovative personalised support informed by relevant risk assessment.

### Social Workers should:

- Uphold professional social work values and ethics in their practice;
- Exercise, justify and record professional judgements and decision making;
- Use, as a basis for approach to risk, discretion and decision making:
  - legislation, protocols, codes, guidance;
  - social work theory, models, practice;
  - best knowledge based practice;
  - evidence;
  - informed opinion; and
- Develop and maintain knowledge, skills and competence, recognising and working within the limits of their competence.

### What does this look like?

- It is understood, including by elected members, that risk is inevitable and that there is a structure that promotes appropriate risk taking supported by evidence-based risk assessment approaches;
- Considered risk taking weighs up the potential benefits or disbenefits of taking the risk against not taking the risk;
- Individuals' understanding and capability to share risk is routinely explored and taken into account in decisions made about social work intervention with them;
- Practice is openly reviewed when things go well or go wrong and learning is identified and shared;
- Social Workers demonstrate enhanced critical decision making skills, backed up by sound evidence and best practice;
- There is clear guidance and understanding of working with risk, including child and adult risk assessment and management;
- Social Workers have the appropriate skills and training to:
  - carry out risk assessment tasks;
  - effectively use the discretion they have to develop innovative, personalised solutions in conjunction with partners and people who need support or services;
  - make, and be able to justify, their decisions; and
- There is an up to date and accurate chronology and analysis to support decisions made.

## 2. Self and Self Regulation

**Social Workers must manage and prioritise work; justify and be accountable for practice; and evaluate their effectiveness in meeting organisational requirements and the needs of individuals, families and communities through safe, effective and personalised practice.**

**Employers, in conjunction with Chief Social Work Officers as appropriate, should:**

- Ensure compliance with all relevant Codes of Practice; legislation; standards; training; organisational and inter-organisational guidance;
- Ensure Social Workers receive effective support, supervision, and feedback which supports ongoing self regulation;
- Provide an effective line management structure that provides an escalation system;
- Provide effective audit of professional practice;
- Provide training and development opportunities for Social Workers; and
- Be accessible to all Social Workers who seek assistance, whether because they do not feel able, or adequately prepared or supported, to carry out any aspect of their work.

**Social Workers should:**

- Comply with all relevant Codes of Practice; legislation; standards; training; organisational and inter-organisational guidance;
- Maintain professional registration and comply with post registration training and learning requirements;
- Take responsibility for their own practice and learning and development;
- Reflect and critically evaluate their practice and be aware of their impact on others;
- Acknowledge and address risk to themselves and others;
- Maintain appropriate relationships and personal boundaries with people who use services;
- Demonstrate emotional resilience in working with challenging situations and behaviours;
- Use supervision and peer support to reflect on, and improve, practice;
- Seek assistance if not able to carry out an aspect of work, or not sure how to proceed; and
- Use the authority of their role in a responsible and respectful manner.

### What does this look like?

Social Workers:

- Carry out duties using accountable, professional judgement, based on social work knowledge, skills, practice and values, complying with relevant Codes of Conduct, legislation, guidance etc, working in a safe and effective manner;
- Are aware, and consider the impact, of their own values, prejudices, ethical dilemmas and conflicts of interest on their practice and on other people;
- Challenge discrimination, disadvantage and other forms of inequality and injustice;
- Maintain clear and accurate records and provision of evidence for professional judgements, in an accessible and appropriate manner;
- Use risk assessment policies and procedures to address whether behaviours of people who use services present a risk of harm to themselves or others; and
- Proactively manage their own training and development needs as an integral part of their job.

Employers/CSWOs

- Have in place systems and approaches to promote a climate which supports, monitors, reviews and takes the necessary action to ensure Social Workers comply with professional, legal, organisational and operational requirements, and have the confidence and competence to deliver safe and effective practice.

### 3. Developing Knowledge and Skills

**Continuing learning and development of knowledge and skills is essential to improving practice and outcomes for individuals, families and communities. Engaging in learning and development, linked to organisational and individual priorities and objectives, supports service improvement.**

#### Employers, in conjunction with Chief Social Work Officers as appropriate, should:

- Ensure there are planned and strategic approaches to learning and development, within a learning culture which is open and fair;
- Provide access to, and actively promote, a wide range of formal and informal learning and development opportunities;
- Provide opportunities for involvement in research and putting this into effective practice; and
- Support arrangements for Social Workers to share and apply learning to their practice.

#### Social Workers should:

- Routinely review and update knowledge of legal, practice, policy and procedural frameworks;
- Use supervision to reflect on practice and use critical analysis to support social work interventions;
- Keep up to date with relevant research through reading the journals, learning from other professionals and listening to service users;
- Continually evaluate and learn from practice; and
- Engage in critical analysis and research.

#### What does this look like?

- There is a learning culture in the workplace which promotes and supports continuously improved practice and performance, including opportunities for critical feedback on that culture;
- Social Workers make effective use of the SSSC Continuous Learning Framework and involvement in professional networks;
- There is a strategy for learning and development based on the learning needs of social workers, workforce planning needs of the organisation and local and national priorities developed by CSWOs, Social Workers and people who use services and their carers;
- The impact of learning on practice is evaluated systematically and is used to inform planning;
- Social Workers at all levels contribute to the continuous improvement of practice which is encouraged and valued;
- There is a clear link between organisational and operational priorities and objectives, personal learning and development plans and activities; and
- There is an environment that promotes engagement in research and applying evidence and knowledge based practice.

## 4. Guidance, Consultation and Supervision

**Reflective practice, coupled with an environment which promotes wellbeing, a healthy work/life balance and appropriate accountability, supports improving practice and ongoing professional development to deliver improved outcomes.**

### Employers, in conjunction with Chief Social Work Officers as appropriate, should:

- Provide effective supervision and employee development systems, that link individual performance to services and outcomes for people;
- Maintain effective systems to allocate work and manage workloads;
- Provide regular communication of priorities, policies and standards;
- Ensure regular audit of the quality of social work practice is carried out; and
- Ensure clear guidance on balancing risk, needs, human rights and consultation is readily available to Social Workers who are making such judgements.

### Social Workers should:

- Actively seek, and engage fully with, supervision on a regular basis to reflect on their practice and identify areas for development;
- Undertake regular analysis and assessment of the quality of their practice including reflection on engagement and interventions with people; what is going well; what requires to change; and identifying and addressing barriers to safe and effective practice; and
- Manage and prioritise their workload within organisational policies and priorities.

### What does this look like?

- Organisational policies, priorities and standards are formally recorded, communicated, evaluated and audited on a regular basis which is specified and the results/response made known to managers and Social Workers;
- Casework is formally recorded and audited periodically by senior managers;
- The role of the Chief Social Work Officer in providing professional advice and guidance, and how these can be accessed, is clearly communicated and understood;
- Social Workers routinely consult with their peers and others to inform practice, share lessons learned and meet continuing professional development needs;
- There is a formal supervision policy which is communicated, and understood, which requires that supervision be used to support effective professional practice that:
  - reviews workload and associated stress levels, balances best practice requirements with organisational policies, procedures and priorities; and support professional judgement and continuous development;
  - specifies the minimum time and frequency of supervision for all Social Workers/other staff/staff with particular needs;
  - requires managers to record when and why sessions are cancelled/cut short;
  - makes clear that this is a reflective process and both managers and Social Workers should undertake appropriate preparation by analysing their practice, identifying challenges and potential solutions and considering development needs;
  - requires the main points raised to be recorded and signed off by both manager and Social Worker.
- There is a clear process for handling professional disagreement, including the role of the line manager and CSWO in providing advice and support with respect to professional standards and decision making. There is clear guidance on how this is recorded; and
- Social Workers are encouraged to raise issues/seek assistance and guidance from their supervisor outwith formal supervision, and the organisation has systems in place to allow the reporting of anything that might impede safe and effective practice.

## 5. Information Sharing and Joint Working

**Effective information sharing and joint working across different agency boundaries are essential to the provision of high quality integrated care and support. They are also an important aspect of local multi-agency systems of child, adult and public protection.**

### Employers, in conjunction with Chief Social Work Officers as appropriate, should:

- Ensure the value of joint working and information sharing is promoted amongst Social Workers and that confidentiality and a right to privacy in private life is understood and complied with;
- Provide clarity of accountability and responsibility for case management in any joint working arrangements;
- Ensure Social Workers have a clear and shared understanding with colleagues of other agencies of their respective responsibilities for the identification and management of risk;
- Have in place information sharing protocols with all relevant partnerships;
- Ensure IT systems are used, where appropriate, to provide integrated and single assessments, and speedy information sharing;
- Ensure Social Workers are appropriately trained, with other agencies, on the purposes and processes of information sharing; and that
- Professional supervision is provided to Social Workers where their line manager is a professional from another discipline.

### Social Workers should:

- Take the necessary action to understand the roles and responsibilities of key colleagues in other agencies;
- Recognise significant information relating to child, adult and/or public protection and communicate it timeously to other key agencies;
- Acknowledge the value of, and respect, the contribution of colleagues from different disciplines;
- Actively promote and co-operate fully in joint working to ensure people receive personalised and appropriately integrated services;
- Understand and apply agency policy for handling and sharing sensitive or highly confidential data; and
- Identify dilemmas of respecting confidentiality and the importance of information sharing and seek support to address these issues.

### What does this look like?

- High quality integrated services are delivered through effective partnerships;
- Good, regular multi-agency training is in place;
- There are effective links within and across agencies to monitor and manage risk;
- There is good use of technology to support information sharing and joint working promoting integrated and single assessment processes such as MAPPA<sup>1</sup> or SSA<sup>2</sup>;
- All agencies promote the uptake of “universal” supports and services where appropriate;
- Partners have good systems to resolve operational disagreements with appropriate recourse to senior managers when needed;
- Accessibility to services is straightforward and personalised; and
- Confidentiality and privacy are respected with due regard to legislation on Data Protection, Human Rights and Equalities.

1 Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements

2 Single Shared Assessment



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ISBN: 978-0-7559-9734-3

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Produced for the Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland  
DPPAS10889 (03/11)