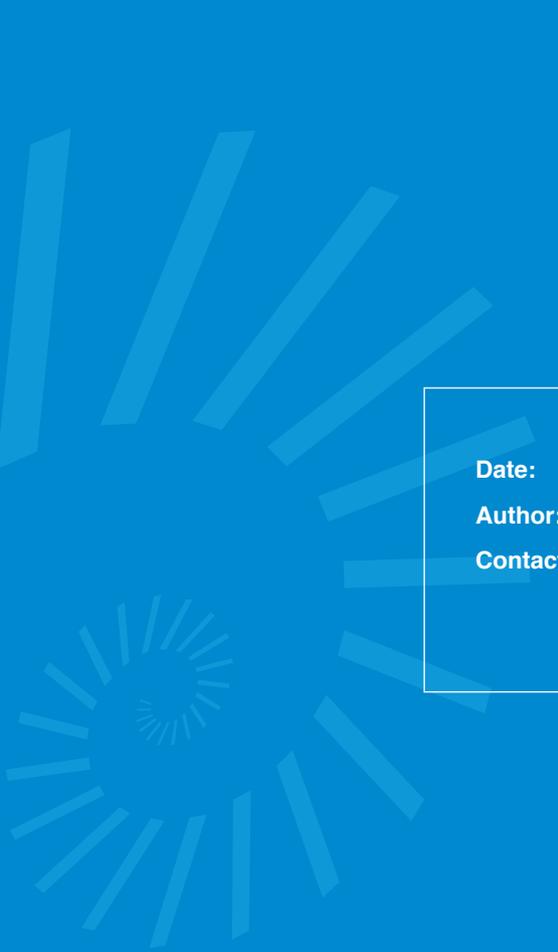


BASW Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Policy



THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS



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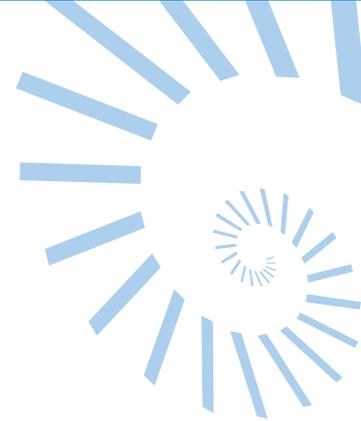
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BASW Continuing Professional Development Policy

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clarify what BASW considers to be the professional rights and responsibilities of social workers in relation to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and the essential role that BASW has in supporting members with their development. CPD is vital to ensure that social workers provide quality services, develop their practice and achieve good outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

It is intended that the CPD policy and definition should apply to all UK countries and social workers, whilst recognising that the context and requirements for re-registration are different in each country (A description of the context for each country is in the Appendix.). The policy is primarily for social workers but is also important for employers and education and training providers. It covers the broad responsibilities of employers and supervisors in supporting CPD for social workers.

Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession, a title protected in UK law. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) has developed a Charter of Rights for social workers. Two of the rights are access to opportunities for lifelong learning and “career progression routes, which maintain practice¹.”

Social workers demonstrate professional commitment by taking

responsibility for their conduct, practice and learning, with support through supervision. By doing this, social workers empower themselves as professionals to progress and achieve their aims and goals, whether they are working within an organisation or independently.² Social workers should continually develop the knowledge, skills and values required for their own role and their professional and career development. They need to proactively manage their own training and development needs as an integral part of their job.³

Employers have a responsibility to actively provide learning opportunities to meet the professional development needs of social workers and to ensure they meet CPD requirements. These requirements may be defined in codes of practice, codes of ethics, regulatory requirements, professional practice standards, practice governance frameworks, professional capabilities frameworks, career structures and CPD frameworks, which contextualise social work practice in each country.

CPD benefits employers as it provides better outcomes for people who use services and improves recruitment and retention. Engaging in learning and development, linked to organisational and individual priorities and objectives, supports service improvement. Employers should ensure there are planned and strategic approaches to learning and development, within a learning culture which is open and fair.⁴

Definition of CPD

Continuing Professional Development is an on-going, planned learning and development process, which improves practice, contributes to lifelong learning and enables career progression.⁵ CPD is the process 'through which professionals maintain and develop their knowledge and skills throughout their career to ensure that they retain their capacity to practice safely, effectively and legally within their evolving scope of practice'.⁶

CPD encompasses all learning as a social worker and values the whole spectrum of learning activities, including professional supervision, peer group learning, placements, training programmes and higher level qualifications. This enables flexibility and choice about how to meet individual learning needs. CPD incorporates the requirements for, but is more than, re-registration as a social worker in each country.

Reflection is a central aspect of on-going learning and development. IFSW states that social workers have a right to work "critically, effectively and reflectively"⁷. Munro⁸ describes reflection as the learning to be gained by engaging in deliberate practice, built on reviewing prior experience to derive new insights and lessons, and on feedback that is accurate, diagnostic and timely. Reflective practice requires time. Professional development is more effective if undertaken within a learning culture and evaluated in terms of outcomes for the social worker and people who use social work services.

CPD should enable and support social workers to:

- ▶ develop professional capacity, professional identity and confidence over the course of their careers
- ▶ make sound professional judgements, decisions and interventions based on evidence-informed practice
- ▶ update, extend and deepen knowledge, skills and analytical thinking to deal with increasingly complex and specialist work
- ▶ keep up to date with relevant research, learning from other professionals and service users⁹
- ▶ work to the BASW Code of Ethics¹⁰ and support the rights of service users
- ▶ take responsibility for own personal growth and developing others
- ▶ value learning and widen the definition of what counts as useful activity
- ▶ reflect on learning in terms of outcomes for professional development and outcomes for service users
- ▶ use reflective practice to engage with new knowledge and skills so learning is always linked to action, and theory to practice
- ▶ understand how individuals learn best and have a personal development plan that reflects this
- ▶ meet re-registration requirements
- ▶ plan their careers and remain in the workforce.

Policy Statement

- 1** The provision of regular, planned CPD is central to the development and maintenance of high quality social work and to developing professional identity and confidence.
- 2** Social workers should be able to work in an environment which values and gives a high priority to continuing learning and development.
- 3** Social workers should have regular appraisal and updated personal development plans that identify learning based on an analysis of each social worker's individual needs and personal learning style.
- 4** Social workers should have space for critical reflection and learning from others through professional supervision, peer learning, professional networks and involving people who use services.¹¹
- 5** Social workers should have access to on-going, planned learning opportunities to maintain and develop knowledge and skills for current roles, progress career development and enable re-registration. This should include, as appropriate, opportunities to access training and higher education awards, recognising that different learning activities may lead to different outcomes.
- 6** Social workers should have access to CPD systems and processes which support learning and career development and focus on improved outcomes for children, adults, families and communities.
- 7** Social workers should have opportunities at all levels to contribute to the continuous improvement of practice, engage in research and evidence informed practice. The impact of learning on practice should be evaluated systematically and used to inform planning.
- 8** Employers should regard CPD as an entitlement, a responsibility and a necessity, in order to maintain and improve practice and service delivery now and in the future, and to support the next generation of social workers. Employers should have 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.
- 9** Social workers should be able to access information and support for CPD through BASW as a professional body. This will include access to a knowledge hub, recording CPD linked to each country's systems for registration and opportunities for sharing expertise and knowledge.
- 10** Social workers, with the support of the professional body, should expect to work with employers, regulators and training providers to develop an approach to CPD which improves the effectiveness, quality and relevance of learning and practice.

Appendix: Context for CPD in the UK (January 2012)

England

Over the last few years the government has supported substantial work to develop and promote CPD. This includes the development of the GSCC PQ framework and the joint 'Framework for CPD' developed and published by Skills for Care (SfC) and the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) (2008). However, in practice CPD has been seen only as achieving higher education post-qualifying awards or meeting post registration training and learning requirements (PRTL) based on inputs or number of hours engaged in learning activity. Social workers themselves and employers have found it hard to find the time or resources to engage in CPD.

The Social Work Task Force report 'Building a Safe and Confident Future' (2009)¹² recommended the development of a more coherent and effective national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers. They stated that such a framework should be accompanied by mechanisms to encourage a shift in culture which raises expectations of an entitlement to on-going learning and development.

The Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) published "Proposals for implementing a coherent and effective national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers" on 26th May 2011. The CPD framework acknowledges that professional development and learning is more effective if undertaken as part of reflective practice and evaluated in terms of outcomes for the professional and for service users.

The new **CPD framework**¹³ is more flexible and recognises the value of all learning opportunities to professional development, including informal and self-directed learning. The framework will be aligned with the relevant levels of **the Professional Capabilities framework (PCF)**¹⁴ and linked to career structure.

The SWRB said that social workers should be supported by employers and expected to take professional responsibility for developing their skills to a high professional level. Alongside the CPD framework, the Reform Board has also developed the **Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework**, which clearly set out the duty of employers to support CPD for social workers through supervision and protected time to undertake learning and development.¹⁵

There is recognition throughout all the frameworks that social workers do not work or learn in isolation, but are responsible to managers and for themselves and other colleagues, who may be social workers or come from different professional backgrounds. As professionals, they also have a duty to educate less experienced colleagues and prepare them to become the next generation of social workers.

From 2012, the registration of social workers in England will become the responsibility of the Health Professionals Council (HPC). Social workers will have to meet **Standards of Continuing Professional Development**¹⁶ for re-registration, instead of PRTL. Social workers will be expected to take personal responsibility for self-directed learning and development, and to record the range and outcomes of their learning activity. These developments provide an opportunity to develop CPD that is driven by the profession to improve the quality of the service we provide.

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) is the regulator for the social care workforce. As the Sector Skills Council for Social Care, Child Care and Early Years workforces in Northern Ireland, it is responsible for developing and promoting high standards in learning, training and development.

NISCC is responsible for registering the social care workforce including social workers. **The Code of Practice**¹⁷ is the same as the other countries, as are the requirements for **Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL)**. PRTL must be related to social care work and improved outcomes for service users. The aim may be to improve performance in the current job or it could involve working towards improvement in service delivery through staff training or research.

In Northern Ireland, a social work training strategy¹⁸ reported limited career structures and set a target of 2010 to develop career pathways linked to agreed and accredited training and/or qualifications linked to continuing registration.

The NISCC intends to introduce a **Continuous Learning Framework** from 2012¹⁹, which will inform/guide PRTL requirements for social care registrants. This will introduce learning standards and PRTL requirements reflecting the level of responsibility of the social care registrant. PRTL activities will be flexible to include work-based learning such as supervision and discussions/learning with colleagues; other learning activities such as involvement in a professional body and research; as well as formal learning.

The framework is likely to have Core standards and Supplementary standards for senior workers and managers. Some examples of the supplementary standards for social workers are:

- Social workers in the first three year period of registration, following successful completion of the Assessed Year in Employment shall complete a minimum of two requirements of the NI Specific Award within the period of registration. This award is part of the NI social work post-qualifying award framework.
- Social workers who are appointed as first line managers shall undertake learning and development activity in the professional supervision and appraisal of staff within two years of appointment to post.

The Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership for Social Work (NIPQETP), is part of the NISCC. It aims to improve the quality of social care in Northern Ireland by supporting the practice, continuing education and performance of qualified social workers.

The **NI Post Qualifying Framework for Social Work** is an education and training framework for registered social workers wishing to develop and enhance their skills and qualifications throughout their career in the social work profession. The NI PQ Framework became operational on 1st April 2007.

The PQ Framework has a range of professional requirements that can be achieved through a modular approach to required education and training standards. Achievement of these professional requirements can lead to the three professional awards. The professional awards are made and certified by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

Scotland

The Scottish Social Care Council (SSCC) is responsible for registering the social care workforce including social workers. The SSCC Code of Practice requires workers to take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills. It is expected that training and learning will contribute to professional development and assist in meeting roles and responsibilities in an informed, competent and confident manner. These responsibilities are set out in the **Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers** of Social Service Workers.²⁰

The requirements for **Post Registration Training and Learning** (PRTL) for social workers is the same as in the other UK countries, to complete a minimum of 15 days (90 hours) of study, training, courses, seminars, reading, teaching or other activities. The type of activity stated as acceptable is deliberately general because it is recognised that there are a variety of ways for registered social workers to continue to learn and develop.

In addition, the registration rules in Scotland²¹ state that at least five days, or 30 hours, training and learning activity shall focus on working effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk to vulnerable groups. This is in

order to ensure that social workers are assisted to meet their primary responsibility of protecting children and adults from harm.

This requirement applies to both children and adults irrespective of the social worker's current work context. For example, it is important that a social worker working in a criminal justice team understands and is equipped to meet their responsibilities in relation to child protection and it is equally important that a social worker working in a child care team understands and is equipped to meet their responsibilities in relation to adult protection. There is no prescribed balance between child and adult protection and it is recognised that the present job role and specific responsibilities may mean that the focus may be more on the protection of children or adults. However it is essential that your evidence covers both service user groups.

The Scottish Executive has recently launched a Child Protection webpace to support workers undertaking child protection work in Scotland to assist registered social workers to meet this specific PRTL requirement.²²

The guidance on PRTL also recognises the importance of supervision and staff development schemes to discuss professional development needs and identify and plan training and learning that will increase skills and knowledge and inform practice. It is also

recommended that at least annually in supervision or in a specific professional development meeting that PRTL should be reviewed, evaluated and recorded to ensure requirements are being met. People who are self-employed still need to satisfy the SSSC that they have completed the required 15 days PRTL including the 5 days on protecting children or adults from harm.

In addition to the SSCC guidance, the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has developed a **Continuous Learning Framework**.²³ This is the key output from the workforce development change programme under 'Changing Lives'²⁴. The Framework sets out what all people in the social service workforce need in order to be able to do their job well now and in the future.

The Framework is progressive and is intended to improve approaches to three key areas – learning and development, career pathways and improved standards of practice. In order to facilitate the use of the Framework in practice, tools and resources will be developed for social service workers and their employers. There are already tools available in Workforce Solutions²⁵.

The organisational capabilities²⁶ support organisations to determine how best to support their employees and to evaluate the impact of learning and development initiatives. It is recommended that organisations consider each of the organisational capabilities

when looking to improve the culture and conditions in the workplace.

The Practice Governance Framework (2011)²⁷ clarifies the respective responsibilities of employers and practitioners in respect of CPD.

Wales

Social workers in Wales have had to register with the Care Council for Wales since 2003. The title 'Social Worker' has been protected in Wales since 1st April 2005. In order to register social workers have to sign up to **The Codes of Practice**, which set out agreed professional standards. It forms part of a wider package of legislation, practice standards and employers' policies and procedures that social care workers must meet. Part of the Code states that "social care workers must be accountable for their work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills (Code 6)²⁸."

As in other UK countries, social workers are required to submit a record of **Post Registration Training and Learning** (PRTL) of 15 days or 90 hours every three years in order to re-register. Social workers should maintain a portfolio of evidence to support their PRTL record. The PRTL Requirements for Registered Social

Workers and Social Care Workers – Guidance²⁹ describes the key features of post-registration training and learning as:

- flexibility to allow for individual circumstances and aspirations
- shared responsibility between manager and practitioner
- allows for a range of routes with no preference
- incorporates individual training needs
- incorporates an employment-based focus.

As part of CPD, the Care Council recognises that there are many ways to continue to learn and develop as a social worker so have avoided being too specific about the type of activities that will meet requirements. The training and learning that registrants choose should:

- benefit their personal development needs
- benefit their current employment
- benefit their career progression
- reflect their preferred learning style
- make the most of the learning opportunities available to form part of their wider professional development; and

- improve their ability to provide high quality services to service users and carers.

Employers have a shared responsibility in supporting workers to meet these requirements which is stated in the Employer Code of Practice.

In November 2009 there was a discussion paper on Social Work Career Pathways, linked to post qualifying training and work based learning. There has subsequently been a consultation on a new **“Continuing Professional Education and Learning: A Framework for Social Workers in Wales”** (CPEL framework). A CPEL Implementation Group started work in November 2011 and will develop the framework.

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²⁶ Appendix 2

<http://www.continuouslearningframework.com/clf/home/welcome-to-the-continuous-learning-framework-website.html>

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