



Department  
of Health

# Draft Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers in Adult Services

A Consultation

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# Draft Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers in Adult Services

A Consultation

Prepared by the Chief Social Worker for Adults

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# Executive Summary

In February this year the Department of Health published Professor Croisdale-Appleby's review of the education of social workers with adults: Re-visioning Social Work Education: an independent review.<sup>1</sup> In his report, Professor Croisdale-Appleby recommended a national and consistent process for assessing social workers. He recommended that there should be standard assessment criteria at the end of the assessed supported year in employment and that there should also be an independent validation of the assessment framework.

Sir Martin Narey (in his review of social work education for children and families) made the point that there are a number of standards for social work education but none of them (in his view) set out a clear statement of the knowledge and skills that a social worker needed to become an effective practitioner.<sup>2</sup>

Following these two reviews, the Chief Social Workers were asked to produce a Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) for all newly qualified social workers at the end of the first year in employment, building on the generic social work qualification.

The Chief Social Worker for Children and Families has consulted on a draft Knowledge and Skills Statement for Child and Family Social Work which closed on 9 October.<sup>3</sup> The Chief Social Worker for Adults is now consulting on this draft statement of knowledge and skills for social workers in adult services:

- as a statement of what a social worker with adults needs to know and be able to do at the end of a first year in practice; and
- to provide social workers and their employers with a framework for assessment which will help to ensure newly qualified social workers become effective social workers in adult social care.

The Knowledge and Skills Statement will be used to enable social workers to understand more clearly what is expected of them as practitioners. Employers will be able more easily to identify whether social workers have the requisite knowledge and skills, and will therefore be able to identify and put in place the support and training needed for employees.

Ministers have announced a further year of funding for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment. Our proposal is that all newly qualified social workers in adult services should be assessed consistently on the basis of the Knowledge and Skills Statement and that continued

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-work-education-review>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/287756/Making\\_the\\_education\\_of\\_social\\_workers\\_consistently\\_effective.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287756/Making_the_education_of_social_workers_consistently_effective.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/knowledge-and-skills-for-child-and-family-social-work>

employment in statutory adult social work to be dependent upon successful completion of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.

Your views are sought on whether:

- a) the right knowledge and skills have been identified (and at the right level);
- b) there is anything you would like to see added; and
- c) the proposed national requirements for the assessment of social workers at the end of their assessed year in employment are appropriately designed.

Please use the consultation response form at Annex A to provide your comments to the Chief Social Worker for Adults by **5pm on Friday 12 December 2014**.

The results of the consultation and the Department's response will be published on the Department of Health's e-consultation website in early 2015.

# Draft Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers in Adult Services

This statement sets out what a social worker working with adults should know and be able to do by the end of their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment. The statement incorporates the experiences and perspectives of front line social workers, their managers, organisations and educators. It has been developed by the Chief Social Worker for Adults in partnership with key stakeholders including the College of Social Work, the British Association of Social Workers, Skills for Care, the Social Care Institute for Excellence, and Principal Social Workers. It sets out, in Section 10, a national framework for the assessment of newly qualified social workers at the end of their first year in practice, including provision for independent validation and quality assurance of the assessment process. It should be used by social workers and their employers to build a wider framework for induction, supervision and the continuing professional development of social workers and the social work profession.

The Statement builds upon the Professional Capabilities Framework and key policy documents developed by the College of Social Work.<sup>4</sup> Namely,

- *The Role & Functions of Social Workers in England*,
- *The Business Case for Social Work with Adults*, and
- *The Role of Social Workers in Adult Mental Health Services*.<sup>5,6</sup>

The Department will work with the College of Social Work and the sector to map in more detail the relationship between the requirements set out in this Statement and the relevant capabilities in the Professional Capabilities Framework.

## 1. The Role of Social Workers Working with Adults

Social workers need to apply a wide range of knowledge and relational skills to understand and build relationships, and work directly with individuals, their families and carers to enable and empower them to achieve best outcomes. This should include undertaking assessments, planning care and support and making the best use of available resources to enable people to have better lives. Social workers should enable people to experience personalised, integrated care and support them to maintain their independence and wellbeing, cope with change, attain the outcomes they want and need, understand and manage risk, and participate in the life of their communities. Social work should focus on the links between the individual, their health and

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.tcsw.org.uk/pcf.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.tcsw.org.uk/policy/adults/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.tcsw.org.uk/policy/mental-health/>

well-being and their need for relationships and connection with their families, community and wider society. Social workers in adult social care must understand and be able to explain the role of social work as part of the system of health and welfare support to individuals and families. They must understand the impact of poverty, inequality and diversity on social and economic opportunities and how these relate to people's health and wellbeing as well as the functioning of their families, particularly in connection with child protection and adult safeguarding.

The Care Act 2014 puts the professional practice of the individual social worker at the heart of adult social care, and signals a move away from care management as the overriding approach to working with adults.

## **2. Person Centred Practice**

Social workers should enable their service users to access the advice, support and services to which they are entitled. They should coordinate and facilitate a wide range of practical and emotional support, and discharge legal duties to complement people's own resources and networks, so that individuals, carers and families can exercise choice and control, and meet their needs and aspirations in often novel, personalised and creative ways. They should work co-productively and innovatively with people, local communities, other professionals, agencies and services to promote self-determination, community capacity, personal and family reliance, cohesion, earlier intervention and active citizenship. Social workers should also engage with and enable access to advocacy for people who may require help to secure the support and care they need due to physical or mental ill-health, sensory or communication impairment, learning disability, mental incapacity, frailty or a combination of these conditions and their physical, psychological and social consequences.

## **3. Safeguarding and Capacity**

Social workers must be able to recognise the risk indicators of different forms of harm and their impact on clients, their families or their carers and should prioritise the protection of vulnerable children and adults whenever necessary. Social workers who work with adults should lead in intervening: to prevent deterioration in health and wellbeing; to safeguard people who may be socially excluded, at risk of abuse or neglect, subject to discrimination, or lacking particular aspects of mental capacity; and to take necessary action where mental health problems make someone a risk to themselves, their children or other people. The principles of the Mental Capacity Act and the Mental Health Act reflect good social work practice with social workers having a vital role to play in ensuring that the service user's best interests are at the heart of all decisions and that the least restrictive options with defined timescales are put in place to support and protect service users where necessary. Social workers should understand and apply in practice personalised approaches to safeguarding adults so that the greatest possible degree of protection is given to each vulnerable adult.



#### **4. Effective Assessments and Outcome Based Support Planning**

Social workers should be able to understand the expertise of service users and their carers and should be able to apply this to develop personalised approaches that enable the individual client to determine and achieve the outcomes they want for themselves. The social worker must ensure the individual service user's views, wishes and feelings are included as part of their full participation in decision making, balancing this with the wellbeing of their carers. Social workers should demonstrate a good understanding of personalisation, the social model of disability and of human development throughout life and demonstrate a holistic approach to the identification of needs, circumstances, rights, strengths and risks. In particular, social workers need to understand the impact of trauma, loss and abuse, physical disability, physical ill health, learning disability, mental ill health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, aging and end of life issues on physical, cognitive, emotional and social development both for the individual client and for the functioning of the family. They should understand the roles and needs of informal or family carers and holistic systemic approaches to supporting individuals and carers, developing and maintaining knowledge and good partnerships with local community resources in order to work effectively with individuals in connecting them with appropriate resources and support.

#### **5. Direct Work with Individuals and Families**

Social workers need to be able to work directly with individuals and their families using interpersonal skills to create relationships based on openness, transparency and empathy. They should know how to build purposeful, effective relationships underpinned by reciprocity. They should be able to communicate clearly, sensitively and effectively, applying a range of best evidence-based methods of written, oral and non-verbal communication and adapt these methods to match the client's age, comprehension and culture. The social worker should be capable of engaging effectively with service users who have learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health needs, and dementia, and with their carers. Social workers should do this in ways that are engaging, respectful, motivating and effective even when dealing with perceived conflict, anger and resistance to change.

Social workers should have a high level of skill in applying evidence-based, effective social work approaches to help service users and families handle change, including where individuals and families are in transition, supporting them to move to different living arrangements and understanding the impact of loss and change.

#### **6. Supervision, Critical Reflection and Analysis**

Social workers must understand the importance of supervision in providing advice and support and know how and when to seek advice from a range of sources including named supervisors, senior social workers and other professionals. They should apply imagination, creativity and curiosity to working in partnership with individuals and their carers, acknowledging the centrality of people's own expertise about their experience and needs. They should be able to make effective use of opportunities to discuss, reflect upon and test multiple hypotheses, the role of intuition and logic in decision making, the difference between opinion and fact, the role of evidence, how to address common bias in situations of uncertainty and the reasoning of any conclusions reached and recommendations made, particularly in relation to capacity, mental health and safeguarding situations. Social workers should have a critical understanding of the

difference between theory, research, evidence and expertise and the role of professional judgement. They should use of research to inform the complex judgements and decisions needed to support, empower and protect their service users.

## **7. Organisational Context**

Social workers must be able to operate successfully in their organisational context, reflecting its legal frameworks, obligations, structures and culture. They should be able confidently to fulfil their statutory responsibilities and work within their organisation's remit and contribute to its development. Social workers must be able to demonstrate effective time management, caseload management and be capable of reconciling competing demands. They should work effectively in inter-agency, multi-disciplinary and inter-professional groups and demonstrate effective partnership working particularly in the context of health and social care integration and at the interface between health, children and adult social care and the third sector.

## **8. Professional Ethics and Leadership**

Social workers should be able to explain their role to stakeholders, particularly health and community partners, and challenge partners constructively to effect multi-agency working. They should contribute to developing awareness of personalisation and outcome-based approaches to improving people's lives. Social workers should be able to demonstrate the principles of social work through professional judgement, decision making and actions within a framework of professional accountability. They should be able to work collaboratively to manage effectively competing interests of service users, their families and their carers ensuring that where children are involved, the children's interests are always paramount but that the needs of all parties are appropriately balanced. They should be able to acknowledge the tensions inherent in having a dual role of care and control; meeting eligible needs within limited resources and be able to manage emotions and expectations of service users and carers. They should feedback the views and experiences of clients and their colleagues to contribute to the continued improvement of services, policies and procedures within the organisation.

## **9. Level of Capability: Social Worker working in an Adult Setting at the end of their first year in employment.**

By the end of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment social workers working in an adult setting should have consistently demonstrated proficiency in a wide range of tasks and roles. For example they will be able to: complete assessments of need independently which start from a perspective of the service users' desired outcomes and have become more effective in their interventions; deal with more complex situations; develop respectful and situation appropriate professional relationships thus building their own confidence; and earn the confidence and respect of others. They will have a good understanding of risk assessment and positive risk taking and be able to apply this to practice to ensure person centered planning approaches and individual rights are upheld. They will have developed confidence in working within multidisciplinary settings, understanding their roles and be able to maintain and express a clear social work perspective. They will have experience and skills in relation to a particular setting and user group, be able to understand and work within the legal frameworks relevant to

adult settings, in particular, the Mental Capacity Act, Mental Health Act and the Care Act, and fully operate within the organisational context/policies and procedures. They will be able to confidently undertake mental capacity assessments in routine situations and will be able to identify and work proactively and in partnership around safeguarding issues and have demonstrated the ability to work effectively in more complex situations. They will seek support in supervision appropriately, whilst starting to exercise initiative and evaluate their own practice. For example, they should take responsibility for cases allocated to them, be proactive in identifying issues and recommending actions, but be aware of when to seek further advice and support in more complex situations. They will be able to reflect on their practice and continue to identify learning and development to further consolidate their knowledge and skills. They will have developed some resilience and leadership skills and be able to demonstrate sound professional judgment and will know how to argue for appropriate resource allocation to meet assessed needs.

#### **10. The National Framework for the Assessment of Social Workers at the end of their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment**

The Department proposes a national system of quality assurance so that the profession can have confidence that employers' judgements are consistent across the country. This national scheme will have two parts: standardised arrangements for assessment and moderation led by Skills for Care; and a national system for validating the implementation of these arrangements across the country, led by the College of Social Work. These arrangements will build on existing processes and are intended to produce improved national consistency in standards and assessment of Assessed and Supported Year in Employment for social workers in adult services.

To ensure national consistency in the assessment of social workers at the end of their first year of practice:

1. the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment assessor must be a registered social worker;
2. the assessment must include:
  - a) four formal direct observations of practice undertaken by a registered social worker (at least two to be completed by the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment assessor);
  - b) the examination of two written pieces demonstrating the ability of the employee to reflect on and learn from practice: one should show how the employee has used reflection on practice to improve their professional skills, and the other should demonstrate reasoned judgment relating to a practice decision;
  - c) the examination of at least three examples of written reports and records, including:

- a report written for an external decision making processes (e.g. Mental Health Tribunal, Best Interest Assessment, Assessment of Needs and Care and Support plan);
  - a set of case recordings;
  - a set of supervision records;
  - at least three pieces of feedback over the course of the year from people who need care and support, or from their carers; and
  - at least three pieces of feedback over the course of the year from other professionals;
3. the assessment process should be recorded in a learning agreement or professional development plan with provision for appropriate reviews; and
4. the process of confirming assessment will include:
- a) Internal Assessment: to confirm the assessment outcome following a recommendation from the assessor; and
  - b) External Standardisation: to develop consistency in the standards set by all employers by sampling assessment decisions and providing feedback to employers.

# Annex A: Consultation Response Form

If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link:  
<https://www.dh.gov.uk/consultations>

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

<b>Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.</b>	
Reason for confidentiality:	

Name:	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	
Name of Organisation (if applicable):	
Address:	

If your enquiry is related to the Department of Health e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: [consultation.unit@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@dh.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: or via the Department's '[Contact Us](#)' page.

Which answer best describes you as a respondent?

<input type="checkbox"/> Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Worker	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent
<input type="checkbox"/> Carer	<input type="checkbox"/> Young person	<input type="checkbox"/> University/FE Provider
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Work consultant	<input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary and Community Sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Health Sector
<input type="checkbox"/> Other		

Please Specify:

1 Is there anything else that should be included in the statement which sets out what a social worker with adults needs to know and be able to do?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

2 Are there any parts of the statement which are not set at the right level for a social worker with adults to be able to know or do at the end of their first year? If so, what are they?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

3 Do you agree with the minimum criteria to be used nationally for social workers at the end of their assessed year in employment? If not, what other criteria should be used?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

<b>Please acknowledge this reply.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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E-mail address for acknowledgement:

Here at the Department of Health we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

All DH public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and use real discussion with affected parties and experts as well as the expertise of civil service learning to make well informed decisions
- departments should explain what responses they have received and how these have been used in formulating policy
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

If you have any comments on how DH consultations are conducted, please contact Katie Weeks, Knowledge and Skills for Social Work with Adults Consultation Coordinator:  
[Katie.Weeks@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Katie.Weeks@dh.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by **5pm on Friday 12 December 2014**

Send by post to:

Chief Social Worker for Adults, Room 208, Department of Health, Richmond House, 79 Whitehall, London SW1A 2NS

Send by e-mail to:

[ChiefSocialWorkerforAdults@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ChiefSocialWorkerforAdults@dh.gsi.gov.uk)