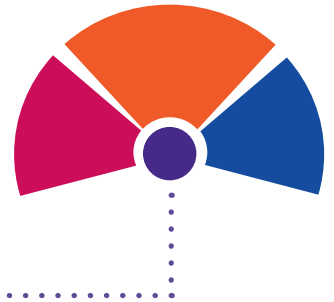


# The Standards for employers of Social Workers in England



Published by LGA on behalf of the Social Work Reform partners.  
**For more information visit [www.local.gov.uk/workforce](http://www.local.gov.uk/workforce)**

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# Introduction

## **Why do we need the Standards for Employers?**

Good social work can transform people's lives and protect them from harm. In order to achieve consistently high quality outcomes for service users and their carers, social workers must have and maintain the skills and knowledge to establish effective relationships with children, adults and families, professionals in a range of agencies and settings, and members of the public. Employers can use the Standards along with an appropriate supervision framework to help drive recruitment and retention.

## **What are they?**

These are Standards, which set out the shared core expectations of employers which will enable social workers in all employment settings to work effectively. These expectations are being incorporated within self-regulation and improvement frameworks for public services and used by service regulators (Ofsted, CQC). All employers providing a social work service should establish a monitoring system by which they can assess their organisational performance against this framework, set a process for review and, where necessary, outline their plans for improvement. Employers should ensure their systems, structures and processes promote equality and do not discriminate against any employee.

## **Who do they apply to?**

The Standards apply to all employers of social workers. They relate to all registered social workers employed within an organisation, as well as managers and social work students. Though the landscape in which social work is delivered is changing, it is expected that these Standards will be relevant to and adopted in all settings and however social workers are employed.

## **How were they developed?**

Stakeholder partners across the sector (listed in the Partners section) developed these Standards between 2009 and 2012 as part of the Social Work Reform Board, building on existing guidelines for employers of social workers, the Professional Capabilities Framework for social workers held by The College of Social Work, the evolving Career Framework, and the HCPC regulatory requirements. The LGA hosts the Standards on their website on behalf of the sector and continues to work with partners on their regular review through the Standards for Employers Working Group. The Standards have been refreshed in May 2014, and will be reviewed regularly.

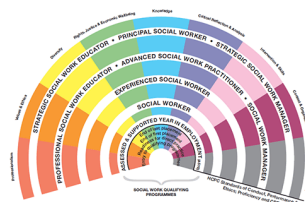
The purpose of the Standards is to sustain high quality outcomes for service users and their families/ carers/communities. The diagram below groups the Standards for Employers into three focal areas:

1. **Enabling employers to provide a well led professional environment**
2. **Enabling social work professionals to maintain their professionalism**
3. **Enabling them to practice more effectively.**



**How do the standards link to the Professional Capabilities Framework?**

All aspects of the Standards are equally important, just as the Professional Capabilities Framework is holistic in nature in order to effectively set out the expectations of social workers themselves. The Professional Capabilities Framework is intrinsic to the implementation of these Standards for Employers.



# The Standards for Employers at a glance

1

## Clear Social Work Accountability Framework

Employers should have in place a clear social work accountability framework informed by knowledge of good social work practice and the experience and expertise of service users, carers and practitioners.

2

## Effective Workforce Planning

Employers should use effective workforce planning systems to make sure that the right number of social workers, with the right level of skills and experience, are available to meet current and future service demands.

3

## Safe Workloads and Case Allocation

Employers should ensure social workers have safe and manageable workloads.

4

## Managing Risks and Resources

Employers should ensure that social workers can do their jobs safely and have the practical tools and resources they need to practice effectively. Assess risks and take action to minimise and prevent them.

5

## Effective and Appropriate Supervision

Employers should ensure that social workers have regular and appropriate social work supervision.

6

## Continuing Professional Development

Employers should provide opportunities for effective continuing professional development, as well as access to research and-relevant knowledge.

7

## Professional Registration

Employers should ensure social workers can maintain their professional registration.

8

## Effective Partnerships

Employers should establish effective partnerships with higher education institutions and other organisations to support the delivery of social work education and continuing professional development.

# Standard 1 - Clear Social Work Accountability Framework

**Have in place a clear social work accountability framework informed by knowledge of good social work practice and the experience and expertise of service users, carers and practitioners.**

This Standard is about having a sound understanding of what constitutes good social work practice, the theories, skills, research and evidence that underpin it and the ways in which their organisation can achieve and maintain it at strategic and operational levels.

## **Strategic accountability**

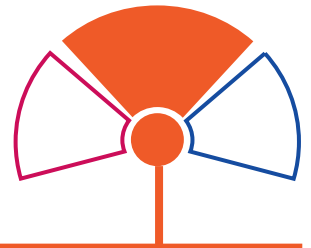
All employers should:

- develop a strategy to monitor the effectiveness and responsiveness of their social work service delivery.
- establish clear lines of accountability within the organisation for social work service delivery.
- establish and maintain effective strategic partnerships with partner agencies, higher education institutions and other organisations. (see also Standard 8)

## **Operational accountability**

All employers should:

- ensure that processes are in place to seek and collate the views of service users, carers and practitioners.
- implement a system to analyse and act upon the views of service users, carers and practitioners so that continuous feedback informs and supports the delivery of quality services.
- In local authorities identify a Principal Social Worker (PSW), and in other employment settings identify a principle or lead social worker, who will be responsible for implementing and leading the Standards for Employers of Social Workers.
- complete, review and publish an annual 'health check' or audit to assess whether practice conditions and working environment of the organisation's social work workforce are safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led.
- promote social work practice awareness amongst service directors and strategic managers, local politicians, community leaders, voluntary sector stakeholders and professionals in universal services such as schools, health and the police.
- explain and promote the role of social work to the public.
- meet the career needs of social workers (Standard 7)
- work with professional bodies and trade unions and recognise and support the right of all social workers to be engaged in the work of such bodies. (Standard 6)



**1. Audit plan template**

[http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=80cde5a9-67aa-42b9-9177-fe2ed3d4c146&groupId=10180](http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=80cde5a9-67aa-42b9-9177-fe2ed3d4c146&groupId=10180)

**2. Action plan template**

[http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=13a1a31f-5b6b-4d97-bf68-853c5e830493&groupId=10180](http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=13a1a31f-5b6b-4d97-bf68-853c5e830493&groupId=10180)

**3. CQC National Standards**

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/public/what-are-standards/national-standards>

## Standard 2 - Effective Workforce Planning

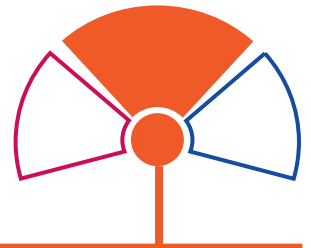
**Use effective workforce planning systems to make sure that the right number of social workers, with the right level of skills and experience, are available to meet current and future service demands.**

This Standard is about having appropriate workforce planning systems in place in order to meet the needs of local service users now and in the future. Effective workforce planning systems should both determine immediate staffing requirements and help to ensure that sufficient numbers of social workers are trained to meet future demand. These should be based on an understanding of the factors that influence need and demand, including the size and specific circumstances of the local population. Workforce planning procedures should be regularly monitored and reviewed.

All employers should:

- undertake an assessment of current and future need and engage with local, regional and national supply and demand systems.
- ensure that workforce planning systems involve effective and strategic partnerships with higher education institutions, local partners and other agencies.
- provide good quality practice placements, other types of practice learning, and effective workplace assessment to help ensure that the right numbers of new social workers of the right calibre are trained, developed and supported.
- engage with the social work education sector in order to facilitate exchanges of personnel and expertise.
- facilitate further learning and development across partner agencies and regional networks and with higher education partners. (Standard 6)





- 1. Workforce planning guide**  
<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6178957/Workforce+Planning+Report+v11.pdf/2202194c-3c9e-480c-95d9-cbea4f0b87db>
- 2. Supply and demand model CfWI**  
<http://www.cfwi.org.uk/files/news/social-worker-supply-and-demand-model>
- 3. Skills for Care Workforce Commissioning resources**  
<http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Social-work/Employing-social-workers/Employing-social-workers.aspx>
- 4. TCSW criteria for endorsement of qualifying programmes**  
<http://www.tcsw.org.uk/Qualifying-programme-endorsement/>

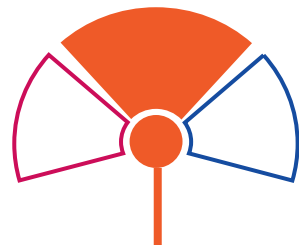
## Standard 3 - Safe Workloads and Case Allocation

### Ensure social workers have safe and manageable workloads.

This Standard is about protecting employees and service users from the harm caused by excessive workloads, long waiting lists and unallocated cases.

All employers should:

- use a workload management system which sets transparent benchmarks for safe workload levels in each service area.
- ensure each social worker's workload is regularly assessed to take account of work complexity, individual worker capacity and time needed for supervision (Standard 5) and CPD (Standard 6)
- ensure that cases are allocated transparently and by prior discussion with the individual social worker, with due consideration of newly qualified social workers on ASYE.
- ensure that a social worker's professional judgment about workload capacity issues is respected in line with the requirements of their professional registration (Standard 7).
- take contingency action when workload demand exceeds staffing capacity report regularly to strategic leaders about workload and capacity issues within services.
- publish information about average caseloads for social workers within the organization (Standard 1).



**1. Caseload/workload exemplars**

[http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=69f39367-15ef-4712-8106-309dba775cb9&groupId=1](http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=69f39367-15ef-4712-8106-309dba775cb9&groupId=1)

**2. Essex workload example**

<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6178957/Workload+weighting+guidance/1e85c3d7-0daf-460b-9566-48633f246c46>

**3. Workload management guidance**

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/socialwork/workloadsupervisionupdated.pdf>

## Standard 4 - Managing Risks and Resources

**Ensure that social workers can do their jobs safely and have the practical tools and resources they need to practice effectively. Assess risks and take action to minimise and prevent them.**

This Standard is about promoting a positive culture and providing a safe and effective environment for social workers with access to practical tools and support. Employers should meet the safety and welfare needs of social workers.

### **Strategic accountability**

All employers should:

- foster a culture of openness and inclusion in the organisation that empowers social workers to make appropriate professional judgements within a supportive environment.
- enable social workers and managers to raise concerns about inadequate resources, operational difficulties, workload issues or their own skills and capacity for work without fear of recrimination.

### **Work environment**

All employers should:

- make a quiet space available for formal supervision, informal confidential professional discussions between colleagues, and team meetings. There should also be a suitable space for confidential interviews with adequate safety measures to protect practitioners.

### **Tools and support to do the job**

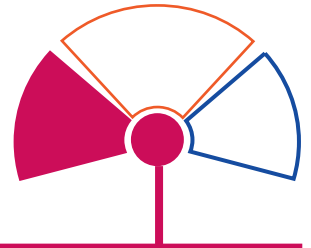
All employers should:

- provide social workers with appropriate practical tools to do their job including effective case recording and other IT systems, access to the internet and mobile communications. They should have safe means of transport for visiting service users and for field work.
- provide social workers with access to fellow professionals including legal advisors, translators and interpreters and provide administrative support to social workers and help to maximise the time social workers are able to spend working directly with the children, adults and families who use services.

### **Work environment**

All employers should:

- have in place caring and effective systems for reporting and responding to concerns raised by social workers and managers so that risks are assessed and preventative and protective measures are taken.
- ensure that the risks of violence, harassment and bullying are assessed, minimised and prevented. Where such instances do occur, there should be clear procedures in place to address, monitor, resolve and review the situation.
- make employee welfare services available for all social workers.



- 1. HCPC Standards**  
<http://www.hpcuk.org/aboutregistration/standards/standardsofconductperformanceandethics/>
- 2. Effective and Ethical Working**  
<http://ifsw.org/policies/effective-and-ethical-working-environments-for-social-work-the-responsibilities-of-employers-of-social-workers-3/>
- 3. Working alone guide**  
<https://www.unison.org.uk/upload/sharepoint/On%20line%20Catalogue/17876.pdf>
- 4. HSE tools for stress**  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/STRESS/standards/downloads.htm>
- 5. LGA sickness absence guide**  
[http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/employment-relations/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/3915367/ARTICLE6](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/employment-relations/-/journal_content/56/10180/3915367/ARTICLE6). Skills for Care Culture for Care: your toolkit
- 6. TCSW Advice Note on the roles and functions of social work**  
[http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/\\_CollegeLibrary/Policy/RolesFunctionsAdviceNote.pdf](http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/_CollegeLibrary/Policy/RolesFunctionsAdviceNote.pdf)

## Standard 5 - Effective and Appropriate Supervision

### Ensure that social workers have regular and appropriate social work supervision.

This Standard is about making high quality, regular supervision an integral part of social work practice. This should start with students on placement, and continue through ASYE and throughout the individual's social work career. Supervision should be based on a rigorous understanding of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). Supervision should challenge students and qualified practitioners to reflect critically on their practice and should foster an inquisitive approach to social work.

#### Frequency of supervision

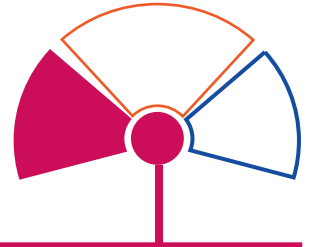
All employers should:

- ensure that supervision takes place regularly and consistently and last at least an hour and a half of uninterrupted time.
- make sure that supervision takes place:
  - For students on placement - as agreed with student and HEI
  - For newly qualified social workers - at least weekly for the first six weeks of employment of a newly qualified social worker, at least fortnightly for the duration of the first six months, and a minimum of monthly supervision thereafter
  - For social workers who have demonstrated capability at ASYE level and above - in line with identified needs, and at least monthly
- monitor actual frequency and quality of supervision against clear statements about what is expected.

#### Quality of supervision

All employers should:

- ensure that social work supervision is not treated as an isolated activity by incorporating it into the organisation's social work accountability framework.(Standard1)
- promote continuous learning and knowledge sharing through which social workers are encouraged to draw out learning points by reflecting on their own practice in the light of experiences of peers.
- ensure that the Professional Capabilities Framework, at an appropriate level, is used as the basis for evaluating capability and identifying development needs.
- ensure that supervision supports students and qualified social workers to meet the HCPC Standards.
- encourage social workers to plan, reflect on and record learning activity, using recording tools such as an e portfolio.
- provide regular supervision training for social work supervisors.
- assign explicit responsibility for the oversight of appropriate supervision and for issues that arise through supervision
- provide additional professional supervision by a registered social worker for practitioners whose line manager is not a social worker.



- 1. Guidance for providing supervision in different settings**  
<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6178957/Guidance+for+providing+supervision+in+different+settings.pdf/2694baa1-f3b5-45d5-a137-ab9c73c9a988>
- 2. SCIE supervision guides**  
<http://www.scie.org.uk/topic/developingskillsservices/managementleadership/supervision>
- 3. BASW supervision policy**  
[http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw\\_73346-6.pdf](http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_73346-6.pdf)
- 4. TCSW e-portfolio**  
<http://www.tcsw.org.uk/membership/membership-offer/cpd-e-portfolio/>
- 5. SCIE Research briefing 43: Effective supervision in social work and social care**  
<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/files/briefing43.pdf>

## Standard 6 - Continuing Professional Development

**Provide opportunities for effective continuing professional development, as well as access to research and relevant knowledge.**

This Standard is about social workers being able to build a robust and up to date knowledge and skill base through effective continuing professional development (CPD) and access to research, evidence and best practice guidance. Employers should facilitate career-long learning and empower social workers to work confidently and effectively with the children, adults and families they have been trained to support. Employers should also understand the statutory requirement for social workers in England to undertake CPD, as outlined in the HCPC's standards for CPD.

### **Supporting staff development**

All employers should:

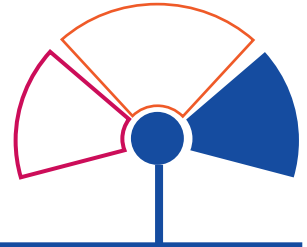
- have effective induction systems and put in place tailored support programmes for Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)s, including protected development time, a managed workload, tailored supervision and personal development plans.
- have an appraisal or performance review system which assesses how well professional practice is delivered and identifies a learning and development plan to support the achievement of objectives.
- provide time, resources and support for CPD.
- have fair and transparent systems to enable social workers to develop their professional skills and knowledge throughout their careers through an entitlement to formal and informal CPD, including Practice educator and/or specialist training as appropriate.
- encourage social workers to plan, reflect on and record CPD activity, using recording tools, such as an e portfolio.

### **Promoting research based practice**

All employers should:

- support their social workers to make decisions and pursue actions that are informed by robust and rigorous evidence so that service users can have confidence in the service they receive
- enable social workers to work with others engaged in research and practice development activities in universities, professional bodies and trade unions to develop the evidence base for good practice.
- ensure that practice educators are able to contribute to the learning, support, supervision and assessment of students on qualifying and CPD programmes.





- 1. TCSW e-portfolio**  
<http://www.tcsw.org.uk/membership/membership-offer/cpd-e-portfolio/>
- 2. ASYE Information, resources and case studies**  
<http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/asye>
- 3. BASW CPD Policy**  
[http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw\\_120605-9.pdf](http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_120605-9.pdf)
- 4. RIPFA**  
<https://www.ripfa.org.uk>
- 5. Skills for Care, Continuing to develop social workers**  
<http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Social-work/Social-work-CPD/Continuing-to-develop-social-workers.aspx>
- 6. HCPC standards for continuing professional development**  
<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/publications/brochures/index.asp?id=103>
- 7. HCPC information and resources on CPD**  
<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/registrants/cpd/>

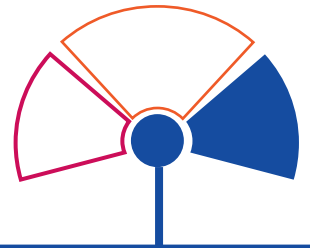
## Standard 7- Professional Registration

### **Ensure social workers can maintain their professional registration.**

This Standard is about supporting social workers to maintain their professional registration.

All employers should:

- support social workers in maintaining their professional registration and their competence, credibility, and currency, as well as enabling professional accountability.
- support staff in meeting the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics, standards of proficiency for social workers in England, and standards for continuing professional development.
- take appropriate steps to inform the regulator, co-operate with investigations and hearings carried out by the regulator, and respond appropriately to its findings and decisions if there are concerns that an employee's fitness to practice is impaired.



1. **HCPC standards of conduct, performance and ethics**  
<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/publications/standards/index.asp?id=38>
2. **HCPC standards of proficiency for social workers in England**  
<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/publications/standards/index.asp?id=569>
3. **HCPC standards for continuing professional development**  
<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/publications/brochures/index.asp?id=103>
4. **BASW Code of Ethics**  
[http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw\\_112315-7.pdf](http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_112315-7.pdf)
5. **TCSW Code of Ethics**  
[http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/Members\\_area/CodeofEthicsAug2013.pdf](http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/Members_area/CodeofEthicsAug2013.pdf)
6. **Understanding how the Health and Care Professions Council 'standards of proficiency for social work' relate to the PCF**  
<http://www.tcsw.org.uk/standard-2col-rhm.aspx?id=6442451337&terms=HCPC>

## Standard 8 - Effective Partnerships

### **Establish effective partnerships with higher education institutions and other organisations to support the delivery of social work education and continuing professional development.**

This Standard is about creating strong partnerships and good collaboration between employers, higher education institutions and other training providers. This will lead to better qualified and developed social workers resulting in improved services for children, young people, adults, families and local communities, and supporting professionals of the future.

#### **Developing strategic leadership and existing staff**

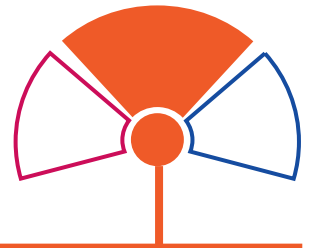
All employers should:

- ensure that strategic lead social workers/principal social workers who are appointed, understand and manage the organisational responsibility for this standard
- implement formal partnership arrangements that promote and enable effective joint planning, shared communication and activities to further the delivery of social work education and CPD.
- engage in networks to promote and share best practice and develop opportunities for joint research and evaluation.
- have a clear policy for recruiting, training and supporting Practice Educators and Practice Development Educators.
- support staff to access qualifying social work education.
- provide support to newly qualified social workers through the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)

#### **Developing future social workers**

All employers should:

- provide high quality placements and support for social work students on those placements.
- contribute to efforts to recruit and retain social work students.
- work collaboratively with partner organisations to develop the skills and knowledge required to deliver high quality social work education.



**1. TCSW Principles of Partnership**

[http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/\\_CollegeLibrary/Reform\\_resources/PartnershipPrincipleSummary%28par2%29.pdf](http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/_CollegeLibrary/Reform_resources/PartnershipPrincipleSummary%28par2%29.pdf)

**2. TCSW Models of Partnership**

[http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/\\_CollegeLibrary/Reform\\_resources/DevelopingGoodPartnershipModel%28par5%29.pdf](http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/_CollegeLibrary/Reform_resources/DevelopingGoodPartnershipModel%28par5%29.pdf)

**3. Skills for Care quality assurance practice examples**

<http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Social-work/Partnerships-and-collaboration/Quality-assurance-practice-examples.aspx>

## Other useful websites and resources

- Social Care Institute for Excellence - [www.scie.org.uk](http://www.scie.org.uk)
- C4EO - [www.c4eo.org.uk](http://www.c4eo.org.uk)
- Local Government Association - [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence NICE - [www.nice.org.uk/socialcare/index.jsp](http://www.nice.org.uk/socialcare/index.jsp)
- The Social Care Commitment - [www.thesocialcarecommitment.org.uk](http://www.thesocialcarecommitment.org.uk)

**If you have any best practice examples which you would like to see included please email [suzanne.hudson@local.gov.uk](mailto:suzanne.hudson@local.gov.uk)**

## Social work reform partners

- The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)
- The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)
- PROSPECT the Union
- British Association of Social Workers (BASW)
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- Centre for Workforce Intelligence (CFWI)
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- The Department of Education (DfE)
- The Department of Health (DH)
- Joint University Council Social Work Education Committee (JucSWEC)
- Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- Ofsted, the Office for Standards in Education
- Public Sector People Managers' Association (PPMA)
- Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)
- Skills for Care (SfC)
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)
- The College of Social Work (TCSW)
- UNISON the Public Services Union