

# The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) Charter for integrated working



**BASW has developed a charter for social workers who may be moving into or already are working within formal integrated systems or within a partnership arrangement, particularly with health services. The Charter applies across various models of integration, from structural – the creation of a single integrated organisation, through to partnership arrangements and co-operation agreements. BASW is supportive of partnership working where it is done well and properly and is appropriate. The evidence base for fully integrated systems appears to be weak as the reports by the IPC, SCIE, and the Kings Fund show<sup>1</sup>. It would appear from this evidence that structural changes are not necessarily the answer to co-ordinated and integrated care.**

The Charter links in with expectations of the Professional Capabilities Framework, the Knowledge and Skills Framework for Social Work in Adult Services as well as the requirements for social workers of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and the Standards for Employers of Social Workers.<sup>2</sup>

A separate and distinct social work identity is not only necessary for social workers to practice effectively, but it is vital for the effective functioning of aspects of health services. The independence of social workers, who are able to practice without fear, can be a necessary check to decisions made by health services and can be vital in upholding the rights of people who use services.

Regardless of what the organisational arrangements are implemented, (co-operation, partnership or full integration) BASW states that the following need to apply:

- **There needs to be clarity of purpose of the “integrated” arrangements and what they set out to achieve**
- **There must be genuine service user and carer involvement in both the creation of partnerships/integrated services and in the on-going management of them**
- **The social model of disability, the social care perspective and a knowledge of social care services provides a vital perspective in multi-agency, multi-disciplinary settings**

- That social workers are supported to have an independent voice. This needs to be developed in supervision and underpinned by professional codes of practice and teaching and learning strategies. Social workers need to be supported when they refuse to undertake actions that they see as unethical, wrong, or indeed in some cases unlawful
- There are aspects of the law that require the independent perspective of social workers, this independence must be supported and encouraged
- Social workers must be supported to retain their occupational role undertaking social work tasks as described in the PCF, HCPC and KSF
- There needs to be an active promotion of the value of the social work workforce
- Teams that are commissioning for social work services must include social workers in those teams. Commissioning managers should recognise that social work is a profession with its own principles and code of ethics and unique knowledge and skills
- Social workers and social work managers should be engaged from the outset in the development of plans to reconfigure and change services
- Interagency groups must be established to oversee joint or integrated agreements
- Regular governance meetings at senior management level must take place to monitor partnership or integration arrangements
- That clear lines of accountability, leadership and support to middle managers are set up in order to take the social work agenda forward
- Everyone responsible for personnel issues, if formal partnership or integration agreements are set up, must be trained in the requirements of the Care Quality Commission and HCPC
- Social care leaders should ensure that support services are in place for social workers – IT HR, finance, learning and development. This includes ensuring that social workers have the tools to engage with partner agencies (such as access to all partner internet and intranet and recording systems)
- Robust arrangements must be put in place to ensure that social workers receive good quality supervision from qualified social workers, which includes:
  - professional supervision within the team from an experienced social worker
  - support for the experienced social worker from an external mentor
- There should be an adequate number of social workers in multi-disciplinary teams
- There should be a social work forum in each locality that is separate from other professions in order to build and sustain identity.

<sup>1</sup> For references see BASW (April 2016) BASW position statement on “integration” <[http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw\\_102051-2.pdf](http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_102051-2.pdf)>

<sup>2</sup> All the domains of the PCF ([www.basw.co.uk/pcf/capabilities/?level=5](http://www.basw.co.uk/pcf/capabilities/?level=5)) are relevant, however the domain detailing ‘Contexts and Organisations’ is particularly relevant: “Social workers should take an active role in inter-professional and inter-agency work, building own network and collaborative working”. Other domains include: Professionalism: “Promote the profession in a growing range of contexts” and The Values and Ethics Domain: “Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of their profession, its ethical standards and relevant law”. The Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) <[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/411957/KSS.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/411957/KSS.pdf)> for social workers details further the value and role of social workers. An example of a relevant statement from the KSS is: “Social workers have a key leadership role in modelling to other professionals the proper application of the Mental Capacity Act”. The Standards for Employers of Social Workers <[www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6188796/The+Standards+-+updated+July+01+2014/146988cc-d9c5-4311-97d4-20dfc19397bf](http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6188796/The+Standards+-+updated+July+01+2014/146988cc-d9c5-4311-97d4-20dfc19397bf)> state: The purpose of the Standards is to sustain high quality outcomes for service users and their families/carers/communities. The Standards for Employers divide 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.

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