

PCF



Professional
Capabilities
Framework

Social worker

BASW
England

The professional association for
social work and social workers

1. PROFESSIONALISM - Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development

Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession. Our title is protected in UK law. We demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for our conduct, practice, self-care and development. We seek and use supervision and other professional support. We promote excellent practice and challenge circumstances that compromise this. As representatives of the profession, we safeguard its reputation. We are accountable to people using services, the public, employers and the regulator. We take ethical decisions in the context of multiple accountabilities.

I...

- am able to meet the requirements of the professional regulator
- actively promote the profession and its reputation in a growing range of contexts
- understand that social work is an international profession with a global definition that supports my professional identity, ethics and practice with diverse communities in England
- take responsibility for obtaining regular, effective supervision from a professional supervisor/manager to ensure effective practice, reflection, continuing professional development and career opportunities
- maintain professionalism in more challenging circumstances
- manage workload more independently, seeking support and suggesting solutions for workload and demand management difficulties
- maintain appropriate personal/professional boundaries in more challenging circumstances
- make skilled use of self as part of my interventions
- maintain awareness of own professional limitations and knowledge gaps and seek to address these

Social worker

- establish a network of internal and external colleagues from whom to seek advice and expertise
- routinely promote wellbeing at work and self-care for myself and others
- promote excellence in practice and raise and address issues of poor practice or inadequate working conditions for professional practice, internally through the organisation, and then independently if required.

2. VALUES AND ETHICS - Apply social work ethical principles and value to guide professional practices

Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves and make decisions in accordance with our [Code of Ethics](#). This includes working in partnership with people who use our services. We promote human rights and social justice. We develop and maintain our understanding of the value base of our profession throughout our career, its ethical standards and relevant law.

I...

- understand ensure my practice is underpinned by commitment to working in partnership with, and listening closely to people who use services, carers, families, communities and networks, wherever possible. I negotiate and establish boundaries to underpin such partnership, using transparency and honesty
- demonstrate confident application of ethical reasoning to professional practice, rights and entitlements, questioning and challenging others using a legal and human rights framework
- critically reflect on and manage the influence and impact of my own and others' values on professional practice
- recognise and manage conflicting values and ethical dilemmas in practice, using supervision, team discussion and other professionally justifiable sources of support, questioning and challenging others, including those from other professions
- ensure practice is underpinned by policy, procedures and code of conduct to promote individuals' rights to determine their own solutions, promoting problem-solving skills, whilst recognising how and when self-determination may be constrained (by the law)
- work to protect privacy and promote trust whilst being able to justify, explain and take appropriate action when the right to privacy is overridden by professional or legal requirements.

3. DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY - Recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice

Social workers understand that diversity characterises and shapes human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. Diversity is multi-dimensional and includes race, disability, class, economic status, age, sexuality, gender (including transgender), faith and belief, and the intersection of these and other characteristics. We understand that because of difference, and perception of difference, a person's life experience may include oppression, marginalisation and alienation as well as privilege, power and acclaim. We identify this and promote equality.

I...

- recognise the complexity of identity and diversity of experience and apply this to practice
- recognise discriminatory practices and inequality and develop a range of approaches to appropriately challenge service users, colleagues and senior staff
- critically reflect on and manage the power of my role in my relationship with people using services and others, adapting my practice accordingly and striving to reduce the risk of power misuse.

4. RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING - Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic wellbeing

Social workers recognise and promote the fundamental principles of human rights, social justice and economic wellbeing enshrined in national and international laws, conventions and policies. These principles underpin our practice and we use statutory and case law effectively in our work. We understand and address the effects of oppression, discrimination and poverty. Wherever possible, we work in partnership with people using services, their carers and families, to challenge inequality and injustice, and promote strengths, agency, hope and self-determination.

I...

- routinely integrate the principles of and entitlements to social justice, social inclusion and equality in my practice and with support as needed, consider how and when challenge may be required
- routinely apply the law to protect and advance people's rights and entitlements, identifying and highlighting situations where interpretations of the law are neither proportionate nor fair to promote autonomy and self-determination
- apply the principles and entitlements of human and civil rights to analyse, evaluate and challenge interventions that are unlawful and/or disproportionate
- analyse differing needs, perspectives and competing rights and apply to practice
- enable and support people to consider and pursue a range of options that may enhance economic status (through access to education, work, housing, health services and welfare benefits)
- where appropriate, set up and/or enable access to effective independent advocacy

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- promote strengths, agency, hope and self-determination in people using services, carers, families and communities and support them in raising their own challenges and finding solutions to inequality, social injustice and rights violations.

5. KNOWLEDGE – Develop and apply relevant knowledge from social work practice and research, social sciences, law, other professional and relevant fields, and from the experience of people who use services

We develop our professional knowledge throughout our careers and sustain our curiosity. As a unified profession, we develop core knowledge that relates to our purpose, values and ethics. We also develop specific knowledge needed for fields of practice and roles. Our knowledge comes from social work practice, theory, law, research, expertise by experience, and from other relevant fields and disciplines. All social workers contribute to creating as well as using professional knowledge. We understand our distinctive knowledge complements that of other disciplines to provide effective services.

I...

- demonstrate a comprehensive understanding and use of knowledge related to my area of practice, including critical awareness of current issues and new evidence-informed practice research
- demonstrate knowledge and application of appropriate legal and policy frameworks and guidance that inform and mandate social work practice. This may include Knowledge and Skills statements in adults' or children's social work
- apply legal reasoning, using professional legal expertise and advice appropriately, recognising where scope for professional judgement exists
- demonstrate and apply to practice a working knowledge of human growth and development throughout the life course
- recognise the short and long term impact of psychological, socio-economic, environmental and physiological factors on people's lives, taking into account age and development, and how this informs practice

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- understand the value of systemic approaches and how they can be used to understand and work with the person or family in their environment, social context and relationships, and inform my practice
- acknowledge the centrality of relationships for people and the key concepts of attachment, separation, loss, change and resilience
- understand forms of harm and their impact on people, and the implications for practice, drawing on concepts of strength, resilience, vulnerability, risk and resistance, and apply to practice
- demonstrate a critical knowledge of the range of theories and models for social work intervention with individuals, families, groups and communities and the methods derived from them
- demonstrate a critical understanding of social welfare policy, its evolution, implementation and impact on people, social work, other professions and inter-agency working
- recognise the contribution and use research and other evidence (eg practice evidence and evidence from experts by experience) to inform and develop my practice
- demonstrate a critical understanding of research methods
- value and take account of the expertise of service users, carers and other professionals and seek their feedback on my practice/role.
- consolidate knowledge and understanding of the opportunities and risks of new technologies, digital resources, online communications, virtual environments and social media in social work

6. CRITICAL REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS - Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision-making

Social workers critically reflect on their practice, use analysis, apply professional judgement and reasoned discernment. We identify, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence. We continuously evaluate our impact and benefit to service users. We use supervision and other support to reflect on our work and sustain our practice and wellbeing. We apply our critical reflective skills to the context and conditions under which we practise. Our reflection enables us to challenge ourselves and others, and maintain our professional curiosity, creativity and self-awareness.

I...

- routinely and effectively apply critical reflection and analysis to increasingly complex cases and situations
- draw on a wide range of evidence sources to inform decision-making
- ensure hypotheses and options are reviewed to inform judgement and decision making
- start to provide professional opinion to others, including in interdisciplinary contexts
- sustain and develop my use of imagination, creativity and curiosity in practice, exploring options to solve dilemmas and problems and involve people who use services in reflections and creativity wherever possible.

7. SKILLS AND INTERVENTIONS - Use judgement, knowledge and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support, prevent harm and enable progress

Social workers engage with individuals, families, and communities, working alongside people to determine their needs and wishes, and what action may be helpful. We build productive working relationships and communicate effectively. Using our professional judgement, we employ appropriate interventions, promoting self-determination, support, protection and positive change. We develop and maintain skills relevant to our roles. We understand and take account of power differentials and use our authority appropriately. We evaluate our own practice and its impact, and how we improve outcomes for those we work with.

I...

- communicate with compassion and authority in challenging situations, and am able to understand and work effectively with negative responses
- routinely explain and accountable for my professional reasoning, judgements and decisions
- engage effectively with people in complex situations, both short-term and when building productive relationships over time
- gather information to inform judgement for interventions in complex situations and in response to challenge or negative responses to my offer
- use assessment procedures discerningly to inform judgement
- develop a range of interventions, use them effectively and evaluate them in practice
- continue to expand my range of intervention methods and demonstrate particular expertise in one or more specific methods relevant to my work setting

Social worker

- make timely decisions when positive change is not happening
- actively support, initiate and co-produce community groups and networks for the benefit of people using services, carers and families
- support the development of professional groups and networks
- clearly report and record analysis and judgements
- demonstrate and promote appropriate information sharing use contingency planning to anticipate complexity and changing circumstances
- recognise and appropriately manage the authority inherent in my position
- demonstrate confident and effective judgement about risk and accountability in my decisions
- regularly undertake assessment and planning for safeguarding.

8. CONTEXTS AND ORGANISATIONS - Engage with, inform, and adapt to changing organisational contexts, and the social and policy environments that shape practice. Operate effectively within and contribute to the development of organisations and services, including multi-agency and inter-professional settings

Social workers are informed about and proactively respond to the challenges and opportunities that come from changing social, policy and work contexts. We fulfil this responsibility in accordance with our professional values and ethics, as individual and collective professionals and as members of the organisations in which we work. We collaborate, inform and are informed by our work with other social workers, other professions, individuals and communities.

I...

- keep abreast of changing policy, political and professional context at local and national level and take account of this in my practice and workplace
- demonstrate the ability to work effectively within my own organisation and identify and begin to influence relationships between my organisation's culture and procedures, the demands of practice and wider changes in my context (eg changes in local communities and wider society)
- work within and am able to explain the relevant legal structures in my organisation or workplace, including basic case law. I know when and how to access support and appropriate legal advice and consultation
- explore, identify and communicate to supervisors and managers how organisational practice can improve to support better social work practice and citizen outcomes
- keep up to date with changing roles and service developments in the organisation, recognising, valuing and engaging with other disciplines and specialist perspectives

Social worker

- am confident about my role in my team or setting, working positively with others. I draw on and contribute to team working and collaborative support
- take an active role in inter-professional and inter-agency work, building own network and collaborative working.

9. PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP – Promote the profession and good social work practice. Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others. Develop personal influence and be part of the collective leadership and impact of the profession

We develop and show our leadership, individually and collectively, through promoting social work's purpose, practices and impact. We achieve this through diverse activities, which may include: advancing practice, supervising, educating others, research, evaluation, using innovation and creativity, writing, using social media positively, being active in professional networks and bodies, contributing to policy and taking formal leadership/management roles. We promote organisational contexts conducive to good practice and learning. We work in partnership with people who use services and stakeholders in developing our leadership and aims for the profession.

I...

- contribute to and promote the development of practice, taking the initiative to test and evaluate new and existing approaches
- promote social work's purpose, practice and impact within my organisation, with colleagues, including those of other disciplines, and more widely where appropriate
- contribute to the learning of others, including social work students and ASYE
- may undertake Practice Educator training
- contribute to collective/collaborative professional leadership through participating in or initiating purposeful peer support, social work forums and meetings within and/or outside my organisation
- take responsibility for seeking, planning and undertaking ongoing professional development and use diverse platforms and opportunities within and outside my organisation/work setting.