



Consultation Response

Social Work England:
Registration

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is the professional association for social work in the UK with offices in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. With over 20,000 members we exist to promote the best possible social work services for all people who may need them, while also securing the well-being of social workers working in all health and social care settings.

BASW is the custodian of the Code of Ethics and the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) for social work in England. All social workers in the UK should follow the professional code of ethics which is based on the global code of ethics and definition of social work. The PCF is the overarching framework for social work learning, development and excellence at all levels from student to strategic social worker. It was developed and is used by the social work profession as a whole in England.

Social Work England's standards provide an essential threshold for public protection. They must neither contradict the code of Ethics nor qualifying any level of the PCF. As social workers develop through their careers, their professional development should reflect the PCF levels. Social Work England's standards for professional development should state that social workers use the PCF as a framework for continuing professional development.






In 2018, BASW refreshed the PCF in conjunction with representatives from across our sector. The relationship between the PCF and the Chief Social Workers' Knowledge and Skills Statements was confirmed in a joint letter between BASW, the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care.

This consultation response was completed in conjunction with the Social Workers' Union (SWU) and representative of their membership. SWU is the only UK trade union for, and run by, qualified and registered social workers. SWU works in partnership with BASW to protect social work professionals in their workplace. Having a professional association and trade union working together is important for the social work profession. Therefore, this response should be considered as the official views of both organisations.

BASW England and SWU welcome Social Work England's consultation on the Registration of social workers. After consultation with our membership, our response is as follows:

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-  The proposed registration rules should state that social workers use the PCF in accordance with their registration.
-  There does not appear to be a timescale for the completion of registrant applications.
-  There does not appear to be an appeals process for refused applications, which could leave applicant's in the awkward/limbo position of being qualified – but unable to ever practice social work.
-  The Social Workers' Benevolent Trust (SWBT) is a registered charity established by BASW in the early 1970's, which now operates independently. SWBT provides financial help to social workers in need. SWBT report that over many years they have received considerable number of applications from social workers needing a grant to re-register with the regulator due to the limited payment options. In some circumstances, social workers may have had to cease their registration due to life events, such as: medium/long term ill health (either their own or a family member) or having a child, along with a range of other events that occur throughout people's lives. For social workers in this position, it is very harsh for them to pay their registration fee in full or quarterly. BASW England recommends the availability of payment by monthly Direct Debit and an option to pay once in employment.
-  We are aware there is a possibility registration fees may be increased in the future (after a consultation). BASW England is strongly opposed to any increase in fees, as we believe they are expensive enough. We also believe increasing the fee would potentially exacerbate the existing recruitment and retention issues in social work. It would be helpful to have information on registration fees and average salaries for other professions, to enable comparisons to be drawn.

Recommendations:

BASW England does not believe registrants' convictions, warnings, sanctions or restrictions on practice should be held publicly on the register, as this would contravene their privacy and could potentially compromise future working relationships. Our view is that a registrant is either suitable/fit to practice and worthy of the trust of citizens, or they are not. Certainly 'spent' sanctions should be expunged from public records.

BASW England would like to see an index in the published version of Social Work England's rules and standards, which signposts to other existing and relevant documents, frameworks and policies to enable social workers to easily cross reference various important resources elsewhere (PCF, BASW Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, IFSW, KSS etc).

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We hope this feedback is helpful and received in the constructive spirit with which it is intended.

For further information please contact:

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