



The Professional Qualifications Bill and Social Work

The Professional Qualifications Bill revokes the current EU-based system for recognising professional qualifications gained overseas and establishes a new approach based on regulator autonomy and supporting the delivery of international agreements. A series of factsheets explaining the key themes in the Bill is available [here](#).

The Bill applies to professions that are regulated by law and to their regulators. Further details on the definitions of ‘profession’ and ‘regulator’ can be found on [gov.uk](#) and in Clause 18 of the Bill. The UK government (UKG) has worked closely with the devolved administrations (DAs) and regulators to determine the professions that are regulated by law. Of most relevance to social work organisations, the Bill will apply to the regulated social work professions in the UK, which are listed below:

- **Social Worker** – regulated in England by Social Work England; regulated in Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC); regulated in Scotland by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC); and, regulated in Wales by Social Care Wales (SCW).
- **Social Work Student** – regulated in Northern Ireland by NISCC; regulated in Scotland by SSSC; and, regulated in Wales by SCW.

By virtue of Clause 1, provided a specified profession meets the ‘unmet demand’ condition in Clause 2, UKG or DAs ministers can require regulators to put in place a process under which they can assess individuals with qualifications and experience gained overseas. Further information on this provision can be found [here](#). Clause 14 underpins regulatory autonomy and will ensure that a regulator’s ability to prevent an unfit individual from practising a profession is not affected. It also means regulations cannot have an adverse effect on the knowledge, skills or experience of individuals practising a profession.

In England, whilst most social work employers recruit effectively from within the domestic labour market, nationals from around the world can make a valuable contribution to adult and children’s social care. Social Work England has an [existing application route open for all overseas-qualified social workers](#) wishing to register, which provides for recognition of qualifications and meets the provision of clauses 1 and 2 of the Bill.

With regards to the social work professions in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, DAs ministers will be required to consult with the relevant regulator when considering whether to lay regulations under Clause 1, if they believe there is unmet demand for the profession in their respective jurisdiction.

The Bill also includes measures to increase transparency across all regulators and to help individuals have the information they need to access regulated professions across the UK and overseas. The Assistance Centre will provide information on entry requirements of professions in the UK, complementing information published by regulators. It will also provide information on entry requirements for overseas professions to individuals with UK professional qualification, helping them to provide their services in overseas markets. Additional information on these measures can be found on [gov.uk](#).

Ultimately, the Bill will be of benefit to the social work professions in the UK, as it will provide UKG and DAs ministers with the ability to address unmet demand, where appropriate, without compromising on the existing standards required to practise. UKG will continue to engage with regulators and professionals when implementing the provisions in the Bill.

Please contact professionalqualifications@beis.gov.uk for more information.