



BASW England

The professional association for
social work and social workers

CPD Guidance on Social Work Roles Undertaken During Disasters



1. Introduction

This document presents guidance on providing qualified social workers with continuous professional development (CPD) training on the role of social work in disaster preparedness, response and recovery. This has been developed in part with reference to [The role of the DASS and social workers in disaster recovery](#).¹

2. Learning Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

By the end of this training, attendees should be able to:

1. Explain the role of the social worker in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.
2. Explain legislation, policy and procedures that are pertinent to this context.
3. Utilise research informed practice in this area, and apply relevant evidence.
4. Apply relevant social work theories and models to this context.

Evaluation and Analysis

By the end of this training, attendees should be able to:

5. Evaluate the impact of disasters on individuals, families and communities.
6. Reflect on the wider contexts, causes and implications of a disaster.
7. Prioritise the perspectives of people who have been impacted by a disaster.
8. Develop creative and ethical responses to the unique/unpredictable challenges.

Skills and Application

By the end of this training, attendees should be able to:

9. Utilise social work skills for psychosocial, practical and emotional support.
10. Promote the importance of the social work role in and advocate for the highest quality social work services for people before, during and after a disaster.
11. Engage with multi-professional teams to provide a coordinated response.
12. Practice self-care and utilise available support.

Note: The training will include the perspective of those with lived experience of disasters and the challenges of this working environment, including those affected or impacted by disasters, social workers and other professionals. This is highlighted under learning outcomes 1 and 7. Ideally this should be through having someone with direct experience involved in the training; however, this perspective can also be provided through videos, written accounts/quotes, artwork etc.

3. Guidance on Meeting Learning Outcomes

1. Explain the role of the social worker in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

On completion of this training attendees should have an understanding of what constitutes a disaster and be able to confidently explain the role of the social worker to different stakeholders, including policy makers, those affected or impacted by disasters and other professionals. This understanding should draw from [The role of the DASS and social workers in disaster recovery](#)² statement and be supplemented with research and evidence, as well as first-

¹ www.adass.org.uk/media/6796/recommendations-on-the-role-of-dass-and-social-workers-in-post-disaster-management-january-2019.pdf

² www.adass.org.uk/media/6796/recommendations-on-the-role-of-dass-and-social-workers-in-post-disaster-management-january-2019.pdf

hand accounts from social workers and those affected or impacted by disasters . Consideration should be given to the social work role in all stages of a disaster process, including pre-impact, impact, post-impact and recovery.

2. Explain legislation, policy and procedures that are pertinent to this context.

This must include knowledge of:

- The legal duties of local authorities in relation to disaster response
- Human rights and social justice considerations
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and associated guidance
- The role of the Humanitarian Assistance Lead Officer (HALO)
- The role of family liaison officers
- Safeguarding duties
- Relevant emergency provisions under the Housing Act 2004
- Relevant provisions of the Mental Health Act 1983
- Processes and procedures for body identification and mortuaries

Local Context:

- Out of hours procedures
- The identity of the strategic lead/HALO in your area
- Local civil contingency plans/Local authority emergency plans
- Local authority responsibilities during a disaster.

If the training context or setting precludes the direct provision of the local contextual information, attendees should be guided on where to obtain this information.

3. Utilise research informed practice and apply relevant evidence.

This should include national research and international research with relevance to the England context. The trainer will need to integrate relevant and up to date research.

4. Apply relevant social work theories and models for disaster response.

Important theories include, but are not limited to:

- Rights based approach
- Anti-oppressive practice
- Trauma informed approach
- Relationship based practice
- Community development
- Strengths based approach/Resilience building
- Crisis intervention
- Assessment models and frameworks tailored to disaster response and recovery.

5. Evaluate the impact of disasters on individuals, families and communities.

This will require a culturally appropriate evaluation based of the specific context of the disaster, and an ability to differentiate between the needs of survivors and bereaved. Being sensitive to the complexities posed by cultural issues requires the practitioner to tailor their response to the individual, and to ask what culture means to the person affected, rather than making assumptions. It should also include an understanding of why some groups are more vulnerable to the impact of a disaster than others, and an advanced planning role based on an assessment of risk and resilience factors in local communities. Social workers will need to be able to utilise this knowledge to localise responses.

6. Reflect on the wider contexts, causes and implications of a disaster.

This should include an understanding of what contributes to disasters and the theoretical frameworks that underpin an understanding of a disaster. This should also incorporate an awareness of the role of the media and politics following a disaster, and your duties/responsibilities in these areas, as well as how they can be utilised as resources. Disaster informed social workers must also be prepared to identify and challenge situations and networks that are potentially exploitative following a disaster.

7. Prioritise the perspectives of people who have been impacted by a disaster.

Training should include the perspectives of those affected or impacted by disasters and these should be central to how social workers understand their role in disaster response. Research shows that disaster responses can neglect cultural diversity, spiritual needs and ethical concerns, and social workers will have a central role in engaging with these areas of practice and ensuring they are accounted for in a holistic and empowering response to a disaster. This will include cultural consciousness around death, funerals, burials, bereavement and grief.

8. Develop creative and ethical responses to the unique/unpredictable challenges.

Social workers responding to a disaster need to be confident to step outside the usual parameters of daily practice and respond to the specific challenges of supporting individuals following a disaster. This needs to include an understanding of the potential blurring of professional boundaries, and the challenges of working 'out of role' in disaster response.

9. Utilise social work skills for psychosocial, practical and emotional support.

Important skills include, but are not limited to:

- Advocacy
- Bereavement/grief support
- Communication skills/active listening
- Managing endings, including ensuring there is a long term support plan
- Risk management/safeguarding
- Recognition of situations/networks that are potentially exploitative
- Emotional intelligence/empathy
- Support around Disaster Victim Identification and the aftermath of this.

10. Promote the importance of the social work role in and advocate for the highest quality social work services for people before, during and after a disaster.

This should include supporting and promoting social work involvement in local resilience boards, in contingency planning and when undertaking planning and response exercises. This is an ongoing role for disaster informed social workers, and one that links to prevention and the promotion of community resilience. This necessitates a knowledge and awareness of social work's professional role within the wider emergency response framework, and of local support services. This should also include the provision of information, and the development of local resources, to explain the role of social work in disaster response to those affected or impacted by disasters, other professionals, colleagues and the media.

11. Engage with multi-professional teams to provide a coordinated response.

Social workers need to be able to engage with a range of professionals in a disaster response, including the police, keyworkers working for private organisations, health colleagues, housing, the coroner's office, faith and community leaders, home office, fire services, and charity organisations. Social workers will need to be confident to use existing skills in multi-agency working to facilitate these professional relationships, including but not limited to:

- Communication skills
- Respect and awareness of your own and other professional roles and responsibilities
- Flexibility
- Professional responsibility/accountability.

12. Practice self-care and utilise available support.

Social workers should not be required to take full responsibility for their self-care, and managers need to be proactive in encouraging and facilitating self-care, as well as ensuring that there are strategic and formal structural support systems and resources in place. However, following this training attendees will need to be confident to raise concerns if they feel they are not sufficiently supported, or they are not coping with the challenges of the role.

Strategies/support for self-care that attendees need to be aware of include:

- Debriefing sessions, daily if necessary.
- Supervision, daily if necessary.
- Check in on yourself: Do I feel ok today? If not, identify why not, and support required.
- Have a clear remit and understanding of your role.
- Available and easily accessible counselling support.
- Peer support/Buddy system.
- The appropriate use of humour in a supportive context.
- If the work becomes long term, don't neglect annual leave, sick days and days off.
- Maintain your personal routine (hobbies, friends, exercise and sleep).
- Practice Mindfulness.
- Identify a clear support system, both professionally and personally.
- Say no if you are not able to take more work.
- Avoid a culture of 'just getting on with it', and seek support if needed.
- Reflection time, including utilising written or recorded reflections.
- Strict time management/diary planning, including reflection time and breaks.
- Ensure you are not also having to manage your regular caseload.
- *Make self-care your priority.*

4. Ongoing Role

Social workers who complete this training can opt to register to be part of a national register of Disaster Informed Social Workers. This will have the following function:

- These social workers could be called upon to provide their expertise at local resilience forums, and in relation to contingency planning and response exercises.
- If there is a disaster response required in their local area, the social worker could be contacted to provide support.
- If this is a particularly large scale disaster, the social worker could be contacted to play a coordinating or leadership role to support their colleagues without specialised training.
- If required, this could also involve the social worker being contacted to provide support in another area, nationally or internationally, and the register will allow for social workers with training to be quickly identified.
- Development of a peer support and information sharing community for disaster informed social workers.
- If not directly working in a disaster response or recovery, these social workers could work in a 'buddy system' to support people who are responding with practical and emotional support.
- Individuals on this register will be asked to opt out if they do not feel able to take on this role at any point, and will have to ensure they keep updated in relation to training in this area through regular refreshers. This will also include keeping up to date on the latest research and developments in this area.

A glossary of common terms utilised in emergency response can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-responder-interoperability-lexicon#history

CPD Guidance Mapped to the PCF, KSS Adults and KSS Children

Learning Outcome	Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)
1. Explain the role of the social worker in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.	1. Professionalism 9. Professional leadership
2. Explain legislation, policy and procedures that are pertinent to this context.	4. Rights, Justice and Economic Wellbeing 5. Knowledge 8. Contexts and Organisations
3. Utilise research informed practice in this area, and apply relevant evidence.	5. Knowledge
4. Apply relevant social work theories and models to this context.	5. Knowledge 7. Skills and Interventions
5. Evaluate the impact of disasters on individuals, families and communities.	3. Diversity and Equality 4. Rights, Justice and Economic Wellbeing
6. Reflect on the wider context, causes and implications of a disaster.	6. Critical Reflection and Analysis 8. Contexts and Organisations
7. Prioritise the perspectives of people who have been impacted by a disaster.	2. Values and Ethics 3. Diversity and Equality
8. Develop creative and ethical responses to the unique/unpredictable challenges.	2. Values and Ethics 6. Critical Reflection and Analysis
9. Utilise social work skills for psychosocial, practical and emotional support.	5. Knowledge 7. Skills and Interventions
10. Advocate for the importance of the social work role and the quality of care/services offered to people before, during and following a disaster	1. Professionalism 9. Professional leadership
11. Engage with multi-professional teams to provide a coordinated response.	8. Contexts and Organisations
12. Practice self-care and utilise available support.	1. Professionalism

Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) Adults	Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The role of social workers working with adults 10. Professional ethics and leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The role of child and family social work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Safeguarding 5. Mental capacity 9. Organisational context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Abuse and neglect of children 8. The law and the family justice system 11. Organisational context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Supervision, critical reflection and analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. The role of supervision and research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Supervision, critical reflection and analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. The role of supervision and research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Effective assessments and outcome based support planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Child development 3. Adult mental ill-health, substance misuse, domestic violence, physical ill-health and disability 6. Child and family assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Supervision, critical reflection and analysis 9. Organisational context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. The role of supervision and research 11. Organisational context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Person-centred practice 7. Direct work with individuals and families 10. Professional ethics and leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Effective direct work with children and families 9. Professional ethics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The role of social workers working with adults 10. Professional ethics and leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The role of child and family social work 7. Analysis, decision-making, planning and review 9. Professional ethics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The role of social workers working with adults 7. Direct work with individuals and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The role of child and family social work 5. Effective direct work with children and families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The role of social workers working with adults 9. Organisational context 10. Professional ethics and leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The role of child and family social work 11. Organisational context
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Supervision, critical reflection and analysis 10. Professional ethics and leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Professional ethics



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