



Social Work England: Q&A

Q. What is government's vision for social work?

A. We want all social workers to be equipped to deliver outstanding services, able to adopt evidence-based and innovative approaches, learn from the very best practice and deliver quality outcomes for all service users.

Q. Why is government setting up Social Work England?

A. Establishing Social Work England will ensure that social workers benefit from the highest quality initial education, access to continuing professional development whilst in frontline practice and experience strong, supportive supervision and leadership.

Q. What is Social Work England?

A. Social Work England will be the new professional regulator for social workers in England. Like the other health and social care regulators across the UK, Social Work England's primary objective will be public protection. It will set professional, education and training standards for social workers, hold the register and provide assurance that those registered meet the standards, are qualified and remain fit to practise.

Q. When will Social Work England be established?

A. Social Work England and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) are working together to ensure a smooth and safe transfer of regulation. We do not expect Social Work England to begin regulating the profession before spring 2019.

Q. Why is government moving regulation from HCPC?

A. Government is confident that the regulation of social workers in England will be better carried out by a social work specific body able to develop an in-depth understanding of the profession.

Q. Is Social Work England independent from Government?

A. Yes. Social Work England will be responsible for day-to-day operations and will employ its own staff, have its own governance arrangements and a clear set of responsibilities. Government will hold the regulator to account for the delivery of its functions. The Professional Standards Authority – which oversees health and social care professional regulators – will provide independent oversight.



Q. Will fees increase for social workers when Social Work England becomes the regulator?

A. It will be up to Social Work England to set fees and it will need to do so before it starts regulating the profession. Social Work England must consult on the level of fees and seek approval from Secretaries of State before setting the fee.

Q. Will social workers pay the costs of setting up Social Work England?

A. No. Government will ensure that any set-up costs will not fall on social workers.

Q. Who shall I pay my fee to when I renew my registration in September 2018?

A. You will need to pay your fee to the current regulator, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Government, Social Work England and the HCPC are working together to ensure a smooth and safe transfer of regulation. The transitional arrangements will include the transfer for any fees already paid.

Q. What happens if I let my registration lapse during the period of transfer of regulation from HCPC to Social Work England?

A. If you let your registration lapse at any point you will not be registered as a social worker in England. You will need to pay your fee to HCPC in September 2018 to renew your registration. If you allow your registration to lapse but continue to practise as a social worker in England or use the protected title 'social worker', you will be committing an offence and may be prosecuted.

Q. If I am on the HCPC register will I automatically be on the Social Work England register?

A. Yes. Social Workers who are registered with HCPC on the day of transfer will automatically transfer to the Social Work England register.

Q. Will Social Work England set standards for social workers?

A. Yes. Social Work England will set and publish professional standards for social workers in England. These include standards of proficiency, health, conduct and ethics and continuous professional development. The standards will clarify expectations about the knowledge, skills, values and behaviours required to become and remain registered as a social worker in England. Social Work England is required to consult on standards and seek approval from Secretaries of State.



Q. Will Social Work England set standards for social work education and training?

A. Yes. Social Work England will set and publish standards for initial education and training for social workers. These standards must be met by institutions and organisations that provide qualifying courses for social workers.

Q. What about post-qualification courses, will Social Work England approve those?

A. Yes. Social Work England can use its approval process, set out in regulations, to approve post-qualification courses. It will be up to Social Work England, in consultation with the sector, to decide whether it should approve post-qualification courses. Social Work England will approve post-qualifying courses for Approved Mental Health Professionals and Best Interest Assessors.

Q. Will Social Work England monitor continuous professional development (CPD) activity?

A. Yes. Ensuring that individual registrants maintain up-to-date knowledge, skills and capabilities to practise safely and effectively is a core function for a professional regulator. Demonstrating CPD activity is a requirement of registration renewal. Social Work England will decide and consult on how to monitor an individual's CPD activity and communicate with registrants before it takes over regulation.

Q. Will the fitness to practise system be different to the current HCPC regime?

A. Yes. Social Work England's fitness to practise regime will make use of a number of new approaches designed to deal with cases more efficiently, thereby more swiftly protecting the public while reducing unnecessary costs and stress for the parties involved. The system though will include a robust investigation process, a clear and transparent mechanism for hearings, separation between investigation and adjudication, and a clear right of appeal for registrants.

Q. Will Social Work England operate the National Assessment and Accreditation System?

A. No. The National Assessment and Accreditation System will be rolled out by the Department for Education, with sector involvement. As an independent body, Ministers could ask Social Work England to take over responsibility of the system, but this will be for Social Work England to determine in consultation with the Department for Education and, crucially, with the sector.