

The Standards for employers of Social Workers in England



Audit Tool

Revised June 2014

Guidance notes

The purpose of the Standards is to sustain high quality outcomes for service users and their families/ carers/communities. The Standards for Employers fall into three focal areas:

1. Enabling employers to provide a well led professional environment
2. Enabling social work professionals to maintain their professionalism
3. Enabling them to practice more effectively.

As part of the process for ensuring that these Standards are being met, employers should undertake an assessment of their performance against the Standards; ascertain what progress has been made to date; highlight actions needed to address any gaps and assess the impact of any actions to date.

Following the completion of the audit, the employer should then develop an action plan, which will form part of the statement of commitment to upholding the Standards and make clear what the employer will do to deliver higher quality service user outcomes.

Step 1

Please assign a rating to summarise progress achieved to date:

GREEN – Standard achieved
AMBER – Standard partially achieved
RED – Standard not yet achieved

Step 2

Please also include a brief commentary (no more than a few sentences) to explain the rating.

Whether the Standard has been achieved

Whether the Standard is on track to be achieved

Whether there are any risks to achieving the Standard.

Step 3

In the priority box, please rank the Standard in order of importance, Low / Medium / High

Please review each section as applicable to your area of responsibility and review regularly

Standard 1

Clear Social Work Accountability Framework

Employers should have in place a clear social work accountability framework informed by knowledge of good social work practice and the experience and expertise of service users, carers and practitioners.

Description	R A G	Evidence	Priority L / M / H
Develop a strategy to monitor the effectiveness of their social work service delivery.			
Ensure that processes are in place to seek and collate the views of service users, carers and practitioners.			
Implement a system to analyse and act upon the views of service users, carers and practitioners so that continuous feedback informs and supports the delivery of quality services.			
Establish clear lines of accountability within the organisation for social work service delivery.			
Identify a strategic lead social worker who will be responsible for implementing the Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework.			
Complete, review and publish an annual 'health check' to assess practice conditions and working environment of the organisation's social work workforce.			
Promote social work practice awareness amongst service directors and strategic managers, local politicians, community leaders, voluntary sector stakeholders and professionals in universal services such as schools, health and the police.			

Standard 2

Effective Workforce Planning

Employers should use effective workforce planning systems to make sure that the right number of social workers, with the right level of skills and experience, are available to meet current and future service demands.

Description	R A G	Evidence	Priority L / M / H
Undertake an assessment of current and future need and feed this into local, regional and national supply and demand systems.			
Ensure that workforce planning systems involve strategic partnerships with higher education institutions and other agencies			
Provide good quality practice placements, other types of practice learning, and effective workplace assessment to help ensure that the right numbers of new social workers of the right calibre are trained.			
Engage with the social work education sector in order to facilitate exchanges of personnel and expertise.			
Facilitate further learning and development across partner agencies.			

Standard 3

Safe Workloads and Case Allocation

Employers should ensure social workers have safe and manageable workloads.

Description	R A G	Evidence	Priority L / M / H
Put in place transparent systems to allocate work and a means to collect information about workload within teams.			
Use this information to assess and review the workload of each social worker, taking account of their capacity and allowing sufficient time for supervision and CPD activity			
Have contingency plans in place for resolving situations where workload demand exceeds the staffing capacity. Have a system in place which generates relevant information to be used as part of regular reporting to strategic leaders and feeds into supply and demand models, and the social work accountability framework.			

Standard 4

Managing Risks and Resources

Employers should ensure that social workers can do their jobs safely and have the practical tools and resources they need to practice effectively. Assess risks and take action to minimise and prevent them.

Description	R A G	Evidence	Priority L / M / H
A social worker's working environment, resources and access to practical tools and support should be designed to deliver safe and effective professional practice. Employers should meet the safety and welfare needs of social workers.			
Make a quiet space available for formal supervision, informal confidential professional discussions between colleagues, and team meetings. There should also be a suitable space for confidential interviews with adequate safety measures to protect practitioners.			
Foster a culture of openness and equality in the organisation that empowers social workers to make appropriate professional judgements within a supportive environment.			
Enable social workers and managers to raise concerns about inadequate resources, operational difficulties, workload issues or their own skills and capacity for work without fear of recrimination.			
Have in place effective systems for reporting and responding to concerns raised by social workers and managers so that risks are assessed and preventative and protective measures are taken.			

<p>Ensure that the risks of violence, harassment and bullying are assessed, minimised and prevented. Where such instances do occur, there should be clear procedures in place to address, monitor and review the situation.</p>			
<p>Provide social workers with appropriate practical tools to do their job including effective case recording and other IT systems, access to the Internet and mobile communications. They should have safe means of transport for visiting service users and for field work.</p>			
<p>Provide skilled administrative staff to support social workers and help to maximise the time social workers are able to spend working directly with the children, adults and families who use services.</p>			
<p>Provide social workers with access to fellow professionals, legal advisors, translators and interpreters.</p>			
<p>Make employee welfare services available for all social workers.</p>			

Standard 5

Effective and Appropriate Supervision

Employers should ensure that social workers have regular and appropriate social work supervision.

Description	R A G	Evidence	Priority L / M / H
Ensure that social work supervision is not treated as an isolated activity by incorporating it into the organisation's social work accountability framework.			
Promote continuous learning and knowledge sharing through which social workers are encouraged to draw out learning points by reflecting on their own cases, in light of the experiences of peers.			
Provide regular supervision training for social work supervisors.			
Assign explicit responsibility for the oversight of appropriate supervision and for issues that arise during supervision.			
Provide additional professional supervision by a registered social worker for practitioners whose line manager is not a social worker.			
Ensure that supervision takes place regularly and consistently.			
Make employee welfare services available for all social workers.			

<p>Make sure that supervision takes place at least weekly for the first six weeks of employment of a newly qualified social worker, at least fortnightly for the duration of the first six months, and a minimum of monthly supervision thereafter.</p>			
<p>Ensure that supervision sessions last at least an hour and a half of uninterrupted time.</p>			
<p>Monitor actual frequency and quality of supervision against clear statements about what is expected.</p>			
<p>The Professional Capabilities Framework, at an appropriate level, is used as the basis for evaluating capability and identifying development needs.</p>			
<p>Supervision supports students and qualified social workers to meet the HCPC Standards.</p>			

Standard 6

Continuing Professional Development

Employers should provide opportunities for effective continuing professional development, as well as access to research and-relevant knowledge.

Description	R A G	Evidence	Priority L / M / H
Provide time, resources and support for CPD.			
Have effective induction systems and put in place tailored support programmes for social workers in their first year in practice, including protected development time, a managed workload, tailored supervision and personal development plans.			
Have fair and transparent systems to enable social workers to develop their professional skills and knowledge throughout their careers through an entitlement to formal and informal CPD.			
Provide appropriate support to social workers to progress their careers ie. Career clinics			
Support their social workers to make decisions and pursue actions that are informed by robust and rigorous evidence so that service users can have confidence in the service they receive.			
Enable social workers to work with others engaged in research and practice development activities in universities, professional bodies, and the College of Social Work to develop the evidence base for good practice.			

Ensure that practice educators are able to contribute to the learning, support, supervision and assessment of students on qualifying and CPD programmes			
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Standard 7

Professional Registration

Employers should ensure social workers can maintain their professional registration.

Description	R A G	Evidence	Priority L / M / H
Support social workers in maintaining their professional registration and accountability as well as their competence, credibility, and currency.			
Support staff in continuing to meet the requirements of the regulator in a timely way.			
Work closely with the regulator to maintain professional standards and investigate professional conduct issues.			
Take appropriate steps to inform the regulator, co-operate with investigations and hearings carried out by the regulator, and respond appropriately to its findings and decisions if there are concerns that an employee's fitness to practice is impaired.			

Standard 8

Effective Partnerships

Employers should establish effective partnerships with higher education institutions and other organisations to support the delivery of social work education and continuing professional development.

Description	R A G	Evidence	Priority L / M / H
Implement formal partnership arrangements that promote and contribute to shared outcomes and mutual understanding in the delivery of social work education and CPD.			
Support staff in continuing to meet the requirements of the regulator. Ensure that the strategic lead social worker manages these partnerships for the organisation.			
Have a clear policy for recruiting, training and supporting practice educators.			
Support staff to access qualifying social work education.			
Provide support for social work students on placements. Contribute to efforts to recruit social work students.			
Work towards joint workforce planning.			
Willingness to compromise and collaborate to achieve win-win outcomes.			
Collaborative partnership group meetings and			

reciprocity agreements between partners.			
Monitor and evaluate partnership agreements in a regular basis ie. validation visits			
Have clear and effective dialogue between partners.			
Facilitate opportunities for movement and two-way exchange of skills and knowledge between practice and Education.			

Once completed, this document should be used to inform the action plan for The Standards.

The action plan should summarise the actions that will be taken and their priority, whilst making links to service and business priorities. A link to the action plan template can be found by clicking on the following link:

http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6188796/The_standards_for_employers_of_social_workers.pdf/fb7cb809-650c-4ccd-8aa7-fecb07271c4a