

# The Standards for employers of Social Workers in England



## What should the social workers in your independent sector organisation to expect from you as an employer?

### What are the Standards for Employers of Social Workers in England?

The Standards for Employers promote the value of the social work profession by setting out a framework that creates an ethical and effective work environment and supports high quality social work practice wherever that takes place.

An increasing number of registered social workers work in diverse roles within the voluntary, community and independent sectors. Some of these settings only employ a small number of social workers. In many cases they work in non-traditional roles, and may not have the protected title “social worker” in their job description.

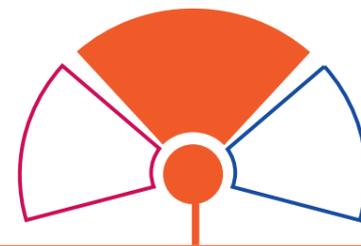
Whatever the scenario, social workers in the voluntary, community and independent sectors play a critical role in the delivery of high quality preventative, early help and complex support services, without which statutory services could not function effectively. If, as an employer, you rely on the skills, knowledge and expertise of a social worker in delivering your service the Standards for Employers provide early help, to assist you to create an environment where your social worker’s professionalism can flourish.

The diagram below represents an overview of the eight standards, grouped 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.**



# A well led professional environment



## Standard 1 - Clear accountability Framework

### **As an independent sector employer of social workers you should:**

- Develop a strategy to evidence and promote the value of social work in your organisation. The starting point is to embed a general understanding of the role of social workers in the context of your service.
- Identify a lead person who will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the Standards for Employers of Social Workers in your organisation or group of organisations.
- Implement an organisational health check as a mechanism for promoting debate about the working environment of the social workers in your organisation.
- Embed the Standards for Employers of Social Workers and the professional responsibilities of registered social workers within organisational policies and procedures.

## Standard 2 - Effective workforce planning

### **As an independent sector employer of social workers you should make the best use of the social workers in your team:**

- Get to know the local and national commissioning priorities, to understand what your social workers can contribute in terms of current and future service delivery.
- Put in place the structure whereby you can best utilise the skills of social workers in your business/organisation.
- Make sure you understand the ways in which the Assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) and the Knowledge and Skills Statements can help your organisation recruit and retain high calibre social workers.
- Tap into organisations that may be able to support you with funding and workforce development opportunities for your social workers.

## Standard 3 - Safe workloads and case allocation

### **As an independent sector employer of social workers you should:**

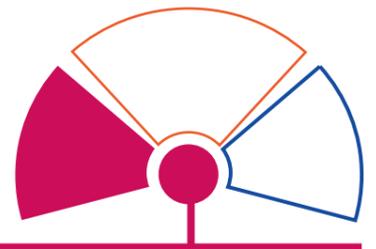
- Ensure that workload and caseload management practices are considered in line with quality and ethical practices and safe working conditions.
- Recognise the different social work services that you provide, the working environment and the unique skills of each employee. Review policies and practice guidance about workloads and allocation accordingly.
- Engage in a regular, professional dialogue with your social workers as they will be able to discuss their professional capabilities and responsibilities with you.

## Standard 8 - Effective partnerships

### **As an independent sector employer of social workers you should work with others to promote the value of social work in your organisation:**

- Participate in the partnerships that address social work issues in your local area and work together with other employers of social workers and universities in teaching partnerships to offer student placements, access the ASYE and other learning and development opportunities for your workforce.
- Engage with professional associations and trade unions as they can make a positive contribution to service quality, protecting and supporting people who use services and employees by ensuring an appropriate work environment.

# Enabling professionals



## Standard 4 - Managing risks and resources

**As an employer of social workers in the independent sector you should:**

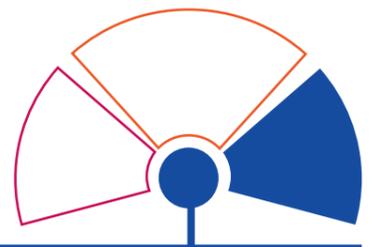
- Safeguard professional standards of practice by finding creative ways of providing the resources necessary to enable social workers to undertake their designated role.
- Reinforce a sense of shared responsibility for adherence to safe working practice.
- Consider flexible working practices.

## Standard 5 - Effective and appropriate supervision

**As a responsible employer of social workers you should:**

- Put in place arrangements to support good quality and regular critically reflective supervision by people with the necessary skills and qualifications in social work. Where necessary this should be sourced from outside of the organisation.
- Maintain an up to date awareness of changes to Standards and other guidance affecting the role and practice of social work.
- Be creative about the models of supervision used and the learning opportunities that are made available e.g. shadow opportunities, buddying, mentoring and action learning sets.
- Encourage the social worker to take responsibility for their professional supervision, alongside the organisation.

# Enabling practice



## Standard 6 - Continuing professional development (CPD)

**CPD and further training enables employers to support social workers develop their skills and knowledge.**

**This ensures the organisation adapts to changing needs of service users, organisational needs and the market. As an independent sector employer of social workers you should:**

- Be aspirational and embed CPD across the organisation and explore accessing local and national funding opportunities.
- Be imaginative about the ways in which you can develop CPD opportunities and network with other similar organisations and explore shared development opportunities.
- Introduce the Assessed and supported year (ASYE) for newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) in your organisation.
- Support your experienced social workers to become practice educators for social work students.

## Standard 7- Professional registration

**As an independent sector employer of social workers you should:**

- Support and encourage social workers to uphold the professional standards identified within the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), the Knowledge and Skills Statements and the HCPC Standards of Proficiency.
- Recognise that while professional registration is the responsibility of the individual social worker, as the employer you have an important role to play in helping your staff to achieve the required standards. Talk to your social workers and other organisations, such as your local council about the ways in which you can work together to meet HCPC registration requirements.

# In addition

## How do the standards link to the Professional Capabilities Framework?

All aspects of the Standards are equally important, just as the Professional Capabilities Framework is holistic in nature in order to effectively set out the expectations of social workers themselves. The Professional Capabilities Framework is intrinsic to the implementation of these Standards for Employers.

At the same time as considering the tips above, it may also be useful think how you can raise the profile of the independent sector as an employer of social workers by reflecting on the following:

1. How can you recognise and support the professional identity of social workers within your organisation? Do you enable them to use the protected 'title'?
2. The strength of the voluntary, community and independent sectors as providers of specialist services within diverse communities, together with the knowledge and experience of registered social workers in these settings is something that others can learn from. How can you demonstrate to others that your organisation is part of a rich diverse sector of expertise, knowledge and professional practice?
3. Don't try to do everything on your own. Share ideas and experiences with other independent sector employers of social workers.

# Useful resources

Local Government Association social work resources -  
[www.local.gov.uk/socialworkers](http://www.local.gov.uk/socialworkers)

Health check document -

<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6637817/Healthcheck+--+provisional/27e0655c-2360-4cb1-ab49-d9485381a791>

BASW resources -

<http://www.basw.co.uk/policies/>

- Code of Ethics.
- Code of Ethics Addendum.
- Effective and Ethical Working Environments for Social Work: The responsibilities of employers of social workers.
- Supervision Policy.
- CPD Policy.
- Additional guidance for independent social workers.
- Social Media Policy.
- Whistle blowing Policy.
- Human Rights Policy.

The College of Social Work resources -

- The Professional Capabilities Framework
- Business case for social work with adults  
[http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/\\_CollegeLibrary/Policy/BusinessCaseSocialWorkDiscussionPaper.pdf](http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/_CollegeLibrary/Policy/BusinessCaseSocialWorkDiscussionPaper.pdf)
- The Role of the social worker in adult mental health services  
<http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/Policy/MH%20Launch%20Document%20April%202014.pdf>
- The business case for the role of Approved Mental Health Practitioner lead  
[http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/\\_CollegeLibrary/Policy/Business\\_case/AMHPBusinessCase.pdf](http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/_CollegeLibrary/Policy/Business_case/AMHPBusinessCase.pdf)
- Partnership principles.

# Useful resources cont.

## Skills for Care resources -

- The Assessed and supported year in employment  
<http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/asye>
- Effective deployment: Commissioning and planning for social workers  
<http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/effectivedeployment>
- Workforce Capacity Planning resources  
<http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Standards/Care-Act/Workforce-capacity-planning/Workforce-capacity-planning.aspx>
- The independent sector forum for employers of social workers in the independent sector contact [independentsectorforum@skillsforcare.org.uk](mailto:independentsectorforum@skillsforcare.org.uk) for more information.

## HCPC standards of proficiency -

<http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003b08standardsofproficiency-socialworkersinengland.pdf>

# The Standards for employers of Social Workers in England



## The eight Employer Standards for employers

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.

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.

3

### Safe Workloads and Case Allocation

Employers should ensure social workers have safe and manageable workloads.

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.

5

### Effective and Appropriate Supervision

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

6

### Continuing Professional Development

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

7

### Professional Registration

Employers should ensure social workers can maintain their professional registration.

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.

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For more information visit [www.local.gov.uk/workforce](http://www.local.gov.uk/workforce)

