



Advanced Level Professional Capabilities

This document presents the Advanced Level Professional Capabilities.

The capabilities should be read in conjunction with the level descriptors which can be found directly after this introduction – the details of the capability statement at each level are intended to be used diagnostically to help identify strengths and areas for development, rather than as a list of areas for which evidence must be produced.

The nine domains are interactive – they work together to describe the knowledge, skills and values that social workers need to practise effectively. At the advanced level of the PCF, they also describe how being a social worker should influence the ways in which one acts at this level.

There are three developmental pathways, covering education, practice and management. The three pathways, or areas of expertise, whilst distinctive, will not necessarily be mutually exclusive, and many social workers will wish to develop capabilities across the pathways, reflecting their expected career progression

The following shorthand is used for the developmental pathways:

Professional Social Work Educator (PSWE)
Advanced Social Work Practitioner (ASWP)
Social Work Manager (SWM)

Most capabilities are relevant to all social workers at this level, but where an area of capability is specific to a particular pathway, this is indicated by using the initials in brackets, as above.

The PCF at ‘Advanced’ Level

At the advanced level, it is expected that all social workers will provide practice and/or professional leadership, through the development of research-informed practice, quality assurance, staff development, and management, and will also help to influence and contribute to strategic development in the organisation. Social workers at this level make a difference by working either directly with people in highly complex situations, or by supporting and/or developing staff, to provide better outcomes for people who use services, families, carers and

communities.

There are three developmental pathways: **Professional Social Work Educator, Advanced Social Work Practitioner and Social Work Manager**. The three pathways, or areas of expertise, whilst distinctive, will not necessarily be mutually exclusive, and many social workers will wish to develop capabilities across the pathways, reflecting their expected career progression.

- **Professional Social Work Educators:** facilitate the learning and development of others (for example managing a number of students on qualifying programmes, NQSWs undertaking ASYE or professionals undertaking CPD) to develop their knowledge, skills, values and practice. They positively manage the interface between providers of education and training and workplace situations, by contributing to arrangements for selection, curriculum delivery, assessment and evaluation. They draw on and contribute to contemporary research and educational practice. They contribute to workforce development strategies in the agency and/or in a university setting.
- **Advanced Social Work Practitioners:** have their practice recognised as exemplary, and provide leadership and professional wisdom to their colleagues and other professionals for work in situations of high complexity. They continue to work directly with people who use services, and those who care for them, as well as families and communities. They provide constructive challenge to enhance practice, procedures and policies, promote innovation, and introduce new ways of working from recognised sites of excellence. They contribute to the development of knowledge and promotion of excellence in their field using evidence-informed practice. They make use of sophisticated, critical reasoning and both model and facilitate reflective and evidence-informed practice.
- **Social Work Managers:** lead, motivate, nurture and manage a team (social workers and others), ensuring the service provided is effective, and delivering positive outcomes. They do so by managing performance and quality assurance, resources and budgets, in collaboration with others and key stakeholders. They are knowledgeable about managing social workers and others within single or multi-professional teams. They contribute and support the development of practice, procedures and policy and specifically the professional development of the team they lead. They are accountable for the practice of social workers within the team they manage, and provide or ensure effective professional and practice supervision, as well as performance appraisals, takes place. They support mentoring and coaching to enhance the quality of practice. They investigate complaints as needed. They seek to ensure team experience influences and informs the work of the organisation and that of other service providers, supporting and managing change as needed within their area of responsibility.

1. Professionalism: Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development

Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession, a title protected in UK law. Social workers demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for their conduct, practice and learning, with support through supervision. As representatives of the social work profession they safeguard its reputation and are accountable to the professional regulator.

- Be able to meet the requirements of the professional regulator.
- Model the social work role, promote social work and decision-making within and outside the organisation.
- Model and use critical reflective skills in management, practice or organisational supervision settings to enhance your own and others practice.
- Model and demonstrate professionalism, ensure professional social work standards are maintained throughout your area of responsibility.
- Model and take responsibility for the positive use of workload tools; using workload data to inform the organisation's workload management and risk management approaches.
- Model and help others to maintain professional/personal boundaries and the skilled use of self in more complex situations.
- Maintain awareness of own professional limitations, knowledge gaps and conflicts of interest, actively seeking to address issues for self and others.
- Develop and maintain a network of internal and external colleagues, with whom to seek and share advice, expertise and new developments in social work.
- Foster and support an environment that promotes learning and practice development within the work place. Foster and maintain a work environment which promotes health, safety and wellbeing of self and others.
- Identify and collaborate to resolve concerns about practice, following procedures as appropriate.
- Contribute to the development and implementation of procedures that are fit for purpose, enhance best practice and contribute to better outcomes.

2. Values and Ethics: Apply social work ethical principles and values to guide professional practice.

Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making, including through partnership with people who use their services. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of their profession, its ethical standards

and relevant law.

- Model and promote confident and critical application of professional ethics to decision-making, using a legal and human rights framework, and support others to do so.
- Model and promote a culture which encourages reflection on the influence and impact of own values on professional practice.
- Demonstrate confident management and arbitration of ethical dilemmas, providing guidance and opportunities for professional development.
- Promote and support a partnership approach to working with individuals, communities, families and carers, providing clarity and reasoning when this approach is not appropriate.
- Promote people's rights to autonomy and self-determination, supporting, challenging and guiding others as appropriate.
- Provide support and leadership when dealing with the sensitive exploration of issues of privacy and information-sharing in complex or risky situations, offering support and guidance in managing such dilemmas.

3. Diversity: Recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice

Social workers understand that diversity characterises and shapes human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. Diversity is multi-dimensional and includes race, disability, class, economic status, age, sexuality, gender and transgender, faith and belief. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experience may include oppression, marginalisation and alienation as well as privilege, power and acclaim, and are able to challenge appropriately.

- Promote positive approaches to diversity and identity in your area of responsibility, providing guidance and challenge as required. Contribute to and implement policy development and decision-making.
- Create and sustain an environment where people feel supported to challenge on issues of discrimination and oppression.
- Provide or seek out expert professional advice so that the law is complied with. Contribute to the development of relevant organisational and professional practices and procedures.
- Model and contribute to the development of best practice in use of power and authority within your sphere of influence. Provide challenge in situations where power is used inappropriately.

4. Rights, Justice and Economic Wellbeing: Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic wellbeing

Social workers recognise the fundamental principles of human rights and equality, and that these are protected in national and international law, conventions and policies. They ensure these principles underpin their practice. Social workers understand the importance of using and contributing to case law and applying these rights in their own practice. They understand the effects of oppression, discrimination and poverty.

- Monitor, review and evaluate practice to ensure application of the principles of social justice, social inclusion and equality to decision-making. Contribute to policies and development opportunities to support these principles.
- Ensure that practice is compliant with the law through the provision of or access to expert professional social work advice. Challenge situations where the interpretation of the law seems neither fair nor proportionate.
- Model best practice, provide or seek out expert professional social work/legal advice, applying human and civil rights in complex situations where there are competing issues. Contribute to policy and practice developments to support service improvement.
- Model and guide others on accessing appropriate opportunities that may enhance economic status. Advocate for the development of opportunities for people within your sphere of influence.
- Offer professional SW consultation and liaison to independent advocacy. Support others to identify when independent advocacy is appropriate, and advocate for necessary resources. Provide review and challenge as necessary.

5. Knowledge: Apply knowledge of social sciences, law and social work practice theory

Social workers understand psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and physical influences on people; human development throughout the life span and the legal framework for practice. They apply this knowledge in their work with individuals, families and communities. They know and use theories and methods of social work practice.

- Encourage a culture of professional curiosity.
- Maintain a well developed understanding of knowledge relevant to your area of practice, and a confident self awareness of knowledge limits.
- Be able to access and make critical use of relevant knowledge from a variety of sources, and apply this knowledge in practice.
- Maintain a strong socio-cultural knowledge base, (including in relation to law, human development, social, psychological and spiritual issues) and apply confidently in practice.
- Use knowledge to hypothesise and make complex judgments in uncertain and ambiguous situations, supporting and challenging others to do the same.

- Enable and challenge others to develop their knowledge base and make knowledge informed judgments.
- Have an in-depth knowledge of adult learning and its application to practice. (PSWE)
- Have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of holistic assessment processes and theory. (PSWE)
- Have a good knowledge of team dynamics, resources, and the ability to maximise people and team potential. (SWM)
- Develop and maintain expertise, informed by knowledge, in both established and emergent areas relevant to their field of practice. (ASWP)
- Support others, through consultation and shadowing, to apply knowledge to practice. (ASWP)
- Build and maintain a confident body of knowledge that informs team management practice and style. (SWM)

6. Critical Reflection and Analysis: Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision-making

Social workers are knowledgeable about and apply the principles of critical thinking and reasoned discernment. They identify, distinguish, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence. These include practice evidence, their own practice experience, service user and carer experience together with research-based, organisational, policy and legal knowledge. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity.

- Maintain an environment where critical reflection and analysis is valued and supported.
- Provide critical reflection, challenge and evidence-informed decision-making in complex situations. Support others in developing these capabilities, and finding their own solutions. (ASWP)
- Model good practice and reflective supervision skills.
- Develop and maintain a system within which all social workers (including you) are able to access professional supervision from appropriately experienced social workers.
- Ensure protected time is available for professional social work supervision.
- Routinely provide professional social work opinion, based on clear rationale and advanced professional knowledge.
- Support and empower others to develop the confidence and skills to provide professional opinion.

7. Intervention and Skills: Use judgment and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support and prevent harm, neglect and abuse

Social workers engage with individuals, families, groups and communities, working alongside people to assess and intervene. They enable effective relationships and are effective communicators, using appropriate skills. Using their professional judgment, they employ a range of interventions: promoting independence, providing support and protection, taking preventative action and ensuring safety whilst balancing rights and risks. They understand and take account of differentials in power, and are able to use authority appropriately. They evaluate their own practice and the outcomes for those they work with.

- Model and promote a culture of clear communication, supporting the development of effective communication skills in others.
- Communicate effectively in highly charged, complex or challenging circumstance to a wide range of audiences for different purposes and at different levels, including public speaking.
- Model effective engagement with a wide range of people in challenging situations, and support others to develop and maintain effective engagement, including in situations of hostility and risk.
- Promote a culture which supports empathetic compassionate relationships with other professionals, people who use services, and those who care for them.
- Be able to gather, analyse and review complex and/or contradictory information quickly and effectively, using it to reach informed professional decisions.
- Support and encourage professional decision-making in others. Identify when more strategic/expert advice or decision-making is needed. (SWM/ASWP)
- Maintain and provide expertise in specialist assessment and intervention, acting as a resource to others within the organisation, supporting social workers to develop. (ASWP/PSWE)
- Engage in and facilitate research and evaluation of practice. (ASWP/PSWE)
- Develop and maintain a culture that supports social/professional networks, for individuals, communities and professionals.
- Evaluate and analyse recording and the use of information systems. Use evidence gained to inform good practice and maintain a focus on positive outcomes for service users, families, carers and communities. (ASWP/SWM)
- Advise, model, and support others to share information appropriately and in timely ways, including in complex situations where there are competing or contradictory rights involved.
- Manage organisational change, supporting others to do so in ways which maintain a focus on positive outcomes for people who use services, families, carers and communities. Model the appropriate use of authority across a range of situations, supporting others to understand and work with the authority inherent in their positions.
- Promote use of evidence and theory to support practice in complex and changing circumstance. (ASWP/PSWE)
- Support effective interventions in the lives of people experiencing complex and challenging change. (ASWP/SWM)

- Model effective assessment and management of risk in complex situations, across a range of situations, including positive risk taking approaches.
- Support and enable staff to have conversations with service users and others to manage risk decision-making themselves where possible.
- Be able to work with and contain the anxiety of others in relation to risk, ensuring that there is a positive balance between perceived risk and protection from harm when necessary. (ASWP/SWM)
- Ensure risk assessment and management reflect current best practice and research developments, including supporting service users and others to manage their own risks where possible. (PSWE/ASWP)

8. Contexts and Organisations: Engage with, inform, and adapt to changing contexts that shape practice. Operate effectively within own organisational frameworks and contribute to the development of services and organisations. Operate effectively within multi-agency and inter-professional partnerships and settings

Social workers are informed about and pro-actively responsive to the challenges and opportunities that come with changing social contexts and constructs. They fulfil this responsibility in accordance with their professional values and ethics, both as individual professionals and as members of the organisation in which they work. They collaborate, inform and are informed by their work with others, inter-professionally and with communities.

- Maintain an awareness of changes in national and local contexts and their impact on practice, and communicate this effectively within and outside of the organisation. Positively influence developments that affect social work practice.
- Provide professional leadership and facilitate collaboration within a multi-agency context as appropriate.
- Maintain a sophisticated knowledge of the law relevant to your area of practice, advise others and facilitate access to and dissemination of more specialist advice where necessary.
- Contribute to and provide professional leadership of organisational change and development, including the identification of gaps in service.
- Influence organisational development, pro-actively using feedback from your areas of responsibility.
- Address and oversee performance management issues that arise, supporting people to positively resolve difficulties where possible, taking action with HR/the regulator where necessary.
- Promote positive working relationships in and across teams, using strategies for collaboration and contribute to a supportive organisational culture.
- Develop and contribute to liaison across agencies at a local and regional level,

maintain a collaborative working approach, resolving dilemmas actively where necessary.

9. Professional Leadership: Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others through supervision, mentoring, assessing, research, teaching, leadership and management

The social work profession evolves through the contribution of its members in activities such as practice research, supervision, assessment of practice, teaching and management. An individual's contribution will gain influence when undertaken as part of a learning, practice-focused organisation. Learning may be facilitated with a wide range of people including social work colleagues, service users and carers, volunteers, foster carers and other professionals.

- Promote and develop professional leadership within your area of responsibility.
- Promote a culture of professional curiosity embracing research within your area of responsibility, encouraging the exploration of different cultures, concepts and ideas.
- Contribute to the identification, planning and meeting of staff development needs within the workplace, informed by the PCF.
- Take responsibility for ensuring individual and workplace practice is informed by and informs research and current professional knowledge.
- Promote, articulate and support a positive social work identity.
- Have regard to the requirements of the standards for Employers of Social Workers
- Ensure systems are in place to provide high quality professional and line management supervision (as appropriate to the role), using critical reflection and a range of other supervisory techniques.
- Assure high quality professional supervision for all (including those providing supervision) within your area of responsibility.
- Provide professional, reflective supervision and support to others. (ASWP)
- Be able to identify and develop potential within other staff.
- Understand concepts of holistic assessment of professional capability, and be able to apply to appraisal processes/performance reviews of social workers within your area of responsibility.