



Professional Capability Framework – Experienced Social Worker Level Capabilities:

This document presents the Experienced Social Work level professional capabilities. It is important to understand that ‘experienced’ in this context does not refer to the length of time someone has been qualified, but rather the level of capability they have, and the person’s ability to manage issues that are more complex, risky or ambiguous.

The capabilities should be read in conjunction with the level descriptor below – 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 Experience Social Work level of the PCF, they describe what level of capability an experienced social worker in practice should be expected to be able to demonstrate. Because of the level of autonomy expected for this role, it is also the level expected of specialist social workers such as AMHPs, BIAs or specialist Child Protection Social Workers.

Level Descriptor:

Experienced social workers are more autonomous in their role. They demonstrate expert and effective practice in complex situations, assessing and managing higher levels of risk, striking a balance between support and control, liaising with a wide range of professionals, including more senior levels. They manage complex caseloads, and offer expert opinion within the organisation and to others. They chair a range of meetings, offer expert support to case conferences, and produce high quality assessments and reports for a range of functions. They model good practice, setting expectations for others. They start to take responsibility and be accountable for the practice of others, mentoring newly qualified social workers, and supervising the work of junior staff. They undertake capacity-building with individuals, families, communities, user groups and voluntary organisations, and contribute their views on service provision to commissioners.

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, set expectations for others and contribute to the public face of the organisation.
- Expect supervision that covers practice, organisational and management aspects of role, applying critical reflection throughout
- Model and help others to demonstrate professionalism
- Model and help others with effective workload management skills
- Model and help others to maintain professional/personal boundaries and skilled use of self
- Maintain awareness of own professional limitations and knowledge gaps. Establish a network of internal and external colleagues from whom to seek advice and expertise.
- Contribute to a learning environment for self, team and, colleagues ***Practice Educator Standards Stage 2 Domain D (see also capability 9)***
- Recognise and seek ways to promote well-being for team and colleagues
- Promote up to date expectations about practice norms, identifying and helping resolve poor practice issues.

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.

- Demonstrate confident and critical application of professional ethical principles to decision-making and practice, supporting others to do so using a legal and human rights framework.
- Model and support others to reflect on and manage the influence and impact of own values on professional practice
- Provide guidance and support to analyse, reflect on and work with ethical dilemmas
- Demonstrate confident application of an understanding of the benefits and limitations of partnership work, support others to do so, and promote service user and carer participation in developing service delivery
- Promote and advance wherever possible individual's rights to autonomy and self-determination, providing support, guidance and challenge to others.
- Demonstrate skills in the sensitive exploration of issues of privacy and information-sharing in complex or risky situations, offering support and guidance to colleagues in managing such these 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.

- Inform, guide and model good practice in the application of understanding of identity and diversity to practice; identifying and taking up issues when principles of diversity are contravened in the organisation
- Model critically reflective practice and support others to recognise and challenge discrimination, identifying and referring breaches and limitations in the ability of your own or other organisations' ability to advance equality and diversity and comply with the law
- Demonstrate and model the effective and positive use of power and authority, whilst recognising and providing guidance to others as to how it may be used oppressively

4. Rights, Justice and Economic Wellbeing:

Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic well-being

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.

- Provide guidance and challenge to others about applying the principles of social justice, social inclusion and equality to decision-making.
- Demonstrate ability to interpret and use current legislation and guidance to protect and/or advance people's rights and entitlements, balancing use of different legislation to achieve the best outcomes; support colleagues (both inside and outside the organisation) to do so
- Be able to communicate legislative issues to other professionals and agencies
- Model best practice in applying human and civil rights, providing support to others and challenge where required
- Support others to enable individuals to access opportunities that may enhance their economic status (e.g. education, work, housing, health services & welfare benefits)
- Promote access to independent advocacy, ensuring best practice and critical review, and contribute to the evaluation of independent advocacy

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.

- Develop knowledge in one or more specialist areas of your practice. Expand your knowledge to inform the connections between this and other settings or areas of practice

- Demonstrate knowledge and application of appropriate legal and policy frameworks and guidance that inform and mandate social work practice. Apply legal reasoning, using professional legal expertise and advice appropriately, recognising where scope for professional judgement exists.
- Demonstrate and apply to practice a working knowledge of human growth and development throughout the life course
- Recognise the short and long term impact of psychological, socio-economic, environmental and physiological factors on people's lives, taking into account age and development, and how this informs practice
- Recognise how systemic approaches can be used to understand the person-in-the-environment and inform your practice
- Acknowledge the centrality of relationships for people and the key concepts of attachment, separation, loss, change and resilience
- Understand forms of harm and their impact on people, and the implications for practice, drawing on concepts of strength, resilience, vulnerability, risk and resistance, and apply to practice
- Demonstrate a critical knowledge of the range of theories and models for social work intervention with individuals, families, groups and communities, and the methods derived from them
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of social welfare policy, its evolution, implementation and impact on people, social work, other professions, and inter-agency working
- Recognise the contribution, and begin to make use, of research to inform practice
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of research methods
- Value and take account of the expertise of service users, carers and professionals

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.

- Routinely and efficiently apply critical reflection and analysis to increasingly complex cases
- Draw on a wide range of evidence sources to inform decision making
- Ensure hypotheses and options are reviewed to inform judgement and decision making
- Start to provide professional opinion.

7. Intervention and Skills: Use judgement 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 judgement, 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.

- Communicate skilfully and confidently in complex or high risk situations. Model and help others to develop communication skills
- Sustain and model engagement with people in fluctuating circumstances and capacities, including where there is hostility and risk.
- Be able to gather information quickly and effectively so as to inform judgement for interventions including in crises, and in response to challenge, or in the absence of complete information
- Use assessment procedures discerningly so as to inform judgement
- Maintain and expand a range of frameworks for assessment and intervention
- Demonstrate skilled use of a range of frameworks for assessment and intervention
- Actively support and initiate community groups and networks, including professional ones
- Contribute to the development of the organisation's information strategy and systems
- Model and help others with appropriate information sharing
- Model and help others to manage changing circumstances
- Recognise and appropriately manage the authority inherent in your position
- Anticipate, assess and manage risk, including in more complex cases, and support others to develop risk management skills
- Undertake assessment and planning for safeguarding in more complex cases, and help others with safeguarding skills

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.

- Keep abreast of changing contexts at local and national level, and take account of these in practice
- Demonstrate the ability to work within your own organisation, and identify and begin to work with the relationship between the organisation, practice and wider changing contexts
- Work to and explain the relevant legal structures in the organisation, including basic case law; know when and how to access support and appropriate legal advice and consultation
- Explore, and identify how organisational practice can support good social work practice
- Keep abreast of changing roles in the organisation; recognise, value and engage with other specialist perspectives
- Be confident about your role in the team, working positively with others; draw on and contribute to team working and collaborative support wherever possible
- Take an active role in inter-professional and inter-agency work, building own network and collaborative working.

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.

- Contribute to organisational developments.
- Play leading role in practice development in the team and help sustain a learning culture.
- Provide supervision to colleagues as organisation determines. Support others to manage and prioritise work
- Assess and manage the work of social work students and ASYE.
- ***Practice Educator Standards Stage 2: Domain B & C (see also capability 1)***