

# Professional Capability Framework – Social Work Level Capabilities:

This document presents the Social Work level Professional capabilities.

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 Social Work level of the PCF, they describe what level of capability a social worker in practice should be expected to be able to demonstrate.

## Level Descriptor:

*In the Social Work role* they progress to practice effectively, exercising higher quality judgements, in situations of increasing complexity, risk, uncertainty and challenge. Through growing understanding they expect and anticipate, but do not pre-judge, the issues that may develop. They have greater confidence and independence (whilst accessing support when needed), and use their initiative to broaden their repertoire of responses; they have expertise in one or more areas of practice, be familiar with local resource networks and be recognised by peers as a source of reliable knowledge and advice.

### **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
- Promote the profession in a growing range of contexts
- Take responsibility for obtaining regular, effective supervision from a SW for effective practice, reflection and career development
- Maintain professionalism in the face of more challenging circumstances
- Manage workload independently, seeking support and suggesting solutions for workload difficulties
- Maintain appropriate personal/professional boundaries in more challenging circumstances
- Make skilled use of self as part of your interventions
- Maintain awareness of own professional limitations and knowledge gaps. Establish a network of internal and external colleagues from whom to seek advice and expertise
- Identify and act on learning needs for CPD, including through supervision
- Routinely promote well-being at work
- Raise and address issues of poor practice, internally through the organisation, and then independently if required

## **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 application of ethical reasoning to professional practice, rights and entitlements, questioning and challenging others using a legal and human rights framework
- Critically reflect on and manage the influence and impact of own and others' values on professional practice
- Recognise and manage conflicting values and ethical dilemmas, in practice, using supervision and team discussion, questioning and challenging others, including those from other professions
- Negotiate and establish boundaries to underpin partnership work with service users, carers and their networks, using transparency and honesty
- Ensure practice is underpinned by policy, procedures and code of conduct to promote individuals' rights to determine their own solutions, promoting problem-solving skills, whilst recognising how and when self-determination may be constrained (by the law)
- Work to protect privacy and promote trust, whilst being able to justify, explain and take appropriate action when the right to privacy is over-ridden by professional or legal requirements

## **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.

- Recognise the complexity of identity and diversity of experience, and apply this to practice
- Recognise discriminatory practices and develop a range of approaches to appropriately challenge service users, colleagues & senior staff
- Critically reflect on and manage the power of your role in your relationship with others

## **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.

- Routinely integrate the principles of and entitlements to social justice, social inclusion and equality, and with support, consider how and when challenge may be needed
- Routinely apply the law to protect and advance people's rights and entitlements, identifying and

highlighting situations where interpretations of the law are neither proportionate nor fair to promote autonomy and self-determination

- Apply the principles and entitlements of human and civil rights to analyse, evaluate and challenge interventions that are unlawful and / or disproportionate
- Analyse differing needs, perspectives and competing rights and apply to practice
- Enable and support people to consider and pursue a range of options that may enhance economic status (through access to education, work, housing, health services and welfare benefits)
- Where appropriate, set up and/ or enable access to effective 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.

- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding and use of knowledge related to your area of practice, including critical awareness of current issues and new evidence based practice research
- 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 with compassion and authority in challenging situations and with resistant individuals
- Routinely explain professional reasoning, judgements and decisions
- Engage effectively with people in complex situations, both short-term and building relationships over time
- Gather information so as to inform judgement for interventions in more complex situations and in response to challenge.
- Use assessment procedures discerningly so as to inform judgement
- Develop a range of interventions; use them effectively and evaluate them in practice
- Expand intervention methods and demonstrate expertise in one or more specific methods relevant to your setting
- Make timely decisions when positive change is not happening
- Actively support and initiate community groups and networks, including professional ones
- Clearly report and record analysis and judgements
- Demonstrate and promote appropriate information sharing
- Use contingency planning to anticipate complexity and changing circumstances
- Recognise and appropriately manage the authority inherent in your position
- Demonstrate confident and effective judgement about risk and accountability in your decisions
- Regularly undertake assessment and planning for safeguarding

## **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 and promote the development of practice, taking the initiative to test new approaches
- Contribute to the learning of others (***Practice Educator Standards Stage 1: Domain A,B,C***)