

The first three years in practice

A framework for social workers' induction into
qualified practice and continuing professional
education and learning



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Social Workers First Three Years in Practice



Introduction and context

Communities need effective social workers and best social work practice is achieved when attention is given to:

- The management and arrangement of social services' functions;
- The management and development of the workforce;
- The continued improvement of the organisation.

The new legal framework in Wales sets out a transformational vision for social services grounded in offering the best possible outcomes for those who need care and support. It aims to ensure people have a stronger voice and real control over the services they receive which are consistent, high-quality and sustainable for the future. This can only be achieved effectively when the management of the service and the workforce come together. This guide has therefore been issued jointly by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) and the Care Council for Wales (Care Council). It is one part of the overall framework that supports the new landscape for social services in Wales in which the outcomes for people who need care and support are the primary concern and delivering those outcomes relies upon the quality of the workforce.


The legal framework comprising the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014* and the *Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016* brings together and modernises the law for social services in Wales.

The Acts reflect a number of key principals and interlinking themes:

- People – putting an individual and their needs at the centre of their care, and giving them a voice in, and greater control over, reaching the personal outcomes that help them achieve well-being;
- Well-being – supporting people to achieve their own well-being and measuring the success of this support;
- Earlier intervention – promoting the use of preventative approaches within the community to address people's needs before they become critical;
- Collaboration – stronger partnership working across all organisations better support people in achieving positive outcomes;
- Regulation which focuses on the quality of services and the people who deliver and manage them and the impact they have on people's care and well-being. Regulating for improvement like this will enable and empower both citizens and service professionals.

Making the aspirations of the legal framework a reality for the people of Wales cannot be done by any one organisation alone. The cultural and practice shifts will require strong and consistent leadership from across the public, private and third sectors and depend upon a confident and competent workforce. Building on initial qualifying training and supporting social workers as they move into professional practice is therefore in the interests of the profession, employers and the people of Wales.

Good social work is based on a citizen-centred, evidence based and reflective approach. Sound professional judgement and decision making are vital and underpin all aspects of practice. Therefore, social workers need a set of skills based on knowledge, values and personal attributes. These cannot be fully developed through a qualifying course alone, and continued professional development is a necessity for social workers as maturing professionals. The development pathway for social workers incorporates the professional social work qualification and the framework for Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL). The CPEL framework describes the minimum arrangements for the on-going education and learning of social workers in Wales. It is designed to support social workers as they progress to take on new roles and responsibilities through their career as social work professionals.



Newly qualified social workers are a precious resource for people in need of care and support and for employers, so it is crucial that the first period of professional practice is planned for and well managed. In recognition of how important it is that newly qualified social workers make a smooth transition from student to confident and competent practitioners the CSSIW and the Care Council for Wales are issuing this joint guidance to social work employers to develop a model of support for the first three years of social workers' professional practice.

This guidance brings together the elements of the first three years of practice and is a single document for employers, social workers and all who may hold an interest in the support, development and management of social workers at this vital stage of their career.

The Framework for Continuing Professional Education and Learning



Expectations

Employers and social workers each have responsibilities for professional development. The *Code of Professional Practice* places a specific responsibility on those managing or leading social care staff:

Section 7: In addition to sections 1-6, if you are responsible for managing or leading staff, you must embed the Code in their work. This includes:

"Ensuring induction, training, learning and development opportunities support staff to maintain and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding."¹

Social workers also have a responsibility in the Code for their own professional development:

Section 6: You must be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and developing knowledge and skills. This includes:

"undertaking relevant learning and development to maintain and improve your knowledge and skills to ensure you are fit to practise, and contributing to the learning and development of others."

In addition *The Social Worker*, Practice Guidance for Social Workers Registered with the Care Council for Wales², describes what is expected of social workers and their employers:

"In order to practise safely and professionally, social workers must continually equip themselves with a body of knowledge and evidence that draws on academic literature, research, legislation, and local understanding. Social work also makes demands on personal capacities and social workers need to plan best use of time, energy and expertise, as well as how to best stay safe in situations where there is risk. Employers have a responsibility to support social workers in these areas."³

¹ Code of Professional Practice for Social Care, Care Council for Wales, 2015

² The Social Worker, Practice Guidance for Social Workers Registered with the Care Council for Wales, April 2015

The CSSIW will expect therefore that employers put in place arrangements to invest in the support and development of their newly qualified social workers and that newly qualified social workers will take responsibility for seeking out and taking up development opportunities.

The First Three Years in Practice Framework will guide social workers and their employers in how they can effectively build resilience and capability. It provides a model of support and investment for well-being, participation and the 'good work' principles. These have been defined in terms of: Excellence, Engagement and Ethics (see [Appendix 1](#)).

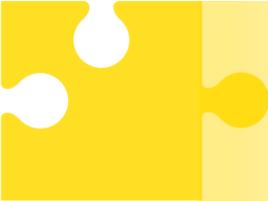
The First Three Years in Practice Framework consists of three stages:

- **Induction to professional social work;**
- **Growing in competence and confidence;**
- **Consolidation Programme and renewal of registration with the regulatory body.**

The learning areas are now continuous from beginning employment in social work into the Consolidation Programme and include:

- **Applying analysis in assessment to inform interventions;**
- **Working collaboratively with individuals and groups using services, carers and other professionals;**
- **Intervention and application of professional judgement in increasingly complex situations.**

The Consolidation Programme is the first part of the CPEL Framework. It builds on the transition into employment and is important in establishing a culture of career long learning and development for the social work profession. All social workers qualifying after 1 April 2016 working in positions undertaking social work tasks, are required to complete the programme in their first three year period of registration as a Social Worker with the Care Council. Renewal of registration will, in part, be dependent on this. Social work tasks are those that draw upon the knowledge and skills contained in the social work National Occupational Standards. If you are unsure whether the expectation of completing the Consolidation Programme applies to you we recommend you talk to your employer in the first instance. More details can be found about the CPEL framework at [Continuing Professional Education and Learning](#).

Section 1:**Induction to professional social work**

(typically occurs in the first three months of practice)

This initial induction period allows for the development of the social worker's understanding of their role in the organisation and wider context of Welsh legislation, policy, culture and language. Induction should also set out and confirm the employers' investment and responsibilities towards the social worker and establish the social worker's professional identity and contribution.

Key areas for induction learning of newly qualified social workers include:

- **Learning about being an employee within the organisation;**
- **Learning about the agency including structure, function, policy, procedures, administration processes, connections with other organisations and individuals using the services, families and carers;**
- **Learning about the community including demography, culture, languages and resources.**

An individually tailored induction programme based on organisational and individual needs is required and can take into account relevant prior experiences and knowledge of the social worker. Newly qualifying social workers in Wales should have a Personal Development Plan (or equivalent) from their professional social work qualification indicating their achievements and future learning needs.

Successful completion of this aspect of the Framework may be linked to employer probationary arrangements and is a first step in confirming a social worker's readiness to progress.



Section 2:

Growing in competence and confidence

(typically in the first year of practice)

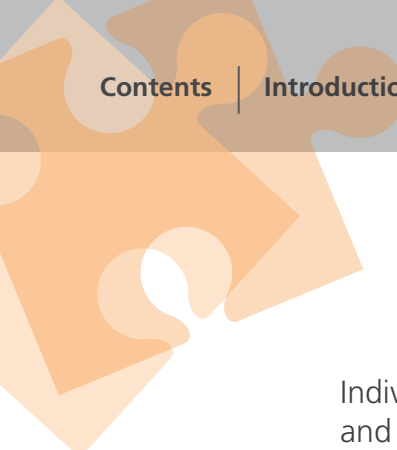
The first three years of practice will focus on consolidation and extension as newly qualified social workers make the transition to mature professionals engaging in complex practice. In addition to their induction, social workers need to consolidate and extend the professional social work skills and knowledge already gained. As they take on new challenges and engage in increasingly complex practice there will be a continued need for reflection. To achieve this effectively a social worker's **individual plan** should be agreed for at least the first year in practice and show the arrangements for progression onto the Consolidation Programme. This should fit alongside the completion of the organisational probationary period (where appropriate).

This individual plan should be used to identify and agree the social worker's learning and development needs together with the organisational priorities and how these will be met. The individual plan should be reviewed and a clear decision made when the manager is confirming the social worker's readiness for the Consolidation Programme. The individual plan should address those aspects shown by employers and social workers to be essential in supporting and progressing well in these first years.

The provision of the following six elements should be included in each plan. A possible individual plan template is in [Appendix 2](#).

1. A programme of learning and development

Employers should provide individually planned and structured learning opportunities which develop knowledge and skills. Opportunities will include training programmes linked to achievable learning outcomes from the Consolidation Programme as well as employer, local and national priorities such as safeguarding or the introduction to specialist practice. They may also include shadowing, co-working, group meetings, peer support and mentoring. Certificated attendance at formal training events and records of support and development activities should be used to confirm completion of learning within individual plans.



Individual social workers are responsible for retaining their learning plans and records of subsequent activities and training programme attendances that contribute to their development and achievement. These may include confirmation of participation in mentoring programmes etc.

Renewal of registration with the regulatory body will also require completion of the social worker's My Care Council PRTL record. Consideration should be given to how this record can be incorporated within employer records or portfolios.

2. Supervision

The Code of Professional Practice for Social Care requires those responsible for managing or leading staff to provide *supervision and appraisal to guide, support and motivate staff to meet their role responsibilities and accountabilities*.⁴

The formal purpose of supervision will need to be established plus the organisation's requirements for supervision including frequency, duration, preparation, scope, review process, recording and target dates. Observation of practice and accompanied visits will provide valuable sources of feedback and learning for the social worker.

In addition to these formal requirements, the supervision relationship should be used to support the social worker in managing challenging work situations and gaining confidence. Supervision can be used to model a congruent relationship that can identify and promote strategies to support well-being and develop personal and professional resilience.

The Social Worker - Practice Guidance for Social Workers Registered with the Care Council for Wales, states the responsibilities and expectations of supervision for social workers are:

Professional supervision and personal reflection are essential to the development of practice and social workers must make effective use of both. These in turn need to be informed by feedback from others and supplemented by less formal support when this is helpful or necessary.

⁴ Code of Professional Practice for Social Care, Care Council for Wales, 2015, Section 7.



As a social worker you must use professional supervision to develop accountable social work practice. You should:

- Prepare for supervision in ways that will maximise its effectiveness;
- Access additional sources of support compatible with professional social work principles;
- Use feedback from supervision and other sources to inform critical reflection on and evaluation of your practice;
- Integrate learning from supervision and reflection within your practice.⁵

3. Complexity of practice

Social workers should be allocated work opportunities by managers that will develop them and are not inappropriate for that individual. Managers should be cognisant of the need to balance developmental opportunities with the confidence and experience of the individual social worker.

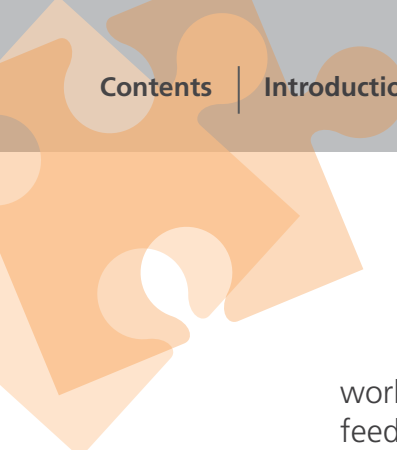
The PDP statement agreed at the end of the professional social work qualification should provide an initial baseline assessment for each individual. Capacity for and competence in more complex work can be assessed through, for instance the learning outcomes tool provided at [Appendix 3](#). This also provides a benchmark for review at the end of the first year of practice.

4. Mentoring

Best practice in mentoring would give opportunities outside of the usual line manager/supervisor arrangements. Models using dedicated mentors have been successful whether these are skilled and experienced social workers from within the organisation or others specifically trained / qualified as mentors. Support and monitoring of mentors is good practice and may be via 'team meetings' or Action Learning Sets which have been found to be effective in offering peer support. Mentoring should be planned and agreements regarding boundaries, records, time, venue and parameters of the discussion are all important.

Mentoring is typically four to six sessions but can be throughout the first full year or even three years. Mentoring is not supervision and aims to complement more formal support systems. Mentors can provide opportunities for examination of good work and structure dialogues or narratives around excellence, engagement and ethical practice. Mentors play a key role in building resilience, confidence, maintaining theory and reflection at this stage of a social

⁵ The Social Worker: Practice Guidance for Social Workers Registered with the Care Council for Wales, Version 2, Care Council for Wales, April 2015



worker's development. Evaluation of mentoring provision can produce useful feedback to ensure the model fits the needs of social workers.

5. Obtaining perspectives and feedback from people with care and support needs

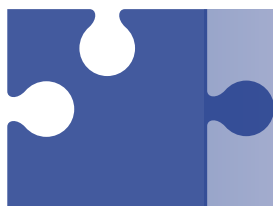
Accompanied visits, observations and direct feedback all provide valuable methods of gaining the perspective and feedback of individuals with care and support needs that the social worker has been involved with. This gives the facility for reflection and to influence practice. It can encourage social workers to develop outcome focused and participative ways of working. This is also an opportunity to work alongside people in the community and strengthen an approach to promote collaboration and co-production of person focused services and resources.

Key areas and questions should reflect the *Code of Professional Practice* and embed the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014*. It could include the examples in the template in [Appendix 4](#).

6. Confirmation and progression

Confirmation of readiness for the Consolidation Programme should involve reviewing the effectiveness of the social worker's individual plan together with the programme provided and undertaken in the first year of practice. The contributors (e.g. individuals using services, social worker, mentor, manager, workforce development officer, Human Resources) could be involved in the evaluation but the decision for the social worker to undertake the Consolidation Programme will be the manager/employer. Any organisational probation or service achievements could be linked in if appropriate. Early achievement of some areas of the Consolidation Programme learning outcomes could be used to record and review progress and achievement. Embedding these learning outcomes is relevant throughout the first three years in practice. A possible tool for this is in [Appendix 3](#).

Individual social workers will need to have records in place which show how they have reviewed their strengths, challenges and their development needs as they go on into the Consolidation Programme. This can be incorporated into the Consolidation Programme.



Section 3: **Consolidation Programme**

(typically in the second or third year of practice) and renewal of registration with the regulatory body

All social workers qualifying after 1 April 2016 working in positions undertaking social work tasks are required to complete the Consolidation Programme in their first three year period of registration as a social worker with the Care Council for Wales. Renewal of registration will, in part, be dependent on this. Social Workers will need to have successfully completed their induction into the social work profession and grown in competence and confidence prior to enrolling on the Consolidation Programme.

Features of the Consolidation Programme

- The programme is assessed and accredited by a higher education institution (HEI);
- There are two Care Council approved programmes in Wales led by clusters of local authorities;
 - Porth Agored in association with University of Wales, Trinity St David
 - Consortiwm Y De, the South Wales Consolidation Programme delivered through the University of South Wales and Cardiff Metropolitan University
- Programmes are partnership arrangements between employers and HEIs;
- Successful completion of the programme is required in order to renew registration for all social workers qualifying in April 2016 onwards;
- It is an entry requirement for the Experienced Practice in Social Work Programme for social workers qualified after 2012.

Social workers passing the Consolidation Programme assessment confirming continued fitness to practise

Social workers successfully completing the Consolidation Programme, and where there are no other concerns about their fitness to practise will be able to

renew their registration as a social worker. These social workers will be subject to Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) requirements for subsequent periods of registration.

Social workers failing to achieve the Consolidation Programme assessment confirming continued fitness to practise

Social workers must have fair and reasonable opportunities to access and successfully complete the Consolidation Programme. In its approval process, the Care Council ensures that Consolidation Programmes have adequate policies and processes for access, student support, extenuating circumstances, assessment, complaints and appeals. In its fitness to practise processes, the Care Council will take full account of individual circumstances, including employer support for the social worker. However, where a social worker fails the Consolidation Programme, and is subsequently found to be unfit to practise, s/he may be removed from Part 1 of the Register of Social Care Workers. If a social worker who qualified after 1 April 2016 has not successfully completed the programme, consideration will be given to the reasons provided. There will be situations where non-completion has been unavoidable (such as maternity leave) and the Care Council will take this into consideration when considering applications for renewal of registration.

The Care Council will consider each situation individually and may:

- refuse renewal of registration or;
- renew registration with a condition to successfully complete the programme by a specified date.

Social workers qualifying in other UK countries

The Care Council recognises equivalent and comparable post qualifying achievements in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland for purposes of renewing registration. Employers and the social worker may however agree that access to the Consolidation Programme or parts of it may still be relevant to meet a social worker's learning needs.

Social workers from other countries

This model will also apply to social workers qualifying in other countries less than three years prior to successfully registering with the Care Council to practise in Wales, unless equivalent learning can be demonstrated. Social workers qualifying in other countries more than three years prior to successfully registering with the Care Council to practise in Wales will be subject to on-going PRTL requirements. Employers will also need to respond to the individual learning and development needs of experienced social workers practising in Wales for the first time.

Agency staff

This model will also apply to social workers qualifying less than three years prior to registering who are working for agencies and are employed as social workers undertaking social work tasks. These social workers have responsibility to comply with the Code of Professional Practice for Social Care including the responsibilities for their own professional development.





Resources

- Excellence, Engagement and Ethics – An explanation (Appendix 1)
- Individual plan template (Appendix 2)
- Social workers First Three Years in Practice learning outcomes tool (Appendix 3)
- People in need of care and support feedback form (Appendix 4)
- Care Council for Wales self-service online site for matters relating to registration, PRTL and renewal [MyCareCouncil – Home](#)
- Care Council for Wales PRTL record [PRTL requirements for social workers](#)
- *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care*, Care Council for Wales, 2015 [Code of Professional Practice](#)
- *The Social Worker: Practice Guidance for Social Workers Registered with the Care Council for Wales, Version 2*, Care Council for Wales, April 2015 [Practice guidance for Social Workers](#)
- Continuing Professional Education and Learning for Social Workers – Your questions answered, Care Council for Wales, 2015 [Continuing Professional Education and Learning](#)
- Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers – Your questions answered Care Council for Wales, 2015 [Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers](#)
- *Supervising and appraising well*, Care Council for Wales
- Social Care Legislation in Wales – Information & Learning Hub www.ccwales.org.uk
- Care Council for Wales' Learning Zone www.ccwales.org.uk

Appendix 1

Excellence, Engagement and Ethics – An explanation

Excellent work is work that is high in quality and technically sound; it meets or exceeds standards by which other work is judged.

Engagement represents the individuals need to care about the work they are doing and the need to find it personally meaningful to them in some way, in order to spend the time and energy it requires to produce work that is high quality and has a positive impact on others.

Ethics is defined as social responsibility – being responsible for the impact that work, behavior, decisions, and products can have on others.

(*Good Work: theory and practice*. Ed. Gardner, H Harvard Graduate School of Education 2010)



Appendix 2

Social worker's first three years of practice – individual plan

Name of social worker: _____

Name of manager: _____

Plan commencement date: _____

Plan review date: (After six months) _____

Plan completion date: _____

Social worker's previous experience, knowledge and skills

A discussion should be held to cover the following questions (tick the boxes following the discussion):

Where were the worker's qualification placements?	
Does the worker have prior experience within the field he/she has been appointed to? <i>(Delete as appropriate)</i>	
Is the worker familiar with the area, community and local resources? <i>(Delete as appropriate)</i>	
What are the worker's Welsh language skill levels – both orally and written?	
What have been specified as the worker's learning needs at the end of the Social Work qualification?	

Observations and any identified needs:**Induction plan**

A discussion should be held to plan for sessions on the following:

(Delete as appropriate)

1. Knowledge of the area, community and local resources	
2. Visiting provision for individuals who use services and carers, other teams and agencies with whom he/she will work closely	
3. Attending internal and multi-disciplinary meetings in order to understand their purpose	
4. Arranging meetings with individuals with whom he/she will work closely	
5. Understanding the critical structure, function, policies and procedures of the organisation	
Observations and any additional needs:	

Mentoring arrangements

If a mentor is to be appointed this section will contain a mentoring agreement. This will contain details of the mentor and mentee expectations, the level of support available and will be signed by both parties. An initial meeting including the social worker's manager would be helpful.

Mentoring dates, venue and time

Date	Venue	Time

Supervision arrangements

Supervision will take place on a regular basis and this section should be used to set out expectations and clarify the contribution made by the supervisor to the reviews of the individual's plan.

Supervision dates venue and time

Date	Venue	Time

Workload arrangements

List the types of work being allocated; and the expected workload complexity and volume.

Workload arrangements

(continued)

Training and learning record

Please list all training/learning undertaken in the last 12 months or attach Care Council for Wales PRTL record or organisational record.

Date	Duration	Details of training or learning activity	How this has contributed to professional development and informed practice

Social worker first three years in practice – individual plan review 6/12 Month

Development plan reviews may take account of contributions from the individual social worker, individuals in receipt of care and support, line managers, supervisors and mentors.

Social worker _____

Reviewer _____ Date _____

Area of Need / Skills gap	Development activity or action	Evidence gathered	Date completed
Reviewer signature		Social worker signature	

Appendix 3

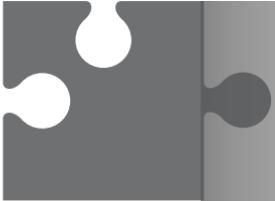
Social workers first three years in practice learning outcomes tool.

Learning outcomes	Identify:	Development plan to meet needs including arrangements for learning opportunities, supervision, complexity of practice, mentoring and perspectives from individuals using services.
Working collaboratively with service users, carers and other professionals.	<p>Experience gained and still required to meet criteria during your next 12 months.</p> <p>Learning gained and still required to meet criteria during your next 12 months.</p> <p><i>e.g. need more knowledge around information sharing protocols, extend knowledge around outcome focused assessment.</i></p>	
1. Be able to communicate effectively with service users and carers.		
2. Be able to work in partnership with other professionals.		

3. Critically reflect on collaborative working.		
Applying analysis in assessment to inform interventions		
1. Understand how legislative frameworks, theoretical perspectives, standards and guidance are used to inform assessment practice.		
2. Be able to use a person centred, outcome focused approach to carry out a range of assessments.		
3. Be able to record assessment information to inform decision making.		
4. Be able to make professional judgements based on assessment information.		
5. Be able to use critical reflection to evaluate own analysis in social work assessments.		

Intervention and application of professional judgement in increasingly complex situations.		
1. Understand the relationship between social policy, legislative frameworks and guidance with social services provision in Wales.		
2. Be able to manage your role as a social worker in increasingly complex situations.		
3. Understand the professional social work role in relation to safeguarding adults.		
4. Understand the professional social work role in relation to safeguarding children.		
5. Be able to exercise the professional social work role in safeguarding interventions.		
6. Be able to contribute to legal processes within the remit of professional social work.		
7. Be able to exercise professional accountability in increasingly complex situations.		

Review date:	
Social worker	Date and signature
Workforce Development Officer	Date and signature
Manager	Date and signature

Appendix 4

People in need of care and support feedback and comments

Some or all of these questions may be used by an observer (who would re-phrase and add explanations and prompts as required). The observer should record the individuals and/or carers' responses below.

The observer must explain to the individual and/or carers that his or her comments will be shared with the social worker to assist their learning and development before asking the questions. If the observer is unable to gain individuals and/or carers feedback they should briefly say why.

Was the social worker on time? Or if delayed did he or she contact you?	
Did the social worker get your permission in advance for the observer to be present?	
Were you clear why the social worker met with you today?	
How well prepared was the social worker for his or her meeting with you?	
How has the social worker listened to you and taken on board your views and wishes?	

How has the social worker listened to you and taken on board your views and wishes?

Any other comments that you would like to make?

Contact details

Care Council for Wales
South Gate House
Wood Street
Cardiff
CF10 1EW

Tel: 0300 30 33 444
 Minicom: 029 2078 0680
 E-mail: info@ccwales.org.uk
www.ccwales.org.uk

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