



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**
Social Care **Wales**



Arolygiaeth Gofal
Cymru
Care Inspectorate
Wales

The first three years in practice

A framework for newly-qualified
social workers' induction and
continuing professional development



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Other formats:

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Introduction

The importance of a structured, guided and supported introduction to professional social work practice cannot be underestimated. Research tells us that an individualised induction, quality supervision, effective mentoring and opportunity for continuing professional development are essential elements in helping a newly-qualified social worker become a confident, competent practitioner.

This jointly-issued guidance provides a framework for social work employers to develop their own model of support for the first three years of a social worker's professional practice. It consists of four sections:

- induction
- growing in competence and confidence
- Consolidation Programme
- renewing registration.

The initial years in professional practice are crucial in shaping a professional social work identity and developing further the knowledge, skills and attributes gained through qualifying training. Employers therefore have a key role in providing a smooth transition from graduate to professional social worker. *The Code of Practice for Social Care Employers* states that employers should:

“Provide a robust and accessible induction, learning and development opportunities to help workers do their jobs effectively and prepare for new and changing roles and responsibilities.”¹

Social workers are also expected to take responsibility for their own learning and professional development. Section 6 of the *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care* states:

“You must be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and developing knowledge and skills.”

The Social Worker: Practice Guidance for Social Workers Registered with Social Care Wales describes what is expected of social workers and their employers:

“Learning and development is essential to providing a good service for people. Your employer has a responsibility to provide you with professional supervision and opportunities to develop your professional knowledge, skills and understanding. You are responsible for your efforts to engage in continuing professional development and keeping abreast of relevant new developments and research.”²

Therefore, there is an expectation that employers will put in place arrangements to support the development of their newly-qualified social workers and that newly-qualified social workers will engage and participate in the continuing professional development opportunities available to them.



1. *The Code of Practice for Social Care Employers 2018*, Social Care Wales, Section 3:1

2. *The Social Worker: Practice Guidance for Social Workers Registered with Social Care Wales*, 2019, Section 7

Section 1: Induction

(This usually takes place in the social workers' first three months)

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) says induction is an opportunity for an organisation to welcome their new worker, help them settle in and ensure they have the knowledge and support they need to perform their role.

This period of a newly-qualified social worker's induction should cover:

- being **an employee** in the organisation
- **the organisation**, including its structure, function, policies, procedures, administration processes and relationship with other agencies
- being a **team member**, including how the team 'works' – its specific roles and functions and its relationship with other teams, in and across organisations
- **the local community**, including its demography, culture, languages and resources.

The induction should be tailored to the social worker's and the organisation's needs and should take account of existing knowledge and previous experience. Every newly-qualified social worker should have a personal development plan (or the equivalent) from their degree course that outlines their achievements and identified learning needs as they move into professional practice. This should be used to inform initial learning activities.

Successfully completing this stage is the first step in confirming that a newly-qualified social worker is ready to move on to the next phase of their induction. Employers may want to link successfully completing this period with their initial probationary assessment.



Section 2: Growing in competence and confidence

(This usually takes place in the social worker's first year)

The first three years of a social worker's career will focus on building upon and improving their knowledge, skills and attributes. As they begin to take on more challenging and more complex work, it's important they have opportunity to discuss and reflect upon their practice.

An **individual plan** should be agreed for (at least) the newly-qualified social worker's first year in practice. The plan should set out their learning and development needs along with the organisation's learning priorities, and clearly state how these will be met. It should also address support arrangements to enable the newly-qualified social worker to reflect upon and discuss their personal and professional development.

The plan should be reviewed regularly, and it should outline how and when the newly-qualified social worker will progress onto the Consolidation Programme. It should also address how the employer will support the newly-qualified social worker to make sure they are progressing well in their first year. This plan may also link to the organisation's probationary processes.

Each plan should include the following elements (you can find an individual plan template in Appendix 1):



3. *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care, Social Care Wales, 2017, Section 7*

1. A learning and development programme

Newly-qualified social workers should be provided with tailored learning opportunities by their employer to develop their knowledge and skills. Those learning opportunities should include training that is linked to the Consolidation Programme learning outcomes, as well as those that address employer, local and national priorities, and an introduction to more specialist practice knowledge. Learning opportunities may also include activities such as shadowing, co-working, peer support group meetings and mentoring.

Newly-qualified social workers should keep their learning plans and a record of their learning activities up-to-date as this will contribute to the development of the Consolidation Programme's portfolio of evidence.

2. Supervision

Under the *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care*, those responsible for managing or leading staff must provide "supervision and appraisal to guide, support and motivate staff to meet their role, responsibilities and accountabilities"³.

The purpose of supervision should be discussed with the newly-qualified social worker in the early stages of their employment and it should be agreed:

- how often supervision meetings take place
- how long the supervision meetings will be
- the preparation work the social worker should do before the meeting
- the scope of the supervision meetings
- how the meetings will be recorded.

Supervision should support the newly-qualified social worker in managing challenging work situations and gaining confidence. It should also help identify and promote ways to support their well-being and develop personal and professional resilience.

The Social Worker: Practice Guidance for Social Workers Registered with Social Care Wales sets out the social worker's responsibilities when it comes to supervision. It says:

"You must use the supervision opportunities available to you to identify and clarify your work and personal development objectives, to reflect on and improve your practice and to share and discuss concerns, including your own well-being. You must:

- a. prepare for supervision to maximise effectiveness
- b. use feedback to reflect on, evaluate and improve your practice
- c. implement actions agreed in supervision."⁴

3. Complexity of work

Work allocated to the social worker should balance developmental opportunities with experience and levels of confidence. The personal development plan prepared at the end of qualifying training can be used to inform the appropriate allocation of work initially.

Managers can also use the *Consolidation Programme learning outcomes tool* in Appendix 2 to help them assess the social worker's capacity for, and competence in, more complex work. This will also provide a benchmark for reviewing progress at the end of the first year and confirming readiness to undertake the Consolidation Programme.

4. Mentoring

Mentoring provides social workers with additional support that complements the support they receive from their manager and through supervision. Mentoring typically lasts for four to six sessions but can take place repeatedly throughout the social worker's first year or even first three years in practice. It needs to be planned and structured, and the social worker and their mentor should agree what will be discussed, frequency of meetings, how discussions will be recorded and boundaries to the mentoring relationship.

Mentors can provide social workers with opportunities to explore 'best practice'. They can help social workers build resilience and confidence, connect their knowledge of social work theory to their work, and reflect upon their practice.

Mentors can be another skilled or experienced social worker, or someone who is specifically trained as a mentor. It is good practice for mentors to be supported and monitored, and this can be provided through supervision and peer support meetings.

Evaluation of the mentoring provided to newly-qualified social workers will provide the organisation with useful feedback to confirm that the support being provided is helpful and fit-for-purpose.

5. Obtaining feedback from people receiving care and support

Accompanying the newly-qualified social worker on visits, observing their work and providing opportunities for people receiving care and support to provide feedback, are valuable ways to inform the development of a newly-qualified social worker.

It will be important to think about the right way to obtain feedback and what areas you wish to cover. You can find example questions and topic areas in Appendix 3.

Next steps

The **individual plan** should be reviewed at six-monthly intervals to confirm progress and identify any new learning and developmental needs. It is important the newly-qualified social worker has the opportunity to reflect on their growth as a professional, recognise their achievements and identify strengths, challenges and gaps in their learning. The *Consolidation Programme learning outcomes tool* in Appendix 2 should be used as a basis for review discussions and to confirm readiness to undertake the Consolidation Programme.

4. *The Social Worker: Practice Guidance for Social Workers Registered with Social Care Wales*, 2019, paragraph 7.3

Section 3: Consolidation Programme (typically undertaken in the second or third year of practice)

All social workers in Wales who qualified on, or after 1 April 2016 must within the first three-year registration period in which they are practising as a social worker complete the Consolidation Programme. They will only be able to renew their registration once they have successfully completed it.

The Consolidation Programme builds on the first year in practice and helps establish a culture of career-long learning and development. Newly-qualified social workers can only enrol on the programme once their manager or employer is happy they have successfully completed their induction and grown in competence and confidence.

The Consolidation Programme may also be relevant to individuals working in positions that draw upon the knowledge and skills set out in the National Occupational Standards for Social Work⁵. It is important that the learning outcomes of the Consolidation Programme can be evidenced in daily work tasks and there is employer support for undertaking it.



About the Consolidation Programme

- The development of the Consolidation Programmes in Wales was led by groups of local authorities working in partnership with higher education institutions (HEIs)
- The programme is set at Level 6 of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales
- There are two programmes approved by Social Care Wales:
 - **Porth Agored**, in association with University of Wales, Trinity St David
 - **Consortiwm Y De – South Wales Consolidation Programme** delivered through Cardiff Metropolitan University and the University of South Wales
- The programmes are managed and delivered through a partnership of employers and HEIs
- Application to the programme is via the Social Care Workforce Development Partnership for the region in which the newly-qualified social worker works. All the partnerships have a webpage where you can find further contact details.

5. You can find more information about the National Occupational Standards at: socialcare.wales/learning-and-development/national-occupational-standards-nos

Section 4: Renewing registration

Social workers who pass the Consolidation Programme

Social workers who successfully complete the Consolidation Programme will be able to renew their registration, if there are no concerns about their fitness to practise and they meet all other registration requirements. They will then have to meet the post-registration training and learning (PRTL) requirements for every subsequent three-year period of registration.

Social workers who fail the Consolidation Programme

Social workers must have fair and reasonable opportunities to access and successfully complete the Consolidation Programme. As part of its process in approving the Consolidation Programmes, Social Care Wales makes sure there are adequate policies and processes in place relating to access, student support, extenuating circumstances, assessment, complaints and appeals.

Social Care Wales will take account of individual circumstances during its fitness to practise processes, including the employer's support for the social worker. However, if a social worker fails the Consolidation Programme and is then consequently found unfit to practise, they may be removed from the Register of Social Care Workers.



Non-completion of the Consolidation Programme

Social Care Wales may accept a request for an extension to complete the Consolidation Programme where there is acceptable evidence of extenuating circumstances.

Social workers qualifying in other UK countries

Social Care Wales 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 be relevant to meet identified learning needs.

Social workers from other countries

The requirements that form part of this framework also apply to social workers from other countries who have been qualified for less than three years before registering with Social Care Wales, unless equivalent learning can be demonstrated.

Employers will also need to be responsive to the individual learning and development needs of more experienced social workers practising in Wales for the first time.

Agency workers

This framework will also apply to those newly-qualified social workers who are working for agencies and are employed in social work roles. *The Social Worker* practice guidance states:

“You must keep your social work knowledge and skills up-to-date, working with your employer to find ways to meet your learning and development needs.”⁶

6. *The Social Worker: Practice Guidance for Social Workers Registered with Social Care Wales*, 2019, paragraph 7.1

Section 5: Resources

- Code of Professional Practice for Social Care

socialcare.wales/resources/code-of-professional-practice-for-social-care

- Code of Practice for Social Care Employers

socialcare.wales/resources/the-code-of-practice-for-social-care-employers

- The Social Worker: Practice Guidance for Social Workers Registered with Social Care Wales, April 2019

socialcare.wales/resources/the-social-worker---practice-guidance

- Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers – Your questions answered

socialcare.wales/resources/consolidation-programme-for-newly-qualified-ed-social-workers-your-questions-answered

- National Occupational Standards for Social Work

socialcare.wales/nos-areas/social-work

- Social Care Wales – Renewing your registration

socialcare.wales/registration/renewing-your-registration

- Social Care Legislation in Wales – Information and Learning Hub

socialcare.wales/hub/home

Appendix 1

First three years of practice – individual plan

Name of social worker:	_____
Name of manager:	_____
Plan start date:	_____
Plan review date (after six months):	_____
Plan end date:	_____

Previous experience, knowledge and skills

Here are the points you should discuss and take into account when planning your induction and personal development plan:

- the practice learning opportunities you completed as part of your degree course
- your relevant previous experience
- your familiarity with the local area and its resources
- your Welsh language skills – oral and written
- the learning needs identified at the end of your degree course.

Summary of discussion:

Induction plan

Your induction should develop your understanding of:

- the organisation’s structure, function, policies and procedures
- how the team works and what your role is
- the role of other teams, the people you need to know and other agencies
- the local area and its resources.



Discuss with your manager any specific learning needs you have in relation to these areas which should be incorporated into your induction. A summary can be recorded below:

Area of learning	How this will be met	Timescale for completion

Workload arrangements

You should discuss and agree how work will be allocated to you, the types of work that will be initially assigned, the arrangements for the introduction of more complex work and how this will be reviewed.

Summary of discussion and actions agreed:

Post-registration training and learning (PRTL)

You should keep an up-to-date record of any learning undertaken which contributes to your continuing professional development. This can include informal learning such as reading, shadowing, supervision and mentoring discussions. You can use the template provided below or upload PRTL activity directly to your SCWonline account. You will need to print a copy of your PRTL record to attach to your individual plan for your six-month and 12-month reviews.

Date	Duration	Details of training or learning	How this contributed to my professional development and practice

Individual plan review

The individual plan review should involve the newly-qualified social worker, line manager and a workforce development officer with responsibility for newly-qualified social workers' learning and development.

Six-month / 12-month review (please specify)

NQSW reflection on personal and professional development in the last six-month period:

Feedback received about practice (from colleagues, mentors and individuals who receive care and support):

Progress made in being able to demonstrate learning outcomes of Consolidation Programme:

Area of learning need or skills gap	Development activity or action required	Timescale for completion	Date completed

Line manager comments:

Arrangements for undertaking Consolidation Programme (at 12-month review):

Newly-qualified social worker's signature:	Date:
Line manager's signature:	Date:
Workforce development officer's signature:	Date:

Appendix 2

Learning outcomes tool

Learning outcomes	Identify:	Action:
	a. The experience you've gained and what you still need to do to meet criteria b. The learning you've gained and what you still need to do to meet criteria	What specific actions need to be incorporated into your individual plan, to be able to meet the learning outcome
1. Applying analysis in assessments to inform interventions		
1.1 Understand how legislative frameworks, theoretical perspectives, standards and guidance are used to inform assessment practice		
1.2 Be able to use a citizen centred, outcome focused approach to carry out a range of assessments to promote and support well-being		
1.3 Be able to record assessment information to inform decision-making		
1.4 Be able to make professional judgements based on assessment information		
1.5 Be able to use critical reflection to evaluate own analysis in social work assessments		

2. Working collaboratively with people in need of care and support, their carers and other professionals

2.1 Be able to communicate effectively with people in need of care and support and their carers		
2.2 Be able to work in partnership with individuals and other professionals		
2.3 Critically reflect on own collaborative working		

3. Intervention and application of professional judgement in increasingly complex situations

3.1 Understand the relationship between social policy, legislative frameworks and guidance with social services provision in Wales		
3.2 Be able to manage your role as a social worker in increasingly complex situations		
3.3 Understand the professional social worker role in relation to safeguarding adults at risk		
3.4 Understand the professional social worker role in relation to safeguarding children at risk		
3.5 Be able to exercise the professional social work role in safeguarding interventions		
3.6 Be able to contribute to legal processes within the remit of professional social work		
3.7 Be able to exercise professional accountability in increasingly complex situations		

Appendix 3

Feedback from people receiving care and support

You may use some or all these questions when obtaining feedback about the newly-qualified social worker's practice (please re-phrase and add explanations and prompts as required). You can record the responses of those receiving care and support and/or their carers below.

Before asking the questions, you must explain to the person receiving care and support and/or their carers that their comments will be shared with the social worker to help with their learning and development.

Did the social worker ask your permission in advance for an observer to be present today?	
Has the social worker been on time for the visits made to you? Or if s/he was delayed, did they contact you?	
Are you clear why the social worker has been visiting you?	
How well prepared has the social worker been for their meetings with you?	
How has the social worker listened to you and taken your views and wishes on board?	
Are there any ways in which the social worker could improve how they work with you?	
Would you like to make any other comments?	