

## **Education and Training Committee, 8 September 2016**

Results of profession-specific standards of proficiency consultation for social workers in England.

Executive summary and recommendations

### **Introduction**

The standards of proficiency for social workers in England were first published in 2012 prior to the opening of the Register to this profession.

The Executive recently reviewed the standards following the conclusion of a three year programme of visits to pre-registration education and training programmes previously approved by the General Social Care Council (GSCC). As agreed by the Committee, we undertook a number of activities including surveys of stakeholders and a workshop which took place in January 2016.

We publicly consulted on the draft standards between 1 April 2016 and 24 June 2016 and have now analysed the responses received. We also sought the advice of the social worker registrant member of Council in considering the responses and preparing the revised draft standards.

The consultation response analysis and revised draft standards for social workers in England are attached.

### **Decision**

The Committee is invited to:

- discuss the attached paper;
- agree and recommend to the Council the revised standards of proficiency for social workers in England as set out in appendix one (subject to minor editing amendments and formal legal scrutiny); and
- agree and recommend to the Council the text of the consultation analysis document (subject to minor editing amendments and formal legal scrutiny).

### **Background information**

- Paper for Education and Training Committee, 03 March 2016, (enclosure 09 at [www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/committees/educationandtraining/index.asp?id=735](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/committees/educationandtraining/index.asp?id=735))
- Paper agreed by Council, 23 March 2016, (enclosure 1 at [www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/council/councilmeetings/index.asp?id=742](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/council/councilmeetings/index.asp?id=742))

## **Resource implications**

The resource implications related to publication of the revised standards have been accounted for in departmental planning.

## **Financial implications**

The financial implications include the costs of publishing the revised standards. These have been accounted for in departmental budget planning.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix one: Revised standards of proficiency for social workers in England following the consultation
- Appendix two: List of additional standards suggested by respondents to the consultation
- Appendix three: List of amendments to the standards suggested by respondents to the consultation

## **Date of paper**

25 August 2016

## **Consultation on revised standards of proficiency for social workers in England**

Analysis of responses to the consultation on standards of proficiency for social workers in England and our decisions as a result.

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# 1. Introduction

## About the consultation

- 1.1 We consulted between 1 April 2016 and 24 June 2016 on revised profession-specific standards of proficiency for social workers in England.
- 1.2 The standards of proficiency (SOPs) are the standards that we consider necessary for the safe and effective practice of each of the professions we regulate. They describe what professionals must know, understand and be able to do at the time they apply to join our Register.
- 1.3 We informed a range of stakeholders about the consultation including professional bodies, employers and education providers. We also issued a press release and included information on our website and in our newsletter 'In Focus'.
- 1.4 We would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to the consultation document. You can download the consultation document and a copy of this responses document from our website:  
[www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/consultations/closed](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/consultations/closed).

## About us

- 1.5 We are a regulator and were set up to protect the public. To do this, we keep a register of health and care professionals who meet our standards for their professional skills and behaviour. Individuals on our register are called "registrants".
- 1.6 We currently regulate 16 health and care professions:
  - Arts therapists
  - Biomedical scientists
  - Chiropodists / podiatrists
  - Clinical scientists
  - Dietitians
  - Hearing aid dispensers
  - Occupational therapists
  - Operating department practitioners
  - Orthoptists
  - Paramedics
  - Physiotherapists
  - Practitioner psychologists
  - Prosthetists / orthotists
  - Radiographers
  - Social workers in England
  - Speech and language therapists

1.7 Please note, we only regulate social workers in England. The regulation of social workers is carried out by separate organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### **About this document**

1.8 This document summarises the responses we received to the consultation and the decisions we made as a result.

1.9 The document is divided into the following sections.

- **Section two** explains how we handled and analysed the responses we received, providing some overall statistics from the responses.
- **Section three** summarises the general comments we received in response to the consultation.
- **Section four** outlines the comments we received in relation to specific questions within the consultation.
- **Section five** outlines our responses to the comments we received and the changes we are making as a result.
- **Section six** lists the organisations which responded to the consultation.

1.10 This paper also has three appendices.

- Appendix one lists the standards after consultation (subject to minor editing amendments and legal scrutiny).
- Appendix two lists all the comments we received suggesting additional standards.
- Appendix three lists all the comments we received suggesting amendments to the draft standards.

1.11 In this document, 'you' or 'your' is a reference to respondents to the consultation, 'we', 'us' and 'our' are references to the HCPC.

## 2. Analysing your responses

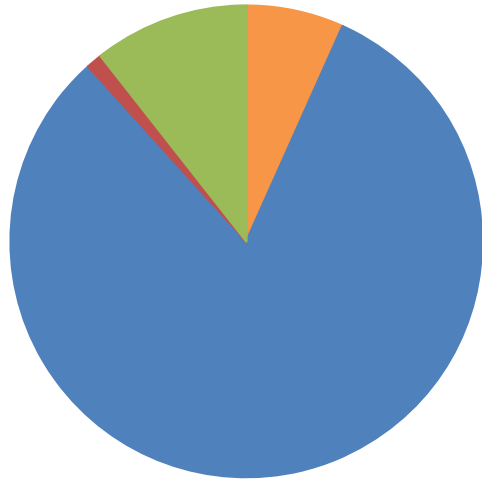
- 2.1 Now that the consultation has ended, we have analysed all the responses we received. Whilst we cannot include all of the responses in this document, a summary of responses can be found in sections three and four.

### Method of recording and analysis

- 2.2 The majority of respondents used our online survey tool to respond to the consultation. They self-selected whether their response was an individual or an organisation response, and, where answered, selected their response to each question (e.g. yes; no; partly; don't know). Where we received responses by email or by letter, we recorded each response in a similar manner.
- 2.3 When deciding what information to include in this document, we assessed the frequency of the comments made and identified themes. This document summarises the common themes across all responses, and indicates the frequency of arguments and comments made by respondents.

### Statistics

- 2.4 We received 125 responses to the consultation. 104 (83.2 per cent) of responses were received from individuals – of which 81 (77.9 per cent) were from HCPC registered professionals – and 21 (16.8 per cent) from organisations.
- 2.5 The breakdown of respondents and of responses to each question is shown in the graphs and tables which follow.



- Educator
- HCPC registered professional
- Service user and / or carer
- Other (please specify)

**Graph 1 – Breakdown of individual responses**

Respondents were asked to select the category that best described themselves.

Those who selected ‘Other’ included students, managers, educators and former service users.



- Education provider
- Employer
- Professional body
- Public body
- Regulator
- Charity and/or voluntary sector organisation
- Other (please specify)

**Graph 2 – Breakdown of organisation responses**

Respondents were asked to select the category that best described their organisation.

Those who selected ‘Other’ included an interprofessional organisation, trade union, student group, independent practice educator and private social work company.

**Table 1 – Breakdown of responses to each question**

Questions	Yes	No	Partly	Don't know
1. Do you think the standards are at a threshold level necessary for safe and effective practice?	82 (68.9%)	7 (5.9%)	26 (21.8%)	4 (3.4%)
2. Do you think any additional standards are necessary?	33 (28.4%)	72 (62.1%)	N/A	11 (9.5%)
3. Do you think there are any standards which should be reworded or removed?	43 (37.1%)	60 (51.7%)	N/A	13 (11.2%)
4. Do you have any other comments about the standards?	38 (33.6%)	75 (66.4%)	N/A	N/A

**Table 2 – Breakdown of responses by respondent type**

	Individuals				Organisations			
	Yes	No	Partly	Don't Know	Yes	No	Partly	Don't Know
<b>Q1</b>	67 (67.0%)	6 (6.0%)	23 (23.0%)	4 (4.0%)	15 (78.9%)	1 (5.3%)	3 (15.8%)	0 (0.0%)
<b>Q2</b>	25 (25.8%)	62 (63.9%)	N/A	10 (10.3%)	8 (42.1%)	10 (52.6%)	N/A	1 (5.3%)
<b>Q3</b>	31 (32.3%)	53 (55.2%)	N/A	12 (12.5%)	12 (60.0%)	7 (35.0%)	N/A	1 (5.0%)
<b>Q4</b>	28 (29.8%)	66 (70.2%)	N/A	N/A	10 (52.6%)	9 (47.4%)	N/A	N/A

- Percentages in the tables above have been rounded to the nearest whole number and therefore may not add to 100 per cent.



### 3. General comments

- 3.1 This section outlines the general themes that arose from the responses we received to the consultation.

#### **Resilience and the role of the workplace**

- 3.2 The proposed standard on resilience was a topic which attracted a lot of comments. A number of respondents welcomed the introduction of resilience to the standards and highlighted the importance of professional resilience in the current working climate for social workers in England.
- 3.3 However, several respondents expressed concern around the introduction of resilience to the standards in the way of employer support. For example, a number of respondents were concerned that the expectation to be able to identify strategies to build professional resilience reduces the emphasis on the responsibility of employers to keep workloads at a reasonable level.
- 3.4 A number of respondents noted that the introduction of resilience to the standards could be interpreted in such a way that sees social workers in England taking full responsibility for coping with workload pressures, without appropriate support from employers.
- 3.5 Another respondent suggested that the introduction of resilience to the standards would not need to be so explicit if the system was improved and social workers were more appreciated and valued.
- 3.6 The vast majority of respondents who commented on the introduction of resilience to the standards called for stronger standards for employers.

#### **Employer tensions, caseloads and meeting the standards**

- 3.7 A number of respondents identified areas where a lack of resources provided by some employers made it difficult for social workers to meet the SOPs. They advocated more support from employers in the following areas:
- continuing professional development (CPD);
  - improving facilities for social workers in England;
  - providing more employer support and supervision; and
  - reducing caseloads to ensure that social workers in England only work hours which are consistent with both their own health and their service users' safety.
- 3.8 Some respondents suggested strengthening the requirements for registrants to report unsafe situations, for example, excessive workloads. One respondent suggested adding a standard that requires registrants to be able to identify when workload and pressure become unmanageable and take responsibility to highlight and evidence this to managers.
- 3.9 Another respondent suggested that the SOPs and other professional standards should be incorporated into the Care Quality Commission (CQC)

and Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) reports and culture to ensure that individuals' working rights and practices are part of a bigger picture.

### **Interaction with other frameworks**

- 3.10 A number of respondents mentioned other frameworks which outline recommendations and good practice for social workers in England. They sought increased cohesion between these frameworks and the SOPs. These included:
- The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) currently held by the British Association of Social Workers (BASW);
  - The Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) for adults written by the Department of Health (DH); and
  - The Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) for children written by the Department for Education (DfE).
- 3.11 Some respondents noted that there were too many standards and frameworks for social workers in England and that these should be combined into one set of standards. One respondent suggested that the HCPC SOPs were not necessary, given the existence of the PCF and KSS. However another respondent suggested that standards such as the PCF and KSS were not necessary.
- 3.12 Another respondent suggested that the HCPC standards were not at threshold level for safe and effective practice as they stand alone. It was suggested that the standards only meet this threshold once accompanied by the PCF.

### **Definition of training and mentoring**

- 3.13 A few respondents commented that further clarity was needed on what the standards mean by the term 'training and mentoring'.
- 3.14 Some respondents understood the term 'training and mentoring' as a reference to a registrant's continuing professional development (CPD). However, other respondents understood the term 'training and mentoring' as a registrant providing training and mentoring to colleagues and the next generation of social works in England. For example, acting as a mentor or practice educator. Respondents for both suggestions sought clarification of this within the standards and some respondents made suggestions on alternative wording.
- 3.15 For those understanding the term 'training and mentoring' as CPD it was suggested that the wording should clarify that these are entwined.
- 3.16 For those understanding the term 'training and mentoring' as providing training and mentoring to others it was suggested that the wording should make reference to the intended recipient.

## Meaning and relevance of leadership

- 3.17 A number of respondents commented on the introduction of leadership to the standards. There were a variety of opinions evident among respondents about what was meant by leadership and its relevance to the social work profession.
- 3.18 Some respondents sought clarification on what was meant by leadership and felt that this was an area that was open to conjecture and debate. One respondent suggested providing a definition of leadership in a social work context.
- 3.19 A few respondents felt that leadership was not relevant to all social workers in England - for example, newly qualified social workers and those not currently in management roles. One respondent commented that the language associated with leadership is not something that social workers traditionally associate with their roles. Another respondent commented that leadership comes with practice, experience and recognition and cannot be mandated.
- 3.20 However, other respondents supported the introduction of leadership to the standards commenting that it is important that social workers recognise that they are leaders and feel confident in assuming this role within communities and professional networks.
- 3.21 A few respondents suggested strengthening the requirements around leadership were appropriate. One respondent commented that there appears to be no obligation to demonstrate leadership, just to understand the concept and its application in practice. Two respondents felt that the wording associated with leadership should be more aligned with the PCF.

## Co-production

- 3.22 A number of respondents welcomed the introduction of co-production to the standards.
- 3.23 Some respondents sought to strengthen the requirements in this area with regard to a registrant's ability to apply and promote co-production. Comments included:
- moving beyond understanding to include requirements for social workers in England to be able to effectively apply this understanding; and
  - requiring social workers in England to promote and encourage co-production amongst service users and organisations.
- 3.24 One respondent commented that the wording in this area could benefit from being more positive. For example, focussing on promoting and prioritising rather than the concept of participation. Another respondent suggested proving clarity on newly introduced terms such as 'co-production'.

### **'Understand'/'be able to'**

- 3.25 Whilst some respondents supported the use of such phrases as 'recognise', 'be able to' and 'understand' which made standards more accessible and usable, a number of other respondents were concerned about this choice of construction. There were a variety of views on this point.
- 3.26 For example, a few respondents noted the following concerns about this choice of construction:
- questioned how we would measure these requirements and how they would be monitored in practice;
  - highlighted our use of 'recognise', 'understand' and 'know' rather than 'respond', 'apply', 'integrate' and 'manage'; and
  - voiced concerns about the use of this language which allowed for too wide an interpretation.
- 3.27 A few respondents commented that for some standards the requirement to 'understand' was not suitable for safe and effective practice. Where this was the case respondents suggested replacing the term 'understand' with 'be able to'.

### **Additional standards and level of detail**

- 3.28 Several respondents were concerned about the content of some of the standards and/or possible omissions. The following provides an overview of the main concerns.
- 3.29 There was a noticeable difference in outlook between respondents on this point. For example, some respondents sought additional prescriptive detail and standards; whereas other respondents sought the removal of what they viewed as superfluous content.
- 3.30 Some respondents sought the inclusion of additional standards and or detail in a number of areas. Some of these included:
- developing independence and resilience of service users;
  - mental capacity and safety of the service user;
  - theoretical knowledge and critical reflection;
  - evidence based assessments;
  - identifying and reporting unmanageable workloads;
  - human rights;
  - social media;
  - career progression and development opportunities;
  - specific standards for adult and children's specialisms; and
  - reporting dangerous, abusive and exploitative behaviour in practise.
- 3.31 However, a number of respondents sought simplification of the standards. Some respondents expressed concern that the standards were too long and complex which could lead to a loss in translation into practice. Other

respondents called for the standards to be simplified, expressing thought that there were too many and that several of the standards could be combined.

- 3.32 Some respondents across the two latter paragraphs felt that overall the standards were too general in providing guidance which left them open to interpretation. One respondent expressed concern that this could mean any practitioner could be seen to fall foul of the standards.

### **Differentiation between adults and children's social work**

- 3.33 Some respondents sought the inclusion of additional standards which reflect the current specialisms in social work. In particular they sought differentiation in the standards for adult and children's social work. For example, one respondent commented that there is a need for those practising in children's social work to require more detailed, specific standards relevant to their role.
- 3.34 However, some respondents supported the genericism of the standards and felt that knowledge across all specialisms in social work was appropriate to support the current working climate for social workers in England. For example, one respondent commented that as a children's social worker they felt it was incredibly important to have knowledge of legislation relevant to a number of areas in adult social work.
- 3.35 One respondent noted that the division of social work specialisms is not consistent across guidance. For example, the SOPs and PCF are both generic, however the KSS provides separate guidance for children's and adult social work. It was suggested that all three guidance documents should be generic.
- 3.36 Two respondents felt that the addition of a standard that requires social workers in England to understand current legislation across a number of specialisms was unnecessary and unrealistic.

## 4. Comments in response to specific questions

- 4.1 This section contains comments made in response to specific questions within the consultation document.
- 4.2 Several respondents indicated that they had comments in response to specific questions. To avoid duplication, some of those comments have not been included here if the same issue has already been addressed elsewhere in this document.

### Question 1. Do you think the standards are at a threshold level necessary for safe and effective practice?

- 4.3 The majority of respondents (69 per cent) agreed that the draft standards are set at a threshold level necessary for safe and effective practice. 79 per cent of organisations who responded agreed that the draft standards are set at a threshold level necessary for safe and effective practice, compared to 67 per cent of individual respondents.
- 4.4 Some of these respondents commented that the standards:
- are a good foundation for safe and effective social work practice;
  - are very comprehensive and detailed;
  - are definite improvements and are robust;
  - reflect current social work practice requirements;
  - are all relevant to social work practice;
  - are relevant, appropriate and necessary for competent and confident levels of practice; and
  - are satisfactory at present.
- 4.5 One respondent welcomed the fact that the standards remain generic and commented that they continue to describe the knowledge and skills needed to practise as a newly qualified social worker at a threshold level in all settings with all service user groups.
- 4.6 A number of respondents **did not** or only **partly** agreed that the standards were set at a threshold level necessary for safe and effective practice (six and 22 per cent respectively).
- 4.7 Some of these respondents proposed further areas for consideration in order to strengthen the standards. These included:
- working within capabilities;
  - commitment to providing a supportive and rewarding environment;
  - reducing the number of standards;
  - introducing requirements specific to adult and children's social workers;
  - reporting unsafe situations;
  - integrating the standards of conduct, performance and ethics;
  - safe and effective working conditions;
  - aligning further with the PCF and KSS; and
  - theoretical knowledge as a base line for reasoning and decision making.

## **Question 2. Do you think any additional standards are necessary?**

- 4.8 The majority of respondents (62 per cent) did not think that any additional standards were necessary; while 28 per cent stated that additional standards were necessary.
- 4.9 The reasons provided by respondents for not proposing additional standards included:
- they capture a broad range of standards and reflect current social work practice requirements; and
  - there are too many standards already.
- 4.10 A significant minority of respondents suggested that additional standards were necessary. 42 per cent of organisations who responded thought that additional standards were necessary, but only 26 per cent of individual respondents thought additional standards were necessary.
- 4.11 All of the additional standards suggested by respondents are set out in appendix two. The main areas suggested by respondents included additional standards relating to:
- recognising and reporting dangerous behaviour in practice;
  - reporting excessive workloads;
  - developing independence and resilience of service users;
  - working with other professions; and
  - providing training to others.

## **Question 3. Do you think there are any standards which should be reworded or removed?**

- 4.12 A slight majority (52 per cent) did not think that the standards needed to be reworded. 60 per cent of organisations who responded sought amendments, but only 32 per cent of individual respondents wanted such amendments to be made.
- 4.13 Some of the suggestions we received were based on concerns about the general use of language in the standards.
- 4.14 We have listed all the proposed amendments to the standards in appendix three. Respondents suggested changes to the standards for a number of reasons including, to:
- align more closely with the PCF and KSS;
  - simplify the language;
  - clarify and strengthen the requirements around 'co-production';
  - provide more clarity and guidance around the requirements for professional resilience;
  - provide more clarity and guidance on the requirements for 'training and mentoring; and

- strengthen requirements in a number of standards from 'understand' to 'be able to'.

**Question 4: Do you have any other comments on the standards?**

4.15 Several respondents indicated that they had other comments to make regarding the standards. To avoid duplication, some of those comments have not been included here if the same issue has already been addressed elsewhere in this document.

4.16 Some respondents:

- sought clarification of abbreviations used;
- requested a precise version of the SOPs to make them more accessible and digestible;
- commented that there is too much focus on overarching and ambitious goals within social work and not enough emphasis on the detailed help that needs to be provided to families and that the standards should aim to rebalance this;
- commented that social work standards should be formulated by active social work practitioners and service users as opposed to politicians, lawyers, or academics;
- sought more positive language within the standards;
- felt that social workers were in danger of being overregulated; and
- commented that there should be more emphasis on employers supporting social workers in England.



## 5. Our responses

- 5.1 We received a range of comments about the standards during the consultation process, including suggested amendments and possible additional standards, which we have carefully considered. The following section outlines our responses to these comments and sets out the changes we have made to the draft standards as a result.

### New regulator

- 5.2 We recognise the current uncertainty about the future of social work professional regulation. Until there is further clarity on progress of the legislation and timescales for the creation of a new regulator, we continue to be responsible for the regulation of social workers in England.

### Level of detail in the standards

- 5.3 A number of comments we received suggested additional standards and amendments to provide more prescriptive detail about the requirements for social workers in England. For example, a few respondents were concerned that the high level nature of the standards may allow for varying interpretations and create a disparity of competency across registrants. We have also noted the comments received which supported additional specialism specific standards for adult and children's social work.
- 5.4 We considered the following in deciding whether we should make suggested changes or amendments:
- Is the standard necessary for safe and effective practice?
  - Is the standard set at the threshold level for entry to the Register?
  - Does the standard reflect existing requirements for social workers in England on entry into the profession?
  - Does the standard reflect existing education and training?
  - Is the standard written in a broad and flexible way so that it can apply to the different environments and domains in which social workers in England might practise or the different groups that they might work with?
- 5.5 The standards set out the proficiencies necessary for entry to the profession. However, the standards are not a curriculum document nor are they intended to be a list of activities which registrants must undertake in any situation.
- 5.6 We also aim to avoid duplication in the standards, to ensure they are clearly worded, and maintain consistency with other HCPC standards wherever possible and appropriate.

### Differentiation between adults and children's social work

- 5.7 A number of respondents sought the inclusion of additional or amended standards to cater to the different specialisms within social work, for example adult, children and mental health.

- 5.8 The standards set out the threshold proficiencies required of applicants when they first apply to join the Register. On entry to the profession, applicants apply to our Register as a so-called 'generic' social worker. They then typically move into roles working with adults, children and families, or with people with mental health conditions.
- 5.9 We recognise that registrants' scope of practice will vary depending on their field of work and chosen specialism. However, in our legislation, registration with us means someone that is able to use the protected title 'social worker'. As a result, we have to make sure that the SOPs describe the knowledge and skills needed to practise as a newly qualified social worker at a threshold level in all settings and with all client groups. Therefore, we do not outline or stipulate competencies specific to specialisms for social workers in England.

### **Interaction with other frameworks**

- 5.10 A number of respondents sought a stronger correlation between the SOPs, Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSSs).
- 5.11 We recognise that the social work profession currently has a number of standard and guidance documents to follow or be aware of. However each of these documents serves a different purpose. For example:
- the SOPs set out the threshold standards that an applicant must meet in order to become registered;
  - the PCF sets out expectations of social workers at every stage of their career, including within their assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE); and
  - the KSSs set out what a social worker should be able to do by the end of their ASYE, specifically related to adults or children's social work.
- 5.12 In putting together the standards for consultation and in finalising the standards in light of the consultation responses we have referred to the PCF and KSS to ensure consistency, wherever this is possible. However, as these standards exist for a different purpose, there may be some differences to ensure that we stay within our remit of setting standards that focus on the threshold required for safe and effective practice at entry to the Register.

### **Responsibility of employers and our remit**

- 5.13 We received a number of comments from respondents who sought mandatory standards for employers to provide a safe and suitable working environment which supported registrants in meeting the standards. For example, improved facilities, reduced caseloads and increased continuing professional development (CPD).
- 5.14 We recognise the importance of a registrant's working environment in enabling them to meet the standards. However, the standards are intended to set out the threshold knowledge, understanding and skills for entry to the Register and it is beyond our remit to prescribe standards to be met by

organisations and employers. Although we do not have any role in setting standards for or regulating employers, the Local Government Association has published standards of good practice for social worker employers.<sup>1</sup>

### **Comments on specific standards**

- 5.15 We have noted the comments received from a few respondents who supported stronger requirements for registrants to report unsafe working conditions and take action where appropriate. We believe that these requirements are addressed within the standards, particularly in the standards under 1, 12 and 15. In addition, standard 6 within the standards of conduct, performance and ethics sets out a requirement for all registrants to report concerns about safety.
- 5.16 We have noted the number of comments received which discussed the merits of the proposed standard on leadership. There is an increasing recognition that the concept of leadership has evolved and is now not confined just to those in senior-level positions but is instead shared and expected (in different ways) at all career levels. The proposed standard did not require that social workers are required to demonstrate leadership as these standards are threshold standards for entry to the Register. Instead, it requires understanding of the concept and what this means for practice, which a newly qualified social worker can then build upon as they begin to practise and as their career develops. We have therefore decided to retain the standard with the wording as proposed.
- 5.17 We also received a small number of comments about the proposed new standard: 'Understand the importance of participation in training and mentoring'. A standard in similar terms is included in the standards for entry to most of the other professions that we regulate. This standard is about understanding the importance of participating in both the registrant's own training and mentoring and in the training and mentoring of others. This is an 'understand' requirement as the standards are about the threshold for entry to the Register and we recognise that access to training and mentoring may vary. Having carefully considered the comments we received, we have decided to introduce this standard as proposed.

### **Our decisions**

- 5.18 We have made a small number of changes to the standards based on the comments we received in consultation as summarised below. The draft revised standards following consultation can be found in appendix one.
- We have made a minor amendment to standard 3.6 to incorporate the importance of a social worker in England applying as well as identifying strategies to build professional resilience.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6188796/The+Standards+-+updated+July+01+2014/146988cc-d9c5-4311-97d4-20dfc19397bf>

- We have made a small number of minor editing amendments for clarity, consistency or to correct errors.

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## 6. List of respondents

Below is a list of all the organisations that responded to the consultation.

Avocet (Private social work company)  
Borough of Poole Adult Services  
British Association of Social Workers (BASW)  
Devon County Council Adult Services  
Family Action  
Leeds City Council  
Leicester City Council  
London Borough of Newham Adult Social Care Services  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
Medway Council  
National Association of Educators in Practice (NAEP)  
Northern Ireland Social Care Council  
Preston Social Care  
Rochdale Borough Council Adult Care Services  
Scottish Social Services Council  
Student and Newly Qualified Social Workers Reference Group (BASW)  
UNISON (Trade union)  
University of Chichester  
University of Worcester

DRAFT FOR ETC 080916

## Appendix 1: Draft standards of proficiency for social workers in England

Amendments to standards are shown in **bold and underlined**. Deletions are shown in ~~strike through~~. The standards in this section are subject to legal scrutiny and may be subject to minor editing amendments prior to publication.

Generic standard	Profession-specific standards										
1. be able to practise safely and effectively within their scope of practice	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="590 534 674 597">1.1</td> <td data-bbox="680 534 1906 597">know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="590 602 674 699">1.2</td> <td data-bbox="680 602 1906 699">recognise the need to manage their own workload and resources effectively and be able to practise accordingly</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="590 704 674 768">1.3</td> <td data-bbox="680 704 1906 768">be able to undertake assessments of risk, need and capacity and respond appropriately</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="590 773 674 870">1.4</td> <td data-bbox="680 773 1906 870">be able to recognise and respond appropriately to unexpected situations and manage uncertainty</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="590 875 674 971">1.5</td> <td data-bbox="680 875 1906 971">be able to recognise signs of harm, abuse and neglect and know how to respond appropriately, including recognising situations which require immediate action</td> </tr> </table>	1.1	know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional	1.2	recognise the need to manage their own workload and resources effectively and be able to practise accordingly	1.3	be able to undertake assessments of risk, need and capacity and respond appropriately	1.4	be able to recognise and respond appropriately to unexpected situations and manage uncertainty	1.5	be able to recognise signs of harm, abuse and neglect and know how to respond appropriately, including recognising situations which require immediate action
1.1	know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional										
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1.3	be able to undertake assessments of risk, need and capacity and respond appropriately										
1.4	be able to recognise and respond appropriately to unexpected situations and manage uncertainty										
1.5	be able to recognise signs of harm, abuse and neglect and know how to respond appropriately, including recognising situations which require immediate action										
2. be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="590 976 674 1073">2.1</td> <td data-bbox="680 976 1906 1073">understand current legislation applicable to social work with adults, children, young people and families</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="590 1078 674 1141">2.2</td> <td data-bbox="680 1078 1906 1141">understand the need to promote the best interests of service users at all times</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="590 1146 674 1243">2.3</td> <td data-bbox="680 1146 1906 1243">understand the need to protect, safeguard, promote and prioritise the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="590 1248 674 1349">2.4</td> <td data-bbox="680 1248 1906 1349">understand, and be able to address, practices which present a risk to or from service users or others</td> </tr> </table>	2.1	understand current legislation applicable to social work with adults, children, young people and families	2.2	understand the need to promote the best interests of service users at all times	2.3	understand the need to protect, safeguard, promote and prioritise the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults	2.4	understand, and be able to address, practices which present a risk to or from service users or others		
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	2.5	be able to manage and weigh up competing or conflicting values or interests to make reasoned professional judgements
	2.6	be able to exercise authority as a social worker within the appropriate legal and ethical frameworks and boundaries
	2.7	understand the need to respect and so far as possible uphold, the rights, dignity, values and autonomy of every service user
	2.8	recognise that relationships with service users and carers should be based on respect and honesty
	2.9	recognise the power dynamics in relationships with service users and be able to manage those dynamics appropriately
	2.10	understand what is required of them by the Health and Care Professions Council
3.	be able to maintain fitness to practise	
	3.1	understand the need to maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct
	3.2	understand the importance of maintaining their own health and wellbeing
	3.3	understand both the need to keep skills and knowledge up-to-date and the importance of career-long learning
	3.4	be able to establish and maintain personal and professional boundaries
	3.5	be able to manage the physical and emotional impact of their practice
	3.6	be able to identify <b>and apply</b> strategies to build professional resilience
4.	be able to practise as an autonomous	
	4.1	be able to assess a situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with it

professional, exercising their own professional judgement	4.2	be able to initiate resolution of issues and be able to exercise personal initiative
	4.3	recognise that they are personally responsible for, and must be able to justify, their decisions and recommendations
	4.4	be able to make informed judgements on complex issues using the information available
	4.5	be able to work effectively whilst holding alternative competing explanations in mind
	4.6	be able to make and receive referrals appropriately
	4.7	understand the importance of participation in training and mentoring
5. be aware of the impact of culture, equality and diversity on practice	5.1	be able to reflect on and take account of the impact of inequality, disadvantage and discrimination on those who use social work services and their communities
	5.2	understand the need to adapt practice to <del>response</del> <b>respond</b> appropriately to different groups and individuals
	5.3	be aware of the impact of their own values on practice with different groups of service users and carers
	5.4	understand the impact of different cultures and communities and how this affects the role of the social worker in supporting service users and carers.
6. be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner	6.1	be able to work with others to promote social justice, equality and inclusion
	6.2	be able to use practice to challenge and address the impact of discrimination, disadvantage and oppression
	7.1	be able to understand and explain the limits of confidentiality



7.	understand the importance of and be able to maintain confidentiality	7.2	be able to recognise and respond appropriately to situations where it is necessary to share information to safeguard service users and carers or others
		7.3	understand the principles of information governance and be aware of the safe and effective use of health and social care information
8.	be able to communicate effectively	8.1	be able to use interpersonal skills and appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with service users, carers and others
		8.2	be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating advice, instruction, information and professional opinion to colleagues, service users and carers
		8.3	understand the need to provide service users and carers with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions or to understand the decisions made
		8.4	understand how communication skills affect the assessment of and engagement with service users and carers
		8.5	understand how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of a range of factors including age, capacity, learning ability and physical ability
		8.6	be aware of the characteristics and consequences of verbal and non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by a range of factors including age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and socio-economic status
		8.7	understand the need to draw upon available resources and services to support service users' and carers' communication wherever possible

	8.8	be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5 <sup>2</sup>
	8.9	be able to engage in inter-professional and inter-agency communication
	8.10	be able to listen actively to service users and carers and others
	8.11	be able to prepare formal reports in line with applicable protocols and guidelines
	8.12	be able to present reports in formal settings
9.		be able to work appropriately with others
	9.1	understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships with service users, carers and colleagues as both an autonomous practitioner and collaboratively with others
	9.2	be able to work with service users and carers to enable them to assess and make informed decisions about their needs, circumstances, risks, preferred options and resources
	9.3	be able to work with service users to promote individual growth, development and independence and to assist them to understand and exercise their rights
	9.4	be able to support service users' and carers' rights to control their lives and make informed choices about the services they receive
	9.5	be able to support the development of networks, groups and communities to meet needs and outcomes
	9.6	be able to work in partnership with others, including service users and carers and those working in other agencies and roles

<sup>2</sup> The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) tests competence in spoken and written English. Applicants who have qualified outside the UK, whose first language is not English and who are not nationals of a country with the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland, have to provide evidence that they have reached the necessary standard. Please visit our website for more information.

	9.7	be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team
	9.8	recognise the contribution that service users and carers' own resources and strengths can bring to social work
	9.9	be able to identify and work with resistance to change and conflict
	9.10	be able to understand the emotional dynamics of interactions with service users and carers
10.	be able to maintain records appropriately	
	10.1	be able to keep accurate, comprehensive and comprehensible records in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines
	10.2	recognise the need to manage records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines
11.	be able to reflect on and review practice	
	11.1	understand the value of critical reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection appropriately
	11.2	recognise the value of supervision, case reviews and other methods of reflection and review
12.	be able to assure the quality of their practice	
	12.1	be able to use supervision to support and enhance the quality of their social work practice
	12.2	be able to contribute to processes designed to evaluate service and individual outcomes
	12.3	be able to engage in evidence-informed practice, evaluate practice systematically and participate in audit procedures
13.	understand the key concepts of the	
	13.1	understand the roles of other professions, practitioners and organisations in health, social care, justice and in other settings where social work is practised

knowledge base relevant to their profession	13.2	be aware of the different social and organisational contexts and settings within which social work operates
	13.3	be aware of changes in demography and culture and their impact on social work
	13.4	<p>understand in relation to social work practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social work theory;</li> <li>• social work models and interventions;</li> <li>• the development and application of relevant law and social policy;</li> <li>• the development of and application of social work and social work values;</li> <li>• human growth and development across the lifespan and the impact of key developmental stages and transitions;</li> <li>• the impact of injustice, social inequalities, policies and other issues which affect the demand for social work services;</li> <li>• the relevance of psychological, environmental, sociological and physiological perspectives to understanding personal and social development and functioning;</li> <li>• concepts of participation, advocacy, co-production, involvement and empowerment; and</li> <li>• the relevance of sociological perspectives to understanding societal and structural influences on human behaviour.</li> </ul>
	13.5	understand the concept of leadership and its application to practice
14. be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills to inform practice	14.1	be able to gather, analyse, critically evaluate and use information and knowledge to make recommendations or modify their practice
	14.2	be able to select and use appropriate assessment tools
	14.3	be able to prepare, implement, review, evaluate, revise and conclude plans to meet needs and circumstances in conjunction with service users and carers

	14.4	be able to use social work methods, theories and models to identify actions to achieve change and development and improve life opportunities
	14.5	be aware of a range of research methodologies
	14.6	recognise the value of research and analysis and be able to evaluate such evidence to inform their own practice
	14.7	be able to use research, reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate actions
	14.8	be able to demonstrate a level of skill in the use of information technology appropriate to their practice
	14.9	be able to change their practice as needed to take account of new developments or changing contexts
15.	<b><u>be able to understand the need</u></b>	to establish and maintain a safe practice environment
	15.1	understand the need to maintain the safety of service users, carers and colleagues
	15.2	be aware of applicable health and safety legislation and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these
	15.3	be able to work safely in challenging environments, including being able to take appropriate actions to manage environmental risk

## Appendix 2: Suggested additional standards

No.	Standard	Suggested additional standards
1.	be able to practise safely and effectively within their scope of practice	<p>A few respondents suggested additional standards or areas of further consideration under this standard. One respondent sought an additional standard that explicitly outlined the requirements for social workers in England to demonstrate 'self and diary organisation'.</p> <p>A few respondents suggested additional standards around risk, assessment and appropriate action. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to be able to recognise and report dangerous, abusive, exploitative behaviour in practice;</li> <li>• stronger emphasis on mental capacity, robust evidence based assessments and support that focusses on the least restrictive alternative; and</li> <li>• management of risk, knowledge and risk assessment frameworks.</li> </ul>
2.	be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession	<p>Two respondents suggested additional standards under this standard. One respondent sought further standards in relation to resilience and professional boundaries. Another respondent suggested the following additional standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing the independence and resilience of service users and family carers as per the Care Act duty "reduce, delay and prevent"</li> </ul>
3.	be able to maintain fitness to practise	<p>One respondent suggested the inclusion of an additional standard under this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to be vigilant and assertive in reporting unsafe situations related to workloads, the behaviour of colleagues or the policy environment.</li> </ul>

4.	be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement	One respondent sought an additional standard under this standard that specifically referenced assessment for permanence. They were concerned that social workers need to start assessing for permanence from the first referral, in order to have a better chance of identifying the appropriate recommendation as early as possible.
5.	be aware of the impact of culture, equality, and diversity on practice	
6.	be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner	
7.	Understand the importance of and be able to maintain confidentiality	One respondent suggested an additional standard under this standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to recognise the role of social media and use this in accordance with agency policy to protect service users and carers.</li> </ul>
8.	be able to communicate effectively	One respondent suggested two additional standards under this standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to uphold and promote the roles, function and values of social work when working in a multidisciplinary context; and</li> <li>supporting service users and carers to connect with appropriate resources and support to meet identified outcomes.</li> </ul>
9.	be able to work appropriately with others	A number of respondents suggested additional standards or areas of further consideration under this standard. One respondent sought the inclusion of a standard that specifically referenced the co-ordinating role that social workers are required to undertake, for example allocation of response.  A few respondents suggested additional standards. These included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ability to analyse a range of information, draw cogent conclusions and make persuasive recommendations;</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to go outside of the social work profession and to honour and respect other professions;</li> <li>• understand and engage with communities to enhance community assets; and</li> <li>• be able to appropriately challenge the views and recommendations of colleagues, other professionals and service users and carers.</li> </ul>
10.	be able to maintain records appropriately	One respondent sought the inclusion of a standard that specifically referenced the requirements for good English and clearly recorded responses for decisions.
11.	be able to reflect on and review practice	Two respondents suggested additional standards under this standard. One respondent sought the inclusion of a standard that specifically referenced observation to support critical reflection. Another respondent suggested the following additional standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to apply reflection models to reflect on practice, knowledge and values and different perspectives.</li> </ul>
12.	be able to assure the quality of their practice	Two respondents suggested additional standards under this standard. One respondent sought the inclusion of a standard that specifically referenced reflective supervision. Another respondent suggested the following additional standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contribute to the continued improvement of social work practice, services, policies and procedures within your area of practice.</li> </ul>
13.	understand the key concepts of the knowledge base relevant to their profession	Two respondents suggested additional standards under this standard. These included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requirements for theoretical knowledge to use as baseline for reasoning and decision-making that encompass the current learning about human development, cognitive functioning and social functioning; and</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to fully understand all of the laws, regulations and statutory guidance which apply to your specialist work, and maintain up to date knowledge after qualifying through CPD.</li> </ul>
14.	be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills to inform practice	<p>One respondent sought the inclusion of an additional standard under this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>disengaging in a planned manner, providing service users and other agencies with information on the closure of continuity of support.</li> </ul>
15.	understand the need to establish and maintain a safe practice environment	

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### Appendix 3: Detailed comments on the draft standards

Respondents' proposed deletions are indicated in the text by ~~strikethrough~~ whilst additions are shown in **bold**.

This section does not include comments received about the generic standards, as they were not within the scope of the consultation.

Profession-specific standards	Comments
<b>1 to be able to practise safely and effectively within their scope of practice</b>	
1.1 know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional	
1.2 recognise the need to manage their own workload and resources effectively and be able to practise accordingly	<p>Two respondents commented on this standard. One respondent commented that newly qualified social workers need to be prepared for the pace and challenges of social work during their placements. Another respondent suggested alternative wording for this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <del>recognise the need</del> <b>be able to effectively</b> manage their own workload <b>to include challenging quantity during supervision or other available forums and to also be able to manage</b> and resources, <b>including a lack of. In doing so</b> <del>effectively and be able to practise accordingly</del> </li> </ul>

<p>1.3 be able to undertake assessments of risk, need and capacity and respond appropriately</p>	<p>One respondent sought further clarity on the term 'capacity'. Specifically they were unclear whether the reference to 'capacity' in this standard was in the context of a person having 'mental capacity' (Mental Capacity Act 2005) or general capacity (physical capacity).</p>
<p>1.4 be able to recognise and respond appropriately to unexpected situations and manage uncertainty</p>	
<p>1.5 be able to recognise signs of harm, abuse and neglect and know how to respond appropriately, including recognising situations which require immediate action</p>	<p>A few respondents commented on this standard. One respondent expressed concern that, unless gaps in knowledge are identified, social workers are at risk of not meeting this standard. Another respondent suggested that reference to intervention underpinned by legislation may help expand this standard.</p> <p>A further respondent expressed concern that a social worker might be penalised if they have recognised a potential harm, have taken advice but no action is subsequently taken. This respondent also felt that the wording was ambiguous and does not make it clear if 'recognising' is the same as 'responding'.</p> <p>One respondent suggested alternative wording for this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to recognise signs of harm, abuse and neglect and know how to respond appropriately, including recognising situations which require immediate action <b>where intervention is required in accordance with the legislative timeframes</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>2 be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession</b></p>	

<p>2.1 understand current legislation applicable to social work with adults, children, young people and families</p>	<p>Three respondents commented on this standard. Two respondents commented that it was unrealistic and unnecessary for social workers to understand legislation in all areas. It was suggested that social workers should be required to understand legislation relevant to their current role only.</p> <p>One respondent made two suggestions for alternative wording for this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand current legislation applicable to social work with adults, children, young people and families <b>and be able to apply legislation effectively to practice</b>; and</li> <li>• understand current legislation applicable to social work with adults, children, young people and families <b>and be able to explain how legislation applies to practice</b>.</li> </ul>
<p>2.2 understand the need to promote the best interests of service users at all times</p>	<p>One respondent suggested alternative wording for this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>understand the need</del> <b>be able</b> to promote the best interests of service users <del>at all times</del> <b>and carers</b></li> </ul>
<p>2.3 understand the need to protect, safeguard, promote and prioritise the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults</p>	<p>Two respondents suggested changes to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the need to protect, safeguard, promote and prioritise the wellbeing of children, young people and <del>vulnerable adults</del> <b>adults of risk</b>; and</li> <li>• <del>understand the need</del> <b>be able, as far as possible,</b> to protect <b>and</b> safeguard, <del>promote and prioritise the wellbeing of</del> children, young people and vulnerable adults</li> </ul> <p>The first respondent commented that their suggested wording was more in line with terminology used in safeguarding practice.</p>

<p>2.4 understand, and be able to address, practices which present a risk to or from service users or others</p>	<p>One respondent suggested amending this standard to the following wording to make it more achievable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>be able to</b> understand <del>and be able</del> <b>the need</b> to address practices which present a risk to or from service users or others</li> </ul> <p>This respondent felt that their suggested wording should be sufficient, or, the standard should rest on the employer.</p>
<p>2.5 be able to manage and weigh up competing or conflicting values or interests to make reasoned professional judgements</p>	<p>One respondent suggested reordering the wording in this standard to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to <del>manage and weigh up</del> <b>and manage</b> competing or conflicting values or interests to make reasoned professional judgements</li> </ul>
<p>2.6 be able to exercise authority as a social worker within the appropriate legal and ethical frameworks and boundaries</p>	<p>One respondent commented that this standard should reference human rights</p>
<p>2.7 understand the need to respect and so far as possible uphold, the rights, dignity, values and autonomy of every service user</p>	<p>Two respondents commented that this standard should reference human rights</p>
<p>2.8 recognise that relationships with service users and carers should be based on respect and honesty</p>	<p>One respondent suggested the following alternative wording for this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise that relationships with service users and carers should be based on respect, <del>and</del> honesty <b>and dignity</b></li> </ul>

2.9 recognise the power dynamics in relationships with service users and be able to manage those dynamics appropriately	One respondent commented that this standard could be made more specific.
2.10 understand what is required of them by the Health and Care Professions Council	
<b>3 be able to maintain fitness to practise</b>	One respondent commented that the standards in this section are too longwinded and suggested that sentences should be shortened.
3.1 understand the need to maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct	
3.2 understand the importance of maintaining their own health and wellbeing	
3.3 understand both the need to keep skills and knowledge up-to-date and the importance of career-long learning	
3.4 be able to establish and maintain personal and professional boundaries	
3.5 be able to manage the physical and emotional impact of their practice	<p>Two respondents suggested alternative wording for this standard to reflect current workloads and available resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>be able</del> <b>take responsible steps</b> to manage the physical and emotional impact of their practice</li> <li>• be able to manage the physical and emotional impact of their practice <b>or identify when further support is required.</b></li> </ul>

<p>3.6 be able to identify and apply strategies to build professional resilience</p>	<p>A number of respondents commented on this standard. The majority of these respondents sought additional or amended wording to alleviate some of the responsibility placed on the social worker as opposed to the employer. Other respondents sought removal of the standard altogether. Particular concerns raised were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it places the emphasis on workers rather than organisations to develop strategies to safely undertake the tasks associated with a social work role;</li> <li>• it could be interpreted as the social worker’s responsibility to manage all stress and pressures of work regardless of support available; and</li> <li>• it can become a loophole for managers/organisations to overload social workers and then blame them for not building resilience strategies if they ‘fold under the pressure’</li> </ul> <p>Four respondents commented that this standard was too vague and further clarity was required. One of these respondents suggested that it could be combined with 3.5. Another respondent suggested that the HCPC should publish guidance around professional resilience and what would actually qualify as such a strategy.</p> <p>Two respondents suggested strengthening the standard with the following alternative wording:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to identify strategies to build professional resilience <b>and support the resilience of people and their communities;</b> and</li> <li>• be able to identify <b>and put into practice</b> strategies to build professional resilience</li> </ul> <p>Two respondents suggested making reference to contexts and situations where resilience might be required. For example, organisational change.</p>
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<p>4 <b>be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement</b></p>	<p>One respondent suggested that this section of the standards should be condensed. Specifically they suggested that standards 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 could be combined. They also suggested shorter sentences should be used throughout the standards in this section.</p>
<p>4.1 be able to assess a situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with it</p>	
<p>4.2 be able to initiate resolution of issues and be able to exercise personal initiative</p>	<p>One respondent commented that the meaning behind this standard is unclear and a definition of clearer explanation of what is meant by resolution would strengthen this standard.</p>
<p>4.3 recognise that they are personally responsible for, and must be able to justify, their decisions and recommendations</p>	
<p>4.4 be able to make informed judgements on complex issues using the information available</p>	<p>One respondent suggested alternative wording for this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to make informed judgements on complex issues using the information available <b>and receive referrals including signposting where appropriate</b></li> </ul>
<p>4.5 be able to work effectively whilst holding alternative competing explanations in mind</p>	<p>Two respondents suggested rewording or deleting this standard as they felt it was already covered elsewhere. One respondent suggested this was already covered in SOP 2.5, another suggested it was already covered in SOP 4.4.</p> <p>Three respondents suggested alternative wording to strengthen this standard and provide more clarity. One respondent suggested additional</p>



	<p>wording that identifies this standard within the scope of reflection. Another respondent suggested the following alternative wording:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>to be able to use professional curiosity in practice</b> <del>be able to work effectively</del> whilst holding alternative competing explanations in mind <b>to strengthen the message in language which social workers recognise</b></li> </ul> <p>One respondent commented that it may be useful to include means of resolution. For example, reflective supervision and critical friend.</p>
4.6	<p>be able to make and receive referrals appropriately</p>
4.7	<p>understand the importance of participation in training and mentoring</p> <p>A number of respondents sought additional wording to clarify the meaning of this standard. These respondents were divided in their opinion of what this standard meant. Some respondents thought that this was a reference to personal CPD. Other respondents thought that this was a reference to providing training and mentoring to others.</p> <p>Three of these respondents suggested alternative wording. One respondent suggested including the term 'support the learning of others'. Two respondents suggested the following alternative wording;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>understand the importance of participation in</del> <b>contributing to the provision of training and mentoring of others;</b> and</li> <li>• understand the importance of participation in training, and mentoring <b>and any other relevant CPD activities</b></li> </ul>
5	<p><b>be aware of the impact of culture, equality and diversity on practice</b></p> <p>One respondent suggested that standards 5.1 and 5.2 in this section could be combined.</p>

<p>5.1 be able to reflect on and take account of the impact of inequality, disadvantage and discrimination on those who use social work services and their communities</p>	
<p>5.2 understand the need to adapt practice to <del>response</del> <b>respond</b> appropriately to different groups and individuals</p>	<p>Two respondents highlighted a typo in this standard and suggested the following correction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the need to adapt practice to <del>response</del> <b>respond</b> appropriately to different groups and individuals</li> </ul>
<p>5.3 be aware of the impact of their own values on practice with different groups of service users and carers</p>	
<p>5.4 understand the impact of different cultures and communities and how this affects the role of the social worker in supporting service users and carers.</p>	<p>One respondent suggested changing the wording of this standard to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>understand different cultures and communities and how this affects the role of the social worker in supporting service users, carers and families</del> <b>be aware of and manage the impact of their own values on practice</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>6 be aware of the impact of culture, equality and diversity on practice</b></p>	<p>One respondent suggested that the standards under this section could be combined with the standards under section 5.</p>
<p>6.1 be able to work with others to promote social justice, equality and inclusion</p>	

6.2	be able to use practice to challenge and address the impact of discrimination, disadvantage and oppression	
<b>7</b>	<b>be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner</b>	
7.1	be able to understand and explain the limits of confidentiality	
7.2	be able to recognise and respond appropriately to situations where it is necessary to share information to safeguard service users and carers or others	
7.3	understand the principles of information governance and be aware of the safe and effective use of health and social care information	<p>Two respondents commented that this standard was not sufficient as it currently stands. One respondent felt that this standard should highlight the legal requirements to comply with data protection and information security. Another respondent felt that social workers need to be able to practice according to data protection legislation and professional codes of ethics in relation to sensitive data.</p> <p>However, two respondents felt that this standard should be removed altogether as it is already covered by job descriptions and data protection legislation</p> <p>Two respondents suggested alternative wording to provide clarity and strengthen this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>understand the principles of information governance and</del> <b>be aware of the secure storage and transmission</b>, and the safe and effective use of health and social care information; and</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand the principles of information governance <b>data protection and confidentiality</b> and be aware of the safe and effective use of health and social care information <b>personal and sensitive data</b></li> </ul> <p>One respondent commented that it was unclear what this standard meant and was better covered on the old standard 5 within the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.</p> <p>Two respondents suggested expanding on the understanding of ‘the principles of information governance’ by including the importance of whistleblowing.</p>
<b>8 be able to communicate effectively</b>	<p>One respondent felt that this section was too long. They commented that this section is repeated in section 10 of the SOPs and that previous standards under sections 2 and 10 were more succinct.</p>
<b>8.1</b> be able to use interpersonal skills and appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with service users, carers and others	
<b>8.2</b> be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating advice, instruction, information and professional opinion to colleagues, service users and carers	
<b>8.3</b> understand the need to provide service users and carers with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions or to understand the decisions made	

<p>8.4 understand how communication skills affect the assessment of and engagement with service users and carers</p>	
<p>8.5 understand how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of a range of factors including age, capacity, learning ability and physical ability</p>	<p>One respondent sought further clarity on the term 'capacity'. Specifically they were unclear whether the reference to 'capacity' in this standard was in the context of a person having 'mental capacity' (Mental Capacity Act 2005) or general capacity (physical capacity).</p>
<p>8.6 be aware of the characteristics and consequences of verbal and non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by a range of factors including age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and socio-economic status</p>	<p>One respondent suggested that this standard should be reworded so that the range of factors appear in alphabetical order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be aware of the characteristics and consequences of verbal and non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by a range of factors including age, <del>disability</del>, culture, <b>disability</b>, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and spiritual or religious beliefs</li> </ul> <p>Two respondents recommended adding the following wording:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be aware of the characteristics and consequences of verbal and non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by a range of factors including age, disability, culture, ethnicity, gender, <b>sexual orientation</b>, socio-economic status and spiritual or religious beliefs</li> </ul> <p>One of these respondents also commented that 'sexual orientation' was one of the six equality strands, the other five of which have already been included within this standard.</p>
<p>8.7 understand the need to draw upon available resources and services to</p>	

support service users' and carers' communication wherever possible	
8.8 be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5 <sup>3</sup>	
8.9 be able to engage in inter-professional and inter-agency communication	<p>One respondent suggested adding the following wording to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to <b>competently and confidently</b> engage in inter-professional and inter-agency communication</li> </ul>
8.10 be able to listen actively to service users and carers and others	
8.11 be able to prepare formal reports in line with applicable protocols and guidelines	<p>One respondent commented that this standard should apply to all written records, not just reports.</p>
8.12 be able to present reports in formal settings	<p>One respondent sought clarification on what this standard meant and what reports it referenced, for example court reports.</p> <p>Three respondents commented that this standard should apply beyond reports. For example, assessments and professional judgements as well as all other verbal and written work. One of these respondents suggested rewording the standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to <del>present reports</del> <b>demonstrate professional communication</b> in formal settings</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) tests competence in spoken and written English. Applicants who have qualified outside the UK, whose first language is not English and who are not nationals of a country with the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland, have to provide evidence that they have reached the necessary standard. Please visit our website for more information.

<b>9 be able to work appropriately with others</b>	One respondent commented that the standards under this section were 'wordy' and several of them could be combined.
9.1 understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships with service users, carers and colleagues as both an autonomous practitioner and collaboratively with others	One respondent commented that this standard should be reworded to require registered social workers to be able to sustain and build professional relationships, not just understand the need for such relationships.
9.2 be able to work with service users and carers to enable them to assess and make informed decisions about their needs, circumstances, risks, preferred options and resources	
9.3 be able to work with service users to promote individual growth, development and independence and to assist them to understand and exercise their rights	
9.4 be able to support service users' and carers' rights to control their lives and make informed choices about the services they receive	
9.5 be able to support the development of networks, groups and communities to meet needs and outcomes	

9.6	be able to work in partnership with others, including service users and carers and those working in other agencies and roles	
9.7	be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team	
9.8	recognise the contribution that service users and carers' own resources and strengths can bring to social work	<p>One respondent suggested adding the following wording to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognise the contribution that service users and carers' own resources and strengths can bring to social work <b>and recognise people's strengths and resources / assets and the contribution they can make to supporting independence and choice for individuals</b></li> </ul>
9.9	be able to identify and work with resistance to change and conflict	<p>One respondent suggested adding the following wording to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be able to identify and work with resistance to change and conflict <b>and competing demands</b></li> </ul> <p>One respondent commented that this wording was unclear and suggested alternative wording for this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be able to identify and work with resistance to <b>manage</b> change and conflict</li> </ul>
9.10	be able to understand the emotional dynamics of interactions with service users and carers	
<b>10</b>	<b>be able to maintain records appropriately</b>	



10.1 be able to keep accurate, comprehensive and comprehensible records in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines	
10.2 recognise the need to manage records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines	
<b>11 be able to reflect on and review practice</b>	<p>Three respondents commented on this section of the standards. One respondent suggested that this section should include reference to 'observation to support critical reflection'. Another respondent suggested that 'keeping an open mind' would be more appropriately placed here.</p> <p>A further respondent suggested that this standard could be revised to require registered social workers to be able to critically reflect on their practice, prepare for and engage effectively with supervision and case reviews and complete agreed actions from these discussions.</p>
11.1 understand the value of critical reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection appropriately	
11.2 recognise the value of supervision, case reviews and other methods of reflection and review	
<b>12 be able to assure the quality of their practice</b>	<p>Three respondents suggested rewording or amending this standard. One respondent suggested combining standards 12.2 and 12.3 in this section. Another respondent suggested including reflective supervision.</p>

	<p>One respondent suggested the following alternative wording:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>be able to assure the quality of their practice</del> <b>understand the importance of quality assurance frameworks and their application to practice</b></li> </ul>
12.1 be able to use supervision to support and enhance the quality of their social work practice	
12.2 be able to contribute to processes designed to evaluate service and individual outcomes	
12.3 be able to engage in evidence-informed practice, evaluate practice systematically and participate in audit procedures	<p>One respondent commented that the use of evidence based practice in this standard is not clear and is likely to be covered under other standards. Two standards were suggested as already covering this area dependant on the meaning. It was suggested that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if this was about being able to contribute to evaluation then this has already been covered in standard 12.2; and</li> <li>• if the meaning here is to be able to understand evidence, relate it to one's own practice and justify any decisions taken then the meaning should be included in the generic standard 11</li> </ul>
<b>13 understand the key concepts of the knowledge base relevant to their profession</b>	Two respondents commented that the standards in this section should be more concise.
13.1 understand the roles of other professions, practitioners and organisations in health, social care, justice and in other settings where social work is practised	On respondent commented that this standard was too specific and suggested removing some of the wording:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the roles of other professions, practitioners and organisations in health, social care, justice and in other settings where social work is practised</li> </ul> <p>However, another respondent commented that this standard was too vague and suggested more clarity on the level of understanding that would be expected.</p>
<p>13.2 be aware of the different social and organisational contexts and settings within which social work operates</p>	
<p>13.3 be aware of changes in demography and culture and their impact on social work</p>	<p>One respondent suggested removing this standard.</p>
<p>13.4 understand in relation to social work practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social work theory;</li> <li>• social work models and interventions;</li> <li>• the development and application of relevant law and social policy;</li> <li>• the development of and application of social work and social work values;</li> <li>• human growth and development across the lifespan and the impact of key developmental stages and transitions;</li> <li>• the impact of injustice, social inequalities, policies and other issues which affect the demand for social work services;</li> <li>• the relevance of psychological, environmental, sociological and</li> </ul>	<p>Three respondents commented that this standard should be strengthened. One respondent commented that this standard should not be limited to understanding the concepts and should instead place an expectation on workers to promote and encourage this amongst service users and organisations. Another respondent felt that the wording should be changed to focus on promoting and prioritising rather than the concept of participation.</p> <p>One respondent suggested strengthening this standard beyond understanding:</p> <p>Understand <b>and effectively apply</b> in relation to social work practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social work theory;</li> <li>• social work models and interventions;</li> <li>• the development and application of relevant law and social policy;</li> <li>• the development of social work and social work values;</li> <li>• human growth and development across the lifespan and the impact of key developmental stages and transitions;</li> </ul>

<p>physiological perspectives to understanding personal and social development and functioning;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concepts of participation, advocacy, co-production, involvement and empowerment; and</li> <li>• the relevance of sociological perspectives to understanding societal and structural influences on human behaviour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the impact of injustice, social inequalities, policies and other issues which impact on affect the demand for social work services;</li> <li>• the relevance of psychological, environmental, sociological and physiological perspectives to understanding personal and social development and functioning;</li> <li>• concepts of participation, advocacy, co-production, involvement and empowerment; and</li> <li>• the relevance of sociological perspectives to understanding societal and structural influences on human behaviour.</li> </ul>
<p>13.5 understand the concept of leadership and its application to practice</p>	<p>A number of respondents sought clarification on what was meant by 'leadership'. One respondent commented that the standard should be strengthened to include the obligation to demonstrate leadership.</p> <p>Four respondents suggested alternative wording to strengthen the requirements for leadership. Two respondents suggested adding wording to reflect an expectation that all social workers, not just those in more senior roles, should be able to demonstrate leadership appropriate to their role and experience throughout their career.</p> <p>Two respondents suggested the following amendments to the standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the concept of leadership and its application to practice <b>and demonstrate leadership skills in work with individuals, families, groups and communities; and</b></li> <li>• <del>understand the concept of the ability to demonstrate the application of leadership and its application to</del> <b>skills in practice</b></li> </ul> <p>Two respondents commented that the wording of this standard should be more aligned with the wording used in the PCF (PCF 9).</p> <p>One respondent suggested removing this standard altogether.</p>

<b>14 be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills to inform practice</b>	
14.1 be able to gather, analyse, critically evaluate and use information and knowledge to make recommendations or modify their practice	One respondent commented that this standard should include observation.
14.2 be able to select and use appropriate assessment tools	
14.3 be able to prepare, implement, review, evaluate, revise and conclude plans to meet needs and circumstances in conjunction with service users and carers	
14.4 be able to use social work methods, theories and models to identify actions to achieve change and development and improve life opportunities	One respondent suggested amending the wording of this standard as it was felt that the word 'use' was contested. Two suggestions for alternative wording were made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to <del>use</del> <b>link</b> social work methods, theories and models to identify actions to achieve change and development and improve life opportunities; and</li> <li>• be able to <del>use</del> <b>relate</b> social work methods, theories and models to identify actions to achieve change and development and improve life opportunities</li> </ul>
14.5 be aware of a range of research methodologies	One respondent suggested either removing this standard or combining it with 14.4 and 14.6.

<p>14.6 recognise the value of research and analysis and be able to evaluate such evidence to inform their own practice</p>	<p>One respondent suggested that this standard should require the application of research and should reference to international research specifically.</p>
<p>14.7 be able to use research, reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate actions</p>	<p>One respondent suggested amending the wording of this standard as it was felt that the word ‘use’ was contested. Two suggestions for alternative wording were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to <del>use</del> <b>link</b> research, reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate actions; and</li> <li>• be able to <del>use</del> <b>relate</b> research, reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate actions</li> </ul> <p>This respondent also commented that the term ‘use research’ was unclear. They saw two possible meanings for this term and provided suggested alternatives for both. It was suggested that if this standard means to use evidence and findings from studies then the standard should be reworded to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to <del>use</del> <b>relate</b> research <b>evidence to practice situations by making use of</b> reasoning and problem solving skills <del>to determine appropriate actions</del></li> </ul> <p>However, if the standard means to use research and reasoning skills then the respondent suggested making this clear within the wording.</p>
<p>14.8 be able to demonstrate a level of skill in the use of information technology appropriate to their practice</p>	
<p>14.9 be able to change their practice as needed to take account of new developments or changing contexts</p>	<p>One respondent suggested removing this standard.</p>

<b>15 be able to establish and maintain a safe practice environment</b>	One respondent commented that they preferred the wording under standard 7 (report concerns about safety) in the current standards of conduct, performance and ethics.
15.1 understand the need to maintain the safety of service users, carers and colleagues	
15.2 be aware of applicable health and safety legislation and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these	
15.3 be able to work safely in challenging environments, including being able to take appropriate actions to manage environmental risk	One respondent suggested strengthening this standard to reflect the risks of lone working and home visits.

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