



Standards of conduct and practice for social care workers

Social care workers are accountable for their practice. This means that they are responsible for ensuring their conduct and practice does not fall below the standards set out in the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's (the Social Care Council), their regulators, *Standards of conduct and practice for social care workers* and that no action or omission on their part harms the wellbeing of service users or carers.

Social care council website: www.niscc.info.



Standards of CONDUCT

Standards of PRACTICE

Foreword

As the regulator for the social care workforce in Northern Ireland, the Social Care Council is committed to driving up standards in social care and ensuring that registrants have the necessary attitudes, values and skills to ensure the delivery of safe and effective care. We believe the Social Care Council's *Standards of conduct and practice for social care workers* (the Standards) have a key part to play in helping to achieve this goal.

The Standards provide a benchmark for good practice and also offer clear criteria to social care workers to guide their day-to-day practice. They also offer a level of assurance to service users about the quality of care they can expect from their worker and to employers in terms of having the confidence that their staff are working to an agreed set of standards. The Standards therefore are for everyone's protection.

Compulsory registration for the social care workforce is now well established, it is reassuring to know that all of those employed in social care in Northern Ireland will be working to a consistent set of standards. It is important that the standards are widely promoted across the sector and firmly embedded in practice and the Social Care Council welcomes UNISON's support.

Patricia Higgins
Chief Executive
Social Care
Council



Introduction

“Being in good employment is protective of health. However, jobs need to be sustainable [and] include not only a decent living wage but also opportunities for in-work development, the flexibility to enable people to balance work and family life, and protection from those adverse working conditions that can damage health.

Fair Society, Health Lives – Professor Michael Marmot

UNISON celebrates the valuable contribution that social care staff bring to the lives of people who need additional support due to frailty, disability or circumstance. Registering with the Social Care Council recognises your professionalism and provides assurance to the public of your ability to safely carry out your role.

Being a member of UNISON means you are not on your own. You are part of a strong trade union of 1.3 million members, thousands of whom are social care staff. Working together we can:

- Improve your terms and conditions of employment,
- Protect your rights at work,
- Develop your skills and knowledge,
- Influence employers and government on issues of importance to you, your family and community,
- We also provide a range of legal, financial and welfare services for you and your family.

All social care workers and social care managers who are registered with the Social Care Council must complete 90 hours of training and learning within a three or five year period depending on their renewal cycle.

Our UNISON College NI offers a range of **free** training workshops for members to support and develop their social care practice. These workshops count towards your 90 hours. Topics include dementia, palliative care, autism, leadership, tissue viability, stoma care, supporting staff and mindfulness.

You can get more information on our free courses at:

www.unison.org.uk/regions/northern-ireland/education-and-training or email: EducationNI@unison.co.uk.

Patricia McKeown
Regional Secretary
UNISON NI

About the Standards

As part of its roles and responsibilities, the Social Care Council is required to produce and publish standards of conduct and practice expected of social workers, social work students and social care workers. There are also standards for employers.

This booklet contains these standards for social care workers

- The **Standards of conduct** describe the values, attitudes and behaviours expected of social care workers in their day-to-day work.
- The **Standards of practice** outline the knowledge and skills required for competent practice.

Together, both sets of standards combine to provide a baseline against which a social care worker's conduct and practice will be judged.

The standards are **binding** on all social care workers registered with the Social Care Council, irrespective of employment status or work setting. **Your fitness to practise will be judged against these standards and failure to comply could put your registration at risk.** If someone raises a concern about your conduct or practice, it will be considered against these standards when deciding if the Social Care Council need to take any action.



The standards are intended to reflect existing good practice and public expectations of the behaviour and practice of social care workers. They form part of the wider package of legislation, regulatory requirements, practice standards and employers' policies and procedures that social care workers must meet.

The following **values** inform and underpin the standards of conduct and practice:

Social care workers must:

- Respect the rights, dignity and inherent worth of individuals.
- Work in a person-centred way.
- Treat people respectfully and with compassion.
- Support and promote the independence and autonomy of service users.
- Act in the best interests of service users and carers.
- Uphold and promote equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Ensure the care they provide is safe and effective and of a high quality.

Standards of conduct...

1. As a social care worker, you must protect the rights and promote the interests and wellbeing of service users and carers.
2. As a social care worker, you must strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers.
3. As a social care worker, you must promote the autonomy of service users while safeguarding them as far as possible from danger or harm.
4. As a social care worker, you must respect the rights of service users while seeking to ensure that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people.
5. As a social care worker, you must uphold public trust and confidence in social care services.
6. As a social care worker, you must be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills.

Protecting the rights and promote the interests and wellbeing of service users and carers

This includes:

- 1.1 Treating each person as an individual.
- 1.2 Treating people with consideration, respect and compassion.
- 1.3 Empowering service users and carers to communicate their views, needs and preferences, taking account of their preferred language and form of communication.
- 1.4 Respecting and, where appropriate, representing the individual views and wishes of both service users and carers;
- 1.5 Supporting service users' right to control their lives and make informed choices about the services they receive;
- 1.6 Gaining consent as appropriate from service users before you provide care or services, in line with your employer's procedures and any statutory requirements;
- 1.7 Explaining your role, the purpose of your involvement and the reasons for any decision you make;
- 1.8 Respecting and maintaining the dignity and privacy of service users;
- 1.9 Treating service users and carers fairly and promoting equal opportunities;
- 1.10 Respecting diversity, beliefs, preferences, cultural differences and challenging discriminatory attitudes or behaviour.

Strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers

This includes:

- 2.1 Being honest and trustworthy;
- 2.2 Communicating in an appropriate, open, accurate and straightforward way;
- 2.3 Being able to communicate clearly in the English language, both verbally and in writing;
- 2.4 Respecting confidential information and clearly explaining agency policies about confidentiality to service users and carers;
- 2.5 Holding, using and storing records in line with organisational procedures and data protection requirements;
- 2.6 Being reliable and dependable;
- 2.7 Honouring work commitments, agreements and arrangements and, when it is not possible to do so, explaining why to service users and carers;
- 2.8 Declaring issues that might create conflicts of interest and making sure that they do not influence your judgement or practice;
- 2.9 Adhering to policies and procedures about accepting gifts and money, hospitality or services from service users and carers;
- 2.10 Refusing any loans of money or property from anyone in your care or anyone close to them
- 2.11 Not engaging in practices which are fraudulent in respect of use of public or private monies;
- 2.12 Promote the autonomy of service users while safeguarding them as far as possible from danger or harm.

This includes:

- 3.1 Promoting service users' independence and empowering them to understand and exercise their rights;
- 3.2 Using established processes and procedures to assess, respond to and manage dangerous, abusive, discriminatory or exploitative behaviour and practice;
- 3.3 Following practice and procedures designed to keep you and other people safe from violent and abusive behaviour at work;
- 3.4 Bringing to the attention of your employer or the appropriate authority, without delay, resource or operational difficulties that might get in the way of the delivery of safe care;
- 3.5 Informing your employer or an appropriate authority, without delay, where the practice of colleagues or others may be unsafe or adversely affecting standards of care;
- 3.6 Complying with employers' health and safety policies, including those relating to substance misuse;
- 3.7 Recognising and using responsibly with service users and carers, the power that comes from your work role.

“.....Promote the autonomy of service users while safeguarding them as far as possible from danger or harm.”

Respect the rights of service users while seeking to ensure that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people

This includes:

- 4.1 Recognising that service users have the right to take positive risks and helping them to identify and manage potential and actual risks to themselves and others;
- 4.2 Following risk assessment policies and procedures to assess whether the behaviour of service users or others presents a risk of harm to themselves or other people;
- 4.3 Taking necessary steps to minimise the risks of service users' behaviour causing actual or potential harm to themselves or other people;
- 4.4 Ensuring that relevant colleagues and agencies are informed about the outcomes and implications of risk assessments in a timely and effective manner.

Uphold public trust and confidence in social care services

In particular, you must not:

- 5.1 Abuse, neglect or harm service users, carers or colleagues;
- 5.2 Exploit service users, carers or colleagues in any way;
- 5.3 Abuse the trust of service users and carers or the access you have to personal information about them or to their property, home or workplace;
- 5.4 Form inappropriate personal relationships with service users;
- 5.5 Discriminate unlawfully or unjustifiably against service users, carers or colleagues;
- 5.6 Condone any unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination by service users, carers or colleagues;
- 5.7 Put yourself or other people at unnecessary risk;

- 5.8 Behave in a way, in work or outside work, which would call into question your suitability to work in social care services;
- 5.9 Use social media or social networking sites or other forms of electronic communication in a way that contravenes professional boundaries, organisational guidelines or Social Care Council standards.

Be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills

This includes:

- 6.1 Meeting relevant standards of practice and working in a lawful, safe and effective way;
- 6.2 Taking personal and, where appropriate, collective responsibility for quality improvement and safety in line with your job role;
- 6.3 Being personally accountable for your actions and able to explain and account for your actions and decisions;
- 6.4 Maintaining clear and accurate records as required by procedures established for your work;
- 6.5 Informing your employer or the appropriate authority in a timely manner about any personal difficulties that might affect your ability to do your job competently and safely;
- 6.6 Informing the Social Care Council and any employers you work for at the first reasonable opportunity if your fitness to practise has been called into question. This includes ill-health that affects your ability to practise, criminal convictions, disciplinary proceedings and findings of other regulatory bodies or organisations;
- 6.7 Seeking assistance from your employer or the appropriate authority if you do not feel able or adequately prepared to carry out any aspect of your work, or you are not sure about how to proceed in a work matter;
- 6.8 Ensuring that if there is a conflict between the Social Care Council standards of conduct and your work environment, your first obligation is to the standards;

- 6.9 Helping service users and carers to make complaints where required, taking complaints seriously and responding to them or passing them to the appropriate person including your employer or the Social Care Council;
- 6.10 Making service users and carers aware of your responsibilities within the Social Care Council standards of conduct;
- 6.11 Being open and honest with people if things go wrong, including providing a full and prompt explanation to your employer of what has happened;
- 6.12 Co-operating with any investigation or formal inquiry into your conduct, the conduct of others, or the care or services provided to a service user where appropriate;
- 6.13 Working openly and co-operatively with colleagues and treating them with respect;
- 6.14 Taking responsibility for work delegated to you, recognising and working within the limits of your knowledge, skills and experience;
- 6.15 Recognising that you remain responsible for the work that you have delegated to other workers;
- 6.16 Recognising and respecting the roles and expertise of workers from other disciplines and agencies and working in partnership with them;
- 6.17 Undertaking relevant training and learning to maintain and improve your knowledge and skills and meeting the Social Care Council Post Registration Training and Learning Requirements in line with your job role;
- 6.18 Contributing to the learning and development of others.

“Ensuring that if there is a conflict between the Social Care Council standards of conduct and your work environment, your first obligation is to the standards”

Note: Social care workers are required to renew their registration every three or five years according to their work role, and to pay an annual registration fee. Failure to pay your annual fee on time will result in suspension without pay, so ensure your email address/postal address is up to date as you may miss the reminder.

Standards of practice...

As a social care worker you must:

1. Understand the main duties and responsibilities of your own role within the context of the organisation in which you work.
2. Be able to communicate effectively.
3. Deliver person-centred care and support which is safe and effective.
4. Support the safeguarding of individuals.
5. Maintain health and safety at work.
6. Develop yourself as a social care worker.



Understand the main duties and responsibilities of your own role within the context of the organisation in which you work

This includes:

- 1.1 Knowing the aims, objectives and values of the service in which you work;
- 1.2 Accessing full and up-to-date details of policies, procedures and agreed ways of working from your employer and adhering to them;

- 1.3 Knowing your main responsibilities to those service users and carers you support including duty of care;
- 1.4 Prioritising and managing your work effectively;
- 1.5 Working in partnership with key people, advocates and others who are significant to individual service users and carers;
- 1.6 Possessing the required level of literacy, numeracy and communication skills necessary to carry out your role and being able to communicate using written English;
- 1.7 Keeping records that are up to date, complete, accurate and legible;
- 1.8 Reporting any adverse events, incidents, errors and near misses that are likely to affect the quality of care and wellbeing of service users or carers;
- 1.9 Responding appropriately to comments and complaints in accordance with your organisation's complaints procedure.

Be able to communicate effectively

This includes:

- 2.1 Developing effective relationships with service users and carers;
- 2.2 Establishing the service user's communication and language needs, wishes and preferences;
- 2.3 Using a range of communication methods and styles to meet a service user's communication needs, wishes and preferences;
- 2.4 Recognising and addressing barriers to effective communication;
- 2.5 Working effectively as part of a team, sharing relevant information to ensure the service user receives the best support and care possible;
- 2.6 Sharing information with other health and social care staff and agencies in a timely manner in line with organisational procedures and principles and practices relating to confidentiality.

Deliver person-centred care and support which is safe and effective

This includes:

- 3.1 Promoting and applying person-centred values in your day to day work with service users and carers;
- 3.2 Delivering care in line with assessed needs and service user and carer preferences;
- 3.3 Undertaking risk assessments appropriate to your role, in partnership with service users, carers and other key people;
- 3.4 Contributing to the risk assessment process by identifying and reporting risks and concerns;
- 3.5 Contributing to the planning process with service users and carers;
- 3.6 Working in partnership with service users to enable them to achieve their goals and be as independent as possible;
- 3.7 Developing care or support plans and/or risk management plans where appropriate, which promote independence in daily living while taking account of any legal or organisational requirements;
- 3.8 Contributing to the implementation of care or support plans and risk management plans;
- 3.9 Participating in the review of care or support plans and/or risk management plans where appropriate;
- 3.10 Supporting service users in their daily living;
- 3.11 Supporting service users to retain, regain and develop skills to manage their daily living;
- 3.12 Contributing to the physical and emotional well-being of service users and carers;
- 3.13 Enabling service users and carers to make informed choices about their lives and to actively participate in decision-making processes;
- 3.14 Supporting service users to develop and maintain social networks and relationships;
- 3.15 Contributing to effective group care where appropriate

- 3.16 Ending your involvement with service users and carers in a planned way, ensuring that they are provided with information on the closure and any continuing forms of support for them.

Support the safeguarding of individuals

This includes:

- 4.1 Knowing the main types of abuse and the factors that may make a service user or carer vulnerable to harm or abuse;
- 4.2 Knowing the regional policies and procedures relating to safeguarding;
- 4.3 Knowing your own role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding;
- 4.4 Recognising the signs and symptoms of harm or abuse when present;
- 4.5 Taking the appropriate actions to safeguard a service user or carer if you suspect they are being harmed or abused or if they disclose that they are being harmed or abused;
- 4.6 Reporting suspected or actual harm or abuse to the designated person in accordance with employer safeguarding policies.

Maintain health and safety at work

This includes:

- 5.1 Applying your organisation's policies and procedures in relation to health and safety in your work setting and with regard to the service users and carers you support;
- 5.2 Applying your organisation's policies and procedures in relation to medication and health care tasks;
- 5.3 Applying your organisation's policies and procedures in relation to moving and handling service users;
- 5.4 Knowing what you can and cannot do relating to general health and safety commensurate with your role and training;
- 5.5 Recognising the risks to your personal safety and wellbeing in your work setting and taking steps to minimise these

Develop yourself as a social care worker

This includes:

- 6.1 Being aware of relevant standards that relate to your work role;
- 6.2 Evaluating your own knowledge, performance and understanding against relevant standards;
- 6.3 Reflecting on your practice to continuously improve the quality of service provided;
- 6.4 Using sources of support for your personal development, including supervision, appraisal and training;
- 6.5 Seeking and using feedback, including that from service users and carers to help you develop and improve the way you work;
- 6.6 Recording progress in relation to your personal development.



“Taking the appropriate actions to safeguard a service user or carer if you suspect they are being harmed or abused or if they disclose that they are being harmed or abused”

12 Good reasons to join UNISON

Don't ignore the facts. Join UNISON today because...

1. Working together we can secure better pay and conditions than non-union workers
2. We provide union protection for your rights and insist that you are treated with dignity and respect at work
3. Working together we can tackle stress, bullying and discrimination
4. Working together we ensure that you have proper access to health and safety rights
5. Working together we can end zero-hours and casual contracts
6. Working together we can secure better staffing levels
7. Working together we can influence quality of care and service standards
8. Working together we can secure trade union recognition from employers
9. Working together we can influence Government and employers on policy and practice
10. Working together unionised workers can work in solidarity with others to challenge unfairness and injustice
11. We offer you free access to union education
12. We provide you with access to legal, financial and welfare services

You can join online at: www.unison.org.uk/join or call us direct on 02890 270190 to arrange to meet with you and your co-worker in our offices or your workplace. We will be offering training/ workshops for all UNISON members to help keep you safe in complying with these codes.



**Free Education for
all members**

CPD

K102

ELearning

Learning Grants



MEMBER LEARNING PROGRAMME





We hope you find this booklet useful. If you have any difficulties or concerns, please use the contact details below as appropriate. For further advice or to join UNISON please contact us today.

**UNISON, Galway House,
165 York Street, Belfast BT15 1AL.
Tel - 02890 270190**



This booklet contains the Social Care Council Standards of Codes and Practice. Further information can be found on the Social Care Council website www.niscc.info.