

Competent **Respectful**  
**Supportive** Accountable  
Compassionate Open Reflective  
Reliable **Co-operative** Trustworthy **Skilful**  
**Honest** Person-centred **Aware**  
Participative **Effective** Informed  
Rights-focused **Adaptable**  
**Responsive** Knowledgeable  
**Non-judgemental**  
Accurate Safe

Standards of Conduct and Practice for

# Social Care Workers

# Introductory Notes

## About us

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) was established in 2001 as the regulatory body for the social care workforce in Northern Ireland.

We regulate the workforce by maintaining a register and setting standards for the conduct, practice and training of social care workers to ensure

that the quality of care provided to service users and carers is of a high standard.

Our register is a public record that those registered have met the requirements for entry onto the register and have agreed to adhere to the standards of conduct and practice set by NISCC.



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# About the Standards

As part of its roles and responsibilities, NISCC is required to produce and publish standards of conduct and practice expected of social workers and social care workers. This booklet contains the standards of conduct and practice 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 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 we 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.

Social care workers are accountable for their practice which means that they are responsible for ensuring their conduct and practice does not fall below the standards set out in this document and that no action or omission on their part harms the wellbeing of service users or carers.

The standards provide social care workers with clear criteria to guide their practice and to check that they are working to standard. They are intended to be a support to registrants in their day to day practice.

The standards provide service users and carers with a clear understanding of how a social care worker should behave towards them and the standards of care they can expect to receive. Consistent application of these standards by social care workers will benefit service users and carers.

Employers of social care workers are expected to take account of the standards in making decisions about the conduct and competence of their staff. To help you understand these standards, we have published a glossary of terms. We will also publish guidance from time to time to support and underpin the standards. Guidance will be available on our website: [www.niscc.info](http://www.niscc.info).

## **Underpinning Values**

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.

**As a social care worker, you must protect the rights and promote the interests and wellbeing of service users and carers.**



## Protect 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.

**As a social care worker,  
you must strive to establish  
and maintain the trust and  
confidence of service users  
and carers.**





## **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.

**As a social care worker, you must promote the autonomy of service users while safeguarding them as far as possible from danger or harm.**



## **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.

**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.**



## **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.

**As a social care worker, you must uphold public trust and confidence in social care services.**



## **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 NISCC standards.

**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.**





## 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 NISCC 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 NISCC 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 NISCC;
- 6.10 Making service users and carers aware of your responsibilities within the NISCC 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 NISCC Post Registration Training and Learning Requirements in line with your job role;
- 6.18 Contributing to the learning and development of others.

# 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.

**As a social care worker, you must understand the main duties and responsibilities of your own role within the context of the organisation in which you work.**



## **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.

**As a social care worker,  
you must be able to  
communicate effectively.**



## **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.

**As a social care worker, you must deliver person-centred care and support which is safe and effective.**





## **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.

**As a social care worker,  
you must support the  
safeguarding of individuals.**



## 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.

**As a social care worker,  
you must maintain health  
and safety at work.**



## 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.

**As a social care worker,  
you must develop yourself  
as a social care worker.**



## 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.

# Glossary

## **ACCOUNTABLE**

Being responsible for the decisions you make and being able to justify them.

## **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION**

A way of working that recognises an individual's right to participate in the activities and relationships of everyday life as independently as possible and to be an active partner in their own care and support rather than a passive recipient.

## **ADVERSE EVENT**

Any event or circumstance that could have or did lead to harm, loss or damage to people, property, environment or reputation.

## **CARE PLAN**

A written plan that sets out in detail the way daily care and support must be provided to an individual.

## **COMPETENCE**

The overarching set of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to practise safely and effectively without supervision.

## **DIVERSITY**

Accepting that everyone is different and respecting and valuing those differences.

## **DUTY OF CARE**

Prioritising the safety, welfare and interests of service users and doing everything you can to keep them safe from harm.

## **EFFECTIVE**

To be successful in producing a desired or intended result.

## **EMPOWER**

To give someone the strength and confidence to act on their own initiative.

## **EQUALITY**

Treating everyone fairly and ensuring they have access to the same opportunities irrespective of their race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

## **FITNESS TO PRACTISE**

When someone has the competence, character and health to do their job safely and effectively.



## **INCLUSION**

Ensuring that people are treated equally and fairly and are included as part of society.

## **NEAR MISS**

An unplanned event that did not result in injury, illness or damage, but had the potential to do so.

## **PERSON-CENTRED VALUES**

These include individuality, independence, privacy, partnership, choice, dignity, respect and rights.

## **POST REGISTRATION TRAINING AND LEARNING REQUIREMENTS**

These are the learning and development activities you must undertake to maintain your registration.

## **PREFERENCES**

A person's preferred option or choice.

## **PROMOTE**

To support or actively encourage.

## **REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

The process of thinking about every aspect of your work, including how and where it could be improved.

## **RESPECT**

To have due regard for someone's feelings, wishes or rights.

## **RIGHTS**

The entitlements that individuals have legally, socially and ethically, including human rights.

## **SELF-CARE**

Practices undertaken by service users towards managing health and wellbeing and managing their own care needs.

## **SERVICE USER**

Any individual who receives social care services.

## **WELLBEING**

Enjoying a good quality of life characterised by keeping well and healthy, feeling safe and secure, being able to participate in purposeful activities and social networks and realise one's full potential.

# Notes:

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