



Standards for Employers of Social Workers & Social Care Workers

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Introduction

This booklet contains standards for employers of social workers and social care workers which set down their responsibilities in the regulation of the workforce.

The standards have been developed jointly between the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and in consultation with employers across the sector.

NISCC is the workforce regulator for social work and social care in Northern Ireland. The purpose of workforce regulation is to protect and promote the interests and wellbeing of service users and carers.

RQIA is the body responsible for monitoring and inspecting the availability and quality of health and social care services in Northern Ireland.

Both bodies are committed to driving up standards in social care.

What are the Standards?

All social workers and social care workers registered with NISCC are required to meet the NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice as a requirement of their ongoing registration. The Standards for Employers describe the responsibilities of employers in supporting and enabling their registered workforce to meet the Standards of Conduct and Practice. The Standards for Employers reflect the provisions within the Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Workers and Social Care Workers.

The Standards for Employers are intended to reflect existing good practice. They are intended to complement rather than replace or duplicate existing employers' policies and form part of the wider package of legislation, requirements and guidance that relate to the employment of staff.

What will the standards mean for you?

As an employer of the social work and/or social care workforce, you will know what part you are expected to play in the regulation of the workforce and in the support of high quality practice and care.

Employers are responsible for making sure that they meet the standards, provide high quality services and promote public trust and confidence in social work and social care services.

You are encouraged to review your own policies and practice in light of the standards set out in this booklet.

Status

NISCC has responsibility within the legislation for publishing standards for employers and keeping them under review.

RQIA has responsibility for enforcement of Department of Health standards and will consider compliance with the Standards for Employers as part of their registration and inspection processes.

NISCC and RQIA will collaborate to effectively ensure adherence to the Standards for Employers and to share information on adherence to the standards within social care services.

To meet their responsibilities in relation to regulating the social work and social care workforce, employers must:

1. Provide vision and leadership to registrants in line with organisational expectations and governance requirements, to ensure they are enabled to deliver safe, effective and values-led care focused on the needs and experiences of service users;
2. Make sure people are suitable to enter the workforce;
3. Have written policies and processes in place to enable registrants to meet the NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice;
4. Provide learning and development opportunities to enable registrants to strengthen and develop their skills and knowledge;
5. Promote the NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice to registrants, service users and carers and co-operate with NISCC's proceedings.

Standard 1

As a social work and social care employer, in line with organisational expectations and governance requirements, you must provide vision and leadership to registrants, to ensure they are enabled to deliver safe, effective and values-led care focused on the needs and experiences of service users.

This includes:

- 1.1 Setting or contributing to the setting of the strategic direction for the social care workforce within the organisation and communicating this to registrants;
- 1.2 Providing a defined line of accountability which ensures the appropriate support and management of registrants;
- 1.3 Ensuring that the necessary resources, working environment, training, support and systems are in place to enable registrants to comply with their duty of care, the Standards of Conduct and Practice and any relevant statutory duties;
- 1.4 Having an appropriate workload management system in place and regularly reviewing this;
- 1.5 Promoting a learning culture that is open and fair and supports learning and development that meets both individual and organisational requirements;
- 1.6 Providing a working environment that upholds ethical practice and is committed to standards and providing good quality services;
- 1.7 Having effective systems in place to support workforce planning;
- 1.8 Having systems in place to listen to service user and carer feedback in order to shape and improve service provision and practice and deliver better outcomes.

Standard 2

As a social work and social care employer, you must make sure people are suitable to enter the social care workforce.

This includes:

- 2.1 Using rigorous and thorough recruitment and selection processes focused on making sure that only people who have the appropriate knowledge, skills and values and are suitable to provide social work or social care services, enter your workforce;
- 2.2 Checking criminal records and relevant registers to ensure people are safe to practise;
- 2.3 Undertaking any required pre-employment health checks;
- 2.4 Seeking and providing reliable references;
- 2.5 Ensuring that workers who are required to be registered with NISCC are registered and are clear about the consequences of failing to register or maintain their registration;
- 2.6 Ensuring clear lines of responsibility and accountability are established between recruitment/employment agencies and employing organisations in relation to agency workers.

Standard 3

As a social work and social care employer, you must have written policies and processes in place to enable registrants to meet NISCC's Standards of Conduct and Practice.

This includes:

- 3.1 Developing, implementing and monitoring policies that ensure the safety and wellbeing of service users and registrants;
- 3.2 Providing and maintaining a work environment that is healthy and safe and free from harassment, bullying or violence;
- 3.3 Providing appropriate supervision and support to registrants, ensuring they provide safe, effective and values-led care;
- 3.4 Ensuring and enabling registrants to have the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to safely and effectively undertake any tasks that you delegate to them;
- 3.5 Having appropriate systems in place to address and manage poor performance;
- 3.6 Having appropriate systems in place to enable registrants to raise concerns about inadequate resources or operational difficulties which might impact the delivery of care and taking appropriate action to address those issues;
- 3.7 Not requiring registrants to do anything that would put their adherence to the Standards of Conduct and Practice at risk.

Standard 4

As a social work and social care employer, you must provide learning and development opportunities to enable registrants to strengthen and develop their skills and knowledge.

This includes:

- 4.1 Providing appropriate induction training and on-going learning and development opportunities to help registrants do their job effectively and prepare for any new and changing roles and responsibilities;
- 4.2 Providing effective, regular supervision to registrants to enable them to develop and improve through reflective practice;
- 4.3 Contributing to the provision of social work and social care education and training, including effective workplace assessment and practice learning;
- 4.4 Supporting registrants to meet NISCC's eligibility criteria for registration and its requirements for post registration training and learning;
- 4.5 Responding appropriately to registrants who seek assistance because they do not feel able or adequately prepared to carry out any aspects of their work;
- 4.6 Supporting and enabling registrants to take responsibility for quality improvement and safety in line with their job role.

Standard 5

As a social work and social care employer, you must promote NISCC's Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Workers and Social Care Workers to registrants, service users and carers and co-operate with NISCC's proceedings.

This includes:

- 5.1 Informing registrants about your responsibilities within the Standards for Employers of Social Workers and Social Care Workers;
- 5.2 Informing registrants about NISCC'S Standards of Conduct and Practice and their personal responsibility to meet those standards;
- 5.3 Making service users and carers aware of the Standards for Employers and the Standards of Conduct and Practice and informing them about how to raise issues through your policies and, if necessary, how to contact NISCC in relation to the Standards;
- 5.4 Having procedures in place that facilitate and promote registrants to report unsafe, discriminatory or abusive behaviour or practice;
- 5.5 Ensuring that where care has or may have caused physical, emotional, financial or material harm or loss, this is reported openly and honestly to the appropriate authorities in accordance with Duty of Candour requirements;
- 5.6 Taking account of NISCC's Standards of Conduct and Practice in making any decision that relates to the fitness to practise of registrants;
- 5.7 Informing NISCC about any fitness to practise issues that would call into question a registrant's registration in line with NISCC's Standard of Acceptance and informing the registrant involved that a report has been made to NISCC;
- 5.8 Co-operating with NISCC investigations and hearings, including providing requested documents or information in a timely manner and responding appropriately to the findings and decisions of NISCC;
- 5.9 Enabling and supporting registrants to co-operate with NISCC investigations and hearings, including providing witness statements and attending hearings where required.

Glossary of Terms

Duty of Candour – is an expectation that employers and workers are open and transparent with people who use services (and those who are acting on their behalf) in relation to their care and will take appropriate action when things go wrong, including providing truthful information and an apology.

Fitness to practise – means that a registrant has the skills, knowledge and character to practise their profession safely and effectively and in a way that upholds public confidence in the social work and social care workforce.

Standard of Acceptance – means the criteria used by NISCC to determine whether information they receive meets the threshold for investigation.

Values-led care – is care that is guided in every aspect by principles of respect, dignity, compassion and inclusion and which recognises the inherent worth of every individual.

Workload management system – is a process for determining the proper workload distributions for staff and the resources they require to enable them to undertake their work role safely and effectively.



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