



CPD Consultation

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Introduction

We are consulting on the proposed process for carrying out and recording continuing professional development (CPD).

CPD is the reflection and learning activities that social workers undertake and record throughout their career to improve their practice and keep it up to date. As part of our [registration rules](#), social workers are required to undertake CPD. This is elaborated on in standard 4 of our [professional standards](#), which outlines the areas of CPD that social workers need to consider when undertaking their learning activities.

The proposals set out below include what we expect social workers to demonstrate when renewing their registration, and how we will evaluate a sample of CPD records. As a result of this consultation, we will develop guidance to support social workers through the process of recording their CPD in order to comply with our requirements. We welcome feedback in this consultation on what social workers would find helpful in this guidance document.

How we got here

Ahead of the consultation, we engaged with the sector in several ways. We first asked about CPD in the public consultation on rules and standards in spring 2019. Social workers told us that they wanted a process that complemented the CPD that they were already doing and that they wanted ongoing communication with the regulator in the setup phase of the CPD process and beyond. They wanted a straightforward process, with a system that is easy to use, allows for a variety of learning, and that demonstrates impact on practice.

We held a workshop with social workers and academics to test our thinking and invite thoughts on the online account. This has established a CPD focused professional group that we intend to engage further throughout this consultation. The feedback from the workshop echoed what we understood—that social workers want a supportive structure, not a bureaucratic burden, with an emphasis on reflection and impact on practice from a variety of CPD activities, supported by guidance. This also reinforced our view that we should require social workers to consider the impact that CPD has had on their practice, rather than measure learning in hours or credits.

We also held a workshop with representatives from social work regulators in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland where we discussed approaches to CPD among regulatory peers. They agreed that it should be a supportive process where social workers record their CPD on a regular basis, to ensure good reflection.

Through our research and engagement, we found that by having a completely online recording and evaluation process and new standards around CPD, we are breaking new ground with our approach. These features have been encouraged by the social workers we spoke to who looked forward to recording their learning as they go, in flexible formats and having a dedicated space for reflection, as well as standards and guidance to support their learning activities.

Our findings are substantiated by those in the Croisdale-Appleby independent review ‘Re-visioning social work education’¹, the Narey report ‘Making the education of social workers consistently effective’², ‘A Review of the Literature on Continuing Professional Development (CPD)’³, commissioned by the General Dental Council, GDC, and the

¹ Professor David Croisdale-Appleby OBE, 2014, *Re-visioning social work education*, Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/285788/DCA_Accessible.pdf

² Sir Martin Narey DL, 2014, *Making the education of social workers consistently effective*. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287756/Making_the_education_of_social_workers_consistently_effective.pdf

³ General Dental Council, GDC, 2019, *A Review of the Literature on Continuing Professional Development (CPD)*. Available at <https://www.gdc-uk.org/api/files/181205%20Executive%20Summary%20Review%20of%20the%20Literature%20on%20CPD.pdf>

Professional Standards Authority framework 'Right-touch reform'⁴, which also references their paper on assuring continuing fitness to practise based on right-touch regulation principles.

⁴ Professional Standards Authority, 2012, *Right-touch reform – A new framework for assurance of professions*. Available at https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/docs/default-source/publications/thought-paper/right-touch-reform-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=2e517320_7

Our strategy

Based on the engagement and research we have undertaken, including advice taken from other regulators, we propose to use the first year of regulation as an opportunity to learn more about our social workers and their CPD. This will serve as an opportunity to embed our new CPD standards and procedures, giving social workers time to adjust to the new process.

We will regularly communicate with social workers around CPD throughout the year and send reminders about completing CPD requirements before the renewal period opens, which will be on 1 September each year. Our regional engagement leads will also work with social workers in their area to understand how CPD is being carried out and how employers are supporting social workers.

After year one we will consider what we have learnt, undertake a review and work with all those with an interest in social work to inform our approach to CPD in years two and three. This will allow us to make incremental and engagement and intelligence led improvements to our CPD approach so that we can use CPD in a meaningful way to raise standards of practice.

Proposed CPD process for 2019-20

This is the proposed process for the registration period 2 December 2019 to 30 November 2020.

Carrying out and recording CPD

Social workers will continue to carry out CPD as they do now, but they will be required to record their CPD in their Social Work England online account. At the point of evaluation, this is the information that will be used to determine whether individuals continue to meet the professional standards relating to CPD. This will allow us to assure the public that social workers are carrying out CPD and that they continue to meet their professional standards.

Social workers have told us that they want to be able to record their CPD in different ways. Therefore, we have designed a Social Work England online account with a CPD function that has both structured and free text template options, with the ability to upload a variety of file types to enable social workers to record their CPD in a flexible way. We will provide guidance on how to use the online account.

In year one, we will not specify a required amount of CPD, only that a social worker must record at least one piece of CPD during the 12 month period. Their recorded CPD must demonstrate that they meet all eight CPD standards. We will provide guidance to explain the recording process, our standards, and the kinds of CPD social workers might choose to undertake to meet our standards.

We will remind social workers to record their activity as they go, sending out periodic notifications via the online system to remind those who have not recorded any CPD, to do so before the end of the renewal period.

Renewal

At the point of renewal, a social worker must ensure that they have recorded their CPD in their online account and declare that they continue to meet the professional standards, including those relating to CPD.

We will not offer the option for social workers to defer their CPD. If an individual's personal circumstances mean that they are not able to complete and record at least one piece of CPD evidence by the point that they renew their registration, they should contact us as soon as possible so that we can discuss with them their options for maintaining their registration.

Once the renewal period closes on the 30 November each year, we will determine which social workers have not recorded anything in their online account. We will treat these

cases as an issue of registration, where we may choose to remove them from the register or set conditions on their registration.

Evaluation

During evaluation of year one, we will not consider whether a social worker's CPD is of 'sufficient quality', as we are still working with the sector and other key stakeholders to determine what this looks like. Rather the first evaluation period will be used as an opportunity to look at what CPD social workers are doing and using it to inform our process and requirements going forwards.

Once renewal has closed, there will be no further action required from the social worker regarding CPD for that renewal period. We will randomly select a 2.5% sample of those on the register that have recorded CPD and inform them that they have been selected. Only the content of a registrant's online account will be assessed, which means there will be no separate process for registrants selected for evaluation. We will then look at their online accounts and confirm that they have uploaded valid CPD entries.

As part of our CPD evaluation and in an effort to raise standards of CPD in social work, we will publish a report that summarises the outcomes of the evaluation and our learning from the first year. This report, alongside our ongoing engagement with social workers, will help to inform our approach to CPD in the future.

An overview on the process is laid out in the flowchart at annex A.

How to respond

You can respond to this consultation in several ways. We have provided an [online survey](#), or you can choose to respond via our consultation email address or by post. We recommend reading the information below before responding. It aims to provide an overview of our proposed approach to CPD, provides an outline of the proposals for year one (2 December 2019 to 30 November 2020) and summarises the research and engagement we have undertaken so far.

All questions in the online survey are optional, and you can choose to remain anonymous if you wish.

The questions in the survey are:

Questions

1. To what extent do you approve of our approach to CPD?
2. What is important for us to consider when developing an evaluation process?
3. Do you have any other comments?

If you would like a copy of the questions by email or post, please contact us at consultation.responses@socialworkengland.org.uk or Consultation Responses, Social Work England, 1st floor, 1 North Bank, Blonk Street, Sheffield, S3 8JY.

If you need any reasonable adjustments to help you respond, please contact us at consultation.responses@socialworkengland.org.uk.

Please complete the survey or return your response by **5pm on Thursday 17 October 2019**.

Impact assessment

The proposals are designed with people who use social work services in mind, ultimately striving for better public protection and increased confidence in social work as a profession.

We expect that any impact would be beneficial but will be felt most immediately by social workers and their employers, and by people who use social work services.

The impact assessment questions can be found at the end of the [online survey](#), but are also listed in the box below for ease of reference.

Impact assessment questions

4. We want to know if you think that the CPD proposals will impact on people based on protected characteristics⁵ positively, neutrally or negatively. Please choose the characteristics you think will be affected by our proposals.
5. If you have chosen any characteristics, please explain why.

What happens next?

Once the consultation period is completed, we will analyse the responses we have received. We will then publish a document which summarises the responses and explains the decisions we have taken as a result.

We will publish our consultation response alongside the guidance for CPD ahead of our launch. The guidance will come into force, and the CPD year will start, on the day we take over regulatory responsibility on 2 December 2019.

⁵ The Equality Act (2010) lists nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

Annex 1: CPD process 2019-20

