

# PCF

2026

# Professional Capabilities Framework



Point of entry to training

**BASW**  
England

The professional association for  
social work and social workers

## 1. VALUES AND ETHICS

Apply social work ethical principles and value to guide professional practices

Social workers have an obligation to work in accordance with our [Code of Ethics](#), in terms of our conduct, our processes and decisions, and our interventions. We involve individuals, carers and communities meaningfully at both an individual and a structural level, up to and including partnership working and co-production. We promote human rights and social justice. We develop and maintain our understanding of the value base of our profession throughout our career, its ethical standards and relevant law.

I...

- recognise the impact my own values and attitudes can have on others and on my relationships with others
- understand the importance of seeking the perspectives and views of those using the service and carers
- recognise that social workers will need to deal with dilemmas, conflict and use the authority invested in their role.

### 2. DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

Recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and anti-oppressive principles in practice

Social workers understand that diversity characterises and shapes human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. Diversity is multi-dimensional and includes race, disability, class, economic status, age, sexuality, gender (including transgender), faith and belief and the intersection of these and other characteristics. We understand that because of difference, and perception of difference, a person's life experience may include oppression, marginalisation and alienation as well as privilege, power and acclaim. We identify this and promote equity, equality, diversity and inclusion.

I...

- demonstrate an initial understanding of difference and diversity within society
- have an insight into the importance of equal opportunities and the implications of this for social work practice
- am receptive to the views of others.

### **3. RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING**

**Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic wellbeing**

Social workers recognise and promote the fundamental principles of human rights, social justice and economic wellbeing enshrined in national and international laws, conventions and policies. These principles underpin our practice and we use statutory and case law effectively in our work. We understand and proactively address the effects of oppression, discrimination and poverty. We are committed to the ethical and accountable use of technology, including AI and we promote digital inclusion. Wherever possible, we work in partnership with people using services and their carers and families, to challenge inequality and injustice, and promote strengths, agency, hope and self-determination.

I...

- recognise the contribution of social work to promoting human rights, social justice, inclusion and equality
- am aware that social and media narratives play a role in influencing public perception of social work, poverty and social justice
- am receptive to the idea that there may be ethical dilemmas and conflicts in the social work role, for example between rights and responsibilities, and between risk and protection.

### 4. KNOWLEDGE

Develop and apply relevant knowledge from social work practice and research, social sciences, law, other professional and relevant fields and from the experience of people who use services

We develop our professional knowledge throughout our careers and sustain our curiosity. As a unified profession, we develop core knowledge that relates to our purpose, values and ethics. We also develop specific knowledge needed for fields of practice and roles. Our knowledge comes from social work practice, theory, law, research, expertise by experience, and from other relevant fields and disciplines. All social workers contribute to creating as well as using professional knowledge. We understand our distinctive knowledge complements that of other disciplines to provide effective services.

I...

- Identify how own learning (formal, informal and experiential) contributes to understanding and developing the social work role
- Understand the value of taking feedback from others to support our practice.

### 5. CRITICAL REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision-making

Social workers critically reflect on their practice, use analysis, apply professional judgement and reasoned discernment. We identify, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence. We continuously evaluate our impact and benefit to those using services. We use supervision and other support to reflect on our work and sustain our practice and wellbeing. We apply our critical reflective skills to the context and conditions under which we practise. Our reflection enables us to challenge ourselves and others, and maintain our professional curiosity, creativity and self-awareness.

I...

- demonstrate an ability to reflect on and analyse my own experiences (educational, personal, formal and informal)
- demonstrates curiosity and critical thinking about social issues
- understands the value of seeking support from others.

## 6. SKILLS AND INTERVENTIONS

Use judgement, knowledge and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support, prevent harm and enable progress

Social workers engage with individuals, families, and communities, working alongside people to determine their needs and wishes, and what action may be helpful. We build productive, empathetic working relationships and communicate effectively. Using our professional judgement and values, we employ appropriate interventions, promoting self-determination, support, protection and positive change. We develop and maintain skills relevant to our roles. We understand and take account of power differentials and use our authority appropriately. We evaluate our own practice and its impact, and how we improve outcomes for those we work with.

I...

- can communicate clearly, accurately and appropriately to the level of training applied for, in verbal and written forms
- demonstrate an ability to engage with people with empathy
- am motivated to develop skills to help people find solutions to social needs.

### **7. CONTEXTS AND ORGANISATIONS**

Engage with, inform and adapt to changing organisational contexts, and the social and policy environments that shape practice. Operate effectively within and contribute to the development of organisations and services, including multi-agency and interprofessional settings

Social workers are informed about and proactively respond to the challenges and opportunities that come from changing social, policy and work contexts. We fulfil this responsibility in accordance with our professional values and ethics, as individual and collective professionals and as members of the organisations in which we work. We collaborate, inform and are informed by our work with individuals and communities, other social workers and other professions.

I...

- understand that individual workers have a role in providing feedback to organisations to shape the work and contribute to efficacy
- demonstrate understanding of the importance of collaboration and working as a member of a team.

### 8. LEADERSHIP

Promote the profession and good social work practice. Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others. Develop personal influence and be part of the collective leadership and impact of the profession

We develop and show our leadership, individually and collectively, through promoting social work's purpose, practices and impact. We achieve this through diverse activities, which may include: advancing practice, supervising, educating others, research, evaluation, using innovation and creativity, writing, using social media positively, being active in professional networks and bodies, contributing to policy and taking formal leadership/management roles. We promote organisational contexts conducive to good practice and learning. We work in partnership with people who use services and stakeholders in developing our leadership and aims for the profession.

I...

- recognise how my own learning, behaviour and ideas can influence and benefit others
- am receptive to leadership demonstrated by others, regardless of their position or role. For example, I consider guidance and advice offered by others, appropriately engage with different roles in structured activities, engage in discussions about social issues.

### 9. PROFESSIONALISM

Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development

Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession. Our title is protected in UK law. We demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for our conduct, practice, self-care and development. We seek and use supervision and other professional support. We promote excellent practice and challenge circumstances that compromise this. As representatives of the profession, we safeguard its reputation. We are accountable to people using services, the public, employers and the regulator. We take ethical decisions in the context of multiple accountabilities.

I...

- demonstrate an initial understanding of the role of the social worker
- demonstrate motivation and commitment to becoming a social worker
- identify my own potential strengths and challenges in relation to the role of social worker
- demonstrate an initial understanding of the importance of personal self-care, resilience and adaptability in social work
- can take responsibility for my own learning and development.