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Social work career progression framework

Background

The recently released Social Work Task Force report recommends a single nationally recognised career structure for social workers. This will take some time to develop nationally so a Derbyshire framework has been produced based on general principles outlined in the report. The future work of the Taskforce will need to be tracked and revisions made to the Derbyshire framework as required.

The Derbyshire framework attached at appendix (A) aims to map each of the main stages of a career in social work from degree course entrant onwards making clear the expectations that should apply to social workers at each of these stages.

This is intended to ensure that social workers are paid in line with their Knowledge Skills and Experience (KSE) and to provide clarity about progression routes. This framework requires social workers to demonstrate commitment to their continuous professional development, to be developing their skills and improving practice.

Line Managers, in conjunction with the Staff education and training department's professional development team, will have responsibility for workforce planning to ensure that social workers have the opportunity to achieve progression. Progression through the grades will be through the submission of portfolios of evidence which demonstrate the key requirements at each stage are met.

This draft framework has been devised for qualified social workers in the Children and Younger Adults department, Adult Care department and the Youth Offending service.

Newly qualified social workers

Social workers who are employed in their first social work qualified post after obtaining the social work degree will be appointed in grade 9. These workers will be required to register on to the newly qualified social worker scheme which Derbyshire is piloting in conjunction with the Children's workforce development council for those working in the Children and younger adults department, and with Skills for Care for those working in adult services.



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The Social Work Taskforce report strengthens the view that the first year in employment after qualifying as a social worker is to be seen by employers as a probationary year, in effect an assessed year in practice from the date of registration with the General Social Care Council (GSCC). The newly qualified social worker schemes are different for children's and adult services but essentially require new social workers to demonstrate a level of competence by the end of year one. Social workers on the NQSW scheme will have access to in-house training opportunities, and will receive mentoring from either their line manager, lead practitioner or a senior practice teacher from the professional development team, in addition to line management supervision.

It is expected that workers in this grade will be subject to close directive supervision and will have opportunities to shadow and learn from more experienced practitioners. At the end of the NQSW year the social worker will be required to demonstrate successful completion of the NQSW scheme requirements and show that they have increased their skills and knowledge. The usual probationary processes will apply so managers will be required to monitor progress at one month, three, five months and now twelve months.

Evidence for progression to grade 10 will be through the submission of a portfolio of evidence which will be assessed by their direct line manager in conjunction with a member of the professional development team, and the appropriate District/Area Manager this process will then be signed off by the appropriate District/Area Manager.

Successful completion will enable the social worker to progress on to grade 10.

Where a social worker is not making appropriate progress in terms of developing competence and ability in working independently, steps will be taken to offer additional support and training; there may be a variety of reasons why some staff may take longer to meet the requirements to progress on to grade 10. However remaining on grade 9 in the long term will not be supported and in such circumstances capability procedures will be considered.

Assessment and progression

Grade 9 – 10

In order to progress from grade 9 to grade 10 social workers will be required to demonstrate that they meet all the requirements outlined in the Knowledge Skills and Experience and typical features outlined at appendix (A). It will be the social workers responsibility to request assessment and submit their portfolio as they come up to completing 12 months in practice. They will submit a portfolio of evidence to their direct line manager which will include;

- Date of social work qualification
- Current Registration with the GSCC
- Evidence of probationary interviews at 1, 3 and 5 months.
- Evidence of successful completion of the requirements of the NQSW scheme
- Details of in-house and other training attended
- A written statement from the worker providing evidence of how they think their practice meets the KSE requirements indicated in appendix (A)
- Details of two case examples which the worker believes demonstrates meeting the grade 9 KSE requirements, reference will be made to the records held on framework i

The social workers direct line manager and District/Area Manager along with a member of the professional development team will conduct a local panel meeting and assess the evidence submitted and meet with the social worker. Panels will be held at 3 set times per year, predetermined by the District/Area Manager. They will then reach a decision and if progression to grade 10 is recommended this will be signed off by the relevant District/Area Manager. Should the panel meeting be held after the 12 months in practice eligibility point any increase in salary can be backdated.

Where the panel decision is not to support progression to grade 10, clear reasons should be given in writing and a plan agreed to improve the workers practice. A target date should be agreed for resubmission, if at this point progression is not supported, managers should take advice from HR about whether or not capability processes should be invoked.



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Social worker with experience

Social workers in grade 10 will hold the social work qualification, continue to be registered with the GSCC and have a minimum of 12 months post qualifying experience. Workers will remain in this grade for a minimum of two years to develop their skills and knowledge in line with the key features outlined in appendix (A). The key features are essentially about a worker developing their practice and being able to take on more complex work with increasing autonomy.

Evidence of working flexibly and responding well to changing demands will be required. Workers in this grade will demonstrate increasing competence in making analytical assessments and reaching evidence based judgements. They will begin to take on additional duties over and above carrying a caseload, supporting students or less experienced staff for example. Supervision with the line manager should become more reflective in nature demonstrating increasing skills and confidence.

A key requirement of all social workers in this grade is to undertake the appropriate PQ consolidation module for their area of service delivery. For social workers in both children's and adults services this requires a minimum of six months training currently delivered in Derbyshire in conjunction with a University provider. Social workers undertaking the PQ consolidation module are assessed in terms of their ability to write to an academic standard and reflect on their own practice, and are observed in their practice by an appropriately trained and qualified PQ mentor. Successful achievement of the PQ consolidation module will therefore be used as an essential element of the standard required to progress to grade 11.

Workers will be required to submit an application to be considered for progression to grade 11 at prescribed times in a year, and will need to submit a portfolio of evidence demonstrating how all the requirements outlined in the KSE and typical features are met. Applications for progression will be considered by a panel comprising of two District/Area Managers and a representative from the professional development team.

Social workers who are unable to successfully complete the PQ consolidation module or meet the requirements of all the KSE and typical features outlined in appendix (A) will remain on grade 10.

In very exceptional circumstances where a social worker is deemed to be capable of working at a complex level and can demonstrate successful achievement of PQ consolidation, and meets all the other KSE requirements prior to the minimum 2 years



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required in grade 10, the District/Area Manager may make a request for accelerated progression to the appropriate Director who will then decide if the evidence submitted merits consideration by an early panel.

Assessment and progression

Grade 10 – 11

In order to progress from grade 10 to grade 11 social workers will be expected to meet all the requirements outlined in the Knowledge Skills and Experience and typical features outlined at appendix (A), and to have had a minimum of two years in grade 10, unless there are exceptional circumstances as approved by the appropriate Director as detailed earlier.

There will be three times in the year when social workers can request they be considered for progression. These will be in the periods;

1 . 30 January

Assessment panels will then take place in February

1 . 31 May

Assessment panels will then take place in June

1 . 30 September

Assessment panels will then take place in October

Social workers will be required to request assessment for progression within these timeframes and will need to submit a portfolio of evidence which will include the following;



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- Date of social work qualification
- Current GSCC registration
- Date of progression to grade 10
- Evidence of successful completion of the PQ consolidation module
- Evidence of willingness to undertake an appropriate full PQ specialist award
- A written statement from the worker providing evidence of how they think their practice meets the KSE requirements indicated in appendix (A)
- Written supporting statement from direct line manager.
- Details of work undertaken to support others e.g. students/ colleagues
- Details of training attended and commitment to ongoing continuous professional development
- Examples of working flexibly and with increased autonomy
- Submission of two case examples which the worker believes demonstrates a high level of competence, reference will be made to the records held on framework i.

In order to ensure a consistent quality assured process, panels will be made up of two District/Area Managers and a representative from the professional development team.

Panels will be held in February, June and October. Panel members will consider the portfolio of evidence submitted and meet with the social worker for a formal discussion. They will then decide if the requirements for progression are met. If they are deemed to be met the increase in salary will be backdated to the closing date of the application period.

Where it is decided that the requirements for progression are not met, written feedback will be provided by the panel. This will assist the worker in discussion with their line manager to understand the rationale and consider a way forward. Should the social worker wish to submit a further submission this will need to be within a future panel time frame.



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Experienced social worker

Social workers in grade 11 will be expected to maintain their registration with the GSCC and undertake increasingly complex work, with a high degree of autonomy, and without the need for close supervision. They will be able to demonstrate significant evidence of working flexibly and responding to the changing needs of the service. Workers in this grade will be seen to have advanced assessment skills. Supervision with line managers will be more consultative in nature.

Social workers in this grade will be very experienced practitioners in their teams and in addition to holding a complex caseload will be expected to play a significant role in enabling the learning of others. They will be expected to support and mentor student social workers, newly qualified social workers and those undertaking PQ studies.

They will be able to manage cases with high levels of risk and safeguarding involved. They will be a highly skilled practitioner, and may hold designated responsibilities for specific areas in social work practice. It is expected that workers in this grade will continue to develop their practice as required by the General Social Care Council and will demonstrate commitment to completing full PQ specialist awards appropriate to their area of work.

In order to be able to apply for a senior practitioner post on grade 12 social workers will need to hold a full PQ specialist award.

Assessment and progression

Grade 11 – 12

Progression to senior practitioner will only be possible by competitive assessment/recruitment subject to the availability of posts. Holding a full PQ specialist award appropriate to the area of practice will be an essential requirement to be short listed for a senior practitioner post.



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Senior practitioner

Senior practitioners will be on grade 12 and will be expected to meet all of the requirements as outlined in appendix (A). They will continue to build on the skills and practice developed in grade 11, working with a very high degree of independence. They will be regarded as the most experienced practitioners holding very complex work, and play a key role in supporting and developing other staff and social work students. They will work closely with line managers and take on areas of development work for their service at district level. They will be expected to demonstrate exemplary social work practice and a sound and contemporary knowledge of local and national initiative and approaches.

Appendix A

	Knowledge Skills and Experience (KSE)	Typical Features
Newly Qualified B9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree in Social Work • Entry level new to DCC policy and procedure • Required to demonstrate working to National Occupational Standards for SW and GSCC Code of practice • Required to complete in-house training • Registration with General Social Care Council GSCC • Required to register with relevant NQSW scheme and meet the outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to close supervision and support from lead practitioner and/or professional development team • Work shadowing of experienced Social Workers • Will refer decisions and judgements to others prior to taking action • A reduced and less complex case load • Competency assessment following minimum of one year in post by line manager in conjunction with professional development team
SW With Experience B10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification in social work plus min 12 months post qualifying experience • Knowledge and understanding of DCC policy and procedure • Skills in assessment planning and service delivery • Ability to work to the SW value base • Ability to reflect on practice • Evidence of CPD • Required to attain PQ Consolidation 6 Minimum 6 months training • Registration with General Social Care Council GSCC • Commitment to achieving the requirements of grade 11, including full PQ specialist award 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocated a less complex case load and subject to monitoring from an experienced SW/LP • Increased autonomy and more complex case loads allocated as post holder progresses • Use of recording and reporting systems to a good standard. • Contribute to the work of the team and service • Developing a range of experience • Meeting PQ standards through achievement of PQ Consolidation

<p style="text-align: center;">Experienced SW B11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Post Qualifying Consolidation Award plus • Considerable Post Qualifying experience • Encouraged to attain PQ Specialist Award including enabling the learning of others ó minimum time scale 18months • May attain PQ Higher Specialist Award • Skills in assessment, planning and service delivery • Ability to work to the SW value base • Ability to reflect on practice • Evidence of CPD • Registration with General Social Care Council GSCC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role focussed on managing own caseload within a specialist area • Complex caseload without the need for close management supervision. • Risk Assessment in often complex situations/advanced skill level in assessments • Changing behaviours of others • Excellent use of recording and reporting systems • Key role in Safeguarding • Working in partnership with other agencies and professionals • May be an AMHP or Best Interest Assessor • Practice Mentor Assessor for PQ Candidates • Required to act as practice assessor for social work students • Enabling the learning of others by supporting NQSW or SW with experience
<p style="text-align: center;">Senior Practitioner B12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualified Social Worker plus PQ Specialist/Higher Specialist Award • Skills required to challenge behaviour of others • Coaching of social workers through complex case work • Registration with General Social Care Council GSCC • Ability to work to the SW value base • Ability to reflect on practice • Evidence of CPD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex caseload • Critical advisory role in case management and determining care packages • Assessment and coordination of services • Complex Risk Assessment • Complex Court Work • Involvement in development of other staff through training/coaching/mentoring • Expert Practitioner • Practice Mentor Assessor for PQ Candidates • Required to act as practice assessor for social work students • Enabling the learning of others by supporting NQSW or SW with experience