

Social work in adult social services

Context

This advice note is intended to be the first in a series from the ADASS.

It has been produced (and should be read) alongside the joint statement “The Future of Social Work in Adult Social Care in England”, with Skills for Care, the Department of Health and the British Association of Social Workers, and which also involved the General Social Care Council, the Social Care Institute for Excellence, the Social Care Association and the Joint University Council Social Work Education Committee.

It has been developed in the context of high profile debate about the needs of individuals, families and communities and the significant contribution of the Social Work Taskforce and the Reform Board.

Planning for social work in adult social services

The joint statement is a demonstration of ADASS proactively leading the profession. The Association is of the view that it is critical to have clarity about the value and contribution of social work. It wishes, in this advice, to be proactive in guiding the most effective use of social work skills in the context of personalising adult social services

As a profession social work is underpinned by core values and behaviours that work with and empower individuals, families and communities. We use the international definition (set out in the joint statement). The employment, deployment training and development of social workers will be shaped primarily by the consideration of people’s needs and circumstances and by the key role that social work plays, alongside other professionals, in interpersonal support for people and safeguarding their rights. This will be based on judgements about where their specific skill sets and approaches match with choice, rights and beneficial outcomes, rather than defining specific roles and tasks for social workers. Therefore, in the absence of a prescriptive legal or regulatory framework, the local authority will employ, or ensure the deployment of, social workers where they are likely to contribute most effectively to securing positive outcomes for people in need of care or support and potentially in vulnerable or complex circumstances, defined by individual, family or community needs.

Advice
Note

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February 2010

ADASS
Workforce
Development
Network

Developing local statements

This ADASS advice is intended as both a means of establishing greater local clarity as well as stimulating further discussion.

ADASS recommends that each local authority determines a local requirement that certain identified functions should be performed by registered social workers. They will do this on the advice of their DASS. It should then be included in a position statement regarding their integrated local area workforce strategy. Such a statement will then go on to say how and by whom interpersonal support will be made available to the citizens in their area.

LOCAL STATEMENTS

Councils should consider the following:

- Needs and demand analyses relating to their populations
- Research about where social work has a positive impact
- The views and opinions of people who need and/or use services and their carers
- Their local public's understanding and expectations of social workers
- The needs of families in their communities with high levels of contact with a range of services (for instance, child protection, mental health, substance misuse and the criminal justice system) where more focused work with the family may improve outcomes overall
- Developing the skills of social workers to provide a wider range of support and intervention models to support individuals and families with complex needs and dynamics
- Modeling, and possibly piloting, alternative forms and methods of making social work and interpersonal support available
- The quality of social work education and other social care training and development in their area
- A framework for professional supervision
- The views and opinions of social workers and their representatives
- The requirements and recommendations of the General Social Care Council and the Care Quality Commission
- The need to meet performance indicators and other targets, including measures of quality
- The requirement to have sufficient and sufficiently skilled staff in place and the overarching duty of care.

Key Issues and Questions for Local Statements

- **The legislative context** – how is the council implementing the law? (Notes on this are included in Appendix 1).
- **Employers' Responsibilities** – are you fulfilling these? (Notes are included in Appendix 2).
- **Risk** – is it safer for a social worker to undertake the task? Are they best able to support individuals in managing risks?
- **Complexity** – are there multiple and different tasks involved?
- **Skill and knowledge**– does the task draw on the skills and knowledge of social work training and experience? Are there further skills and knowledge needed?
- **Volume** - how many of these sorts of tasks are there to do?
- **Choice** – does the person needing services and support want, request or expect a registered social worker to work with them (not omitting people who may additionally be prepared to pay for this either through personal budgets or their, or their families', own resources)?
- **Cost, efficiency and effectiveness** – can registered social workers be afforded to do the task? Can the work of social workers reduce costs overall in the longer term?
- **Equity** – are registered social workers deployed in a way that can be justified by a needs assessment?
- **Benefit or outcome** – where do (or should) registered social workers have beneficial impact on people's lives both through direct work and as a source of knowledge, advice and consultancy to the council more widely?
- **Research and practice evidence**: what works and what is worth or needs development?
- **Public awareness** – do people know where and how to get information, advice and support and what are their perceptions of social work and social care?

The results of this analysis will be local, but ADASS suggests that Local Statements should include:

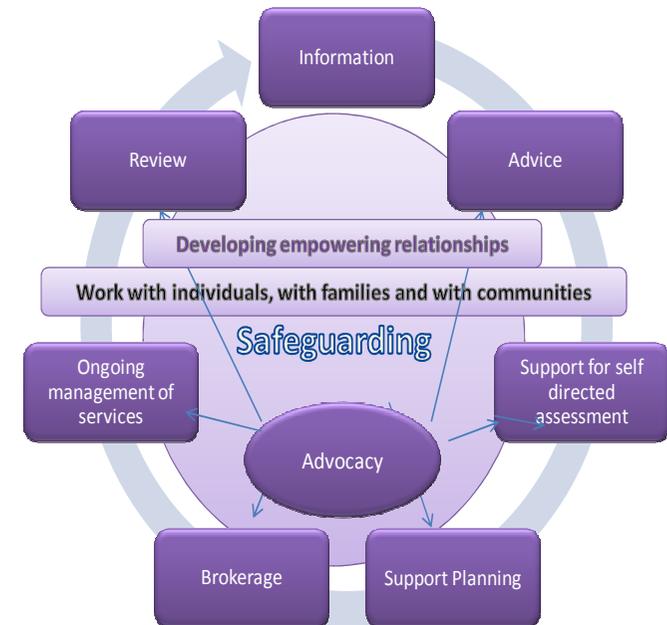
- Undertaking the duties and responsibilities of an Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) along with nurses, Occupational Therapists and psychologists.
- Safeguarding individuals' human rights where there is a question of the deprivation of liberty
- Investigations of referrals that have met the significant harm threshold as defined by the Local Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) and direct work with people who have been harmed or abused to support them in difficult decision making and the consequent drawing up, implementation and review of protection plans
- Direct work with families where there are inter-generational issues related to abuse, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, mental health and other problems
- Work with families where there are children's safeguarding concerns
- Hospital discharge care planning and review
- Continuing care assessments
- Transitions – transfer of a looked after child/young person or child/young person in need to adult services for an agreed time period
- Specific work at the interface with the criminal justice system, for instance as part of Drug Intervention Programmes
- Contributions to research and the development of evidence bases relating to social work and social care practice
- Consultations where social work skills and knowledge are beneficial; for example with other professional groups and with organisations led by people who use services
- A source of expertise and advice to the council in its community leadership role more widely.

Key Questions for the DASS and local authority

- What do you know about your current registered social workers? Where do you deploy them now?
- Are you compliant with the National Minimum Data Set-Social Care?
- How would you advise your local authority to deploy them – now and in 3/5 years time?
- In shaping the workforce, what are the options for delivering interpersonal support?
- What is the demand for social work and other interpersonal skills and how will you ensure adequacy of supply and skill? (See diagram opposite).
- Where do you have to apply legislation and safeguard people's rights?
- Are issues identified in the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis and in commissioning strategies?
- How will you communicate the important messages about direction and people's functions in the workforce?
- How will you respond to the "national: local" options that the Green Paper sets out in relation to workforce implications, particularly if the option where funding levels are determined on a national basis is pursued, thus diminishing the local authority directed gate-keeping function?
- Where do you have to work with other parts of the council to improve outcomes for and safeguard individuals in families and in communities?

The intended output is the availability of **interpersonal and social work skills** where they are needed to improve outcomes, with registered social workers deployed according to local policy.

Interpersonal Support



ADASS recognises that there are options for models of delivery and is keen to learn from the results of rigorously evaluated pilots.

Cathie Williams and Vic Citarella, February 2010

Appendix 1: Delivering in the Legislative Context

Local Authorities will be mindful of fulfilling their statutory duties as they implement *Putting People First* and to reviews of social care legislation. One important consideration relates to ensuring that there are sufficient, and sufficiently skilled staff in place. Section 6 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 requires councils with social services responsibilities to have sufficient staff to perform their statutory functions.

ADASS has recently published *“Personalisation and the law: Implementing Putting People First in the current legal framework”*, ADASS 2009. This gives indications of where it is prudent to ensure that there are sufficient registered social workers employed within a local authority to enable it to fulfil its duties of care. Some of the key aspects are as follows:

“The over-arching duty of care to all social care clients can be honoured within a personalised system. This will be done through....the understanding of all concerned that safeguarding is a form of risk management which should already be integral to assessment and support planning functions, and...a commitment to providing a backstop service for the few whose experience of a personal budget ultimately fails to meet their needs”

*“Screening and signposting – it is lawful and desirable to give apparently capacitated clients enough information, at **first contact**, to enable them to make an informed decision as to whether it is in their interests to continue with assessment, given the means test for any council subsidy of their care or support needs....“Staff dealing with first contact need enough social work skill and experience to recognise indicators of mental impairment which may affect insight and understanding of the options, and the processes involved in assessment, so that those applicants may be assured of their right to assessment”*

Resource allocation: *“Local authorities already do a form of approximate resource allocation based on social work staff’s consensus about what is right and proper, against a backdrop of a finite amount of money from Members”.*

Support Planning: *“The client must also be given a proportionate amount of help and support to design their own care/support plan, according to their level of mental capacity to deal with the questionnaire exploring the domains of risk to independence, in the absence of social services intervention. There is no need for this help to be given by a qualified social work professional, other than in Mental Health Act cases and where the presenting issues rationally compel such a judgment to be made. An example would be where a person has communication difficulties and his or her supporting circle includes people themselves known to Criminal Justice, Mental Health or Safeguarding services. Another would be where the person in question must rationally be seen as a person who appears to be deluded about, or otherwise lacking in insight into, their actual situation”.*

Social Work Employers' Responsibilities

The Social Work Taskforce recommended that employers should audit themselves against standards and publish the results of this healthcheck, as set out in Appendix 1 of the final report.¹ These include effective and pro-active workload management, having the right tools to do the job, a healthy workplace and effective delivery.

As an employer of social workers and leaders for professional standards in their local areas, the DASS must ensure that anyone appointed to a post designated as a social worker is registered with the GSCC. Additionally ADASS proposes; firstly taking up with the Employers Organisation for Local Government a commitment to adherence to the GSCC Employers' Code of Practice and, secondly, seeking ways to ensure that contractual partners adhere to the Code. ADASS is committed to raising standards in practice, supervision and support, and with partners, additionally in social work education and regulation.

As the public official that approves mental health professionals the DASS must ensure they have one of the required qualifications and be registered with the relevant regulator – social worker, nurse, OT or psychologist. They must additionally have undertaken training approved by GSCC that meets the required competencies.

¹ "Building a Safe, Confident Future", SWTF November 2009