Professional Capabilities Framework and social work with carers

This document outlines how the social work practice with carers resources can be used to evidence learning and development to satisfy the Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) and the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF).

We have structured the document using domains of the PCF. Each domain includes:

- Statement from the PCF (https://www.basw.co.uk/pcf)
- Statement developed by Research in Practice for Adults in relation to practice with carers
- Capabilities that relate to carers from that domain (social worker level)
- Knowledge and skills that relate to carers in this domain from KSS statement
- Example of how to use the resource to strengthen practice in this domain
Professionalism

Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession, a title protected in UK law. Social workers demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for their conduct, practice and learning, with support through supervision. As representatives of the social work profession they safeguard its reputation and are accountable to the professional regulator.

Carers statement

Professionalsm: Social workers are ready to apply their knowledge, skills and values to recognise and support carers.

Capabilities

- Maintain awareness of own professional limitations and knowledge gaps. Establish a network of internal and external colleagues from whom to seek advice and expertise
- Identify and act on learning needs for CPD, including through supervision.

Knowledge and Skills Statement

Section 10: Professional ethics and leadership

Social workers should be able to demonstrate the principles of social work through professional judgement, decision making and actions within a framework of professional accountability

Examples

The Top Tips for Practice will help you identify how carers want social workers to relate to them.
http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/top-tips-for-practice/

The Critical Reflection Tool will help you reflect on your practice when working with carers and learn from good practice
http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/critical-reflection-tool/

The Action Planning Tool will help you turn practice reflection into action, so that learning can be transferred into practice.
http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/action-planning-tool/

The evidence scope will support you to evidence your decisions about your practice with carers.
Values and Ethics

Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making, including through partnership with people who use their services. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of their profession, its ethical standards and relevant law.

Carers statement

Values and Ethics: Social workers recognise the impact of people’s values and beliefs, including their own and those of carers.

Capabilities

- Demonstrate confident application of ethical reasoning to professional practice, rights and entitlements, questioning and challenging others using a legal and human rights framework
- Critically reflect on and manage the influence and impact of own and others values on professional practice
- Recognise and manage conflicting values and ethical dilemmas, in practice, using supervision and team discussion, questioning and challenging others, including those from other professions
- Ensure practice is underpinned by policy, procedures and code of conduct to promote individuals rights to determine their own solutions, promoting problem-solving skills, whilst recognising how and when self-determination may be constrained (by the law)

Knowledge and Skills Statement

Section 10: Professional ethics and leadership

[Social workers] should be able to work collaboratively to manage effectively the sometimes competing interests of service users, their families and their carers ensuring that the needs of all parties are appropriately balanced, but that where children are involved, the children’s interests are always paramount.

They should be able to acknowledge the inherent tensions where there is a dual role of care and control; be able to meet eligible needs within limited resources and manage the emotions and expectations of service users and carers.

Example

You can use Case Study 1 (Eve) – Ethics of Using Assistive Technology Tool to look at this issue and to weigh up the benefits and drawbacks.

You can use Case Study 1 (Eve) – Family Group Conference Tool to help plan and facilitate a family group conference to help understand the needs and wishes of the whole family, for example where there are competing interests within the family.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/case-studies/case-study-1/

You can use the tools in Case Study 4 (Anne) to look at issues around dying and spirituality to support end of life care.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/case-studies/case-study-4/

You can use the Law and Policy section for signposting to relevant sections of the law to be aware of when working with carers.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/critical-reflection-tool/
Diversity

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 and transgender, faith and belief. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experience may include oppression, marginalisation and alienation as well as privilege, power and acclaim, and are able to challenge appropriately.

Carers statement

Diversity: Social workers value people as individuals, and ensure their wishes and needs are respected, including those of carers.

Capabilities

- Recognise the complexity of identity and diversity of experience, and apply this to practice
- Recognise discriminatory practices and develop a range of approaches to appropriately challenge service users, colleagues and senior staff
- Critically reflect on and manage the power of your role in your relationship with others.

Knowledge and Skills Statement

Section 2: The role of social workers working with adults

[Social workers] must understand the impact of poverty, inequality and diversity on social and economic opportunities and how these relate to people’s health and wellbeing as well as the functioning of their families, particularly in connection with child protection, adult safeguarding and also empowering individuals who may lack mental capacity.

Example

Case Study 3 (Susan) considers issues of gender and sexuality, including tools containing advice on inclusivity of LGBT people.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/case-studies/case-study-3/

Case Study 5 (Michelle and Joel), including tools on Involving Parents of People with a Learning Disability and Culturally Competent Planning.

Rights and Justice

Social workers recognise the fundamental principles of human rights and equality, and that these are protected in national and international law, conventions and policies. They ensure these principles underpin their practice. Social workers understand the importance of using and contributing to case law and applying these rights in their own practice. They understand the effects of oppression, discrimination and poverty.

Carers statement

Rights and Justice: Social workers ensure that carers and those they are caring for, especially from marginalised or disadvantaged groups, can empower themselves and be enabled to get the support they need.

Capabilities

- Routinely integrate the principles of and entitlements to social justice, social inclusion and equality, and with support, consider how and when challenge may be needed
- Routinely apply the law to protect and advance people’s rights and entitlements, identifying and highlighting situations where interpretations of the law are neither proportionate nor fair to promote autonomy and self-determination
- Apply the principles and entitlements of human and civil rights to analyse, evaluate and challenge interventions that are unlawful and/or disproportionate
- Analyse differing needs, perspectives and competing rights and apply to practice
- Enable and support people to consider and pursue a range of options that may enhance economic status (through access to education, work, housing, health services and welfare benefits)
- Where appropriate, set up and/or enable access to effective independent advocacy.

Knowledge and Skills Statement

Section 2: The role of social workers working with adults

[Social workers] must understand the impact of poverty, inequality and diversity on social and economic opportunities and how these relate to people’s health and wellbeing as well as the functioning of their families, particularly in connection with child protection, adult safeguarding and also empowering individuals who may lack mental capacity.

Section 6: Effective assessments and outcome based support planning

Social workers should demonstrate a good understanding of personalisation, the social model of disability and of human development throughout life and demonstrate a holistic approach to the identification of needs, circumstances, rights, strengths and risks.

Section 9: Organisational context

[Social workers] must be able to understand and work effectively within financial and legal frameworks, obligations, structures and culture, in particular Human Rights and Equalities legislation, the Care Act, Mental Capacity Act, Mental Health Act and accompanying guidance and Codes of Practice.

Example

You can use Case Study 2 (Josef) Capacity Tool to support people, as far as possible, to make their own decisions

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/case-studies/case-study-2/

You can use Case Study 5 (Michelle and Joel) to support people with learning disabilities and their families to plan for the future.

You can use the Law and Policy section for signposting to relevant sections of the law to be aware of when working with carers.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/critical-reflection-tool/
Knowledge

Social workers understand psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and physical influences on people; human development throughout the life span and the legal framework for practice. They apply this knowledge in their work with individuals, families and communities. They know and use theories and methods of social work practice.

Carers statement

Knowledge: Social workers know how to use law, evidence and systems to support and protect carers and those close to them and use the evidence base to inform their practice with carers.

Capabilities

- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding and use of knowledge related to your area of practice, including critical awareness of current issues and new evidence based practice research
- Demonstrate knowledge and application of appropriate legal and policy frameworks and guidance that inform and mandate social work practice. Apply legal reasoning, using professional legal expertise and advice appropriately, recognising where scope for professional judgement exists
- Demonstrate and apply to practice a working knowledge of human growth and development throughout the life course
- Recognise the short and long term impact of psychological, socio-economic, environmental and physiological factors on people’s lives, taking into account age and development, and how this informs practice
- Recognise how systemic approaches can be used to understand the person-in-the-environment and inform your practice
- Acknowledge the centrality of relationships for people and the key concepts of attachment, separation, loss, change and resilience
- Understand forms of harm and their impact on people, and the implications for practice, drawing on concepts of strength, resilience, vulnerability, risk and resistance, and apply to practice
- Demonstrate a critical knowledge of the range of theories and models for social work intervention with individuals, families, groups and communities, and the methods derived from them
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of social welfare policy, its evolution, implementation and impact on people, social work, other professions, and inter-agency working
- Recognise the contribution, and begin to make use, of research to inform practice
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of research methods
- Value and take account of the expertise of service users, carers and professionals.

Knowledge and Skills Statement

Section 11: Level of capability for a social worker working in an adult setting at the end of their first year in employment.

By the end of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment social workers working in an adult setting should have consistently demonstrated proficiency in a wide range of tasks and roles. For example, they will be able to complete assessments of need independently, which start from a perspective of the service users’ desired outcomes and have become more effective in their interventions; deal with more complex situations; develop respectful and situation appropriate professional relationships, thus building their own confidence; and earn the confidence and respect of others. They will have a good understanding of risk assessment and positive risk taking and be able to apply this to practice to ensure person centred planning approaches and individual rights are upheld. They will have developed confidence in working within multidisciplinary settings, understanding their roles and be able to maintain and express a clear social work perspective. They will have experience and skills in relation to a particular setting and user group, be able to understand and work within the legal frameworks relevant to adult settings, in particular, the Mental Capacity Act, Mental Health Act and the Care Act, and fully operate within the organisational context, policies and procedures. They will be able to confidently undertake
mental capacity assessments in routine situations; to identify and work proactively and in partnership around safeguarding issues and have demonstrated the ability to work effectively in more complex situations. They will seek support in supervision appropriately, whilst starting to exercise initiative and evaluate their own practice. For example, they should take responsibility for cases allocated to them, be proactive in identifying issues and recommending actions, but be aware of when to seek further advice and support in more complex situations. They will be able to reflect on their practice and continue to identify learning and development to further consolidate their knowledge and skills. They will have developed some resilience and leadership skills and be able to demonstrate sound professional judgment and will know how to argue for appropriate resource allocation to meet assessed needs.

Examples

You can use the evidence review to identify main messages from the evidence about social work with carers.

You can use the Top Tips for Practice tool to consider carers’ views on how social workers can best relate to them.
http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/top-tips-for-practice/

You can use the Critical Reflection Tool to show how you have turned your experience into learning and new knowledge.
http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/critical-reflection-tool/

You can look at further resources on social work with carers listed in the ‘general resources’ section.
http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/general-resources-for-social-work-with-carers/
Critical Reflection

Social workers are knowledgeable about and apply the principles of critical thinking and reasoned discernment. They identify, distinguish, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence. These include practice evidence, their own practice experience, service user and carer experience together with research-based, organisational, policy and legal knowledge. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity.

Carers statement

Critical Reflection: Social workers are able to make professional judgements related to carers’ support that demonstrate critical reflection and use of the evidence base. They can also identify when they themselves need additional support.

Capabilities

- Routinely and efficiently apply critical reflection and analysis to increasingly complex cases
- Draw on a wide range of evidence sources to inform decision making
- Ensure hypotheses and options are reviewed to inform judgement and decision making
- Start to provide professional opinion.

Knowledge and Skills Statement

Section 8: Supervision, critical reflection and analysis

Social workers should be able to make effective use of opportunities to discuss, reflect upon and test multiple hypotheses, the role of intuition and logic in decision making, the difference between opinion and fact, the role of evidence, how to address common bias in situations of uncertainty and the reasoning of any conclusions reached and recommendations made, particularly in relation to mental capacity, mental health and safeguarding situations.

Social workers should have a critical understanding of the difference between theory, research, evidence and expertise and the role of professional judgement. They should use practice evidence and research to inform the complex judgements and decisions needed to support, empower and protect their service users. They should apply imagination, creativity and curiosity to working in partnership with individuals and their carers, acknowledging the centrality of people’s own expertise about their experience and needs.

Examples

You can use the Critical Reflection Tool to consider your practice and how you might turn experiences into learning for the future.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/critical-reflection-tool/

You can use the case study assessment materials to reflect on what biases or assumptions you may need to be aware of in your own practice, and how you would reflect and test out hypotheses in each situation.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/case-studies/

You can use Case Study 4 (Anne) Learning needs analysis for End of Life Care Tool to consider how far you meet the capabilities for supporting people who are dying or bereaved, and to plan how you will gain skills, knowledge and confidence to work well in this area.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/case-studies/case-study-4/

You can use the questions in Case Study 4 (Anne) Principles for Reflection on Religion and Belief Tool to examine the principles that underpin good social work practice around religion and belief and reflect on your practice.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/case-studies/case-study-4/
Intervention and Skills

Social workers engage with individuals, families, groups and communities, working alongside people to assess and intervene. They enable effective relationships and are effective communicators, using appropriate skills. Using their professional judgement, they employ a range of interventions: promoting independence, providing support and protection, taking preventative action and ensuring safety whilst balancing rights and risks. They understand and take account of differentials in power, and are able to use authority appropriately. They evaluate their own practice and the outcomes for those they work with.

Carers statement

Intervention and Skills: Social workers are able to effectively engage with carers to ensure they have the support they need.

Capabilities

- Communicate with compassion and authority in challenging situations and with resistant individuals
- Routinely explain professional reasoning, judgements and decisions
- Engage effectively with people in complex situations, both short-term and building relationships over time
- Gather information so as to inform judgement for interventions in more complex situations and in response to challenge
- Use assessment procedures discerningly so as to inform judgement
- Develop a range of interventions; use them effectively and evaluate them in practice
- Expand intervention methods and demonstrate expertise in one or more specific methods relevant to your setting
- Make timely decisions when positive change is not happening
- Actively support and initiate community groups and networks, including professional ones
- Clearly report and record analysis and judgements
- Demonstrate and promote appropriate information sharing
- Use contingency planning to anticipate complexity and changing circumstances
- Recognise and appropriately manage the authority inherent in your position
- Demonstrate confident and effective judgement about risk and accountability in your decisions
- Regularly undertake assessment and planning for safeguarding.

Knowledge and Skills Statement

Section 7: Direct work with individuals and families

Social workers need to be able to work directly with individuals and their families through the professional use of self, using interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence to create relationships based on openness, transparency and empathy. They should know how to build purposeful, effective relationships underpinned by reciprocity. They should be able to communicate clearly, sensitively and effectively, applying a range of best evidence-based methods of written, oral and non-verbal communication and adapt these methods to match the person’s age, comprehension and culture.

Social workers should have a high level of skill in applying evidence-based, effective social work approaches to help service users and families handle change, especially where individuals and families are in transition, including young people moving to adulthood, supporting them to move to different living arrangements and understanding the impact of loss and change.
Example

You can use the Action Planning Tool to consider your current practice skills and how you will use learning about good practice with carers to improve the way that you work.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/action-planning-tool/

You can use the one page profile, chronology, carers’ assessment, ecogram and support plan tools to inform the conversations you have with carers, and how they are recorded.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/tools/

You can use the Top Tips for Practice document to inform your approach to working with carers.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/top-tips-for-practice/

You can look at the role of attachment theory in social work with carers using materials from Case Study 5 (Michelle and Joel), including the Social Work capabilities for Attachment-aware Practice Tool.

Contexts and Organisations

Social workers are informed about and pro-actively responsive to the challenges and opportunities that come with changing social contexts and constructs. They fulfil this responsibility in accordance with their professional values and ethics, both as individual professionals and as members of the organisation in which they work. They collaborate, inform and are informed by their work with others, inter-professionally and with communities.

Carers statement

Contexts and Organisations: Social workers are able to promote good support to carers within their organisational context, making links with relevant multiagency colleagues to access information, advice and input where necessary.

Capabilities

- Keep abreast of changing context at local and national level, and take account of these in practice
- Demonstrate the ability to work within your own organisation, and identify and begin to work with the relationship between the organisation, practice and wider changing contexts
- Work to and explain the relevant legal structures in the organisation, including basic case law; know when and how to access support and appropriate legal advice and consultation
- Explore, and identify how organisational practice can support good social work practice
- Keep abreast of changing roles in the organisation; recognise, value and engage with other specialist perspectives
- Be confident about your role in the team, working positively with others; draw on and contribute to team working and collaborative support wherever possible
- Take an active role in inter-professional and inter-agency work, building own network and collaborative working.

Knowledge and Skills Statement

Section 9: Organisational context

Social workers working with adults should be able confidently to fulfil their statutory responsibilities, work within their organisation’s remit and contribute to its development. They must be understand and work effectively within financial and legal frameworks, obligations, structures and culture, in particular Human Rights and Equalities legislation, the Care Act, Mental Capacity Act, Mental Health Act and accompanying guidance and codes of practice. They must be able to operate successfully in their organisational context, demonstrating effective time management, caseload management and be capable of reconciling competing demands and embrace information, data and technology appropriate to their role. They should have access to regular quality supervision to support their professional resilience and emotional and physical wellbeing. Social workers should work effectively and confidently with fellow professionals in inter-agency, multi-disciplinary and inter-professional groups and demonstrate effective partnership working particularly in the context of health and social care integration and at the interface between health, children and adult social care and the third sector.
Examples

You can use Case Study 2 (Josef) to consider how you can work with different agencies to support young carers.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/case-studies/case-study-2/

You can use Case Study 3 (Susan) to consider how to ensure smooth transitions into a care home.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/case-studies/case-study-3/

You can use the Critical Reflection Tool to discuss and record organisational enablers and barriers to good practice with carers in supervision.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/critical-reflection-tool/

You can use the Law and Policy section for signposting to relevant sections of the law to be aware of when working with carers.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/critical-reflection-tool/
Professional Leadership

The social work profession evolves through the contribution of its members in activities such as practice research, supervision, assessment of practice, teaching and management. An individual’s contribution will gain influence when undertaken as part of a learning, practice-focused organisation. Learning may be facilitated with a wide range of people including social work colleagues, service users and carers, volunteers, foster carers and other professionals.

Carers statement

Professional Leadership: Social workers highlight the importance of supporting carers and lead multiagency colleagues in delivering effective support. They share ‘what works’ for the carers they support, and engage in organisational learning activities.

Capabilities

- Contribute to and promote the development of practice, taking the initiative to test new approaches
- Contribute to the learning of others
Knowledge and Skills Statement

Section 10: Professional ethics and leadership

Social workers should be able to explain their role to stakeholders, particularly health and community partners, and challenge partners constructively to effect multi-agency working. They should contribute to developing awareness of personalisation and outcome-based approaches to improving people's lives. Social workers should be able to demonstrate the principles of social work through professional judgement, decision making and actions within a framework of professional accountability. They should be able to work collaboratively to manage effectively the sometimes competing interests of service users, their families and their carers ensuring that the needs of all parties are appropriately balanced, but that where children are involved, the children’s interests are always paramount. They should be able to acknowledge the inherent tensions where there is a dual role of care and control; be able to meet eligible needs within limited resources and manage the emotions and expectations of service users and carers. They should be able to identify potential deprivations of liberty and understand the process for assessing and authorising these in individuals’ best interests. They should feedback the views and experiences of clients and their colleagues to contribute to the continued improvement of services, policies and procedures within the organisation. They must be able to recognise and address poor practice and systemic failings which put people at risk, whether in their own organisation or the organisations and institutions with which they are working, making appropriate use of whistle-blowing procedures.

Example

You can use Case Study 3 (Susan) to consider how you can take a lead to support people in transition.

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/case-studies/case-study-3/

You can use the Action Planning Tool to make a note of where practice in your area could be changed or improved, and how to achieve this

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/overarching-resources/action-planning-tool/

You can use the ‘train the trainer’ resources to share learning with others

http://carers.ripfa.org.uk/train-the-trainer/

You can use RIPFA’s key issue on ‘balancing need’ to explore this issue in practice.

https://www.ripfa.org.uk/resources/publications/key-issues/balancing-need-the-relationship-between-carers-assessment-and-needs-assessment-key-issue-2016/ (this will need changing if the PDF is uploaded to the carers.ripfa site for free download)