

Career progression guidance for level 2 Social Workers in Adult Social Care

2021–23



Contents

Introduction 4

Eligibility criteria 9

Progression process 10

Introduction

This guidance document relates to social workers in Manchester Adult Social Care (ASC) teams.

It details the criteria and processes to be followed in order for qualified social workers in ASC whose current job roles require them to be registered with Social Work England (SWE) to progress to the top of pay grade 7 and be recognised as a level 3 social worker or 'experienced social worker' as defined by the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF).

Level 3 workers are expected to work with the more complex situations, with more autonomy and less frequent supervision. This does not remove the need for accountability on the social worker's part and regular formal supervision and informal support from a team manager/supervisor. There is also the expectation that the social worker will take a more active role in the development of others, eg. by undertaking a supervisory/practice educator role with more junior staff/NQSWs/students.

The term 'team manager/supervisor' is used throughout this guidance to acknowledge the different ways in which social workers are managed and supervised, and the different levels of responsibility.

Progression to level 3 is not a given right and does not automatically happen after a set period of time. There are some social workers who will take a number of years in practice before they are considered ready to apply for progression. There may also be a number of social workers who will not be considered ready to progress and so will remain at level 2.

A social worker's readiness to be considered for progression will be decided by their team manager/supervisor in conjunction with the social worker. This document details the stages that follow the decision by a team manager/supervisor about whether a social worker is ready to be considered for progression.

What is level 3?

The Professional Capabilities Framework provides a framework for a social worker's progress during their career and identifies the level of capability that can be expected of them and their practice at each stage. From the point of qualifying, the career stages are:

- Newly qualified social worker (assessed and supported year in employment level)
- Social worker (level 2)
- Experienced social worker (level 3)
- Professional social work educator/advanced social work practitioner/social work manager
- Strategic social work educator/principal social worker/strategic social work manager.

This policy relates only to career progression between social worker (level 2) and experienced social worker (level 3).

The PCF contains nine domains:

- Professionalism
- Values and Ethics
- Equality and Diversity
- Rights, Justice and Economic Wellbeing
- Knowledge
- Critical Reflection and Analysis
- Intervention and Skills
- Contexts and Organisations
- Professional Leadership.

Further details of the PCF can be found at:

<https://www.basw.co.uk/pcf/understanding-the-pcf/>

The nine domains work together to describe the knowledge, skills and values that social workers need to practise effectively at a particular level of the PCF, and what they need to achieve to be considered to be operating at or moving towards a higher level of the framework.

Each domain of the PCF contains several capability statements at each level. These can be used to understand each of the domains and be used diagnostically to help identify strengths and areas for development, rather than as a tick list of areas where competence has to be evidenced.

Progression between levels is determined by development of a social worker's ability to manage complexity, risk, ambiguity and increasingly autonomous decision-making across a range of situations.

Particular issues to think about are:

- The level of confidence, underpinned by practice experience, reflection and deepening understanding
- The increasing ability to work independently and to collaborate on equal terms with members of other professions
- The quality of the judgements made, and the level of ability to explain and justify them
- Efficacy of the work undertaken, and the outcomes achieved
- The ability to take initiative, form constructive alliances, and to act as a change agent
- The ability to engage effectively with situations of increasing complexity and challenge, eg. those with:
 - multi-agency input
 - complex family/organisational dynamics
 - serious hostility and conflicts of interest
 - multiple problems/disadvantages
 - multiple/significant risk factors
 - the need to take into account the public interest

- The appropriate use of authority and challenge
- The ability and commitment to educate and provide professional supervision for others
- Demonstration of leadership, management and research.

The PCF can specifically be used to help understand the difference between a level 2 social worker and a level 3 social worker in Manchester Adult Social Care.

Level 2 can be understood by referencing the 'social worker' level of the PCF:

'In the social work role they progress to practise effectively, exercising higher-quality judgements, in situations of increasing complexity, risk, uncertainty and challenge. Through growing understanding they expect and anticipate, but do not pre-judge, the issues that may develop. They have greater confidence and independence (while accessing support when needed), and use their initiative to broaden their repertoire of responses; they have expertise in one or more areas of practice, are familiar with local resource networks and are recognised by peers as a source of reliable knowledge and advice.'

<https://www.basw.co.uk/pcf/capabilities/?level=5&domain=1>

Level 3 can be understood by referencing the 'experienced social worker' level of the PCF:

'Experienced social workers are more autonomous in their role. They demonstrate expert and effective practice in complex situations, assessing and managing higher levels of risk, striking a balance between support and control, and liaising with a wide range of professionals, including more senior levels. They manage complex caseloads, and offer expert opinion within the organisation and to others. They chair a range of meetings, offer expert support to case conferences, and produce high-quality assessments and reports for a range of functions. They model good practice, setting expectations for others. They start to take responsibility and be accountable for the practice of others, mentoring newly qualified social workers, and supervising the work of junior staff.'

They undertake capacity-building with individuals, families, communities, user groups and voluntary organisations, and contribute their views on service provision to commissioners.'

<https://www.basw.co.uk/pcf/capabilities/?level=4>

Social workers ready to be considered for career progression to level 3 should be fully operating at the social worker level and be working to a limited extent at the experienced social worker level, but ready to take on all the responsibilities assigned to this level.

Eligibility criteria

A social worker will not be eligible to apply for progression until they:

- have a minimum of **two years' post-qualifying experience**
- have successfully completed the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)
- have qualified as one or more of Practice Educator (PE), Best Interest Assessor (BIA) or Approved Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP)
- are ready to work at the 'experienced social worker' level of the PCF.

Social workers who have gained their initial post-qualifying experience with another employer but are still within grade 7 will have to successfully complete their probationary period with Manchester City Council before being considered eligible to start the progression process, regardless of how long they have been post-qualified.

It is a team manager/supervisor's responsibility to decide if a social worker is ready to be considered for progression and undertake the different stages of the process.

Team managers/supervisors will be expected to provide accurate, positive references and reports in support of the social worker's competence and readiness. This process should not be used where there are concerns about a social worker's competence in practice. Manchester City Council's capability procedure is more appropriate for this.

Progression process

There are four stages to the social work career-progression process:

Stage 1: Further practice experience

After successful completion of the ASYE, the social worker will continue to gain experience in practice. During this time, they and their team manager/supervisor need to use supervision and a personal development plan to continue skill development and consideration of progression.

There is no guarantee that a line manager/supervisor will support a social worker to be considered for progression as soon as they are two years' post-qualified. They may feel that the social worker needs further experience in practice and should use supervision and the 'social worker' and 'experienced social worker' levels of the PCF to identify the areas the social worker needs to develop further and how this development will be achieved.

Stage 2: Qualification as any of the following: PE, BIA and/or AMHP

Following completion of ASYE and during the period in which the social worker is gaining practice experience, they should undertake training to become any of these roles. For further details of these progression routes, please contact:

- PE: **adultsocialworkconsultants@manchester.gov.uk**
- BIA: **sian.packett@manchester.gov.uk**
- AMHP: **adultsocialworkconsultants@manchester.gov.uk**

Stage 3: Career progression panel application

Once a social worker has qualified as PE/BIA/AMHP and gained sufficient practice experience (as deemed by their manager), they can be put forward to the career progression panel. In order to initiate this, the social worker (copying in their team manager) should email **adultsocialworkconsultants@manchester.gov.uk**, requesting to attend the next panel.

In preparation for the panel, written documentation for the career progression should be completed; this requires the manager/supervisor's support and recommendation, and certificate of completion of the PE/BIA/AMHP course.

Written documentation requirements:

1. A career progression panel **application form** completed by the social worker
2. One **reflective statement** by the social worker (1,000 words maximum) analysing the work they have done and the learning achieved since qualifying, the reason they are applying for career progression, and why they think they are ready for it, making reference to the nine domains of the Professional Capabilities Framework at 'experienced social worker' level
3. A **statement of recommendation** from the line manager/supervisor
4. **Feedback** from two different professional colleagues, eg. district nurse, social worker, housing officer
5. **Statement of confidentiality**
6. **Direct observation** of practice completed by line manager/supervisor and including feedback from citizen
7. Certificate confirming qualification as BIA/PE/AMHP.

Panel application and written documentation must be received by email at least seven working days before the interview panel and should be submitted to: **adultsocialworkconsultants@manchester.gov.uk**

Following receipt of the portfolio and prior to the interview panel, the panel members may access the applicant's case records and sample their work.

Stage 4: Assessment by formal interview panel

The formal progression interview panel will consist of the principal social worker, a service manager (from a different service as the social worker) and a social work consultant.

The panel will consider the candidate's application and written documentation and will ask them a series of questions to explore their level of professional competency.

Applicants will be informed of the panel's decision within one working day of the panel meeting. The appropriate HR business partner will also be informed of the panel's decision, and this will be recorded on their personnel file.

If successful, the social worker will be moved to the top of grade 7 and payment will be made from the date of the career progression panel.

Where the application for career progression is unsuccessful, verbal feedback will be given regarding the issues that need to be addressed before a resubmission can be made. Feedback may also involve the applicant meeting their line manager and a member of the interviewing panel to discuss in more detail the issues that led to the applicant being unsuccessful and how they can address them.

If you need any further information, please contact the social work consultant in your locality.

