



Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Consultation Document

Post Registration Training and Learning Requirements for Social Workers

Proposals for New Requirements

Closing Date - 29 July 2009

April 2009

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The Consultation Process

The proposals in this consultation document apply to qualified social workers registered with us, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC). We have sent this document to all registrants on the social work Part of the Social Care Register and their employers. We have also sent it to key stakeholders, including NIPSA, UNISON, BASW, the RQIA and service users and carers.

You can also download further copies of this document from our website or you can contact us if you would like us to send you a copy of the document in an alternative format.

The Consultation will run until 29 July 2009

Once the consultation period is completed, we will analyse the responses we receive. We will also publish a document which summarises the comments we receive and explains the decisions we have taken as a result. This will be available on our website.

How to Respond

We ask a number of questions about our proposals on pages 13-16.

We would ask you to address these questions in your response and if you wish to make other comments on our proposals these can be added at the end.

If you would like to respond to this consultation document please send your response in writing to:

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The document is also available on the NISCC website (www.niscc.info) and you can e-mail your response to: peggy.carlile@nisocialcarecouncil.org.uk

Post Registration Training and Learning Requirements for Social Workers

Introduction

We are the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) and we were established in October 2001 to protect people who use social care services and raise standards in social care training and practice.

Social workers practising in Northern Ireland are required by law to be registered with us.

Social workers registered with us work in many different settings and sectors, for example, in Health and Social Care Trusts, in criminal and youth justice agencies, in education welfare and in the voluntary and private sectors.

Current Arrangements

Registration with us is for a period of three years and must then be renewed. One of the requirements for renewal is that social workers have undertaken a minimum of 90 hours training and learning throughout the three year period of their registration. The purpose of post registration training and learning (PRTL) is to ensure that social workers continue to improve their knowledge and skills and think about how they are doing their job and how they could improve their practice. Failure to complete the PRTL requirement can lead to refusal to renew registration.

We issued guidance in 2004 which outlines the rationale for PRTL and provides advice on how social care workers can meet the requirements. The guidance gives examples of how PRTL requirements can be met for different categories of worker but does not specify activities to be undertaken or qualifications to be achieved. The guidance advises that PRTL should improve the registrant's practice and have a positive impact on the service they provide. You can find this guidance by clicking on this link: http://www.niscc.info/content/uploads/downloads/registration/PRTL_guidance_forms.pdf

There are a number of changes to the current arrangements in relation to PRTL which we are proposing to introduce on which we wish to consult. These are:

- 1. That we introduce new PRTL requirements at significant stages in a social worker's career.**
- 2. That employers are given an enhanced role in the endorsement of PRTL.**
- 3. That NISCC ceases to routinely collect records of PRTL achievement at the point of renewal of registration and strengthens the system of PRTL audit.**
- 4. That registrants who fail to fully complete PRTL requirements due to exceptional circumstances are no longer automatically referred to the Registration Committee.**

Proposal 1 – That we introduce new PRTL requirements at significant stages in a social worker's career

Background

DHSSPS Development and Training Strategy

In September 2006 the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) published a Personal Social Services (PSS) Development and Training Strategy 2006-2016. This strategy set targets for the achievement, over time, of relevant qualifications linked to registration and re-registration with us. The Strategy applies to the whole PSS workforce but the relevant targets for qualified social workers are as follows:-

From 2009, all new social work registrants and re-registrants will be working towards or hold relevant accredited training or qualifications appropriate to job role and associated with continuing registration. (Page 16)

By 2016, all senior, middle and first line managers will have undertaken appropriate leadership and management skills training within two years of appointment to post. (Page 14)

The Strategy also states that social work registrants will be expected to be working towards training or qualifications appropriate to their job role and linked to the Post Qualifying (PQ) Framework.

PQ Framework

As a result of reforms in social work training in Northern Ireland a new degree in social work was introduced in 2004 and this was followed by a revised post qualifying education and training framework. The NI PQ Framework provides opportunity for recognition of professional achievement within social work and it also creates opportunity for access to academic achievement. It has a range of professional Requirements that lead to three NISCC professional awards in social work based at post graduate Masters level.

- The NI Specific Award – 3 core Requirements and 6 general Requirements.
- The NI Specialist Award – 9 Requirements
- The NI Leadership and Strategic Award – 9 Requirements

Social workers can achieve recognition for professional learning and development through programmes that are accredited for Requirements or Awards as well as through an individual assessment route that allows for a more flexible approach to recognition of learning.

There is a detailed list of PQ Requirements in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of this document (pages 10-12). You can also download the NI PQ Framework from the NISCC website at this link: http://www.niscc.info/content/uploads/downloads/careers/2006N_PQ_Framework.pdf.

Further information on PQ education and training can be found on the PQ Partnership website: www.nipqetp.com.

The Assessed Year in Employment

In Northern Ireland an Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) was introduced as part of the package of reform of social work training announced in 2001. The intention was that all newly qualified graduates from the Degree in Social Work would undertake an assessed year in employment linked to registration.

A DHSSPS Policy Circular (HSS (SSI) AYE 1/2005) required that from 1 April 2006 all new social work graduates must successfully complete the AYE in compliance with our Registration Rules.

The aims of the AYE policy are:

- (i) To ensure that at the end of the first year in employment newly qualified social workers are competent to practise as fully accountable social workers;
- (ii) To ensure that newly qualified staff are given the supervision and support required to develop their competence; and
- (iii) To ensure employers are satisfied that new social work graduates are performing at a level which merits continuing employment as a social worker.

Our Proposals

We are proposing to revise our PRTL requirements for social workers to meet the targets in the PSS Development and Training Strategy. Although the Strategy does not apply to all our social work registrants (it does not apply to social workers employed in the education, justice, voluntary and private sectors), we are of the view that all registrants on the social work part of the Register should have to meet the same requirements.

We propose to introduce new requirements at significant stages in a social worker's career, for example, the registration period immediately following the Assessed Year in Employment and when moving into a specialist role or management position.

It is proposed that the new PRTL requirements will apply to:-

- Newly qualified social workers who complete the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) after 1 November 2009;
- Social Workers applying for or renewing their registration after 1 November 2009.

We have taken account of the following considerations in our proposals:-

- (i) The Requirement in the PSS Development and Training Strategy that there should be a phased introduction of post qualifying achievements, appropriate to job role and associated with continuing registration, and the development of leadership and management skills for the social services;
- (ii) The need for any new requirements to be achievable by social workers in all sectors; and
- (iii) That there are sufficient training and financial resources available to enable all social workers to meet the requirements.

For those social workers who do not fall into the categories above the current PRTL requirement of 90 hours relevant training and development will continue to apply.

The statutory health and social care sector in Northern Ireland is subject to the NHS Agenda for Change strategy, a key component of which is the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF). Our PRTL proposals will align with the KSF.

The proposed PRTL requirements are laid out in the table below:

Job role	PRTL requirement ¹
Newly qualified social workers who have completed the AYE	Enrolment with NI Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership and achievement of a minimum of two PQ Requirements of the NI Specific Award in Social Work
Registered social workers	90 hours training and development appropriate to job role
Registered social workers who have moved into specialist roles ²	Enrolment with NI Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership and working towards or have achieved the NI Specialist Award in Social Work or the NI Leadership and Strategic Award in Social Work (or a Post Qualifying or Advanced Award in the UK PQ Framework)
Registered social workers who lead or manage service areas e.g. Team Leader/ Manager, Programme Head	Working towards or have achieved appropriate leadership and management training as identified with their employer, for example, the NI Leadership and Strategic Award

¹ To be achieved over the three year registration period

² A specialist role as defined by the employer as a role requiring a higher level of training

Proposal 2 – That employers are given an enhanced role in the endorsement of PRTL

The responsibility of employers regarding PRTL

Employers have a responsibility under the NISCC Code of Practice to ‘provide training and development opportunities to enable social care workers to strengthen and develop their skills and knowledge’ (Code of Practice for Employers of Social Care Workers, Section 3). The Code also requires employers to effectively manage and supervise staff to support effective practice and to develop and improve their performance (2.2).

While the primary responsibility to achieve PRTL requirements rests with Registrants, we believe that employers have an important responsibility for ensuring that social workers reflect on their development and keep their training and learning current and relevant to the nature of their role and stage in their careers. Staff development is a process and employers have a role in working with staff to identify their learning needs, reflect on their practice and endorse that registration requirements have been met. Review of staff training and development should be a key element of the supervision and appraisal process.

Currently, employers have to endorse registration renewals and as part of the endorsement process we ask them to assure us that the registrant has completed the activities recorded on the PRTL Record of Achievement Form.

Our Proposal

We propose to strengthen the role of employers in endorsing PRTL by giving them the responsibility of deciding which posts require specialist training and what is appropriate training for managers. We also propose to seek an assurance from employer endorsers that:-

- (i) The registrant has completed the appropriate NISCC PRTL Requirements; and
- (ii) That the PRTL activities are appropriate to the job role.

Where a registrant is not in employment we may wish to seek further information from them to satisfy ourselves that our requirements have been met. We intend to issue an information leaflet on how registrants not in employment can meet PRTL requirements.

Proposal 3 – That NISCC ceases to routinely collect records of PRTL achievement at the point of renewal of registration and strengthens the system of PRTL audit

PRTL Audit

Currently we require all registrants to provide a record of achievement which sets out the PRTL activities which they have undertaken. Regulators of other professions, for example, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and the Health Professions Council (HPC) test compliance with their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirements by asking registrants to declare that they have met the standard and that they agree to comply with any request to audit their CPD activities. The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has taken this approach since they started registration. We would like to move towards a similar system but with the involvement of employers to assure us that our requirements are being met.

We will continue to issue PRTL recording forms and we expect registrants to keep their record of achievement up to date for discussion at their annual appraisal.

Employers should use the annual appraisal to discuss staff development and learning plans and ensure the staff member is meeting NISCC requirements.

We will continue to randomly audit PRTL and ask Registrants to provide us with an endorsed record that summarises their training and learning and how it has contributed to improving their practice.

Amended guidance for registrants and employers will be issued.

Our Proposal

We propose to change our methods of testing compliance with our PRTL requirements. We will cease routinely collecting PRTL Records of Achievement and will require registrants to declare that they have met the PRTL requirement, endorsed by their employer, and that they agree to comply with any request to audit their PRTL activities.

Proposal 4 – That registrants who fail to fully complete PRTL requirements due to exceptional circumstances are no longer automatically referred to the Registration Committee

Current situation

The current Registration Rules require that any registrant, who fails to complete PRTL requirements in full, must be referred to the Registration Committee. Experience has shown that there can be a range of exceptional circumstances which legitimately prevent registrants from completing their PRTL, for example long term sickness or maternity leave.

Our Proposal

We propose to amend the NISCC Registration Rules (subject to approval by DHSSPS) to remove the requirement for automatic referral to the Registration Committee and provide for greater discretion to be delegated to officers in exceptional circumstances.

Appendix 1 – NI Specific Award in Social Work

Core Requirements

The core Requirements must be integrated and met through the general Requirements.

- A. Demonstrate a systematic understanding of their own practice and a critical awareness of current issues and challenges in the context of the NISCC Codes of practice, professional ethics, the principles of diversity, equality and social inclusion in a wide range of situations;
- B. Use evaluation to systematically develop and improve their specific practice, including implementing effective practice in inter-professional and inter-agency contexts;
- C. Take responsibility for continuing professional development making use of professional and managerial supervision, consultation and other professional support as appropriate to identify and address issues; develop, implement and evaluate plans; and continue to advance knowledge and understanding in order to improve practice;

PQ Requirements

- 1. Develop and consistently sustain in-depth competence within their specific area of practice to agreed national, occupational or recognised agency standards, applying knowledge and experience of relevant service provision with confidence;
- 2. Demonstrate systematic and appropriate application of relevant legislation/policy, theories, research and methods of practice that include a range of skills;
- 3. Demonstrate consistent and sustained sound judgement and decision making in the context of complexity, risk, uncertainty, conflict and/or contradiction;
- 4. Systematically apply knowledge and understanding of service user and carers issues to actively contribute to social support strategies that promote choice, independence and empowerment and which involve service users and carers (where appropriate);
- 5. Effectively and efficiently manage and be accountable for own work and demonstrate a capacity to plan for and respond to change;
- 6. Demonstrate confidence in, and promote understanding of, own professional role within networks across organisational and professional boundaries and support others as appropriate to the candidate's level of learning.

Appendix 2 – NI Specialist Award in Social Work

PQ Requirements

1. Apply independent critical judgement to systematically develop their own practice and that of others in the context of the NISCC Codes of Practice, professional ethics, the principles of diversity, equality and social inclusion in a wide range of situations;
2. Demonstrate a substantially enhanced level of competence in a defined area of professional practice, professional management, professional education or applied professional research to agreed national, occupational or recognised agency standards;
3. Demonstrate a well-developed capacity of using analysis and evaluation to continuously develop and enhance own performance and contribute to the performance of professional and inter-professional groups, teams and networks;
4. Demonstrate a well developed capacity to analyse, evaluate and apply relevant and current research evidence including service-user research;
5. Using a range of skills and methods of intervention, work effectively and creatively and with initiative in a context of risk, uncertainty, conflict and contradiction where there are complex challenges. Make informed and balanced judgements in the context of relevant policy and legislation;
6. Use a critical knowledge and understanding of service user and carers issues to develop and implement service user and where appropriate carer rights and participation in line with the goals of choice, independence and empowerment;
7. Take responsibility for influencing key aspects of complex change processes, including those involving other professions or other agencies;
8. Support, mentor, supervise or manage others including contributing to practice learning opportunities, enabling self and others to identify and explore issues, improve and develop and share best practice;
9. Develop and implement effective ways of working in networks across organisational and professional boundaries, having confidence in own professional role and taking responsibility for identifying , analysing and resolving complex issues, promoting partnership and collaboration, thus ensuring the delivery of integrated and person-centred services.

Appendix 3 – NI Leadership and Strategic Award in Social Work

PQ Requirements

1. Use independent critical judgement to take a leading role in systematically developing their own practice and that of others in the context of the NISCC Codes of Practice, codes of professional ethics, the principles of diversity, equality and social inclusion in a wide range of situations;
2. Demonstrate a substantially enhanced and sustained level of competence in a defined area of work, taking a leading role in developing and promoting good practice drawing on international perspectives to inform this;
3. Demonstrate conceptual understanding and a well developed capacity to take responsibility for the use of critical analysis and evaluation to continuously develop and enhance own performance and that of others;
4. Demonstrate a significant contribution to the development, delivery and evaluation of the service provided in a chosen area by demonstrating the ability to research, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate strategies for improvement or change;
5. Work creatively, innovatively and effectively, taking a leading role in the context of risk, uncertainty, conflict and contradiction or where there are complex challenges and a need to make informed, independent and balanced judgements;
6. Take a lead responsibility, using initiative and self direction, for managing key aspects of complex change processes, including those involving other professions or other agencies;
7. Support, mentor, supervise or manage others exercising leadership to enable them to identify and explore complex issues and improve practice and service delivery;
8. Take a leading role in developing and implementing effective ways of working in networks across organisational and professional boundaries, taking responsibility for identifying, analysing and resolving highly complex issues, promoting partnership and collaboration, thus ensuring the delivery of integrated and person-centred services;
9. Use critical knowledge and comprehensive understanding of service user and carers' issues to actively promote, develop and implement service-user and, where appropriate, carer rights and participation in line with the goals of choice, independence and empowerment;

Please return only this section of the consultation document.

Closing Date for Responses 29 July 2009

Consultation Questions

Please indicate the status in which you are responding to the consultation by ticking one of the following boxes:

Registrant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade Union	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional Body	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service User/Carer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

-
1. We propose that newly qualified social workers who have completed the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) should have achieved two Requirements of the NI Specific Award in Social Work by the next point of renewal.

Do you agree with this proposal? Yes No

If 'no', is this because of:-

(a) Relevant training programmes not available?	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Shortage of places on relevant training programme?	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Difficulties in being released from work to attend training?	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Shortage of resources to assess PQ submissions?	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Shortage of funding?	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional comments:

- 2 We propose that when social workers move into specialist posts they should be working towards or have achieved a NI Specialist Award in Social Work or the NI Strategic and Leadership Award in Social Work (or a Post Qualifying or Advanced Award in the UK PQ Framework) at the next point of renewal.

Do you agree with this proposal? Yes No

If 'no', is this because of:-

- (a) Relevant training programmes not available?
- (b) Shortage of places on relevant training programme?
- (c) Difficulties in being released from work to attend training?
- (d) Shortage of resources to assess PQ submissions?
- (e) Shortage of funding?
- (f) Other (please specify)

Additional comments:

- 3 We propose that when social workers are promoted to lead or manage service areas that they should be working towards or have achieved appropriate leadership and management awards at the next point of renewal.

Do you agree with this proposal? Yes No

If 'no', is this because of:-

- (a) Relevant training programme not available?
- (b) Shortage of places on relevant training programme?
- (c) Difficulties in being released from work to attend training?
- (d) Shortage of resources to assess PQ submissions?
- (e) Shortage of funding?
- (f) Other (please specify)

Additional comments:

- 4 The Role of the Employer

We believe that employers have an important responsibility for ensuring that social workers keep their training and development current and relevant to the nature of their role and stage in their career

Our proposed new PRTL requirements enhance the role of employers by giving them the responsibility of deciding:

- (a) Which posts require specialist training; and
- (b) What is appropriate training for managers.

Do you agree with this proposal (a)? Yes No

Do you agree with this proposal (b)? Yes No

If you disagree please give reasons:

5 We also propose to seek an assurance from employer endorsers that:

- a. The registrant has completed, on an annual basis, the appropriate records in relation to NISCC PRTL Requirements; and
- b. That the PRTL activities are appropriate to the job role.

Do you agree with this proposal? Yes No

If you have any other suggestions on how the role of employers in the PRTL process can be strengthened, please add them here.

6 We propose to change our methods of testing compliance with our PRTL requirements. We will cease routinely collecting PRTL Records of Achievement and will require registrants to declare that they have maintained their records and met the PRTL requirement and that they agree to comply with any request to audit their PRTL activities.

Do you agree with this proposal? Yes No

7 We propose to amend the NISCC Registration Rules (subject to approval by DHSSPS) to remove the requirement for automatic referral to the Registration Committee and provide for greater discretion to be delegated to officers in exceptional circumstances.

Do you agree with this proposal? Yes No

8 What do you consider constitutes exceptional circumstances?

9 Do you have any further comments on our proposals?

10 I am responding:

As an individual On behalf of an organisation

Name:

Job Title:

Organisation:

Tel:

Email:

Closing Date for Responses - 29 July 2009