



# **Northern Ireland Social Care Council**

## **Codes of Practice for Social Care Workers and Employers of Social Care Workers**

September 2002



# **Codes of Practice for Social Care Workers**

## **Introduction**

This booklet contains agreed codes of practice for social care workers and employers of social care workers describing the standards of conduct and practice within which they should work. This introduction is intended to help you understand what the codes are for and what they will mean to you as a social care worker, employer, service user or member of the public.

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council began its work on 1 October 2001, at the same time as the General Social Care Council, the Scottish Social Services Council, and the Care Council for Wales. The Councils have a duty to develop codes of practice and have worked together in developing these codes as part of their contribution to raising standards in social care services.

The two codes for workers and employers are presented together in this booklet because they are complementary and mirror the joint responsibilities of employers and workers in ensuring high standards.

## **What are the codes?**

The Code of Practice for Social Care Workers is a list of statements that describe the standards of professional conduct and practice required of social care workers as they go about their daily work. This is the first time that standards have been set in this way at national level, although many employers have similar standards in place at local level. The intention is to confirm the standards required in social care and ensure that workers know what standards of conduct employers, colleagues, service users, carers and the public expect of them.

The Code of Practice for Employers of Social Care Workers sets down the responsibilities of employers in the regulation of social care workers. Again, this is the first time that such standards have been set out at national level. The code requires that employers adhere to the standards set out in their code, support social care workers in meeting their code and take appropriate action when workers do not meet expected standards of conduct.

The codes are intended to reflect existing good practice and it is anticipated that workers and employers will recognise in the codes the shared standards to which they already aspire. The Councils will promote these standards through making the codes widely available.

## **How will the codes be used?**

The codes are a key step in the introduction of a system of regulation for social care in the four countries of the UK. The Councils are responsible for the registration of those working in social care. The register will be a public record that those registered have met the requirements for entry onto the register and have agreed to abide by the standards set out in the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers.

The Councils will take account of the standards set in the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers in considering issues of misconduct and decisions as to whether a registered worker should remain on the register.

## **What will the codes mean to you?**

- As a social care worker you will have criteria to guide your practice and be clear about what standards of conduct you are expected to meet. You are encouraged to use the codes to examine your own practice and to look for areas in which you can improve.
- As a social care employer you will know what part you are expected to play in the regulation of the workforce and the support of high quality social care. You are encouraged to review your own standards of practice and policies in the light of the standards set in the code.
- As a user of services or member of the public the codes will help you understand how a social care worker should behave towards you and how employers should support social care workers to do their jobs well.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this code is to set out the conduct that is expected of social care workers and to inform service users and the public about the standards of conduct they can expect from social care workers. It forms part of the wider package of legislation, practice standards and employers' policies and procedures that social care workers must meet. Social care workers are responsible for making sure that their conduct does not fall below the standards set out in this code and that no action or omission on their part harms the wellbeing of service users.

## **Status**

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council expects social care workers to meet this code and may take action if registered workers fail to do so. Employers of social care workers are required to take account of this code in making any decisions about the conduct of their staff.

Social care workers must:

- 1. Protect the rights and promote the interests of service users and carers;**
- 2. Strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers;**
- 3. Promote the independence of service users while protecting them as far as possible from danger or harm;**
- 4. Respect the rights of service users while seeking to ensure that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people;**
- 5. Uphold public trust and confidence in social care services; and**
- 6. Be accountable for the quality of their work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills.**

**1. As a social care worker, you must protect the rights and promote the interests of service users and carers.**

This includes:

- 1.1 Treating each person as an individual;
- 1.2 Respecting and, where appropriate, promoting the individual views and wishes of both service users and carers;
- 1.3 Supporting service users' rights to control their lives and make informed choices about the services they receive;
- 1.4 Respecting and maintaining the dignity and privacy of service users;
- 1.5 Promoting equal opportunities for service users and carers; and
- 1.6 Respecting diversity and different cultures and values.

**2. As a social care worker, you must strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers.**

This includes:

- 2.1 Being honest and trustworthy;
- 2.2 Communicating in an appropriate, open, accurate and straightforward way;
- 2.3 Respecting confidential information and clearly explaining agency policies about confidentiality to service users and carers;
- 2.4 Being reliable and dependable;
- 2.5 Honouring work commitments, agreements and arrangements and, when it is not possible to do so, explaining why to service users and carers;
- 2.6 Declaring issues that might create conflicts of interest and making sure that they do not influence your judgement or practice; and
- 2.7 Adhering to policies and procedures about accepting gifts and money from service users and carers.

**3. As a social care worker, you must promote the independence of service users while protecting them as far as possible from danger or harm.**

This includes:

- 3.1 Promoting the independence of service users and assisting them to understand and exercise their rights;
- 3.2 Using established processes and procedures to challenge and report dangerous, abusive, discriminatory or exploitative behaviour and practice;
- 3.3 Following practice and procedures designed to keep you and other people safe from violent and abusive behaviour at work;
- 3.4 Bringing to the attention of your employer or the appropriate authority resource or operational difficulties that might get in the way of the delivery of safe care;
- 3.5 Informing your employer or an appropriate authority where the practice of colleagues may be unsafe or adversely affecting standards of care;
- 3.6 Complying with employers' health and safety policies, including those relating to substance abuse;
- 3.7 Helping service users and carers to make complaints, taking complaints seriously and responding to them or passing them to the appropriate person; and
- 3.8 Recognising and using responsibly the power that comes from your work with service users and carers.

**4. As a social care worker, you must respect the rights of service users while seeking to ensure that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people.**

This includes:

- 4.1 Recognising that service users have the right to take risks and helping them to identify and manage potential and actual risks to themselves and others;
- 4.2 Following risk assessment policies and procedures to assess whether the behaviour of service users presents a risk of harm to themselves or others;
- 4.3 Taking necessary steps to minimise the risks of service users from doing actual or potential harm to themselves or other people; and
- 4.4 Ensuring that relevant colleagues and agencies are informed about the outcomes and implications of risk assessments.

**5. As a social care worker, you must uphold public trust and confidence in social care services.**

In particular you must not:

- 5.1 Abuse, neglect or harm service users, carers or colleagues;
- 5.2 Exploit service users, carers or colleagues in any way;
- 5.3 Abuse the trust of service users and carers or the access you have to personal information about them or to their property, home or workplace;
- 5.4 Form inappropriate personal relationships with services users;
- 5.5 Discriminate unlawfully or unjustifiably against service users, carers or colleagues;
- 5.6 Condone any unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination by service users, carers or colleagues;
- 5.7 Put yourself or other people at unnecessary risk; or
- 5.8 Behave in a way, in work or outside work, which would call into question your suitability to work in social care services.

**6. As a social care worker, you must be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills.**

This includes:

- 6.1 Meeting relevant standards of practice and working in a lawful, safe and effective way;
- 6.2 Maintaining clear and accurate records as required by procedures established for your work;
- 6.3 Informing your employer or the appropriate authority about any personal difficulties that might affect your ability to do your job competently and safely;
- 6.4 Seeking assistance from your employer or the appropriate authority if you do not feel able or adequately prepared to carry out any aspect of your work, or you are not sure about how to proceed in a work matter;
- 6.5 Working openly and co-operatively with colleagues and treating them with respect;
- 6.6 Recognising that you remain responsible for the work that you have delegated to other workers;
- 6.7 Recognising and respecting the roles and expertise of workers from other agencies and working in partnership with them; and
- 6.8 Undertaking relevant training to maintain and improve your knowledge and skills and contributing to the learning and development of others.



# Code of Practice for Employers of Social Care Workers

## Introduction

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## **Purpose**

The purpose of this code is to set down the responsibilities of employers in regulating social care workers. The purpose of workforce regulation is to protect and promote the interests of service users and carers. The code is intended to complement rather than replace or duplicate existing employers' policies and it forms part of the wider package of legislation, requirements and guidance that relate to the employment of staff. Employers are responsible for making sure that they meet the standards set out in this code, provide high quality services and promote public trust and confidence in social care services.

## **Status**

The Northern Ireland Health and Personal Social Services Regulation and Improvements Authority will take this code into account in their enforcement of care standards.

To meet their responsibilities in relation to regulating the social care workforce, social care employers must:

- 1. Make sure people are suitable to enter the workforce and understand their roles and responsibilities;**
- 2. Have written policies and procedures in place to enable social care workers to meet the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) Code of Practice for Social Care Workers;**
- 3. Provide training and development opportunities to enable social care workers to strengthen and develop their skills and knowledge;**
- 4. Put in place and implement written processes and procedures to deal with dangerous, discriminatory or exploitative behaviour and practice; and**
- 5. Promote the NISCC's codes of practice to social care workers, service users and carers and co-operate with the NISCC's proceedings.**

## **1. As a social care employer, you must make sure people are suitable to enter the social care workforce and understand their roles and responsibilities.**

This includes:

- 1.1 Using rigorous and thorough recruitment and selection processes focused on making sure that only people who have the appropriate knowledge and skills and who are suitable to provide social care are allowed to enter your workforce;
- 1.2 Checking criminal records, relevant registers and indexes and assessing whether people are capable of carrying out the duties of the job they have been selected for before confirming appointments;
- 1.3 Seeking and providing reliable references;
- 1.4 Giving staff clear information about their roles and responsibilities, relevant legislation and the organisational policies and procedures they must follow in their work; and
- 1.5 Managing the performance of staff and the organisation to ensure high quality services and care.

## **2 As a social care employer, you must have written policies and processes in place to enable social care workers to meet the NISCC's Code of Practice for Social Care Workers.**

This includes:

- 2.1 Implementing and monitoring written policies on: confidentiality; equal opportunities; risk assessment; substance abuse; record keeping; and the acceptance of money or personal gifts from service users or carers;
- 2.2 Effectively managing and supervising staff to support effective practice and good conduct and supporting staff to address deficiencies in their performance;
- 2.3 Having systems in place to enable social care workers to report inadequate resources or operational difficulties which might impede the delivery of safe care and working with them and relevant authorities to address those issues; and
- 2.4 Supporting social care workers to meet the NISCC's Code of Practice for Social Care Workers and not requiring them to do anything that would put their compliance with that code at risk.

**3. As a social care employer, you must provide training and development opportunities to enable social care workers to strengthen and develop their skills and knowledge.**

This includes:

- 3.1 Providing induction, training and development opportunities to help social care workers do their jobs effectively and prepare for new and changing roles and responsibilities;
- 3.2 Contributing to the provision of social care and social work education and training, including effective workplace assessment and practice learning;
- 3.3 Supporting staff in posts subject to registration to meet the NISCC's eligibility criteria for registration and its requirements for continuing professional development; and
- 3.4 Responding appropriately to social care workers who seek assistance because they do not feel able or adequately prepared to carry out any aspects of their work.

**4. As a social care employer, you must put into place and implement written policies and procedures to deal with dangerous, discriminatory or exploitative behaviour and practice.**

This includes:

- 4.1 Making it clear to social care workers that bullying, harassment or any form of unjustifiable discrimination is not acceptable and taking action to deal with such behaviour;
- 4.2 Establishing and promoting procedures for social care workers to report dangerous, discriminatory, abusive or exploitative behaviour and practice and dealing with these reports promptly, effectively and openly;
- 4.3 Making it clear to social care workers, service users and carers that violence, threats or abuse to staff are not acceptable and having clear policies and procedures for minimising the risk of violence and managing violent incidents;
- 4.4 Supporting social care workers who experience trauma or violence in their work;
- 4.5 Putting in place and implementing written policies and procedures that promote staff welfare and equal opportunities for workers; and
- 4.6 While ensuring that the care and safety of service users is your priority, providing appropriate assistance to social care workers whose work is affected by ill health or dependency on drugs and alcohol, and giving clear guidance about any limits on their work while they are receiving treatment.

**5. As a social care employer, you must promote the NISCC's codes of practice to social care workers, service users and carers and co-operate with the NISCC's proceedings.**

This includes:

- 5.1 Informing social care workers about this code and your responsibility to comply with it;
- 5.2 Informing social care workers about the NISCC's Code of Practice for Social Care Workers and their personal responsibility to meet that code;
- 5.3 Making service users and carers aware of this code and the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers and informing them about how to raise issues through your policies and, if necessary, contact the NISCC in relation to the codes;
- 5.4 Taking account of the NISCC's Code of Practice for Social Care Workers in making any decision that relates to the conduct of workers;
- 5.5 Informing the NISCC about any misconduct by registered social care workers that might call into question their registration and inform the worker involved that a report has been made to the NISCC; and
- 5.6 Co-operating with NISCC investigations and hearings and responding appropriately to the findings and decisions of the NISCC.