



Guidance Notes for Social Workers from European Union (Eu) / European Economic Area (Eea) or Switzerland Applying to Join the Register for Visiting Social Workers

These guidance notes support the declaration form for social workers applying to join the Social Care Register (Register) for visiting social workers. Social workers who apply to join the Register must have a qualification gained outside the United Kingdom in the European Union (EU)/European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland (Member State), or a third country recognised by the Member State.

1. Competent Authorities - social care councils in the United Kingdom

There are four social care regulatory councils (Councils) in the United Kingdom (UK). Each one maintains the Register for visiting social workers from Member States.

The Councils are the:

- General Social Care Council (England)
- Northern Ireland Social Care Council
- Scottish Social Care Council
- Care Council for Wales.

When applying to join the Register for visiting social workers you should apply to the Council in the Country you plan to provide all or most of your services.

2. Registration with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council

If you wish to register with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) and you qualified outside the UK the NISCC must make sure that your qualification is equivalent to the UK qualification for Social Workers.

The Register has two parts for social workers:

- Part 1 -is for social workers who qualified in or outside the UK who work permanently or regularly in the UK; and
- Part 3 - is the visiting European part that is for visiting social workers from Member States who provide services on a temporary or occasional basis in the UK.

Part 1 of the Register - for social workers

The Social Care Register was established by the Health & Personal Social Services Act 2001. A change in the law from 1 June 2005 means that anyone wishing to work as a social worker in Northern Ireland is required to be registered on the Social Care Register for qualified Social Workers.

The register is open to social workers who qualified in or outside the UK who wish to work full or part-time on a permanent and/or regular basis whether in an employed or self-employed capacity. To be registered you must:

- have the necessary qualifications;
- be physically and mentally fit ;
- be of good character and conduct;
- competent; and
- agree to comply with the NISCC's Code of Practice for Social Care Workers.

For more information about part 1 of the register and the application process visit the NISCC web site at www.niscc.info or email the Registration helpline to registration@nisocialcarecouncil.org.uk, or phone **+44 (0) 28 90417633** (outside the UK) for information and an application form.

Part 3 of the Register - for visiting social workers from a Member State

The visiting European part of the Register for visiting social workers from a Member States was established under The European Communities (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulation 2007 from 20 October 2007.

The register is open to social workers from Member States who wish to provide services full or part-time on a temporary and/or occasional basis, whether in an employed or self-employed capacity, if:

- you are a national of a relevant Member State (countries are listed at section titled National of a Member State). or
- you are a family member of a Member State national (see section 4 - 'National of a Member State' for definition).
- your qualifications were obtained in a relevant Member State (or a third country recognised by the Member State) and are equivalent to the recognised qualification in the UK.
- you are legally established with a competent authority in your home Member State for the purposes of pursuing the social work profession there.
- If neither the profession nor the education and training is regulated in your home state, that you have practised the social work profession for at least 2-years in the last 10-years.

Without some material change in your circumstances, if you have been refused registration on part 1 of the Register for one of the following reasons we would not normally consider you eligible to join the Register for visiting social workers.

- your qualification was not equivalent to the UK qualification for Social Workers; and/or
- you were not of good character or conduct.

3. Code of Practice for Social Care Workers

All social workers practising in the UK, including visiting social workers from Member States, must meet the standards set out in the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers. The code of practice is a list of statements that describe the standards of professional conduct and practice required of you as a social worker.

Once registered you are responsible for making sure that your conduct does not fall below the standards set out in the Code of Practice. You need to make sure that no action or omission on your part harms the wellbeing of people who use your professional services. We will take into account the standards set in the code when considering issues of misconduct and decisions as to whether you may remain on the register.

A booklet containing the codes of practice for both employers and social care workers can be found in the application pack or on the NISCC website at www.niscc.info

4. National of a Member State

To apply to join the Register as a visiting social worker you must be a national or family member of a national of a Member State. A family member of a national of a Member State is the husband, wife, or civil partner. It is also the direct descendants, including those of the spouse or partner, who are under the age of 21 or are dependants and the dependent direct relatives in the ascending line and those of the spouse or partner.

The European Member States and their related codes listed in the application form are listed overleaf.

European Member States and their related codes

Country	Code	Country	Code	Country	Code
Austria	AT	Greece	EL	Netherlands	NL
Belgium	BE	Hungary	HU	Norway	NO
Bulgaria	BG	Iceland	IS	Poland	PL
Cyprus	CY	Ireland	IE	Portugal	PT
Czeck Republic	CZ	Italy	IT	Romania	RO
Denmark	DK	Latvia	LV	Slovenia	SI
Estonia	EE	Liechtenstein	LI	Slovakia	SK
Finland	FI	Lithuania	LT	Spain	ES
France	FR	Luxembourg	LU	Sweden	SE
Germany	DE	Malta	MT	Switzerland	CH

You are required to provide proof of your nationality. You must provide:

- a photocopy of the photographic page of your passport or national identity card; and
- if you are a family member, a copy of the marriage certificate or certificate of civil partnership; or
- other evidence of your rights as a family member under EU Directive 2004/38/EC for example: a residence permit for family members.

5. Your Professional Details

We need to know each of the Member States you are established in. For each state we need your professional title in the language of that country and the translation in English.

In addition, you need to tell us what professional services and the service area you will be working in for example children, substance abuse, mental health.

6. Qualification

You are required to provide proof of your qualification to show that you have trained as a social worker in your home Member State. The evidence must give the title of your qualification, the name of the awarding body and the date that the qualification was awarded in the original language. This can be a photocopy of one of the following:

- your social worker qualification certificate;
- your academic transcript; or
- your Diploma supplement. (available since 2005, a Diploma supplement provides a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of your studies)

We may need to contact the competent authority in the Member State where you obtained your qualification to confirm the content of your social work training and provide:

- a list of the social work subjects and modules you studied as part of your training;
- a list and description of the service area of all the supervised and assessed practice placements completed in a social work role as a compulsory part of training (ie. you had to pass in order for the qualification to be awarded); and
- the number of days (6 hours equals a day) completed for each supervised practice placement.

You must allow us sufficient time to make these checks before you provide any services in the UK.

If there is a substantial difference between your professional qualification and the training the NISCC requires, to the extent that difference is such as potentially harmful to public health and safety, we shall give you the opportunity to show, by means of an aptitude test or an adaption period, that you have the acquired knowledge or competence that is lacking.

We will draw up a list of the knowledge and skills that are essential to practise social work in the UK that are missing from your qualification, training and practical experience.

Aptitude test

If you think you have the required knowledge and skills you can undertake an aptitude test. It will be a written and oral test in English. The aptitude test will be arranged as quickly as possible and will take place in Northern Ireland, in Belfast. The test will normally be within a month of you telling us you want to take a test. We will try and give you an option of at least 2 dates to choose from.

If you do not pass the aptitude test you will be given the opportunity to re-sit the test. You will not be able to provide services in the social work profession in the UK until you have the required knowledge or competency.

We will provide you more information about the aptitude test if this option is offered to you.

Adaption period

The adaption period is a period of additional training to allow you to acquire the knowledge and skills that are essential to practise social work in the UK. The additional training will be for a fixed number of days under the guidance of a qualified supervisor or teacher. To comply with the Directive the additional training has to be completed within 3 months of the date of your application to join the temporary register. The additional training has to take place in the UK.

We will draw up a list of the knowledge and skills that are missing from your qualification, training and practical experience. This will determine the activities to be covered and the length of time required for the additional training. We will provide you with some guidance about how to find a supervised practice placement. It is your responsibility to find and arrange the supervised practice placement in the UK.

You will not be able to provide services in the UK until you have successfully completed the adaption period or passed the aptitude test.

7. Legally established in one or more Home Member States

To be eligible to apply for registration on the temporary register you are required to be legally established to pursue the profession of social work in a Member State(s). If you are established in more than one Member State you need to tell us about them all.

To be legally established you must not be barred from practising, even temporarily, at the time you send your application to the NISCC. You need to give us evidence of your legal establishment in your home Member State.

If you are not legally established in a Member State and you continue with your application it will be refused.

Regulated profession in Member State

If social work is a regulated profession in your home Member State where you are legally established to practise you either:

- hold a specific qualification to practise as a social worker in your home Member State; or
- there is regulated education and training directly geared to practising the social work profession in your home Member State.

If social work is a regulated profession in your home Member State, you can provide the evidence of your legal establishment by providing one of the following documents:

- a copy of your current registration or license certificate as a social worker that records the title of the profession and the period of your registration or license; or
- a letter (where possible in English) from the competent authority confirming that you are legally established to practise the social work profession in that country and that you are not prohibited from practising, even temporarily, at the time that you sent your application to the NISCC

Non regulated profession in a Member State

If social work is not a regulated profession in your home Member State you are required to provide two years' social work experience in the last 10-years as evidence of your legal establishment.

At this point in time we understand that social work is **not** a regulated profession in the following Member States: Bulgaria, Czech Republic,

Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, the Netherlands and Norway. Please visit the NISCC's website for any changes to this list of Countries at www.niscc.info

If your home Member State is one of these countries you must provide evidence of your employment history that shows you have practised the social work profession for a minimum of 2-years during the previous 10-years. The evidence we require is a certificate, letter or reference (preferably in English) from:

- each employer where you obtained your relevant work experience including the activities performed; or
- from your professional body.

If you are unable to provide evidence of a legal establishment or you are barred from practising in your home Member State, you are not eligible to provide services on a temporary or occasional basis in the UK. If you wish to proceed with submitting your application it may be refused.

Professional association or equivalent body

We ask you to provide details of the professional social work association that you may be registered with. We may contact the professional association if we require further information about your qualification, your education and training or evidence of your two years relevant social work experience.

Competent authority

We ask you provide details of the competent administrative authority in your home Member State. This is the body that by law, regulation or administration authorised you to practise as a social worker. It may also supervise your status as a social worker. We will contact the competent authority if we require any additional information about your qualification, legal establishment and professional conduct.

For example the NISCC is one of four competent authorities in the UK. We authorise the content of the education and training and set professional standards for social workers in the UK. We will also consider issues of professional misconduct and decide whether someone can continue to use the professional title of 'social worker'.

If you want to contact your home Member State for more information about competent authorities, regulated and unregulated profession please visit the EUROPA website at: www.europa.eu

8. Good Character and Conduct

We will contact the competent authority in the Member State that you are legally established to confirm your good character and conduct. We will seek confirmation:

- that your professional status is not subject to any current investigation that may bring into question your suitability to practise with children or vulnerable groups;
- that you are not prohibited from practising, even on a temporary basis; and

- that they know of no disciplinary or criminal sanctions of a professional nature that will prohibit you from working with children or vulnerable groups.

If you are prohibited from practising in your home Member State even on a temporary basis you will not be eligible to be registered as a visiting social workers in the UK. If there are any other restrictions placed on your professional activities these will be taken into account when we assess your declaration.

Once you are registered you will be required to meet the standards set out in the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers. We will take the standards set in the code into account when considering issues of misconduct and decisions as to whether you can remain on the temporary register.

9. Professional Title and the Public Register

When you are registered you will be required to use the professional title of 'Social Worker' when you provide services in the UK. Your full name and the professional title of 'Social Worker' will appear on the Public Register on the NISCC's website **www.niscc.info**

10. Continuous Professional Development

Though not required as a condition of your registration you are encouraged to maintain your professional development. The NISCC asks registrants to maintain their professional personal development by undertaking a minimum of five days post registration training and learning each year.

11. Annual Renewal of the Declaration

The registration period is 12 months from the date of registration. You are required to renew your declaration on the 12-month anniversary of your registration if you intend to continue providing temporary and occasional services in the UK. The renewal declaration form will be on the NISCC website at **www.niscc.info** or you can email the registration team at **registration@nisocialcarecouncil.org.uk** or telephone **+44 (0) 28 90417633** for a copy.

If we have not received your renewal declaration, your name will be removed from the Register 28 days after the renewal date. We will not write to you to remind you to renew your declaration.

To establish whether the professional services you have provided during the registration period is temporary and occasional you will be asked to:

- list the dates and length of each period of service you have provided;
- provide details of the professional activities you have carried out; and
- tell us about any changes to the supporting documentation you have provided.

When making our assessment we will take into account the following:

Duration – the time you have taken to undertake each professional service.

Frequency – the number of occurrences and the interval between visits.

Regularity – how regular the services are provided, is it constant or at fixed intervals, and is it for the same or different organisations using your professional services.

Continuity – whether the services are provided in a continuous period or occasionally over a period of time.

The assessment will be made on a case by case basis at the point of your renewal. If it is deemed that the service you are providing is not temporary or occasional your registration will not be renewed. If this should occur you will be invited to apply to the permanent register for social workers.

We will not check your qualifications again at renewal. We will contact the competent authority in your home Member State to confirm that you are still legally established to practise social work there and that there is no professional misconduct that may need to be considered before we renew your declaration.

12. Completed Application Forms

Completed declarations can be sent by post to:

Registration Team
Northern Ireland Social Care Council
7th Floor Millennium House
19-25 Great Victoria Street
Belfast
BT2 7AQ

Please check that you have all the supporting documentation with the application form. These are:

- proof of nationality;
- attestation of legal establishment;
- evidence of professional qualification; and
- if appropriate, proof of two years' professional experience.

13. Timetable for Assessment

When we receive your application we will acknowledge its receipt. If there are any documents missing or the form is incomplete we will return the application form to you with details of the missing documents.

Once we have the complete application with supporting documentation we will assess your qualification. We may need to ask for more information about your social work training from the competent authority or professional association in your home Member State.

We will contact the competent authority in your home Member State to confirm your legal establishment, good character and conduct.

The assessment process may take up to 8 weeks to complete. During this time you should not provide services in the UK.

If your registration is agreed we will write to you and tell you of our decision. This letter can be used as evidence of registration. Your name will also appear on the Public Register at **www.niscc.info**

If we refuse your registration we will write to you giving you full and detailed reasons for the decision, including details of:

- the shortfall in your qualification and experience and explain what the substantial differences are;
- the choice of compensation methods – either an aptitude test or an adaptation period and when it can be delivered. Aptitude tests will be arranged normally within a month of when you have confirmed this is what you want to. It will take place in N.Ireland in Belfast.

14. Right of Appeal

You will have 28 days to provide any additional information to support your application if the NISCC recommends that your application or renewal of your registration is refused.

If our recommendation remains unchanged and we refuse your application or renewal you have 3 months to appeal to the Care Tribunal. The period of 3 months is treated as having started the day after the final decision letter was posted to you. Information on how to appeal to the Care Tribunal NI can be found on their website at www.caretribunalni.gov.uk