

The Roles and Tasks of Social Workers in Northern Ireland in the 21st Century

Introduction

The Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) has commissioned the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, as the Regulatory Body for Social Care Workers, to carry out a review of the roles and functions of Social Workers in Northern Ireland in the 21st Century. The review will build on recent work carried out in Scotland and England and will examine its relevance in the Northern Ireland context.

The intended outcome of the project is to develop a concise statement of those functions that are unique to Social Work and those areas of service delivery where Social Work has a significant contribution to make. While it is important to maintain a common understanding across the United Kingdom (and to some extent Europe, particularly the Republic of Ireland) of what Social Work is and does, it is also important to be clear about what is particularly distinctive about Social Work in Northern Ireland, where it operates in a uniquely integrated model of Health and Social Services.

It is the intention that this concise statement of the Roles and Functions of Social Workers in Northern Ireland will provide a common understanding which will:

- ensure clarity about the contribution social work can make in a wide range of roles
- ensure that the public are clear about what can be expected of the Profession
- assist Commissioners and Service Providers in the design of services, particularly in multi-disciplinary organisations and settings, ensuring that Social Work expertise are appropriately deployed
- support the development and enforcement of standards in:
 - performance management
 - social care governance and
 - workforce and service regulation
- support and inform training for Social Workers at qualifying and post qualifying levels
- assist and inform workforce planning