



south ayrshire
health & social care
partnership

Professional Governance for Social Work Practice

February 2021



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1 Introduction

1.1 Professional governance is an accountability framework that helps health and social care professionals working at the front line to collaborate effectively in the delivery of integrated services. It also aims to ensure that people receiving services achieve improved outcomes. Fundamental to such a framework are professional ethics and values, codes of conduct, standards of practice, policies and procedures, evidence-based practice, quality and performance improvement.

1.2 This Framework is underpinned by the principles of human rights and social justice. It reflects the aim of social work and social care to promote empowerment and inclusion as well as enhancing quality of life both through direct intervention and through increasing capacity to self-help.

1.3 This paper is based on the following documents:

- Practice Governance Framework: Responsibility and Accountability in Social Work Practice, Scottish Government (2011)
- Governance for quality social care in Scotland, Social Work Scotland
- Code of Ethics for Social Work, British Association of Social Workers, 2014
- Codes of Practice, Scottish Social Services Council, 2016
- IRISS Framework for Continuous Learning in Social Services, 2008
- Clinical and Care Governance Framework, Scottish Government, 2015

1.4 The national vision and strategy for social work and social care in Scotland set out in 2016 is:

‘Our vision is a socially just Scotland with excellent social services delivered by a skilled and valued workforce which works with others to empower, support and protect people, with a focus on prevention, early intervention and enablement’. (Social Services in Scotland – a shared vision and strategy 2015-2020, Social Work Strategic Forum, 2015)

1.5 This paper sets out the following:

- Governance for Social Work Practice
- Social Work Professional Leads
- Governance for Social Care Practice
- Role of the Social Work Governance Group

2 Governance for Social Work Practice

2.1 Effective social work requires a range of professional skills, in particular the ability to make and contribute to holistic, often multi-agency, assessments of circumstances with people. It also requires co-operation and close working relationships between social workers, people who use services, carers, providers of care in the private and third sector and other professionals.

2.2 There are social work functions, which only registered social workers can fulfil. This does not in any way diminish the contribution of anyone else involved in an individual's support or supervision, nor mean that it is only in this way that registered social workers make a contribution. Rather it clarifies the lines of accountability for specific statutory social work functions.

It is for Chief Executives, elected members, Chief Social Work Officers and line managers to ensure that, whatever the configuration of services or functions, only registered social workers are delegated accountability for the exercise of these particular functions. This should be the case even where some tasks within the function may be carried out by other staff. In these cases the employer retains overall responsibility for the competence and performance of such tasks.

The role of the registered social worker in statutory interventions is clearly set out in Guidance <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/03/05091627/2>

2.3 The purpose of a Professional Governance for Social Work Practice Framework (**Appendix 1**) is to:

- Outline the key accountabilities of employers and practitioners and what should be in place to discharge these.
- Provide a prompt or tool which employers and practitioners can use to assess whether the appropriate conditions are met to ensure safe and effective practice.

2.4 The Professional Governance for Social Work Practice Framework is intended to help:

- Develop and sustain a confident, competent and valued workforce;
- Ensure an environment and culture that promotes creativity, taking responsibility and the delivery of safe and effective practice;
- Promote wellbeing and retention of a healthy work/life balance;
- More effective working with colleagues, other agencies and with people who use services to improve outcomes for individuals, families and communities.
- Provide evidence of activity that gives the HSCP and Chief Executive assurance as to the quality and effectiveness of Social Work Services.

2.5 The Professional Framework covers five key areas:

Risk, Discretion and Decision Making

Risk is an essential and unavoidable part of everyday life. Social Workers are accountable for maintaining professional standards and the quality of their work. A focus on assessment and prevention helps to identify and manage risk. Social Workers need to be empowered, enabled and supported to make well informed decisions, using their professional judgement and discretion within a framework of accountability.

Self and Self-Regulation

Social Workers must manage and prioritise work; justify and be accountable for practice; and evaluate their effectiveness in meeting organisational requirements and the needs for individuals, families and communities through safe, effective and personalised practice.

Developing Knowledge and Skills

Continuing learning and development of knowledge and skills is essential to improving practice and outcomes for individuals, families and communities. Engaging in learning and development, linked to organisational and individual priorities, supports service improvement.

Guidance, Consultation and Supervision

Professional supervision provides opportunities for reflective practice and, coupled with an environment that promotes wellbeing, a healthy work/life balance and appropriate accountability, supports improving practice and ongoing professional development to deliver improved outcomes.

Information Sharing and Joint Working

Effective information sharing and joint working across different agency boundaries are essential to the provision of high-quality integrated care and support. They are also an important aspect of local multiagency systems of child, adult and public protection.

2.6 Responsibilities of employers, the Chief Social Work Officer and Social Workers are described in the Framework (much of which is relevant to other practitioners also). It also provides a descriptor of what this looks like in operation. It can be used as a tool for assessment of whether everyone is clear on their responsibilities and key accountabilities, whether personal or corporate and, if the necessary conditions have been established, to promote safe, effective and personalised practice, meet performance objectives and make sure people get the level of support and services we would like to see for ourselves and our families.

3 Professional Leads

3.1 Chief Social Work Officer

3.1.1 Each local authority is required by law to appoint a Chief Social Work Officer who has a key role in ensuring components are in place for developing good governance, for example, culture, systems, practices, performance, vision and leadership, and in overseeing compliance with these arrangements. The Chief Social Work Officer is accountable to the Chief Officer of the HSCP, Chief Executive, Elected Members and the Integration Joint Board, providing professional advice on the discharge of statutory duties including corporate parenting, child and adult protection and managing high risk offenders. This includes providing comment on issues, which may identify risk to the safety of vulnerable people or impact on the social work service and also on the findings of relevant service quality and performance reports, setting out:

- implications for the delivery of national and local outcomes
- proposals for remedial action;
- means of sharing good practice and learning;
- monitoring and reporting arrangements for identified improvement activity.

3.1.2 In July 2016, the Scottish Government issued revised Guidance on the Chief Social Work Officer role www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/07/3269 for local authorities and bodies/partnerships to which local authorities have delegated social work functions. In July 2015, the Scottish Social Services Council published the Chief Social Work Officer Standard in Scotland 2015 www.socialworkscotland.org/doc_get.aspx?DocID=1134. It is based around the core of modelling social work values with four standards: setting direction, achieving outcomes, self-leadership and working with others. The Standard is the foundation of the Post Graduate Diploma – Chief Social Work Officer.

3.1.3 The Chief Social Work Officer is responsible for:

- Providing professional leadership and ensuring that professional issues are considered as part of strategic, corporate and operational service delivery;
- Providing professional advice on the discharge of statutory duties including corporate parenting, child protection, adult protection and managing high risk offenders;
- Ensuring senior social work posts appropriately reflect professional leadership responsibilities to support the development and delivery of professional assurance arrangements across social work;
- Ensuring social work practice and standards across all social work functions;
- Ensuring only registered social works undertake functions that are reserved in legislation for this role;
- Taking a leading role in supporting the workforce;

- Taking the final decision on behalf of the local authority on a range of statutory matters including the adoption of children, secure accommodation and guardianship;
- Ensuring there are effective governance arrangements for the management of complex issues involving the balance of need, risk and civil liberties.

3.1.4 The Chief Social Work Officer has a role in:

- Providing professional advice and guidance to the Integration Joint Board to which social work functions are delegated;
- Promoting partnership working across professions and all agencies to support the delivery of integrated services;
- Promoting social work values across corporate agendas and partner agencies.

3.2 Social Work Professional Leads for the Governance Board Membership

3.2.1 Social Work professional leads have specific responsibilities for:

- Providing professional leadership and ensuring that professional issues are considered as part of service delivery and service change;
- Ensuring that social workers and social care workers have access to professional advice to support safe practices;
- Ensuring that appropriate mechanisms are in place to support staff supervision and development;
- Social Work professional leads also have operational responsibilities for services.

3.2.2 The Social Work Professional Leads in South Ayrshire are:

Chief Social Work Officer
Senior Manager Children and Families
Senior Manager Children and Families and Criminal Justice
Service Manager Adults; (with 2 represented on the Board)

3.2.3 The Social Work Governance Board seeks to be representative of the broader profession and as such would also include the following as members:

Quality Assurance Officer
Area Team Leader x1
Social Work Practitioner x1
Other interested parties co opted by the Board

3.2.4 Social Work Professional Leads have professional lines of accountability directly to the Chief Social Work Officer.

4 Governance for Social Care Practice

4.1 Social care services are becoming more integrated with health services and agreed care governance arrangements are essential within this complex environment to ensure quality services and statutory responsibilities are effectively discharged.

4.2 Social care governance provides a framework to support all people working within social care services to take responsibility for continuously improving the quality of their services. It is based on good communication and requires everyone to have an understanding of their role and responsibilities. It connects practitioners, users and cares, social care managers and organisational leaders in a achieving a common goal – improving outcomes for people who use our services.

4.3 Key Principles of Social Care Governance:

4.3.1 The principles of effective care governance include the following:

- Involving service users/cares and the wider public on the development of quality care services;
- Ensuring safe and effective services with appropriate support and training for staff;
- Striving for continuous improvement with effective policies and processes in place;
- Ensuring accountability and management of risk.

4.4 The Social Care Governance Framework illustrates the key component parts that contribute to good social care governance.

5 The Role of the Social Work Governance Board

5.1 The Social Work Governance Board (SWGB) contributes to the overall Health and Care Governance Framework, which shows the way in which accountability for the quality of health and social care services is monitored and assured and how professional accountability is organised in South Ayrshire. The SWGB comprises Social Work Professional Leads and supports the discharge of the function of the Chief Social Work Officer by fulfilling a governance function for all social work and social care services. Other colleagues may be co-opted to the group as work demands.

5.2. Representatives from the SWGB attend various meetings across the Partnership where quality assurance is monitored. The Chief Social Work Officer is a member of the Health and Care Governance Committee, which provides clinical care and professional governance assurance for all health and social care services commissioned by the Council and those within South Ayrshire delivered by NHS Ayrshire and Arran.

Appendix 1 Professional Governance for Social Work Practice

1. Risk, Discretion and Decision Making

Risk is an essential and unavoidable part of everyday life. Social Workers are accountable for maintaining professional standards and the quality of their work. A focus on assessment and prevention helps to identify and manage risk. Social Workers need to be empowered and supported to make well informed decisions, using their professional judgement and discretion within a framework of accountability.

Employers, in conjunction with Chief Social Work Officers as appropriate, should ensure:

- Clear strategic objectives and a robust operational framework are in place to deliver social work services;
- There is clear guidance about balancing risk, needs and human rights;
- Social Workers are supported to exercise professional judgement and take risks;
- There is a structured approach to assessing and managing risk, drawing on evidence-based approaches and supported by robust risk assessment and risk management systems that are routinely audited and monitored; and
- That a framework exists for the development of innovative personalised support informed by relevant risk assessment.

Social Workers should:

- Uphold professional social work values and ethics in their practice;
- Exercise, justify and record professional judgements and decision making;
- Develop and maintain knowledge, skills and competence, recognising and working within the limits of their competence.
- Use, as a basis for approach to risk, discretion and decision making:
 - legislation, protocols, codes, guidance;
 - social work theory, models, practice;
 - best knowledge-based practice;
 - all available evidence;
 - informed opinion;

What does this look like?

It is understood, including by elected members, that risk is inevitable and that there is a structure that promotes appropriate risk-taking supported by evidence-based risk assessment approaches;

- Considered risk taking weighs up the potential benefits or disbenefits of taking the risk against not taking the risk;
- Individuals' understanding and capability to share risk is routinely explored and taken into account in decisions made about social work intervention with them;
- Practice is openly reviewed when things go well or go wrong and learning is identified and shared;
- Social Workers demonstrate enhanced critical decision-making skills, backed up by sound evidence and best practice;
- There is clear guidance and understanding of working with risk, including child and adult risk assessment and management;
- There is an up to date and accurate chronology and analysis to support decisions made and;
- Social Workers have the appropriate skills and training to:
 - carry out risk assessment tasks;
 - effectively use the discretion they have to develop innovative, personalised solutions in conjunction with partners and people who need support or services;
 - make, and be able to justify, their decisions

2. Self and Self-Regulation

Social Workers must manage and prioritise work; justify and be accountable for practice; and evaluate their effectiveness in meeting organisational requirements and the needs of individuals, families and communities through safe, effective and personalised practice.

Employers, in conjunction with Chief Social Work Officers as appropriate, should:

Social Workers should:

- Ensure compliance with all relevant Codes of Practice; legislation; standards; training; organisational and inter-organisational guidance;
- Ensure Social Workers receive effective support, supervision, and feedback which supports ongoing self-regulation;
- Provide an effective line management structure that provides an escalation system;
- Provide effective audit of professional practice;
- Provide training and development opportunities for Social Workers; and
- Be accessible to all Social Workers who seek assistance, whether because they do not feel able, or adequately prepared or supported, to carry out any aspect of their work.

- Comply with all relevant Codes of Practice; legislation; standards; training; organisational and inter-organisational guidance;
- Maintain professional registration and comply with post registration training and learning requirements;
- Take responsibility for their own practice and learning and development;
- Reflect and critically evaluate their practice and be aware of their impact on others;
- Acknowledge and address risk to themselves and others;
- Maintain appropriate relationships and personal boundaries with people who use services;
- Demonstrate emotional resilience in working with challenging situations and behaviours;
- Use supervision and peer support to reflect on, and improve, practice;
- Seek assistance if not able to carry out an aspect of work, or not sure how to proceed; and
- Use the authority of their role in a responsible and respectful manner.

What does this look like?

Social Workers:

- Carry out duties using accountable, professional judgement, based on social work knowledge, skills, practice and values, complying with relevant Codes of Conduct, legislation, guidance etc, working in a safe and effective manner;
- Are aware, and consider the impact, of their own values, prejudices, ethical dilemmas and conflicts of interest on their practice and on other people;
- Challenge discrimination, disadvantage and other forms of inequality and injustice;
- Maintain clear and accurate records and provision of evidence for professional judgements, in an accessible and appropriate manner;
- Use risk assessment policies and procedures to address whether behaviours of people who use services present a risk of harm to themselves or others; and
- Proactively manage their own training and development needs as an integral part of their job.

Employers/CSWOs

- Have in place systems and approaches to promote a climate which supports, monitors, reviews and takes the necessary action to ensure Social Workers comply with professional, legal, organisational and operational requirements, and have the confidence and competence to deliver safe and effective practice.

3. Developing Knowledge and Skills

Continuing learning and knowledge and skills is essential to improving practice and outcomes for individuals, families and communities. Engaging in learning and development, linked to organisational and individual priorities and objectives, supports service improvement.

Employers, in conjunction with Chief Social Work Officers as appropriate, should:

- Ensure there are planned and strategic approaches to learning and development, within a learning culture which is open and fair;
- Provide access to, and actively promote, a wide range of formal and informal learning and development opportunities;
- Provide opportunities for involvement in research and putting this into effective practice; and
- Support arrangements for Social Workers to share and apply learning to their practice.

Social Workers should:

- Routinely review and update knowledge of legal, practice, policy and procedural frameworks;
- Use supervision to reflect on practice and use critical analysis to support social work interventions;
- Keep up to date with relevant research through reading the journals, learning from other professionals and listening to service users;
- Continually evaluate and learn from practice; and
- Engage in critical analysis and research.

What does this look like?

- There is a learning culture in the workplace which promotes and supports continuously improved practice and performance, including opportunities for critical feedback on that culture;
- Social Workers make effective use of the SSSC Continuous Learning Framework and involvement in professional networks;
- There is a strategy for learning and development based on the learning needs of social workers, workforce planning needs of the organisation and local and national priorities developed by CSWOs, Social Workers and people who use services and their carers;

- The impact of learning on practice is evaluated systematically and is used to inform planning;
- Social Workers at all levels contribute to the continuous improvement of practice which is encouraged and valued;
- There is a clear link between organisational and operational priorities and objectives, personal learning and development plans and activities; and
- There is an environment that promotes engagement in research and applying evidence and knowledge-based practice.

4. Guidance, Consultation and Supervision

Reflective practice, coupled with an environment which promotes wellbeing, a healthy work/life balance and appropriate accountability, supports improving practice and ongoing professional development to deliver improved outcomes.

Employers, in conjunction with Chief Social Work Officers as appropriate, should:

- Provide effective supervision and employee development systems, that link individual performance to services and outcomes for people;
- Maintain effective systems to allocate work and manage workloads;
- Provide regular communication of priorities, policies and standards;
- Ensure regular audit of the quality of social work practice is carried out; and
- Ensure clear guidance on balancing risk, needs, human rights and consultation with manager is readily available to Social Workers who are making such judgements.

Social Workers should:

- Actively seek, and engage fully with, supervision on a regular basis to reflect on their practice and identify areas for development;
- Undertake regular analysis and assessment of the quality of their practice including reflection on engagement and interventions with people; what is going well; what requires to change; and identifying and addressing barriers to safe and effective practice;
- Manage and prioritise their workload within organisational policies and priorities.

What does this look like?

- Organisational policies, priorities and standards are formally recorded, communicated, evaluated and audited on a regular basis which is specified and the results/response made known to managers and Social Workers;
- Casework is formally recorded and audited periodically by senior managers;
- The role of the Chief Social Work Officer in providing professional advice and guidance, and how these can be accessed, is clearly communicated and understood;

- Social Workers routinely consult with their peers and others to inform practice, share lessons learned and meet continuing professional development needs;
- There is a formal supervision policy which is communicated to, and understood, which requires that supervision be used to support effective professional practice that:
 - reviews workload and associated stress levels, balances best practice requirements with organisational policies, procedures and priorities; and to support professional judgement and continuous development;
 - specifies the minimum time and frequency of supervision for all Social Workers/other staff/staff with particular needs;
 - requires managers to record when and why sessions are cancelled/cut short;
 - makes clear that this is a reflective process and both managers and Social Workers should undertake appropriate preparation by analysing their practice, identifying challenges and potential solutions and considering development needs;
 - requires the main points raised to be recorded and signed off by both manager and Social Worker.
- There is a clear process for handling professional disagreement, including the role of the line manager and CSWO in providing advice and support with respect to professional standards and decision-making. There is clear guidance on how this is recorded; and

Social Workers are encouraged to raise issues/seek assistance and guidance from their supervisor out with formal supervision, and the organisation has systems in place to allow the reporting of anything that might impede safe and effective practice.

5. Information Sharing and Joint Working

Effective information sharing and joint working across different agency boundaries are essential to the provision of high-quality integrated care and support. They are also an important aspect of local multiagency systems of child, adult and public protection.

Employers, in conjunction with Chief Social Work Officers as appropriate, should:	Social Workers should:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the value of joint working and information sharing is promoted amongst Social Workers and that confidentiality and a right to privacy in private life is understood and complied with; • Provide clarity of accountability and responsibility for case management in any joint working arrangements; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the necessary action to understand the roles and responsibilities of key colleagues in other agencies; • Recognise significant information relating to child, adult and/or public protection and communicate it timeously to other key agencies;

- Ensure Social Workers have a clear and shared understanding with colleagues of other agencies of their respective responsibilities for the identification and management of risk;
- Have in place information sharing protocols with all relevant partnerships;
- Ensure IT systems are used, where appropriate, to provide integrated and single assessments, and speedy information sharing;
- Ensure Social Workers are appropriately trained, with other agencies, on the purposes and processes of information sharing; and that
- Professional supervision is provided to social workers where their line manager is a professional from another discipline.

- Acknowledge the value of, and respect, the contribution of colleagues from different disciplines;
- Actively promote and co-operate fully in joint working to ensure people receive personalised and appropriately integrated services;
- Understand and apply agency policy for handling and sharing sensitive or highly confidential data; and
- Identify dilemmas inherent in respecting confidentiality and the importance of information sharing and seek support to address these issues.

What does this look like?

- High quality integrated services are delivered through effective partnerships;
- Good, regular multi-agency training is in place;
- There are effective links within and across agencies to monitor and manage risk;
- There is good use of technology to support information sharing and joint working promoting integrated and single assessment processes such as MAPPA1 or SSA2 ;
- All agencies promote the uptake of “universal” supports and services where appropriate;
- Partners have good systems to resolve operational disagreements with appropriate recourse to senior managers when needed;
- Accessibility to services is straightforward and personalised; and
- Confidentiality and privacy are respected with due regard to legislation on Data Protection, Human Rights and Equalities.

1 Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements

2 Single Shared Assessment

Appendix 2 Professional Governance for Social Care Practice

Chief Executives and Elected Members	Chief Social Work Officer Responsibilities
<p>Elected members represent constituents and promote the interest of the local community</p> <p>With Chief Executives, Elected Members promote human rights, equalities, social justice</p> <p>Ensure planning, delivery and monitoring of social care services is informed by service user experience and views</p> <p>Have a duty to scrutinise public services</p> <p>Develop strategic and policy direction</p> <p>Create an environment that affirms the contribution of staff and support innovation</p> <p>Lead improvement and learning where challenge and risk has been identified</p>	<p>Accountable to the Chief Executive and Elected Members</p> <p>Provide professional advice to the corporate team and professional leadership to staff Act as final decision maker on certain matters</p> <p>Ensure components are in place for developing good governance e.g. culture, systems, practices, performance, vision, leadership</p> <p>Ensure there is clear guidance about balancing risk, needs and civil liberties</p> <p>Ensure robust processes are in place to assess and manage risk</p> <p>Ensure improved outcomes for individuals is a priority</p> <p>Ensure compliance with the all relevant Codes of Practice, legislation and standards</p> <p>Promote professional values and ethics in conjunction with SSSC and Care Inspectorate Ensure staff receive quality support, supervision, development and learning through an effective structure</p> <p>Develop a culture of openness, communication and accountability when learning from successes and critical incidents</p>

Social Care Practitioners and Managers	Service Users, Carers and Communities
<p>All staff are responsible for contributing to the delivery of social care governance arrangements</p> <p>Uphold social work professional values and ethics in their practice</p> <p>Work in partnership with services users, cares and other stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes</p> <p>Should be informed and empowered by the organisation and through learning and development enable the shift of power and control to people requiring support.</p> <p>Are responsible for continually improving by applying best practice, theory and judgement skills</p> <p>Maintain standards for registration (where required) and meeting SSSC Codes of Practice and applying the SSSC Continuous Learning Framework</p> <p>Maintain appropriate relationships and personal boundaries with people who use services</p> <p>Take responsibility for the safety of people who use services and for themselves as staff members</p> <p>Use supervision to reflect on practice</p>	<p>Be recognised as having expertise and encouraged/enabled to contribute to identifying individual and community goals and outcomes</p> <p>Be informed of rights and responsibilities and how these impact on life and planning choices</p> <p>Contribute to the performance management system of the service and have the opportunity to shape services</p> <p>Have information on how to influence</p> <p>Have the opportunity to share views on what is essential to good quality life and influence the allocation of resources to meet this</p> <p>Inform organisational risk management/risk enablement activities</p>

Ensure there is a link between organisational and operational priorities and personal learning and development plans	
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Appendix 3 Social Work Governance Group – Standing Agenda

	AGENDA ITEM	LEAD
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
2.	Minutes	
3.	Action Log	
	CORE BUSINESS	
4.	Policy Development	
5.	Quality Assurance Audits	
6.	Self-Evaluation Activity	
8.	Improvement Activity	
9.	Professional Discussion Topic	
	REGISTERED SERVICES INSPECTION FEEDBACK	
10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children's Services - Adult Services - Justice Services 	
	PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS	
11.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complaints - Supervision - PDR activity - Research Log - Registration Issues 	
	INFORMATION ITEMS	
12.		
	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
13.	TBC.	

Appendix 4 Professional Governance for Care and Health (Social Work)

Health & Social Care Professional and Regulatory Bodies

National Standards

