



Department  
for Education

**Consultation Response Form**

**Consultation closing date: 9 October 2014  
Your comments must reach us by that date**

# **Knowledge and Skills for Child and Family Social Work – Response Form**

If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information is received, your explanation about why you consider your response to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department for Education ('the Department').

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

<b>Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for confidentiality:	

Name: Nushra Mansuri	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Name of Organisation (if applicable): BASW	
Address: <b>BASW, Head Office, 16 Kent Street, Birmingham B5 6RD</b>	

Which answer best describes you as a respondent?

<input type="checkbox"/> Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Worker	<input type="checkbox"/> LA representative bodies
<input type="checkbox"/> Young person	<input type="checkbox"/> University/FE Provider	<input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary and Community Sector
<input type="checkbox"/> Other employers of social workers (private, voluntary and independent)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other	

I. Please Specify:

BASW is the UK professional association for social work, led by and accountable to a growing population of approximately 16,000 social worker members. Our members work in frontline, management, research and academic positions in all social work settings across the UK. BASW members share a collective commitment to those values and principles that will secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people, adults, families and communities.

1. Is there anything else that should be included in the statement which sets out what a child and family social worker needs to know and be able to do?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

BASW England was in the fortuitous position of being able to comment on the prequel to this document in May 2014 and sent a response on behalf of our Children and Families Reference Group directly to Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker. As you will appreciate from the description above, the membership of BASW is diverse, capturing the very rich and broad context within which social work operates. Our members were therefore dismayed that the comments that we made originally about the need for the statement to embrace the wider spectrum of social workers engaging in children and families social work have not been taken on board as this statement only seems to apply to those working in the statutory sector as opposed to alternative sources of employment i.e. the PVI (private, voluntary and independent). If that is the intention, then this needs to be made explicit; it also begs two fundamental questions:

- 1) Is part of the rationale to deter NQSWs from working in the non-statutory sector? or
- 2) Given that initiatives such as the AYSE are applicable to all employers of social workers, should more than one statement be devised which would better capture the different contexts in which NQSWs may be working in the children's sector?

Since the consultation was launched in July, we have had the opportunity to sample the views of a range of different social work interests including education providers for social work students and also employers. The key message that is strongly coming through from both of these groups is one of consternation in terms of where this statement fits with the overall reform agenda and is this yet another layer of bureaucracy being imposed on what is an already congested area? For example, social work educators tell us that they have been working very hard to map the curricula with the Professional Capabilities Framework and the Standards of Proficiency which has been an enormous task; both of these entities are still relatively new and have not even had the opportunity to bed down properly and so to be confronted by yet another document is staggering. Equally, we are hearing similar comments from those involved in the learning and development of the social workers that their organisations employ. They have spent a lot of time aligning their programmes with the aforementioned criteria as well as making the necessary changes to AYSE as it is developing only to be told that they will be expected to incorporate the statement into their programmes later on in the autumn. **The existing criteria which has to be met by all ASYE candidates illustrates the need for continued learning akin to other professions and we would want to see this preserved and question where this statement fits with this very important principle. BASW is also very committed to the principle of social work being a unified profession throughout the UK regardless of an individual's specialism.** We would therefore, strongly argue that the advent of this statement does not lead to divergent approaches being taken in terms of whichever pathway individuals follow in social work education whether that be within HEIs or in the workplace as we believe that would ultimately be counter-productive and damaging to the social work profession.

Needless to say, the sector is already under enormous pressure as a result of increased demand for its services and in many places depleted resources, so this intervention unfortunately for some can add to a feeling of demoralisation. One of the most debilitating factors for the social work profession in recent decades has been change being instituted based on a deficit model of social work and for many, this is the perception of this statement particularly, as it was a recommendation of the Narey review of social work education and training for children and families social workers. In Sir Martin Narey's report his commentary on both the SoPs and the PCF was not altogether complementary. He was also disparaging of the international definition of social work which we will return to. Conversely, this sharply contrasted with a separate review of social work education carried out by Professor Croisdale-Appelby. Unfortunately, this does not inspire confidence in the sector.

Nevertheless, returning to the views of our immediate membership, the statement was reviewed by BASW England's Children and Families Reference Group and they felt that

it could be a useful document in terms of helping social workers to be more able to articulate what is that they do to the public as we know that the profession is not generally well understood by society at large and so this could be a mechanism for promoting elucidation. However, it should not be regarded as a 'stand alone' document in terms of the curriculum at pre-qualifying level and the expectations for NQSWs; the statement must have synergy with what is already there otherwise there is a danger of producing a 'reductionist' model of social work that ultimately devalues the profession.

In respect of the content, we have a question about semantics and why the statement refers to child and family social work as opposed to the more familiar term of children and families social work. We also said in our response to the prequel to this consultation exercise that there is a distinct absence of the rights of the child and that has not been addressed. There is no reference to the UNCRC which should underpin social work practice with children and young people. There is also no exhortation for social workers to be conversant with relevant European and International legislation, conventions, protocols etc. as well as UK and English legislation and policy. Social work cannot be an insular activity in any jurisdiction and certainly needs to be understood in its fullest context and what this means in practice. Members also felt that it was important that social workers understood the difference between duties and powers and the implications of both.

In essence, BASW wants to know how this statement can be congruent and integrated with what already exists and not conversely create unnecessary turbulence and increased divergence within the profession itself i.e. between social work with adults and social work with children and families. There is also value in the sector not being exposed to constant change but being allowed more settled periods of consolidation so that we can hopefully experience the benefits of following a particular trajectory that isn't constantly changing direction; the social work reform programme after all was initiated by the SWTF and subsequently the SWRB – many partners contributed to this work and would like to see it through to fruition. In this respect, sometimes it is important for the sector to hold its nerve whatever the external pressures – political or otherwise. We know that constant change in the lives of children is unsettling and destabilising; this should not be mirrored in social work services and education and training.

2. Are there any parts of the statement which are not set at the right level for a child and family social worker to be able to know or do, at the end of their first year of practice? If so, what are they?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

Certainly, the feedback that we have amassed does raise questions about expectations and at what point in a NQSW's career they should be knowledgeable about certain aspects of the statements. A number of those we heard from felt that the expectations set out in this document were not commensurate with someone who is only just starting out in their career and that there needs to be a lot more thought about what the appropriate milestones should be in an NQSW's career progression which would span a longer period than 12 months if mapped properly. They maintain that it would take some years to be fully confident and competent in the areas that are highlighted and so unrealistic expectations may inadvertently contribute to more social workers leaving the profession. Lessons that we should learn from the not so distant past are that NQSWs were expected to hit the ground running and take on issues of complexity beyond their experience, knowledge and skills which inevitably led to burnout (a lot of these findings came from the work of the SWTF as well as the Munro Review to some extent). This also fits with the relatively short shelf life of social workers compared to other professions so care must be exercised here if we want to develop an experienced workforce with longevity. Other disciplines do not expect their graduates to have the 'whole package' after a year and take a much longer view when it comes to career progression. A lot of the finer detail therefore, needs to be made clearer and the expectations need to be fair and proportionate. BASW is also strongly of the view that the onus should not exclusively be on the performance of NQSWs but rather a partnership approach is adopted which identifies employers as a key player in the success of NQSWs attaining the required standards. In this respect, it is not only about being an effective social worker but also about operating in an effective working environment. We therefore, cannot stress enough the importance of the 'health check' and the Employers Standards. We are pleased that some of the environmental factors are becoming more of a feature of Ofsted reports but there should also be evidence of NQSWs undergoing processes such as AYSE and an assessment against the proposed statement receiving the necessary support from their employer. It must not become a one dimensional process as this runs the risk of setting up individuals to fail rather than taking a more holistic view about what the key contributing factors are to their 'failure' or 'success' which demands a collaborative approach with according roles and responsibilities.

3. Do you agree that the statement should not prescribe particular social work theories or methodologies?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

We certainly believe that the statement should encourage both NQSWs and students to make good use of social work theories and methodologies encouraging individuals to take a degree of risk in their learning (with support and accountability) rather than being risk averse. One size does not fit all of course so it is not about championing certain theories or methodologies over others as they all have their strengths and weaknesses and can be contingent upon context, culture etc. After all, encouraging social workers to be eclectic and draw from different methods and theories has always been an important principle in social work education and training that we need to retain.

Another central plank to all of this is that employers are genuine 'learning organisations' and subscribe to promoting a learning culture amongst their workforce utilising both the virtual and actual world to create opportunities for the professional development of social workers. Again, this should incorporate how we learn not just locally and nationally but internationally; we live in exciting times in terms of being able to engage with colleagues from across the globe.

Finally, these issues directly correspond with employers duties to support their staff in terms of CPD although we would also expect professional social workers to also take their share of responsibility for learning beyond the workplace as well. Perhaps, the statement could point to a suitable appendix of links to resources which of course would need adding to. BASW for example has a knowledge hub on our website as well as a facility for members to hold e-portfolios of their learning.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

<b>Please acknowledge this reply.</b>	X
E-mail address for acknowledgement: n.mansuri@basw.co.uk	

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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All Department for Education public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key consultation principles are:

- government will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- government will need to give more thought to how they engage with and use real discussion with affected parties and experts as well as the expertise of civil service learning to make well informed decisions
- government should explain what responses they have received and how these have been used in formulating policy
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other methods should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

If you have any comments on how Department for Education (DfE) consultations are conducted, please contact Aileen Shaw, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: [aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 9 October 2014

Send by post to:

Social Work Team, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

Send by e-mail to: [KnowledgeAndSkills.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:KnowledgeAndSkills.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk).