



# **Continuing professional development: validation assessment**

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# Introduction

Continuing professional development (CPD) is the reflection and learning activity that social workers undertake throughout their career to maintain and improve their practice.

By undertaking and recording CPD, social workers demonstrate to us, and to the public, that they meet standard 4 (maintain my CPD) of our [professional standards](#)<sup>1</sup> and that they remain fit to practise.

The requirement to maintain their CPD applies to all registered social workers. This includes people who are:

- on maternity or paternity leave
- not currently working
- in non-social work roles.

Providing evidence of CPD every year is a requirement of renewing your registration.

We also carry out an annual review of CPD submitted by social workers to check that it meets our requirements<sup>2</sup>. We call this review a validation assessment.

This guidance describes the validation assessment process.

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1 Social Work England Professional Standards 2019

2 Social Work England (registration) Rules 2019, rule 53

# The validation assessment process

On 5 January 2021, we will randomly select 2.5% of social workers for validation assessment.

We will exclude some people from the selection process, including social workers who:

- are subject to a fitness to practise investigation.
- have a live sanction of suspension or conditions of practice applied to their registration from fitness to practise proceedings.
- have not been registered continuously since the start of the previous registration year.

Social workers who have been selected for validation assessment will receive a communication from us explaining the next steps. We will not ask social workers to provide any additional CPD information. Instead, we will assess the CPD they have recorded on their online account during the previous registration year.

An anonymised CPD record for each selected social worker will be extracted from their online account. Each CPD record will then be allocated to a CPD assessor.

# Who will carry out the validation assessment?

The validation assessment will be carried out by a team of 10 independent CPD assessors.

The assessors have been recruited under our appointment rules<sup>3</sup> for their experience of working in quality assurance in social work or in a similar setting. 5 of the CPD assessors are registered social workers.

To ensure a robust and consistent approach, all assessors will undertake regular training.

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<sup>3</sup> Social Work England Appointment Rules 2019

# What will be assessed?

The assessor will only look at the CPD record extracted from the social worker's online account. The record will include the following mandatory elements:

- Title of CPD (a short descriptive name for the CPD entry)
- The date that CPD was completed
- What their role was (what they said their role was when doing the CPD)
- What they did (an explanation of what they did or what happened)
- Critical reflection (information about the impact the CPD had on their practice)

Where a social worker has recorded more than 1 piece of CPD, the assessor will look at the first piece of CPD on the system. By first piece we mean the date the CPD itself was completed (not the date the CPD record was created on the system).

Where the structured form has been used, the assessor will have information about how the record meets specific parts of the CPD standard.

Where the unstructured form has been used, the assessor will have information about what specific parts of the CPD standard the social worker says they have met.

The assessor will have additional information where a supporting document has been uploaded.

The assessor will use all the information available to assess whether the social worker is maintaining their CPD.

The assessor will assess the CPD record against 2 questions:

1. Is the CPD record relevant to social work practice?
2. Is there a clear description of the impact that the CPD has had on their practice?

We do not require social workers to meet all 8 parts of the CPD standard. This means that the assessor will not assess which parts of the CPD standard have been met.

If the answer to both questions is 'yes', the CPD will be accepted. This means that the assessor will not look at the other CPD that has been recorded.

If the answer to 1 or both questions is 'no', the CPD will not be accepted. The assessor will then look at the next piece of CPD recorded and so on until a CPD record is assessed as relevant to social work practice and there is a clear description of the impact the CPD has had on practice. If the assessor does not find any CPD which meets the criteria, the social worker's record enters moderation.

# What do we mean by relevant?

We recognise that social workers work in a wide range of roles and settings. Because of this, we have taken a broad approach to relevance and have not defined what types of CPD a social worker should record.

Where a social worker is not currently practising, the assessor will look for the relevance that the CPD will have when the social worker returns to practice.

Where the social worker is in a role where they are not working directly with people with lived experience of social work, the assessor will look for the relevance that the CPD has to the social worker and their practice.

CPD is not just about attending training courses. Although formal training can be an important aspect of learning, CPD can be any activity that a social worker feels would benefit them and their practice.

This can include anything from learning from complaints and understanding where things went wrong, to podcasts and book clubs.

We encourage social workers to think creatively about their learning, including the things they are already doing in their role.

The following parts of the CPD standard set out the learning relevant to social work practice.

## 4.1 Ask for feedback from a range of sources, including from people with lived experience of my social work practice

What should I do?

- Regularly ask for feedback.
- Ask for feedback from a range of people in a variety of ways.

- Reflect on feedback and tell us how you have used what you've learned to make changes to your practice.

## 4.2 Use supervision and feedback to critically reflect on, and identify, my learning needs

What should I do?

- Work with your supervisor or peers to discuss your practice.
- Identify areas for improvement and decide what learning you need.
- Record this and include your personal reflection on how you identified your learning needs.

## 4.3 Keep my practice up to date and record how I use research, theories, and models to inform my practice and my professional judgement

What should I do?

- Use a variety of resources including professional journals, articles, research, blogs and social media.
- When recording your CPD, tell us how you have used these resources and what you've learned to make positive changes to your practice.

## 4.4 Demonstrate good subject knowledge on key aspects of social work practice and develop knowledge of current issues in society and politics impacting on social work

What should I do?

- Be aware of changes in policies, guidance and legislation affecting the way you practice.
- Think about these changes and adapt your practice accordingly.
- Record what you have learned, and tell us how it may affect your practice, and what changes you may need to make.

## 4.5 Contribute to an open learning culture in the workplace to discuss, reflect on and share best practice

What should I do?

- Discuss what you learn with peers, share your learning with others, and inspire them to do the same.
- Help create a culture that encourages the cycle of experience, reflection, learning and change.
- Learn from others and their experiences, including people with lived experience, where possible.

## 4.8 Reflect on my own values and challenge the impact they have on my practice

What should I do?

- Reflect on your values and understand why they are important to you.
- Look at your practice and reflect on the decisions you've made. Relate your decisions back to your values.
- Compare your values against those of others, reflecting on the differences and their impact on your practice.
- Record any reflection, highlighting changes you've made and detailing the impact it's had on your practice.

# What do we mean by impact on practice?

Section 4.6 of the CPD standard describes what we mean by impact on practice.

Where a social worker is not currently practising, the assessor will look for a description of the impact that the CPD will have when the social worker returns to practice.

Where the social worker is in a role where they are not working directly with people with lived experience of social work, the assessor will look for a description of the impact that the CPD has on those they work with, such as students and colleagues.

## 4.6 Reflect on my learning activities and evidence what impact continuous professional development has on the quality of my practice

What should I do?

- Analyse what you did, what happened, what worked well and what did not. Think about what needs to change to improve future outcomes.
- Think about what you got out of the learning and how you apply it to your practice.
- Tell us about the positive changes you have made and the impact they've had.

# Outcome of the assessment

The assessor will record the outcome of the validation assessment.

Where the answer to both questions in the assessment outcome document is 'yes', the outcome is 'accepted'. We will inform the social worker of the outcome. The assessor will not provide any commentary. Where the answer to 1 or both questions is 'no', moderation will be carried out by a second assessor. At this stage, the outcome can be 'accepted' or 'advice given'.

In a small number of cases, the outcome may be that a concern is raised. You can read more about concerns later in this guidance.

## Moderation

Moderation will be completed independently by a second assessor using the same 2 questions:

1. Is the CPD record relevant to social work practice?
2. Is there a clear description of the impact that the CPD has had on their practice?

Where the answer to 1 or both questions is 'no', the outcome will be 'advice given'.

## What happens when the outcome is 'advice given'?

We will contact the social worker with details of the advice provided by the assessor. The social worker will not be required to provide any further information.

The assessor will provide clear advice on why the CPD was not accepted, and ways in which it could have been improved. We will inform the social worker that they should reflect on the advice when recording future CPD.

As the CPD we assessed did not meet our requirements, the social worker will be automatically selected for validation assessment in December 2021, if they apply to renew their registration.

## Concerns

Where the assessor has concerns about the CPD that has been recorded, they will inform the CPD quality assurance manager.

Where the information submitted does not relate to CPD, the social worker will be referred to the head of registration (or their nominated deputy), to consider whether a removal process is appropriate using the procedure set out in our rules<sup>4</sup>.

Where a social worker is dissatisfied with a decision to remove them from the register, they may appeal the decision in line with the procedure set out in our rules<sup>5</sup>.

If, during our validation of the CPD activity, we identify information that might call into question the social worker's fitness to practise, the social worker will be referred to the triage team for consideration under the fitness to practise process.

In most instances, the outcome of a validation assessment will not be made public. However, where a concern is raised and the case is referred to either the registration or fitness to practise teams for further consideration, the outcome of the validation assessment may be published or referred to in their processes, including (potentially) in a decision of the adjudicators.

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<sup>4</sup> Social Work England (Registration – Removal from the Register and Registration Appeals) Rules 2019, part 2.

<sup>5</sup> Social Work England (Registration – Removal from the Register and Registration Appeals) Rules 2019, part 3.

# Data protection

Where the CPD record includes personal data, the CPD record will be removed from the social worker's online account and the social worker will be informed of the action taken and advised about our requirements. The assessor will continue to assess the record.

# Conflict of interest

Where the assessor becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest during a validation assessment, they will immediately inform the CPD quality assurance manager. For example, where the assessor knows the social worker, or they have a relationship with the employer of the social worker whose record they are assessing.

If there is a potential conflict of interest, the social worker's CPD record will be re-allocated to a different assessor for validation.

# Annex 1: Validation assessment process

## CPD validation

Social Work England system randomly selects 2.5% of social workers for validation. These are allocated to an assessor.

