



**Scottish Social Services Council**

**POST REGISTRATION TRAINING AND  
LEARNING REQUIREMENTS FOR NEWLY  
QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS**

**Guidance Notes for Employers**

**July 2010**

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# **POST REGISTRATION TRAINING AND LEARNING REQUIREMENTS FOR NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS**

## **GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS**

### **Introduction**

This guidance provides advice for employers about the Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) requirements set by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) for newly qualified social workers (NQSWs).

It also provides guidance about how employers might support NQSWs to meet PRTL requirements and further advice in that regard is provided in the following documents:

- the SSSC's PRTL Guidance for Newly Qualified Social Workers
- the generic guidance and induction toolkit, Preparing for Practice – Induction Guidance for Employers, which can be accessed on line at [www.sssc.uk.com/preparingforpractice/](http://www.sssc.uk.com/preparingforpractice/)
- the Continuous Learning Framework [www.sssc.uk.com/Education+and+training/Continuous+Learning+Framework/Continuous+Learning+Framework.htm](http://www.sssc.uk.com/Education+and+training/Continuous+Learning+Framework/Continuous+Learning+Framework.htm)

### **Requirements and responsibilities of NQSWs and their employer**

Once students have successfully completed their social work training they are eligible to apply for registration in the part of the Register for social workers. Employers are reminded that if they employ individuals who have recently completed their social work training but have not yet gained registration on the part of the Register for social workers, such workers may not use the title "social worker".

All social work graduates embarking on a career in social service work should apply for registration in the part of the Register for social workers even if they intend to take up posts in social service work which have titles other than "social worker". The term "newly qualified social worker" (shortened to NQSW) will be used throughout this guidance for workers who have successfully completed their social work training and have gained registration in the SSSC Register in the part for social workers. It is not meant to imply that all social work graduates will be employed in posts entitled "social worker".

## **Registration of NQSWs**

From June 2009, all Social Work graduates are registered for a period of 3 years. Social work graduates who intend to work full-time in social service work will have agreed, as part of the application process for registration, to complete 24 days (144 hours) of PRTL within 12 months of the date on which their registration was granted. After they have completed their first 12 months of practice and their PRTL they must submit evidence of this on the Record of Achievement form. The Record of Achievement form must be submitted to the SSSC on or before the 14 month anniversary of the date on which their registration was granted.

Graduates who are not intending to work full time ie 35 hours a week, will have agreed, as part of the application process for registration to complete 24 days (144 hours) of PRTL within 18 months of the date on which their registration was granted. This allows them an additional six months to complete their PRTL. After they have completed their first 18 months of practice and their PRTL they must submit evidence of this on the Record of Achievement form. The Record of Achievement form must be submitted to the SSSC on or before the 20 month anniversary of the date on which their registration was granted.

During the remainder of the 3 year period of registration, they must all complete a further 10 days of PRTL

A significant proportion of NQSWs are late in submitting their PRTL Record of Achievement and their application to renew their registration. Therefore, it would be helpful if employers could take note of relevant dates and monitor that their NQSWs have complied with registration requirements in order to avoid any unnecessary difficulties about a worker's continued right to use the title "social worker". Although this information is provided to NQSWs when they are registered, our experience to date is that a significant number of NQSWs have submitted their PRTL Record of Achievement and their application to renew their registration late.

## **Post Registration Training and Learning requirements**

The PRTL that NQSWs are required to undertake can consist of study, training courses, seminars, reading, teaching or other activities eg shadowing work colleagues, which could reasonably be expected to assist social work graduates to consolidate their knowledge, skills and values in social work practice. To allow for flexibility PRTL can be accounted for either as full days/part days or in hours.

At least five days (30 hours) of the PRTL activity must focus on working effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk to vulnerable groups. This is in order to ensure that NQSWs are assisted to meet their primary responsibility of protecting **both** children **and** adults from harm irrespective of their practice context.

## **Change of employment during the first period of registration**

Where a NQSW decides to change employment within their first period of registration, they should ask the employer they are leaving to countersign their PRTL form in respect of any PRTL they have completed during that employment and to identify any areas of required development.

## **Countersigning of PRTL Record of Achievement proforma**

The PRTL record of achievement should be signed by the NQSW's line manager.

Each NQSW PRTL Record of Achievement is checked to ensure the required number of hours has been completed and that the PRTL has been endorsed and countersigned appropriately. Each Record of Achievement is then read by an SSSC Learning and Development Adviser, who will give brief written feedback, which is included in a letter informing the NQSW whether he/she has met the registration requirements. If they have not met the requirements, clear guidance will be given about what additional evidence is required and within what timescale

We think it is helpful for immediate line managers of NQSWs to be aware of the feedback provided to their staff member where additional evidence is being requested. Therefore, the Record of Achievement form includes a request for the name and address of the NQSW's immediate line manager. A copy of the form can be found on the web site:

<http://www.sssc.uk.com/sssc/all-about-registration-for-social-workers/social-workers-post-registration-training-and-learning-prtl.html>

Where a NQSW has more than one employer each employer must endorse the application for renewal of registration and countersign the PRTL Record of Achievement.

Completion of PRTL is a mandatory requirement. However, the SSSC recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances, such as an extended period of sick leave that would leave a NQSW unable to fully complete their PRTL. In such circumstances the NQSW will be required to submit a PRTL Record of Achievement for training they have undertaken and to provide an explanation in writing to the SSSC for their failure to complete their PRTL. The SSSC will consider the explanation and will ask the relevant employer to comment on it before determining the worker's application for renewal of registration.

### **Endorsement of applications for renewal of registration**

The lead SSSC countersignatory for the organisation employing the NQSW is asked to:

- endorse the application for renewal of registration to state that she/he knows of no reason why the SSSC should not be assured of the competence and good character of the NQSW, and their suitability for continued registration

The SSSC recognises that lead countersignatories will have to consult with the immediate line managers of workers and other relevant staff in order to provide the required endorsement. However, given the importance of this endorsement, the SSSC considers it appropriate that this is provided by a suitably senior representative of the organisation.

### **Renewal of registration**

The SSSC will renew a NQSW's registration for a further three years where:

- their application for renewal of registration is endorsed by the relevant lead countersignatory
- their PRTL Record of Achievement is countersigned by their line manager
- there are no changes in their circumstances that call into question their good character, conduct and competence
- they have paid the relevant renewal fee
- their Record of Achievement has been found to be satisfactory.

## **Referral to a Registration Sub-committee**

A NQSW's application for renewal of registration may be referred to a Registration Sub-committee for its consideration and determination of the worker's continued suitability for registration where:

- the worker has not completed the required PRTL and, in the view of the SSSC, the reasons given for non-completion do not amount to an excusable cause for failure to comply with the SSSC's Registration Rules and/or
- the worker's PRTL is not suitably countersigned and/or
- the worker's application for renewal of registration is not suitably endorsed and/or
- the endorser has provided further information in relation to the worker's suitability for registration and/or
- the SSSC is aware of changes in the NQSW's circumstances which may call into question their suitability for registration.

A Registration Sub-committee may decide to renew registration for a specified period, renew registration subject to conditions or refuse renewal of registration in accordance with Registration and Conduct Rules.

If a Registration Sub-committee determines that a worker's application for renewal of registration should be refused the employer must take appropriate action ie the worker should no longer be employed in a post that requires a professional qualification in social work and may no longer call herself/himself a social worker.

## **The responsibilities of the NQSW in planning and completing PRTL**

NQSWs will receive information about the PRTL requirements in the registration pack they receive once they have been granted registration in the part of the Register for social workers. It is important that NQSWs recognise that they have a personal professional responsibility for maintaining and developing their social work knowledge, skills and values.

To reinforce the personal nature of this responsibility it is important that employers encourage NQSWs to take a pro-active approach to identifying their learning and development needs and how they might be met through PRTL. The individual learning plan which NQSWs will bring with them from their course should be the starting point for planning their PRTL.

## **Employer support for NQSWs to meet PRTL**

The purpose of the extended period of PRTL for NQSWs is to ensure that all relevant workers are assisted to consolidate their social work knowledge, skills and values in their first year of practice as qualified social workers. Employers of NQSWs are expected under the SSSC's Code of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers to assist registered workers to continue their professional development. The focus of PRTL should be on providing learning and development opportunities that will assist NQSWs to understand the objectives and responsibilities of their employing organisation, to meet the requirements of their post and to consolidate and grow in confidence in applying their social work skills, knowledge and values.

Organisations that have appointed a number of NQSWs may find it helpful to arrange for them to undertake some training together and to meet on a regular basis to share experiences and ideas, and to reflect on their practice and their learning and development. Where organisations have appointed only one or a small number of NQSWs they might look to offer such learning through collaboration with neighbouring social service employers.

It is essential that all NQSWs understand that they must practise in accordance with the SSSC's Code of Practice for Social Service Workers and are aware of the requirements placed on employers through the SSSC's Code of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers.

As part of planning PRTL, NQSWs and their managers will also want to consider the training being provided for social workers by their organisation and decide, with regard to content and level, which courses it would be relevant and appropriate for the NQSWs to complete. The participation of NQSWs in mainstream training would provide helpful opportunities for them to network with and learn from more experienced colleagues.

Self-directed learning and private study are important components of continuing professional development and provide an opportunity for workers to research and learn more about practice issues that are of particular interest to them and/or to keep up to date with general developments in the fields of social care and social work. The allocation of PRTL time for such activities is acceptable. It may be helpful to enable NQSWs to share and discuss their learning from their private study with other newly qualified workers to provide a focus for such learning and to help contribute to the learning of their colleagues.

## **Reflection**

The PRTL guidance provided for NQSWs emphasises the importance of them reflecting on their learning and development and clearly explaining how it has assisted them to think, write and act reflectively. It would be helpful if supervisors of NQSWs could encourage their staff to reflect on their learning and development and record these reflections throughout their first year in practice.

## **Protection of children and adults from harm**

NQSWs are required to focus a minimum of five days (30 hours) of their PRTL on working effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk to vulnerable groups. This is to ensure that they are assisted to meet their primary responsibility of protecting **both children and adults** from harm, irrespective of their practice context.

It is very important that NQSWs understand and are confident about meeting their responsibilities in relation to the protection of both children and adults from harm. PRTL should enable NQSWs to understand their employer's policies and procedures for child and adult protection and their specific responsibilities in relation to both of them. NQSWs working primarily with children must show some focus in their PRTL on the protection of adults and vice versa.

## **Responsibilities of line managers of NQSWs in relation to PRTL**

In some organisations training and development staff may assist in the process of identifying learning needs and helping to plan PRTL but it is important that the line managers of NQSWs understand their role in assisting their new members of staff to develop and grow more competent and confident in their social work practice.

Supervision will be a key component in the development of NQSWs and it is important that it encourages workers to analyse and reflect on their developing practice as well as consulting on their caseload. Where a NQSW is line managed by a non-social worker it will be important to ensure that they have access to consultation with a registered social worker throughout their first period of registration to assist them to reflect on their developing role as a social worker.

Line managers of NQSWs will play a key role in making recommendations to the SSSC lead countersignatory in their organisation about how the NQSWs they manage have completed their PRTL and their suitability or

otherwise, for continued registration. It will be important that line managers check throughout the year that NQSWs are recording their PRTL and their explanation of how it has helped them to consolidate their social work knowledge, skills and values and assisted them to contribute to the protection of children and adults from harm.

For further information please contact the SSSC's Registration team [registration@sssc.uk.com](mailto:registration@sssc.uk.com)

Telephone: 0845 60 30 891

If you would like to request this document in another format, please contact the SSSC on: 0845 60 30 891 or email [enquiries@sssc.uk.com](mailto:enquiries@sssc.uk.com)