



**SUMMARY OF
THE FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING
IN SOCIAL SERVICES**

Introduction

On 3 December 2008 the Minister for Children and Early Years launched the Continuous Learning Framework (CLF). The CLF was developed by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) through a process of robust consultation with the social service sector. The CLF aims to improve the quality of outcomes for people using social services by supporting the workforce who are delivering them to be the best they can be. The CLF is for everyone working in social services in Scotland whether in the public, private or voluntary sectors. There are also clear links to relevant Frameworks for staff from other disciplines and the CLF has the potential to support multi-agency working.

The CLF is not mandatory but the Scottish Government is keen to see ownership of it across the social service sector as a key resource for achieving the vision of a competent, confident and valued workforce, capable of delivering high quality services. The CLF is not intended to replace the systems and processes which many organisations already have in place but to enhance their effectiveness.

The CLF sets out what people working in social services need to do their jobs well now and in the future and what their employer needs to do to support them. It has four key areas:

1. Knowledge, skills, values and understanding

The knowledge, skills, values and understanding required for each role in social services are already shaped in a number of ways at national and local level. For example, the National Occupational Standards, the standards underpinning specific qualifications and awards and the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers are already used by many organisations to help them describe these requirements for different job roles. Many organisations also have internal requirements which are included in an employee's induction and developed as needed throughout their career, eg knowledge of organisational policies and procedures.

2. Qualifications and training

The qualifications and training a person requires will also vary depending on their job role. The qualifications required for each role will largely be determined by the SSSC's registration requirements. Each employer is also likely to have requirements for training that are specific to their particular organisation and to particular job roles, eg training relating to health and safety or the protection of vulnerable children and adults.

These two key areas are already well developed in Scotland and the CLF does not explore them in detail but rather directs the sector to where they can find out more if required. The next two key areas have been developed specifically for the CLF and their aim is to build on the first two.

3. Personal capabilities

The personal capabilities describe the ways in which people manage themselves and their relationships with others in the workplace. The SSSC and IRISS chose to focus on these because there is evidence that it is their personal capabilities that enable people to put their knowledge, skills, values and understanding and their qualifications and training into practice throughout their career and to continuously learn and improve their practice. By supporting employees to build on their personal capabilities we can have the most positive impact on people who use social services. There are thirteen personal capabilities, some of which relate to how people manage their relationships with others and the remainder to how they manage themselves. The personal capabilities are:

Managing relationships:

- a focus on people who use services and their carers
- working in partnership
- motivating and leading others
- empathy
- dealing with conflict.

Managing self:

- professional autonomy
- lifelong learning
- flexibility
- confidence
- resilience
- accurate self-assessment
- awareness of impact on others
- organisational awareness.

In the CLF, each of the personal capabilities is described across four stages of progression which are engaged, established, accomplished and exemplary. There are a number of indicators under each of the stages of progression which describe what each personal capability might look like and provide ways in which each stage could be evidenced.

4. Organisational capabilities

An individual can be committed to doing a good job but unless they are part of an organisation that supports them to learn it can be difficult for them to make the most of their capabilities. The organisational capabilities describe the culture and conditions in the workplace that enable social service workers to be the best they can be. The six organisational capabilities are:

- creating a learning and performance culture
- planning for learning, development and improved practice
- promoting access to learning and development opportunities
- promoting access to feedback
- treating people with dignity and respect
- focusing on health and wellbeing.

Each of the organisational capabilities is set out in two sections. The first describes how the organisation might demonstrate the capability and the second what the social service worker should experience as a result of this. Each organisational capability is also described across the same four stages of progression as the personal capabilities using a number of indicators. The SSSC and IRISS have worked with the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) and the Care Commission to make sure that there are links to the former's Performance Inspection Model (PIM) and the latter's Quality Themes and Statements.

Using the Framework in practice

The Framework can help social service workers to:

- identify their learning needs in a way which takes account of the demands of their current job role, their own particular areas for development and their career aspirations
- provide evidence of the impact their learning has had on their practice, eg for Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL)
- be clear what they can expect their employer to do to support their learning
- engage meaningfully with and gain the most from employee development processes such as induction, supervision, performance appraisal and personal development planning

- recognise and gain recognition for their progress and identify areas where they can further improve their practice
- gain recognition for their prior informal learning
- meet their responsibilities set out in the **Code of Practice for Social Service Workers**.

The Framework can help social service employers to:

- systematically and fairly identify and meet the learning needs of all employees
- prepare workers for undertaking qualifications required for registration with the SSSC
- recruit the right people and retain them
- continuously improve their service
- evaluate their own performance and provide evidence for external scrutiny
- involve people who use services and their carers in the planning and delivery of personalised services, the development of staff and the continuous improvement of the service
- meet their responsibilities set out in the **Code of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers**.

A number of organisations are already using the CLF in practice. One organisation is Angus Council who have used it to further strengthen their performance appraisal and supervision processes. Staff and their line managers have found that using the personal capabilities in supervision discussions has made these more meaningful. The personal capabilities have enabled line managers to focus on how staff put their knowledge, skills, values, understanding, qualifications and training into practice, resulting in better outcomes for people who use services. For staff the process of supervision has become a more shared experience. One member of staff working in home care was featured at the launch of the CLF where she spoke of growing in confidence through this process and the positive impact this has had on people who use services.

Embedding the CLF in practice across the social service sector

The Scottish Government is providing additional resources to the SSSC to support social service employers and workers to use the CLF in practice in a way which best meets their needs in their own context. We are working with the four Scottish Social Services Learning Networks to:

- raise awareness of the CLF across the social service sector
- make sure that social service workers and their employers have the information they need to decide how they could best use the CLF in their own context

- develop a website which will provide information about the CLF itself, the support available and examples of how others are using it in practice
- set up support networks
- develop tools to support the use of the CLF in practice
- make links between the CLF and other initiatives in the social service sector
- evaluate the impact of the CLF in practice.

More information

You can download the CLF from the SSSC website (www.sssc.uk.com) where you will also find more information on the Framework. A section of the website dedicated to the CLF will be available soon.

To request copies of the CLF (paper copies and CDs are available) please contact Shirley Gibson on tel: 01382 207170 or email: shirley.gibson@sssc.uk.com

If you are interested in using the CLF, a member of the CLF project team at the SSSC would be happy to meet with you to explore further how you might use it in your own setting. The project team consists of:

- Fiona Clark, Senior Learning and Development Adviser, who can be contacted on 01382 207218 or email: fiona.clark@sssc.uk.com
- Wilma Paterson, Project Officer, who can be contacted on 01382 207380 or email: wilma.paterson@sssc.uk.com

If you are already using the CLF, we would really like to hear how you are using it and what difference it is making. So please contact a member of the project team.

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