

## Return to practice (RTP) guidance for social workers

Social workers are engaged in practice that covers a wide range of functions from early intervention to securing people's safety. They need to draw on a range of appropriate knowledge, skills and evidence when making decisions. They need to hold an extensive range of knowledge, theory, policy and legislation as well as the skills and confidence to be able to manage the ethical dilemmas, complexity, competing demands and expectations of their professional role.

RTP requirements will support those who have been out of social work practice and not registered for over two years, to upskill their knowledge, skills and competence. The return to practice process will support workers to build their confidence, put their learning into practice and evidence that their practice is up to date.

RTP requirements ensure that we continue to support and enhance the development of registered social workers and provides those they support, their carers and families with the confidence that they are fit to practise. It is essential that social workers returning to practice have the necessary knowledge and skill to effectively deliver the range of clear and reserved functions social workers are accountable for. The importance of outcomes for people social workers support is at the forefront of these requirements. It will ensure those carrying out statutory duties under the protected title of social worker are competent and confident to do so.

## Return to practice requirements



If you are a social worker returning to practice, for you to register, we will require you to evidence your learning across four themes of knowledge and skills as part of your application. You can evidence the requirements through observed practice, formal and informal learning. The hours/days of learning you are required to evidence is tiered according to the length of time you have been out of practice. You will be required to submit evidence of the learning and practice

completed to meet the requirements in the required format. Any learning submitted as evidence of meeting the RTP requirements must have taken place within the 12 months before the date of application for registration.

## Hours

### Hours

#### **Less than 2 years:**

No additional return to practice requirements only CPL requirements for social workers would need to be completed.

#### **2 - 5 years out of practice: 180 hours required**

- Supervised Practice : Minimum of 60 hours (ten days of 6 hours)
- Informal Learning: Minimum 60 hours (but no more than 90)
- Formal Learning: minimum of 60 hours

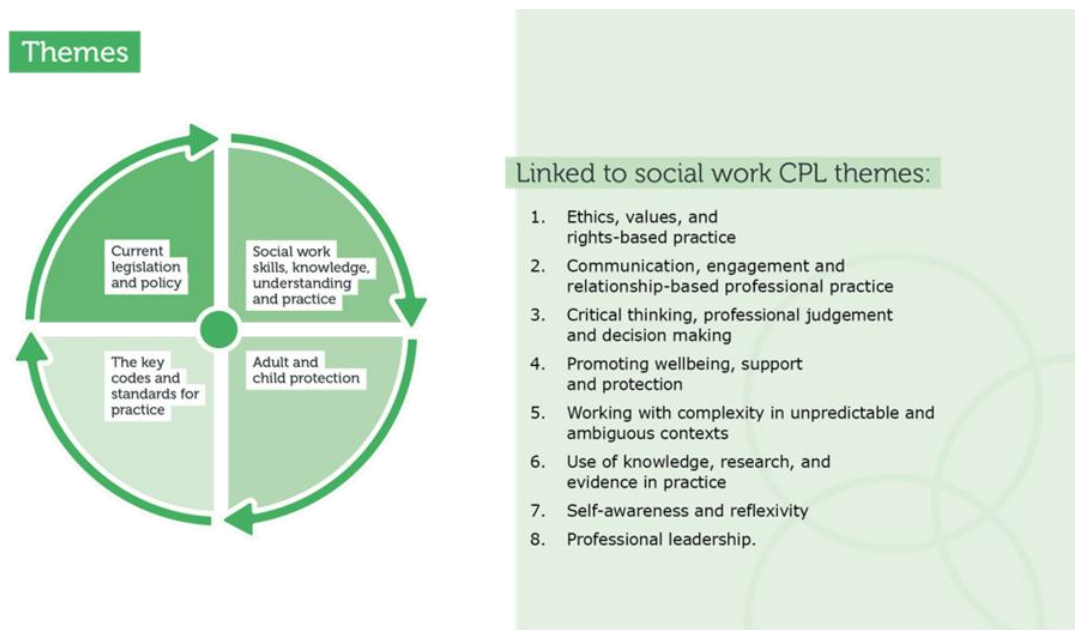
#### **5 + years out of practice : 360 hours required**

- Supervised Practice: minimum of 120 hours (20 days of 6 hours)
- Informal Learning: minimum of 120 hours (but no more than 180)
- Formal Learning: minimum of 120 hours

There is a tiered approach to the requirements depending on how long it is since you were last registered as a social worker. There will be no requirement for anyone who has been out of practice and off the Register for less than two years.

You can evidence the requirements through informal learning, formal learning and supervised practice. We will accept a combination of the three ways of evidencing learning, but to ensure that your skills and knowledge are appropriately updated, no more than 50% of your learning can be informal. You must also complete the minimum observed practice days required to allow you enough learning opportunities to meet the themes of the requirements.

## Themes



We expect any learning presented as evidence of meeting the required hours to cover the following four themes:

- current legislation and policy
- social work skills, knowledge, understanding and practice
- the key codes and standards for practice
- adult and child protection.

Return to practice is a recognised pathway within the new CPL process. The eight CPL core learning elements for all social workers regardless of career stage or role are:

- Ethics, values, and rights-based practice
- Communication, engagement and relationship-based professional practice
- Critical thinking, professional judgement and decision making
- Promoting wellbeing, support and protection
- Working with complexity in unpredictable and ambiguous contexts
- Use of knowledge, research, and evidence in practice
- Self-awareness and reflexivity
- Professional leadership.

The core learning elements build on the Standards in Social Work Education (SISWE) and are underpinned by the same ethical principles.

To help you meet the RTP requirements, and your CPL requirements for your first year of registration, we have mapped the social work CPL core learning elements under each of the RTP themes in the table below. You can find further descriptors of the core learning elements for social work in our CPL guidance.

<b>Return to Practice Requirement themes</b>	<b>Current legislation and policy</b>	<b>Social work skills, knowledge, understanding and practice</b>	<b>The key codes and standards for practice</b>	<b>Adult and child protection</b>
Social work core learning elements	<p>Ethics, values, and right-based practice</p> <p>Promoting wellbeing, support, and protection</p> <p>Working with complexity in unpredictable and ambiguous contexts</p> <p>Use of knowledge, research, and evidence in practice</p>	<p>Ethics, values, and right-based practice</p> <p>Communication, engagement, and relationship-based professional practice</p> <p>Critical thinking, professional judgement and decision making</p> <p>Working with complexity in unpredictable and ambiguous contexts</p> <p>Use of knowledge, research, and evidence in practice</p> <p>Self-awareness and reflexivity</p> <p>Professional leadership</p>	<p>Ethics, values, and right-based practice</p> <p>Critical thinking, professional judgement and decision making</p> <p>Promoting wellbeing, support, and protection</p> <p>Self-awareness and reflexivity</p>	<p>Ethics, values, and right-based practice</p> <p>Communication, engagement, and relationship-based professional practice</p> <p>Critical thinking, professional judgement and decision making</p> <p>Promoting wellbeing, support, and protection</p>

## **Theme descriptors**

### **Current legislation and policy**

This theme requires you to evidence learning that includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that your knowledge is up to date about how statutory social work is governed/led by relevant policy, legislation and national guidance. For example, learning around social work statutory duties within mental health, adults with incapacity, child protection and adult support and protection legislation. Evidence for this theme should include knowledge of the policy landscape and key current policy, for example Getting it Right for Every Child and Promoting Excellence, and what this means for social work practice. You are required to evidence how you have/will put your completed learning into practice.

### **Social work skills, knowledge, understanding and practice**

As a returning social worker, you will bring transferable skills, knowledge and experiences from previous periods of registration, study and employment. This theme requires you to evidence what learning you have undertaken to build on your previous knowledge and skills to bring your practice up to date to ensure that you are confident and competent in your ability to carry out the key functions of the social work role, including professional decision making and managing risk.

Resources you might use include My Learning Badges and recently published research. Supervised practice will allow you to critically reflect on this theme and reflect on your learning. You may wish to explore specific learning for specialist areas of practice in your learning. You may also want to use this theme to critically reflect on any particular issues or reasons you left practice and if there is an emotional impact on your own wellbeing as you return to social work.

### **The key codes and standards for practice**

You will need to ensure that you are confident and competent in your knowledge about the relevant codes of practice and standards that you will be working to. This will include, but is not limited to the SSSC Codes of Practice, the Standards in Social Work Education and the Health and Social Care Standards. Specialist learning and role specific practice standards that underpin different areas of social work practice may be relevant for this theme. For example, the National outcomes and standards for social work services in the criminal justice system.

### **Adult and child protection**

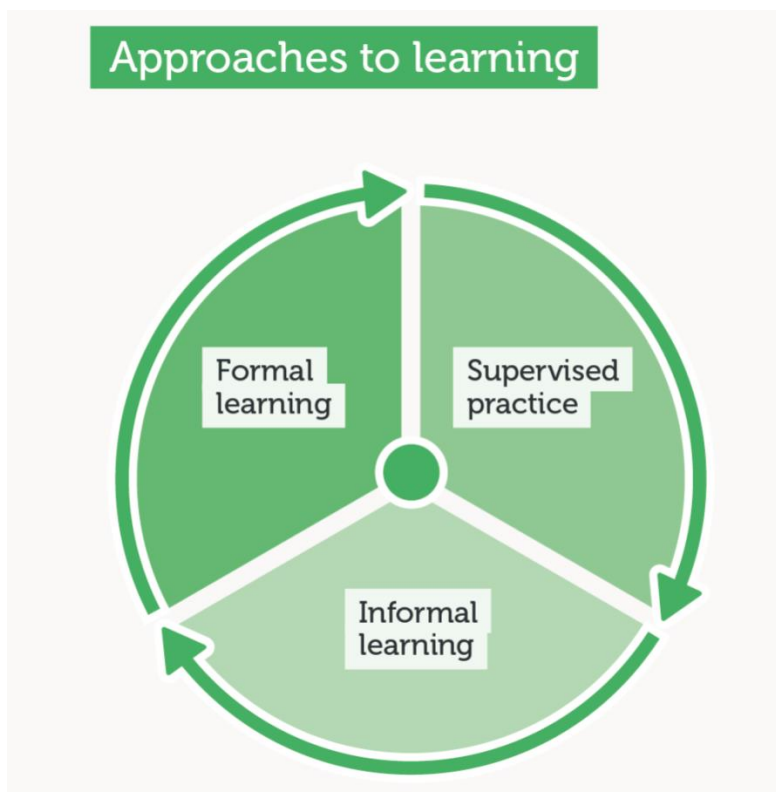
Every registered social worker must engage in learning that helps their understanding of how their role contributes to the wellbeing and protection of children and adults from harm, regardless of setting or role.

Under this theme you must ensure that your learning brings you up to date with current adult and child protection legislation and guidance and your responsibilities as a social worker. You must evidence how you have refreshed

your own learning in relation to national statutory guidance and any legislative changes since you were last registered. Supervised practice will provide you with the opportunity to evidence how you have put that learning into practice and demonstrate your competence and confidence in delivering organisational protecting people policies and procedures.

If you hold a specialist award that allows you to carry out reserved statutory duties, such as acting as a mental health officer (MHO), we expect you to meet the practice requirements for this and ensure you have completed any learning necessary to carry out these functions.

## Approaches to learning



You can evidence the RTP requirements through formal learning, informal learning and supervised practice.

### Formal learning

This can take the form of learning through an accredited course, such as one completed through an HEI (higher education institution). It can also take the form of learning completed through a work-based environment that is certificated or evidenced through an employer or learning provider. It must be a course that is relevant to social work practice and the themes identified in the requirements. We will accept any formal learning you complete within 12 months of applying to register. If you are still undertaking this formal learning at time of application, you can submit evidence from the learning provider or employer of hours/credits and learning completed to date towards meeting this requirement.

## **Informal learning**

This can take the form of any private learning that is directly related to social work practice that meets the RTP themes. You should record a reflective account of learning, alongside the time taken for you to complete the learning. Informal learning can include but is not limited to learning about your organisation, conversations with colleagues, team meetings, shadowing, learning for new work through books, research, reading and listening to books, journals, articles, podcasts, programmes etc. This learning should have taken place within 12 months of your application to register.

## **Supervised practice**

This must take the form of practice at a social worker level/function, which is supervised by someone who is a registered social worker. This can take the form of any relevant practice that social workers in Scotland do. You can undertake the supervised practice in any setting that is relevant to social work practice. It must take place in the 12 months before applying for registration. We would accept evidence from a placement or paid employment in a role related to social work, such as social work assistant, if you have undertaken the period of practice with the supervision of a registered social worker.

It could include:

- providing information, support and guidance to service users and their families
- undertaking or shadowing assessments
- care planning
- applying legislation
- signposting and liaising with other agencies.
- attending team and multi-disciplinary meetings
- case recording
- training sessions
- shadowing social workers and other professionals
- any other activities relevant to the setting.

## Evidence of required learning

### Evidence for learning

#### **Supervised Practice**

Endorsed and signed off by a social worker

#### **Formal Learning**

Certified or work based learning completed

#### **Informal Learning**

Reflective accounts of learning



You must submit records of all your learning to the SSSC in the required format as part of your application for registration. We will accept learning completed within 12 months of application as evidence.

### **Formal learning**

You must submit evidence of course/learning completed and it must meet the minimum hours required. This can include evidence of academic modules, certificates, degrees, diplomas, courses that have been run by your own organisation or another, or online learning that is certified. This evidence can be in the form of certification of the learning completed but you must include supporting information about length and content of courses to ensure that the minimum hours for this part of the return to practice requirement are met.

### **Informal learning**

You should keep a record of any informal learning you have undertaken. For each learning record you must include a description of the learning, the hours completed, a reflective account of how this learning has supported your return to practice and the RTP theme it relates to.

### **Supervised practice**

Supervised practice involves working under the supervision of a registered social worker.

We don't specify the activities you must do as part of your supervised practice, however, they must relate to activities that social workers do in Scotland.

The supervisor who oversees your supervised practice must be registered as a social worker and must not be subject to any fitness to practise investigation, sanctions or interim orders.

You will need to keep a record of all the supervised practice you carry out to evidence you have met the requirements.

You will need to provide the following information about your supervisor:

- contact details name of the regulatory body they are registered with



- their registration number

The evidence that you submit must include the following:

- a list of the activity (or activities) you have completed and a detailed description of the activity
- confirmation of the hours you have completed
- a description of how this learning met one or more of the RTP themes
- evidence that you have updated your skills and knowledge in more than one theme.

Your supervisor must verify that you carried out the work and that you have met all four themes across all the hours required for your return to practice. You should submit this verification and information to the SSSC in the required format as evidence that you have met the requirements.