

Consultation

Capabilities Statement for social workers
in England who work with older people

April 2017



About the statement

Methodology

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is leading the development of a **Capabilities Statement** for social workers, who work with older people. The Capabilities Statement will set out the knowledge, skills and values that social workers need to work well with older people.

The Statement for consultation has been co-produced with stakeholders, including social workers and older people, those who support them as informal carers and family members, and relevant organisations. They build on existing frameworks, evidence and good practice.

- We have reviewed evidence and guidance, including existing standards and frameworks, research about what supports older people and practice documents
- We have gathered feedback from an External Reference Group of representatives of social work, social care and older people's organisations
- We have gathered views from older people and from social workers in a series of forums and through a Special Interest Group of people who responded to our website.

Main messages

The main messages that we received so far are:

- People welcome a capabilities statement to explain what good looks like, what older people can expect, and what social workers can offer
- The statement needs to fit with other frameworks and should not duplicate them, especially the Knowledge and Skills Statement for social workers with adults, and the Professional Capabilities Framework
- It would be useful to link the capabilities to the areas (domains) in the Professional Capabilities Framework
- The statement should say what *additionally* social workers with older people need to know and be able to do, rather than repeating all the other frameworks
- The statement should address all levels of someone's career, and particularly focus on social workers and experienced social workers that work directly with older people
- Social workers who work with older people often work with younger people too, so may end up with a number of different frameworks that they are using; again this means that it would be helpful to say what additionally is needed for work with older people
- Social work with older people is wide-ranging and changing, so there needs to be some flexibility in the statement – with headline descriptions of capabilities and then a range of areas to consider
- The statement will be useful for other social care staff working with older people.

There were consistent themes in the knowledge, skills and values that people identified for social workers who work with older people

About the consultation

Your response

This consultation is for anyone who has an interest in social work with older people . It gives you a chance to look at the draft capabilities statement and comment on it.

There are specific questions, however all comments are useful.

You do not have to comment on the whole document.

Please respond by **5pm on 26 April 2017**

Please email your response to Zan Hoang z.hoang@basw.co.uk

Next steps

Views will be analysed and the statement will be updated and then launched on 23 May 2017.

The statement will be owned by the social work profession, through BASW, endorsed by the Department of Health and implemented by the sector. It will provide a national practice excellence framework for social work with older people.

We will then start to develop the Continuing Professional Development pathway. The Pathway will set out the roles that older people's social workers can have at different stages of their career. It will outline how social workers can develop expertise, and how they will demonstrate this as they move from qualification through their career.

Consultation

1. About you

Name (if you are happy to share this)

Role

Email (if you are happy to share this)

Are you replying as an individual or on behalf of a group?

2. The statement

“It is important that it isn’t assumed that anyone can work with older people; older people deserve to have people with the right knowledge and skills working with them. Some of the knowledge and skills is the same as for working with other people, but there are some specialist elements too.” (Older people’s feedback, Birmingham forum)

A. Definitions

Social work with older people is concerned with maintaining and enhancing the quality of life and wellbeing of older people and their families and with promoting dignity, choice and independence. For specialist social workers with older people the core ‘skill set’ that all social workers possess is supplemented by an additional set of specialist skills as well as specialist knowledge (Milne et al 2013).

Older people are often defined by service providers as people over 65 years old or people who have retired. However, older people are a large and very varied group with different experiences of ageing.

Social work – helps adults and children to be safe so they can cope and take control of their lives again. Social workers - make life better for people in crisis who are struggling to cope, feel alone and cannot sort out their problems unaided.¹ All social workers may work either directly or indirectly with older people, their carers, families and close ones.

There is a **glossary** for acronyms at the end of the statement.

Question 1: Are these definitions helpful?

Answer.....

¹ Social work Task Force (2010) *Building a safe, confident future*

B. Purpose of the capabilities statement

It's important for social workers to know what we expect and need, so they know if they're doing a good job and can be measured on it. (Older person, Bristol forum)

The Capabilities Statement sets out the knowledge, skills and values that are essential for excellent social work with older people, their carers, families and people close to them. They set expectations and clarify what social work can offer.

The Statement sets out standards for excellent work. Achieving the standards will require individual efforts by social workers and also the necessary support from educators, managers, employers and government.

This capabilities statement will be enhanced by a Continuing Professional Development Pathway that will set out the roles that older people's social workers may fulfil at different stages of their career. It will outline how social workers can develop expertise and how they will demonstrate this as they move from attaining their professional qualification through their career.

Question 2: Any comments on this section?

Answer.....

C. How the capabilities statement fits with other frameworks

Social workers who work with older people do not currently have a set of capabilities for this specialism or a clear pathway to acquire and demonstrate expertise. These capabilities are one element of responding to that gap. The focus is on what good looks like for older people. These capabilities are *additional* to the capabilities set out in other frameworks and aim to build on them (see below).

Stage of career	Current frameworks	These capabilities
At qualification	PCF pre-qualifying levels Qualifying course Registration standards	Additional capabilities for all social workers to develop when undertaking generic pre-qualifying education and training
End of first year of qualifying	PCF End of ASYE Knowledge and Skills statement for adults' social workers	Additional capabilities for social workers working with adults to develop in their first year of practice
Social worker	PCF Social Worker	Statement of additional capabilities for social workers working with older people who wish to develop a special interest in this area of work
Experienced social worker	PCF Experienced social worker AMHP BIA Practice Educator award Other specialist qualifications	
Advanced level	PCF Advanced level Knowledge and Skills statement for Practice Supervisors (forthcoming) Management courses Educator courses Advanced social worker courses	Additional capabilities for advanced level social workers in older people's services
Strategic level	PCF Strategic level Principal social worker training Leadership courses Educational leadership	Additional capabilities for strategic level social workers in roles that cover older people's services

The key capabilities statement is for social workers working in older people's services where comprehensive knowledge, skills and values relating to older people is most required. Social workers develop these capabilities as they become more experienced.

Question 3: Does the fit between this statement and other frameworks make sense? How could this be explained better?

Answer.....

Question 4: Does it make sense to have this statement set out *additional* capabilities, rather than repeating other frameworks?

Answer.....

Question 5: What are the implications for other areas of adults' services of having a capabilities statement for social work with older people?

Answer.....

Question 6: What will the implications be for non-registered staff working with older people alongside social workers?

Answer.....

D. At qualification

The capabilities below should be incorporated into learning during a generic social work qualification course. All capabilities are additional to the HCPC and PCF.

Expectation for social work with older people

I have an understanding of social work with older people and work with older people as part of general social work practice

Capabilities

Professionalism

I recognise that social work with older people has distinctive elements

Values and ethics

I understand the principles of strengths-based social work with older people, and recognise the impact of age discrimination

Diversity

I recognise that older age is not a static experience or the same for everyone

Rights, justice and economic wellbeing

I recognise the impact of poverty and social exclusion on older age

Knowledge

I value and take account of the expertise and experience of older people, know the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, and start to learn from gerontological theory and research

Critical reflection and analysis

I start to reflect on the different impacts of ageing

Skills and interventions

I recognise the need to consider the whole life-course when working with older people

Context and organisations

I understand that older people experience multiple needs and require a joined up response

Professional leadership

I start to advocate for the importance of social work with older people

Question 7: Any comments on these capabilities?

Answer.....

E. End of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

The capabilities below should be incorporated into the ASYE for social workers who have contact with older people. All capabilities are *additional* to the PCF, ASYE and Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers with Adults.

Expectation for social work with older people

I am able to work confidently and capably with older people, and seek specialist input as needed.

Capabilities

Professionalism

I am able to explain the role and value of social work with older people

Values and ethics

I recognise the importance of treating each older person as a whole person, recognising their history and context, and I challenge age discrimination and its intersection with other oppressions

Diversity

I recognise the complexity and diversity of older age, and its fluidity, and continually develop my understanding

Rights, justice and economic wellbeing

I recognise the combined impact of experience across the life-course, societal attitudes to older people, and loss - including of capacity to make specific decisions - and I uphold older people's rights

Knowledge

I understand the impact of ageing, changes and transitions in older age, the most common physical and mental health issues – including dementia – and their impact, the welfare systems relating to older people, how law and policy are applied, relevant gerontological theory and research, and the availability of resources

Critical reflection and analysis

I start to develop a critically reflective understanding of how people discuss age, as well as my own beliefs and biases around ageing

Skills and interventions

I recognise the complexities arising from an individual's long life and the impact of the context across this lifespan, and I use this understanding to inform my interventions

Context and organisations

I am aware of changes in the social, cultural, political and economic context for older people, in demography, and in welfare, and how these impact on social work with older people

Professional leadership

I work with others across the wider care system to improve the experience and outcomes of older people

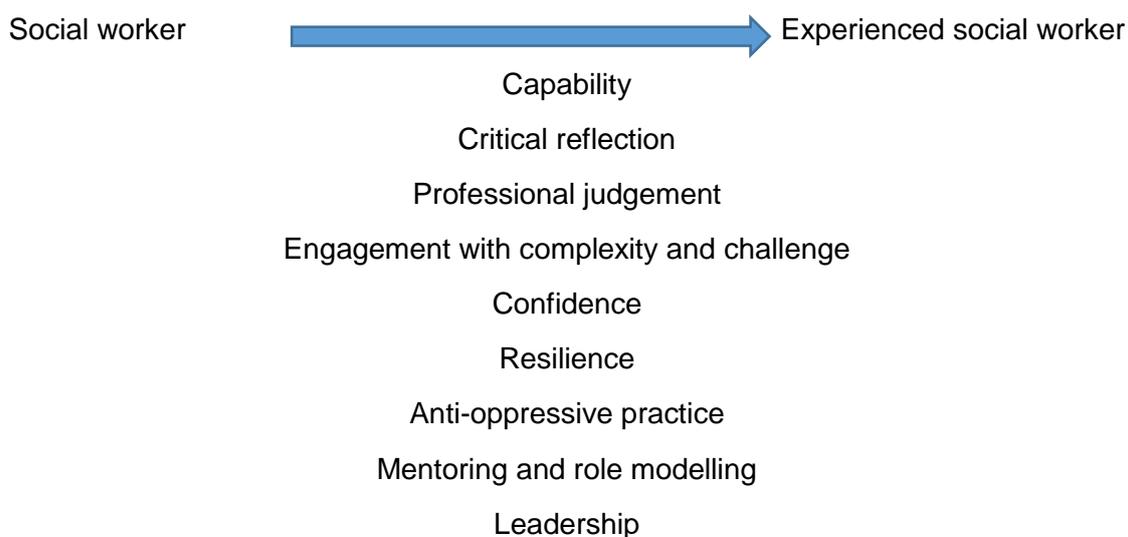
Question 8: Any comments on these capabilities?

Answer.....

F. Social worker to experienced social worker

The Capabilities below should be acquired by social workers working in Adults' services who work with older people and develop a special interest in this area of work. This is where the focus of the capabilities statement is, as most older people who have contact with social workers are likely to have complex needs. All capabilities are additional to the PCF.

As social workers develop their experience, they will develop in a range of areas that are shown below (beneath the arrow). As social workers develop, they will acquire the capabilities.



Question 9: Does this make sense?

Answer.....

Expectation for experienced social work with older people

I model good practice in working with older people, and demonstrate expert and effective practice.

Capabilities

Professionalism

I uphold professional standards of social work excellence with older people. I am able to carry out, explain and be accountable for the expert professional role that I undertake with older people.

Values and ethics

I have absolute respect for the lives older people have lived and the experience they have gained.

I manage ethical dilemmas of conflicting views, aspirations and opportunities relating to older people. I balance protection with the promotion of independence and self-determination. I address possible tensions between my own professional stance and that of the older person. I engage ethically with older people at risk who do not want social work intervention.

I apply the United Nations convention on the rights of older people. I enable choice, control, autonomy and aspiration for older people, including when mental capacity is lacking. I work explicitly against power abuse and discrimination against older people, and promote empowerment, equalities and social inclusion. I maintain optimism about what older people can and do contribute to society as individuals and as a group.

Diversity

I understand the diversity of an increasingly varied older population including needs, characteristics, preferences and circumstances. I am able to make sense of older people's individual experiences and explain how current society relates to these.

I understand how age discrimination can intersect with other dimensions of social inequality such as sexism, racism or oppression linked to homosexuality. I understand and address the intersecting impacts on health and wellbeing of disadvantages across the life course, chronic physical and/or mental ill health, poverty, vulnerability, uncertainty, change, risk, and transition. I understand the intersection of religion, spirituality and ageing. I work explicitly against power abuse and discrimination against older people, and promote empowerment, equalities and social inclusion. I challenge limitations on older people's choices, for example about sexuality.

I work with frail older people who are at risk of unnecessary hospital admission and inappropriate care to prevent or minimise transitions that are likely to have adverse consequences for their well-being, and to improve the quality, outcomes and efficiency of the care provided.

I model critically reflective practice and support others to recognise and challenge age discrimination.

Rights, justice and economic wellbeing

I understand and respond to evidence around inequalities in relation to income, social class, gender, ethnicity and disability persisting into later life. I understand and challenge structural age discrimination in health and social care resource allocation.

I advocate with older people and their families through the complex system of services. I ensure information about, and referral to, services and resources for older people, including age-related benefits. I am able to support older people undergoing complicated financial assessments for services. I identify what quality means from older people's perspectives, and advocate for the right of older people to access good quality care.

I enable older people to enhance their social networks and activity, and reduce isolation and loneliness. I support older people to preserve goals, values and relationships and to adapt by employing cognitive coping mechanisms, as well as practical strategies.

I use the law to uphold older people's rights, including when there is conflict, when someone does not have capacity to make a decision, and at end of life.

Knowledge

I have deep knowledge about specific areas relating to ageing, which include:

- Health conditions and the impact of multiple health conditions
- Age-related sensory impairment
- Dementia, depression and other mental health issues
- Grief, loss, bereavement and the impact of cumulative or concurrent losses
- Loneliness and social isolation
- Gerontological social work research and theory
- Critical understandings of the concepts of independence and dependency in relationships
- Intergenerational approaches
- Emerging technologies and their potential to support older people's wellbeing
- The development of the welfare state and the history of older people's services and its impact
- Policy, guidance, practice standards and law relating to older people, including the application of MCA 2005, DoLS, Making Safeguarding Personal, Court of Protection
- Knowledge of specialist services related to older age including housing, health care, finance
- The role of CQC and quality assurance frameworks for older people's services
- Setting-specific knowledge including, of the impact of prison, hospital, care home settings, and of best practice within these areas
- Individual-specific knowledge including the culture, history and beliefs that an older person identifies with
- The impact of life changes as factors in older people taking their own lives
- Other professional guidance including NICE guidelines and best practice from other professionals and agencies.

I maintain my knowledge as these areas develop.

Critical reflection and analysis

I engage reflexively with my own ageing, assumptions, hopes and fears, and how these are shaped by encounters with older people.

I grasp the complexity of older people's lives. I undertake clear analysis, critical thinking, decision making, planning and recording with older people. I recognise and combat the tensions between policies and the realities of older people's lives.

Skills and interventions

I have developed expertise in direct work with older people and their carers, families, networks and communities, and act as a role model for others. This can include:

- Expertise in communication with older people
- Ability to engage older people who are socially invisible or excluded
- Individualised bio-psychosocial assessment that addresses all of the person's needs, including their medical, psychological, emotional, social, personal, sexual, spiritual and cultural needs; sight, hearing and communication needs; and accommodation and environmental care needs
- Use of biographical and narrative approaches with older people as a sensitive way of developing insights into needs and how these might be addressed

- Ability to sustain and build older people's strengths, life-course coping strategies and resilience on all levels – physical, social and emotional – including through peer support
- Preventative work to combat the impact of poverty, isolation, disability, health problems etc across the life-course
- Development of care plans that recognise the inter-related nature of multiple long-term conditions
- Coordination of care and support for older people across a range of organisations, agencies and settings, and navigation for older people through systems
- Specific attention to risks associated with ageing including from historic neglect and abuse, institutional or social oppression, complicated grief, harmful coping strategies, undetected mental health problems, loss of capacity
- A lead role in establishing capacity and best interests decisions for older people
- Provision of a continuous supportive relationship to older people through times of crisis and change, ensuring continuity and contingency
- Individual and community work to counter loneliness and social isolation
- Coaching for older people to ask the right questions of their care providers and increase self-care skills
- Skilled use of counselling techniques
- Motivational interviewing and behavioural change work to support older people with acute and chronic illness
- Crisis intervention work to support older people in times of sudden change
- Work with older people at transition points to explore possible options with them and their family
- Specific work with people with dementia and their carers at various stages, including early intervention, diagnosis, support planning and rehabilitation
- Applied knowledge of reminiscence and memory improvement methods, research and support
- End of life work with older people as an advocate, navigator, co-ordinator and facilitator, to enable them to achieve a dignified death
- Recognition of the overlapping roles and experiences of older people, carers, partners, parents etc
- Ability to support older carers to plan for the future with the cared for person and others
- Bereavement support to carers and families.

Context and organisations

I am able to advise on the changing and developing needs, wishes and expectations of older people. I challenge and improve responses to changing demographic demands. I challenge disempowering or ageist services.

I understand the perspective and values of social work in working effectively with other disciplines within geriatric interdisciplinary practice. I advocate for older people in interdisciplinary and inter-agency contexts. I am able to access appropriate specialist gerontological support including medical, housing and other services.

Professional leadership

I champion the development of the specialist area of social work with older people. I act as a role-model for culture change in how services work with older people across social care and other agencies.

I advocate for appropriate resources to carry out excellent social work. I help to develop new social models of care, better suited to the needs of older people, which build on the resources and networks surrounding the older person.

I carry out research on social work with older people and ensure this is used. I contribute to local and national knowledge.

Question 10: Any comments on these capabilities?

Answer.....

G. Advanced level

The capabilities below should be acquired by social workers working at an advanced practice, education or management level in older people's services. All capabilities are additional to the PCF and Practice Supervisor KSS.

Expectation for social work with older people

I am an expert in working with older people (practice) and/ or I supervise others who work with older people (manager) and/ or I contribute to the development of practice locally and nationally (educator)

Capabilities

Professionalism

I embed and uphold capabilities for social work with older people

Values and ethics

I create and sustain an environment for ethical, quality social work that enables older people's outcomes

Diversity

I create and sustain an environment where people feel supported to challenge age discrimination, and where resources are used to meet diverse needs relating to ageing

Rights, justice and economic wellbeing

I identify and develop strategies to address service gaps, fragmentation, discrimination, and barriers that impact on older people, and work with older people to co-produce services and build community capacity

Knowledge

I contribute to a strong gerontological knowledge base, including through my own research and support of research

Critical reflection and analysis

I create and sustain an environment for critically reflective thinking about the wellbeing of older people

Skills and interventions

I facilitate use of the best evidence to devise effective interventions with older people, and I help to evaluate the impact of interventions and apply learning from this

Context and organisations

I develop appropriate multidisciplinary support for older people, recognising the progressive nature of many conditions, and build collaborations to improve support to older people

Professional leadership

I promote and support the role of social work with older people and the development of gerontological social work as a specialism

Question 11: Any comments on these capabilities?

Answer.....

H. Strategic level

The capabilities below should be acquired by social workers working at a strategic practice, education or management level in roles that cover older people's services. All capabilities are additional to the PCF and Leadership capabilities.

Expectation for social work with older people

I am a leader in working with older people and develop practice locally and nationally

Capabilities

Professionalism

I model and demonstrate a commitment to excellence in social work with older people

Values and ethics

I ensure the conditions for ethical, quality social work that enables older people's outcomes

Diversity

I lead strategic approaches to diversity in older age, address any negative impacts of social and health care policies on practice with historically disadvantaged populations, and challenge barriers that prevent older people from living well

Rights, justice and economic wellbeing

I ensure service developments are co-produced with older people, and advocate and organise with others to meet the needs of a growing older population and to enhance the contribution of older people

Knowledge

I ensure development of and access to critically evaluated knowledge and engagement in gerontological debates, and I apply expert knowledge about older people to strategic decision making

Critical reflection and analysis

I facilitate critically reflective thinking about the wellbeing of older people within management and strategic areas

Skills and interventions

I advise on and support expert assessment and intervention skills in complex practice situations with older people, and I evaluate the impact of interventions and apply learning from this

Context and organisations

I build collaborations across disciplines, services and systems to ensure continuity and reduce gaps in services to older adults, and I work at local and national levels across boundaries to inspire and leverage resources to optimise services for older adults

Professional leadership

I pursue a vision, strategy and plan to raise the quality, impact and visibility of social work with older people, including through practice development, research and education

Question 12: Any comments on these capabilities?

Answer.....

Question 13: Any other comments on the statement, particularly relating to your area of experience?

Answer.....

3. Glossary

AMHP	Approved Mental Health Practitioner
ASYE	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
BIA	Best Interest Assessor
BASW	British Association of Social Workers
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DoLS	Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
KSS	Knowledge and Skills Statement
MCA 2005	Mental Capacity Act
PCF	Professional Capabilities Framework for social workers in England