



Department  
for Education

**Consultation Response Form**

**Consultation closing date: 1 September 2015**

**Your comments must reach us by that date**

**Knowledge and skills: practice leaders  
and practice supervisors**

**If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>**

In November 2014 the Department for Education published the statement of knowledge and skills for Approved Child and Family Practitioners written by the Chief Social Worker for children and families.

This consultation is on two additional new draft statements of knowledge and skills on child and family social work, one for practice supervisors and one for practice leaders.

These statements will be part of a new national, practice focused, career pathway. Practice supervisors and practice leaders will be assessed against them to provide clarity about the quality of practice that can be expected from those who hold these accreditations.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| <b>Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reason for confidentiality:   |                          |
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>                              |                          |

|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Name: Cathy Ashley  |                                     |
| Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Name of Organisation (if applicable): Family Rights Group           |                                     |
| Address:<br>The Print House<br>18 Ashwin Street<br>London<br>E8 3DL |                                     |

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's ['Contact Us'](#) page.

Please specify the category which best describes you as a respondent. If other, please specify.

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Worker   | <input type="checkbox"/> Local authority or representative body                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Higher education or further education institution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> University/FE Provider  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Voluntary and Community Sector Organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carer   | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member  | <input type="checkbox"/> Child or Young Person                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other employer of social workers (private, voluntary and independent) | <input type="checkbox"/> Child and family social worker                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social worker in adult setting                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supervising social worker   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other  |  |

Cathy Ashley is the chief executive of Family Rights Group, the charity that works with parents in England and Wales whose children are in need, at risk or are in the

care system and with members of the wider family who are raising children who cannot live with their parents.

We advise parents, grandparents, other relatives and friends about their rights and options when social workers or courts make decisions about their children's welfare.

We campaign for families to have a voice, be treated fairly and get help early to prevent problems escalating. We champion family group conferences and other policies and practices that keep children safe within their family network.

1 Is there anything else that should be included in the statement which sets out what a practice leader needs to know and be able to do?

|                                     |     |                          |    |                          |          |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|----------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not Sure |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|----------|

Family Rights Group welcomes the desire to develop a social work system that is focussed on excellent practice rather than bureaucratic process, with the aim of ensuring a strong positive impact on the lives of children and their families. We note that these two statements form part of the Government plan to have a national accreditation and assessment system for all social work practitioners working with children and families wherever they sit within the system. We appreciate that both new draft statements have benefited from discussions with user groups prior to this formal consultation.

This response draws upon: our significant experience in working with thousands of families with direct experience of child and family social work involvement in their lives; findings from research including action research we have conducted on under-explored areas of children's services' work, such as the effective engagement with fathers; and knowledge from employing, working with and training social workers, and running the Family Group Conference National Network. Importantly we have also held workshops with parents whose children have been subject to social work intervention (as children in need, on a child protection plan, as looked after children, and/or adopted) and with kinship carers and convened a working group, with representatives from both workshops, to directly inform this response. Alongside completing this response form, we have attached an annotated version of the two draft Knowledge and Skills Statements with more detailed comments, and suggested amendments.

### General comments:

- We are concerned that there is no clear statement made about how these two statements fit into the **Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)** nor how they fit with the KSS for social workers working in Adults' Services. This is at a time when revision of the PCF has only recently transferred to the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) following the closure of The College of Social Work (TCSW). Many local authorities link their assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) programmes and career progression systems for social work staff to the PCF so clarity about how these processes fit together would be highly beneficial. Moreover the Chief Social Worker for Adults has said she may also introduce some form of accreditation system and further Knowledge and Skills Statements for managers and practice leaders. It is essential that there is **greater clarity around the join up between the children and adults sectors** particularly given that the current social work qualification is generic.
- Deprivation including income poverty can seriously affect adults' and children's welfare and life chances, severely limiting parents' and kinship carers' ability to provide their children with the environment and opportunities that they would wish, creating stresses and strains that can affect all concerned. Recent research has established a strong correlation between deprivation and children becoming subject to state intervention such as being on a child protection plan or placed in care (Bywaters, P (2015) 'Inequalities in child welfare: towards a new policy, research and action agenda' Br J Soc Work (2015) 45 (1) 6 - 23). Many impoverished families, who we work with, report feeling stigma and shame, especially when they ask public agencies for help and such requests are ignored, or dismissed or rejected due to rising thresholds or financial cuts. Later, if problems escalate into a crisis, they often feel judged or forced to accept a social work intervention regardless of whether they feel it is suitable. It is critical that poverty, discrimination and disadvantage are addressed in the statements (see below).
- Whilst the family members consulted said they welcome clarity about accountability and standards within social work, they are very concerned about how the **assessment and accreditation system** will be designed and implemented. They are adamant that this **should not be punitive** (and stated that they felt they knew from their own experiences the damage of a blame culture) particularly given that some factors will be beyond the control of the practice leader or supervisor e.g. political allocation of resources. Family members also expressed concern about the immediate consequences for children and families if a significant number of staff failed the test because strict accreditation standards needed to be complied with from the outset. Some pointed out that their children had already had a number of social workers in their lives due to a significant turnover of social work staff in their area, and vacancy rates being covered by short term

agency staff. Whilst they were clear that poor practice shouldn't be tolerated, they also recognised that families would suffer further if there was suddenly a significant fall out of social workers and their managers from the workforce. Families consulted did however, take the view that the accreditation process of practice leaders, supervisors and front line workers should include people independent of the employing local authority/agency, that it must involve practice observation not just an on-line test and that families could be involved in this process. They stated that they would welcome the opportunity to consider further how this could be achieved.

- It is our view that throughout the statements there should be reference to 'the welfare of children and their families and the safety of those at risk'.
- Families consulted struggled to understand some of the wording in the statements – and strongly recommended that it should be written in plain English wherever possible.

### **Practice leader**

The practice leader statement should refer to the other statements. The practice leader must lead by example and should have the skills and knowledge to support and critically appraise supervisors and accredited child and family practitioners.

There needs to be a clear statement about the responsibility of the practice leader to create an organisational culture in which priorities and expectations are clearly defined and in which all staff work to a clear ethical framework. This includes but is not limited to:

- Practitioners having a good working up to date knowledge of child welfare and family justice and other relevant legislation, and what this means in terms of their statutory powers and responsibilities.
- The responsibility of the local authority in addressing poverty and disadvantage and mitigating its negative impact on individuals including their social and economic opportunities and how this relates to child welfare and family functioning.
- That a key aim of social worker intervention should be to support children's rights to live safely within their family network, where possible.
- The importance of children's services working collaboratively with other agencies including adult services in order that children and vulnerable adults are effectively supported and those at risk protected.

- Recognising, valuing and investing in building on the strengths and resources within families and communities, including kinship carers.
- Children and families with experience of social work involvement should be pro-actively supported to have a voice and influence decisions about their own lives and shape child welfare policies and practices.

There needs to be a statement acknowledging how families experience social work intervention, which can be far reaching. The consequences for families can be long lasting, and both positive and negative and social workers at all levels of the practice system need to recognise that families may feel fear, shame and bewilderment.

2 Is there anything else that should be included in the statement which sets out what a practice supervisor needs to know and be able to do?

|                                     |     |                          |    |                          |          |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|----------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not Sure |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|----------|

**Practice supervisor**

The KSS for practice supervisors should refer to the other statements, and should make explicit how this role fits within the clear ethical and practice framework set out in the practice leader KSS (detailed above).

It is vital that the supervisor has all the knowledge and skills enshrined in the KSS for accredited child and family practitioner. It is particularly crucial that the supervisor has an in-depth knowledge of child care law and statutory guidance, policy and procedures.

The practice supervisor needs to have the skills, knowledge and depth of experience to support frontline workers. Indeed adequate support for frontline workers should be further emphasised throughout the statement.

The ability of the practice supervisor to influence the organisation will depend in large part on the culture/resources/authority given to them by those in a more senior position. This should be made clear.

Families consulted were very keen that although supervisors should be available to children and family members and accountable for their actions and that of their staff, they shouldn't be made accountable for decisions and procedures that were

decided at a higher level. Practice supervisors should not be scapegoated nor should the system be punitive.

Whilst we acknowledge the helpful role of effective group and peer supervision we think it is important to also stress the value of individual supervision for social workers. This should provide social workers with a safe and supportive environment where practice dilemmas, including any impact of their work on their own emotional welfare and the effect this may have on practice with children and families, can be constructively discussed. Individual prejudices and assumptions, or the social worker's own emotional welfare/personal /family history may need to be sensitively challenged and reflected upon in a one to one environment with a trusted supervisor.

Lines of accountability should be further clarified, and expectations of the supervisor should be realistic, for example, we would question whether expecting supervisors to 'Develop a culture of learning and improvement, where staff are sufficiently stretched and mentored to meet their aspirations' is realistic since it is unlikely to be within the supervisor's control.

Practice supervisors should understand the value of and actively support children and their families to be involved in planning processes and quality assurance processes.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Please acknowledge this reply.</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E-mail address for acknowledgement: <a href="mailto:CAshley@frg.org.uk">CAshley@frg.org.uk</a> |                          |

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and use real discussion with affected parties and experts as well as the expertise of civil service learning to make well informed decisions
- departments should explain what responses they have received and how these have been used in formulating policy
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please email: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 1 September 2015

Send by post to:

Jan Nayeem

Sanctuary Buildings

Great Smith Street

London

SW1P 3BT

Send by e-mail to:

[KnowledgeandSkills2015.CONSULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:KnowledgeandSkills2015.CONSULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk).



Department  
for Education

# **Knowledge and skills: practice leaders and practice supervisors**

**Government consultation**

**Launch date 28 July 2015**  
**Respond by 1 September 2015**

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## Introduction

Following a government consultation, in November 2014 the Department for Education (DfE) published the statement of knowledge and skills for Approved Child and Family Practitioners written by the Chief Social Worker (children and families). The Chief Social Worker outlined the intention of that statement to act as a catalyst for bigger changes and has now commissioned two new statements for practice supervisors and practice leaders. We are consulting on those statements.

## Who this is for

- Social workers
- Local authorities and representative bodies
- Higher education and further education institutions and their representative bodies
- Voluntary and Community Sector organisations
- Parents and carers
- Family members
- Children and young people
- Other employers of child and family social workers (private, voluntary and independent)
- Others

## Issue date

This consultation document was issued on 28 July 2015.

## Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the team on:

- 0207 7838 755 for Knowledge and skills: Practice leaders and practice supervisors and ask for Bekah Little; or email:

[KnowledgeandSkills2015.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:KnowledgeandSkills2015.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk)

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

## Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

## The response

The results of the consultation and the Department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in autumn 2015.

## About this consultation

The Department is seeking views on two new draft statements of knowledge and skills:

- for practice supervisors of child and family social workers
- for practice leaders of child and family social work

The statements will be used together with the previously-published knowledge and skills for Approved Child and Family Practitioners, to develop a national assessment and accreditation system for child and family social workers. The system will apply to three levels of practice: Approved Child and Family Practitioner (ACFP); Practice Supervisor (PS); and Practice Leader (PL).

The knowledge and skills for Approved Child and Family Practitioners is available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/knowledge-and-skills-for-child-and-family-social-work>

The Department has developed the statements through discussions with focus groups, user groups and individual practitioners, supervisors and leaders. During this period of public consultation and beyond, the Department will continue to consult people and organisations who have a vested interest in improving social work practice in a range of ways.

DfE has set out a list of questions but would particularly welcome your views if there is anything else which should be included in the statements.

## Background to the consultation

The two new statements are part of a radical shift toward a practice-focussed system. A national assessment and accreditation system will ensure frontline practitioners, supervisors and leaders are equipped to deliver excellent social work which has a strong positive impact on children's and families' lives; it will also have a focus on excellent practice, wherever the individual practitioner sits within the system. In time, the accreditation system may be further expanded to include particular areas of practice such as permanency planning.

The focus on practice is not solely channelled through assessment and accreditation:

- the government is investing over £181m a year on social work initial training, as well as the Frontline and Step Up training programmes which are attracting highcalibre people into social work, using the knowledge and skills statements as the cornerstone for what is taught;
- employers are being given a greater say in what is taught on social work training courses through Teaching Partnerships which will not only focus on frontline

practitioners but also prepare for the integration of arrangements for Approved Child and Family Practitioners, supervisors and practice leaders;

- the government is funding employers to support newly-qualified social workers in their first year of practice through the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment, using the knowledge and skills statements to help assess their development; and
- the Innovation Programme is working with 53 projects across the country to explore, evaluate and disseminate new ideas about how social workers and others around them can best make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable children, including through new training and practice tools, or by ensuring structures and processes support effective practice and empower social workers.

DfE is committed to developing an assessment and accreditation system which is reliable and valid. This is likely to include a process of employer endorsement where practice is developed and directly observed, followed by an assessment of critical analysis and decision making with the possibility of further practice observation through a simulated practice assessment.

In order to develop the confidence in the accreditation method, alongside this formal consultation DfE is working with a number of employers to test these methods with their staff. Ultimately, the aim is to create a status amongst child and family social workers which will be recognised widely not only as evidence of the skills and knowledge they have to do the job well, but also as a passport towards career progression. Once the results of the consultation are analysed, DfE will work with employers and others on implementation, including whether the system should be rolled out on a voluntary or a compulsory basis, which social workers it should apply to, the speed of the roll-out and other issues.

## Respond online

To help us analyse the responses, please use the online system wherever possible. Visit [www.education.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations) to submit your response.

## Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a word document version of the form and email it or post it.

## By email

- [KnowledgeandSkills2015.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:KnowledgeandSkills2015.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**By post**

Jan Nayeem  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BT

**Deadline**

The consultation closes on 1 September 2015.

## Knowledge and Skills for Practice Supervisors

This statement of knowledge and skills provides the basis for accrediting Practice Supervisors in child and family social work.

Practice supervisors are qualified social workers whose primary function is to supervise the practice and decision making of Approved Child and Family Practitioners, and to develop the skills of individuals and teams within statutory child and family social work services. This requires experience of working with a high level of social complexity and risk of harm, and experience of working within the statutory system.

The practice supervisor will be able to do the following:

### 1) Promote and govern excellent practice

Establish and maintain a highly valued position of influence within the organisation, and be recognised for extensive knowledge and skill in the profession of child and family social work. Create an environment which enables excellent practice by setting high standards and motivating others to do the same. Demonstrate optimistic behaviour, and build positive relationships with children and families and other professionals. Lead by example, showing integrity, creativity, resilience and clarity of purpose. Be visible and accessible to all staff, children and families.

Be accountable for ensuring the highest professional standards and professional conduct. Design and implement intelligent measures to assure the quality of practice and the effective throughput of work. Interrogate decisions, ensuring they are underpinned by theory and the best evidence and that they will contribute to the goals of the family and their social work plan, whilst ensuring that the safety of children remains the highest priority.

### 2) Developing excellent practitioners

Provide a practice framework, underpinned by theory and the best evidence, within which practitioners can work effectively. Explain and champion the framework to practitioners, other professionals, children and families and set an expectation that this framework will be applied to practice. Facilitate use of the best evidence to devise effective interventions, which are most likely to support family welfare and reduce risk to children. Secure excellent practice through an analytical understanding of different patterns of family functioning matched with service responses which are most likely to effect change for families, as well as support children in public care and young people leaving care.

Recognise the strengths and development needs of practitioners, using practice observation, reflection and feedback mechanisms, including the views of children and

**Commented [PL1]:** There is a serious concern that this is not a reasonable expectation for a practice supervisor whose focus should be to support frontline social workers. Moreover their influence will depend in large part on the culture/resources/authority given to them by those in a more senior position.

**Commented [PL2]:** It is vital that the supervisor has all the knowledge and skills enshrined in the KSS for accredited child and family practitioner. It is particularly crucial that the supervisor has an in-depth knowledge of child care law and statutory guidance, policy and procedures.

**Commented [PL3]:** We suggest 'work towards' rather than 'create'

**Commented [PL4]:** Critically this person needs the skills, knowledge, and experience to support frontline social workers.

**Commented [PL5]:** We suggest adding 'honesty'

**Commented [PL6]:** We suggest adding 'the team's....'

**Commented [PL7]:** Within their team, the organisation and when working with children and families

**Commented [PL8]:** Including the right support

**Commented [PL9]:** Welfare and safety

**Commented [PL10]:** which includes the views of children and families with experience of the system

**Commented [PL11]:** within the organisation and with families

**Commented [JM12]:** This language could be simplified as the meaning is not clear.

families. Develop a culture of learning and improvement, where staff are sufficiently stretched and mentored to meet their aspirations. Gauge different learning styles and recognise when the role of the Practice Supervisor is to teach and when it would be more effective to draw on practitioners' own knowledge. Identify the knowledge and skill gaps of staff and take action to address this. Invest available resource into staff and service development, drawing on the expertise of children and families.

**Commented [PL13]:** This may not always be realistic or within the supervisor's control

### 3) Shaping and influencing the practice system

Provide a safe, calm and well-ordered environment for all staff, ensuring that processes are fit for purpose and efficient. Create an ethos within which staff are motivated and supported to be ambitious on behalf of children and families. Use resources to the best effect and ensure mechanisms are in place to facilitate constant reflective thinking about the welfare of families and the safety of children. Build and develop influential and respectful partnerships between practitioners and partner agencies. Pay attention to different structures, pressures, priorities and levers for influencing and shaping the thinking of others.

**Commented [PL14]:** We are not clear what this means in this context. We are concerned that it may give the impression that social workers should be unrealistically optimistic or do things to the family rather than with them.

**Commented [PL15]:** Including recognising the resources that lie within families and communities

Share practice knowledge and expertise and influence the wider organisation and national system to function to the best effect. Offer constructive advice and creative, strengths-based solutions to difficulties.

### 4) Effective use of power and authority

Apply a proportionate and ethical approach to the exercise of authority, which develops and maintains relationships with families and professionals and ensures the protection of children. Maximise opportunities for children and families to make informed choices. Secure an up to date, working knowledge of relevant law. Exercise statutory powers where social work assessment shows that families require help and support and children are at risk of significant harm, ensuring that actions are proportionate to risk. Support practitioners to communicate clearly, honestly and respectfully the purpose and content of the social work plan, even when this is likely to generate a hostile, angry or frightened response.

**Commented [PL16]:** And to influence local authority actions and plans

**Commented [JM17]:** Including recent case law

**Commented [PL18]:** We do not think this phrase is necessary.

**Commented [PL19]:** We feel the meaning of this phrase is unclear, with multiple possible meanings.

Recognise the patterns of relationships between professionals, identifying where these are likely to compromise the welfare of families and the safety of children, taking immediate and corrective action. Invite challenge and debate and be accessible to children, families and professionals. Ensure the professional network identifies the logic by which children and families are functioning and use this as a basis for effective engagement. Take into account difference, the experience of discrimination and the impact of poverty.

**Commented [PL20]:** We would suggest 'diversity'

## 5) Confident analysis and decision making

Create a culture of focussed thinking which consistently explores a wide range of contexts (including family and professional stories, the chronology of critical events, social and economic circumstances). Generate multiple hypotheses which make sense of the complexity in which children and families are living. Help practitioners to make decisions based on these hypotheses, observations and analyses, taking account of the wishes and feelings of children and families. Ensure that practitioners are ambitious for children and families and that the long-term and life-long consequences of decisions are fully considered at all stages of planning and review. Build relevant relationships with children and families and professionals to test current hypotheses and dominant perspectives. Ensure that children and young people's expectations are met where possible and any disappointment sensitively acknowledged and sufficiently addressed.

Establish recording processes which provide the full analysis underpinning decisions, making sure the rationale for why and how decisions have been made is comprehensive and well expressed.

## 6) Purposeful and effective social work

Ensure practitioners adopt an approach to practice which is proportionate to identified risk and need. Use supervision processes to challenge the balance of authoritative intervention and collaborative engagement to determine how current practice is achieving the best long-term outcomes for children and families. Use focussed questioning with practitioners to clarify the direction of work, and identify whether practitioners need to adopt a more reflective and curious approach, or respond with greater pace and assertion. Ensure that family narratives are sought and listened to, that all relevant family members, including fathers, are engaged in shaping plans and supported to carry these out, and that practice empowers families to make positive changes.

Ensure methods and tools used are based on the best evidence, that progress is frequently reviewed and that the social work plan is adjusted accordingly. Provide a constant check on the safety and wellbeing of children, ensuring that identified risks are managed and new risks identified, assessed and addressed.

Implement effective strategies for ensuring throughput of work. Frequently review the requirement for continued involvement so that cases are closed in a timely manner and that families have an appropriate and long-term support plan, and ensure that no child or family is left unnoticed in the system.

**Commented [PL21]:** Again we are concerned about the use of this word in this context. But we agree that practitioners should be focused on the needs of children and their families.

**Commented [PL22]:** We are unclear of the meaning of this sentence.

**Commented [PL23]:** Recognising all types of families including family and friends care

**Commented [PL24]:** We are very concerned that this could lead to all child in need cases being treated as child protection cases. Instead we suggest 'continually reflect upon and review the welfare and support needs of children and their families and be alert to evidence of actual or likely significant harm.'

**Commented [PL25]:** Where that is required

## 7) Emotionally intelligent practice supervision

Recognise how different relationships evoke different emotional responses, which impact upon the effectiveness of social work practice. Use mechanisms such as peer supervision and group case consultation to help identify bias, shift thinking and the approach to case work in order to generate better outcomes for children and families. Recognise and articulate the dilemmas and challenges faced by practitioners and use this expertise and experience to guide, assist and support the provision of services.

Commented [PL26]: And understand

Commented [PL27]: We think it is vital to add 'Understand the value and importance of individual supervision'

Identify emotional barriers affecting practice and recognise when to step in and proactively support individuals. Promote reflective thinking to drive more effective discussions so that reasoned and timely decision-making can take place. Demonstrate a high level of resilience within pressured environments, be attuned to the effect of high emotion and stress and respond in calm, measured and pragmatic ways.

Read the confidence of practitioners and adapt management and leadership style according to the needs of individuals and the organisation. Protect practitioners from unnecessary bureaucratic or hierarchical pressures and have in place strategies to help manage the root causes of stress and anxiety. Re-energise and reaffirm commitment to support families and protect children.

Commented [JM28]: Consider instead of read

Commented [PL29]: Continually

## 8) Performance management and improvement

Explain to practitioners the full legal, regulatory, procedural and performance framework within which they operate and be accountable for their work within it. Provide opportunities for staff to give and receive constructive feedback on performance. Recognise and commend hard work and excellent practice and build social workers' confidence in their practice. Meet complacency with a commitment to continued improvement and confidently hold poor practice to account.

Commented [PL30]: Within your team

Commented [PL31]: We suggest 'challenge' rather than 'meet'

Establish available capacity so that work is allocated appropriately across the staff group and ensure best use is made of resource, ability, interests and ambitions. Devise and implement systems which both demonstrate effective practice and trigger immediate corrective action where necessary. Produce and utilise data to understand current demand, historical patterns and likely future trends. Scrutinise system performance and devise and implement effective and timely improvement plans.

Strike a balance between employing a managerial, task-focussed approach and an enabling leadership style to achieve efficient day-to-day functioning. Develop a strategy for future improvements and contribute to similar within the wider organisational system. Draw on and share best practice within local and national contexts. Implement communication channels with children, young people, families and other professionals inviting critical feedback and ideas for improvement. Respond thoughtfully and proactively to complaints and mistakes, creating learning opportunities for self, staff and the organisation.

Commented [PL32]: We 'suggest enabling practice focussed reflective leadership style'

Commented [PL33]: We do not think use of 'critical' is necessary

## Knowledge and Skills for Practice Leaders

This statement of knowledge and skills provides the basis for accreditation in child and family social work: Practice Leaders

Practice Leaders are qualified social workers with the day to day operational responsibility across the whole local system for child and family social work practice, and for Approved Child and Family Practitioners and Practice Supervisors. Most usually this is referred to as the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care or Director of Family Services. By exception, it may be that some employers, principally large local authorities, would regard themselves as having more than one Practice Leader because the local authority area for the purpose of child and family social work is sub-divided into discrete geographical units that operate largely autonomously and independently.

The practice leader will be able to do the following:

### 1) Lead and govern excellent practice

Be a highly visible and highly valued figure, occupying a position of significant influence at a local and national level, and be known for exceptional knowledge and skill in the profession of child and family social work. Hold accountability for child and family social work practice and its impact on the lives of children and families.

Provide clarity of organisational purpose and the values underpinning that, focussing on providing a world-class service for children and families. Demonstrate optimistic behaviour, and positive relationships and attitudes towards children and families, other professionals and partner agencies, politicians and the public. Drive change and constant progress so that children and families get the very best help and support. Show commitment to children in public care by ensuring they grow up in homes in which they can thrive and, having left care, receive all the support to which they are entitled.

Lead by example with integrity, creativity, resilience, and clarity of purpose. Sustain wide, current knowledge and understanding of child and family social work practice and broader child protection and welfare systems, locally, nationally and globally.

### 2) Creating a context for excellent practice

Engage staff, children and families and the wider partnership in constructive thinking about the future, creating a shared strategic vision which inspires, motivates and encapsulates the organisational commitment to supporting families, protecting children and providing safe and stable childhoods for children in public care. Communicate compellingly this vision and drive strategic leadership throughout the organisation, so that it is applied to everyday practice.

**Commented [PL34]:** The Practice leader statement should refer to the other statements. There needs to be a clear statement about creating an organisational culture in which priorities and expectations are clearly defined and in which all work to a clear ethical framework. This includes but is not limited to:

-Practitioners having a good working up to date knowledge of child welfare and family justice and other relevant legislation, and what this means in terms of their statutory powers and responsibilities.

- The responsibility of the LA in in addressing poverty and disadvantage and mitigating its negative impact on individuals including their social and economic opportunities and how this relates to child welfare and family functioning  
-That it should support children's rights to live safely within their family network, where possible

-The importance of children's services working collaboratively with other agencies including adult services in order that children and vulnerable adults are effectively supported and those at risk protected

-Recognising, valuing and investing in building on the strengths and resources within families and communities, including kinship carers

-Children and families with experience of social work involvement should be supported to have a voice and influence decisions about their own lives and shape child welfare policies and practices.

There needs to be a statement acknowledging that how families experience social work intervention, which can be far reaching. The consequences for families can be long lasting, and both positive and negative and social workers at all levels of the

**Commented [PL35]:** Whilst recognising the difficult circumstances that people may live in, and the responsibility to try and improve lives for children and their families

**Commented [PL36]:** We think this is a meaningless phrase especially given that the statement is applicable in every Local Authority.

**Commented [PL37]:** We are not clear what this phrase means. We suggest 'building respectful relationships'

**Commented [PL38]:** We strongly suggest that this should state a commitment to all children including those in public care

**Commented [PL39]:** That those who having left care.....

**Commented [PL40]:** We suggest adding 'honesty'

**Commented [PL41]:** And work with all staff

**Commented [PL42]:** We suggest 'for all children including those in public care'

**Commented [PL43]:** We suggest this is replaced by 'Champion'

Focus on best outcomes for children and families and ensure that the vision, purpose and plan for the organisation is welcomed and owned by all. Continuously evaluate how best to keep the vision a reality, and what needs to change to build upon existing strengths.

**Commented [PL44]:** Who determines what is the best outcome? Families/children and the LA may have different views.

Create a culture in which excellent practice is expected and celebrated, critical incidents handled with grace and discipline, and public commitment to protecting children and supporting families frequent and authentic.

**Commented [JM45]:** We are not sure what this means in this context. Instead we suggest sensitivity and confident decision-making

**Commented [JM46]:** We suggest continuous rather than frequent

### 3) Designing a system to support effective practice

Design with political and financial astuteness, and within a clear set of principles, a practice system which enables excellent child and family social work practice to flourish, ably translating local and national policy into the organisational context, without compromising high quality professional practice. Prioritise budgets in order to meet demand and ensure quality of service provision. Confidently illustrate the relationship between efficiency, child outcome and financial flexibility so that services can respond to changing need and risk.

**Commented [PL47]:** We fear this could be interpreted in many ways. There must be an acknowledgement of the far reaching effect on the system when social workers intervene in families' lives in any way

**Commented [PL48]:** With the overriding aim of supporting children as wherever possible to live safely within their family.

Provide a safe, calm and well-ordered environment for all staff, ensuring that process is well considered, fit for purpose and efficient. Create sufficient capacity for practitioners to build relationships with children and families and undertake effective direct work, which successfully reduces risks and enhances family wellbeing. Use resources to best effect and have mechanisms in place to ensure constant reflective thinking about the safety of children and the welfare of families. Build influential and productive relationships across the organisation and the wider local partnership, across regions and nationwide, to secure the very best support to families and the protection of children.

**Commented [PL49]:** We would challenge how the postholder will achieve this without political backing particularly in an environment of severe financial cuts to local government. The postholder needs to be an advocate for – but on their own cannot ensure – that LA budgets reflect the needs of children and families in need of support/at risk.

**Commented [PL50]:** We would add 'supportive'

**Commented [PL51]:** Including recognising resources within families and communities and investing in kinship care so that children can thrive within their families even if they cannot remain with their parents.

**Commented [PL52]:** It is our view that throughout the document the focus should be 'the welfare of children and their families, and the safety of those at risk'

Establish communication channels which report on the confidence of the organisation, and be alert to anxiety and pressures within the organisation, even at the earliest stages. Secure high quality legal, financial and human resource services for the organisation and ensure communication technology is fit for purpose. Challenge orthodoxies in the best interests of achieving excellence for children and families, and model entrepreneurial and innovative approaches to practice and leadership.

**Commented [PL53]:** We are unclear of the meaning of this.

**Commented [PL54]:** We are concerned that this implies a business profit motivated approach and think that innovative approach is sufficient

### 4) Developing excellent practitioners

Critically appraise theory, best evidence and rationale for different practice approaches, and select robust methodologies to form an overarching practice framework. Identify the skills needed to practise within the complexity of children's and families' lives, and in particular the population being served by the organisation. Secure the resources and support needed to implement the practice framework and shape, in partnership with others, the current and future quality of practice through effective training and sustained professional development for all staff and throughout a practice career. Recognise and

**Commented [PL55]:** And a workforce that reflects the population it serves

**Commented [PL56]:** Involving families including young people as trainers and people to learn from

utilise the resource that children, families and communities can bring to the development of staff and services.

Recognise the value of excellent social workers remaining in frontline practice. Identify and develop people with emerging leadership talent, and support retention through the provision of challenging, interesting and motivating opportunities. Distribute leadership throughout the organisation and encourage alliances between colleagues so that they hold one another to account for the quality of practice.

**Commented [PL57]:** We suggest 'delegate leadership responsibilities'

**Commented [PL58]:** We suggest re-phrasing to 'constructively challenge' – lines of accountability should be clear – this sentence blurs them.

## 5) Support effective decision making

Be able to create a culture where managed risk is accepted and understood as being inherent in every decision that is made. Encourage practitioners to take decisions in this context and make sure they know they have the backing of the organisation to do so. Actively demonstrate trust in the workforce and develop a culture which promotes learning, reflection and the acceptance of accountability.

**Commented [PL59]:** We would add 'in life'

**Commented [PL60]:** We suggest adding and there are clear lines of accountability

**Commented [PL61]:** And lines of accountability are clear

Publicly acknowledge the enormity of separating a child from their parents. Participate and add rigour to decision-making about children coming into public care, returning home or to extended family, or moving to new permanent families. Ensure that all longterm consequences of current decisions are properly explored and understood.

**Commented [PL62]:** We suggest wider family rather than extended family

**Commented [PL63]:** We would add that there is a clear commitment to exploring the family network and that a child is never taken into care due to a lack of LA or public agency support.

Make sound and complex decisions under high pressured, fast paced conditions, striking a balance between speed and depth of thought.

## 6) Quality assurance and improvement

Set ambitious practice standards, instilling a strong sense of accountability in staff for the impact of their work on the lives of children and families. Establish rigorous, fair and transparent processes for managing the performance of staff, including accurate measures of practice through direct observation. Secure an in depth, comprehensive and current understanding of the realities of practice across the organisation and know how to address early signs of difficulties. Recognise and commend hard work and excellent practice to build social workers' confidence in their practice. Meet complacency with a commitment to continued improvement and confidently hold poor practice to account.

**Commented [PL64]:** We suggest adding 'set and uphold'. We prefer high quality rather than ambitious practice standards.

**Commented [PL65]:** And review...

Learn from local, national and international review, inspection and research and lead debate about any case for change. Ensure local children, families and communities play an active role in assessing the quality of services received and developing ideas for service and staff development. Pay close attention to the organisation's local and national reputation, taking steps to manage its public profile successfully. Establish the organisation as a credible and respectable public service, proudly promoting the achievements of staff, children and families.

**Commented [PL66]:** Including of children, young people, parents and wider families' experiences

**Commented [PL67]:** And support them to play an active role. Children and families' views and voices should influence decisions at all levels – within the service they receive and the practice delivered by the organisation.



Department  
for Education

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