The Standard for Chief Social Work Officers
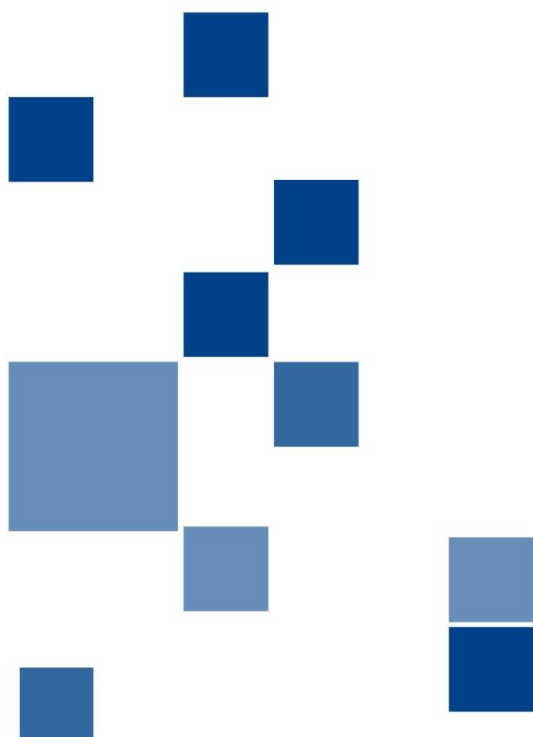
July 2015

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Introduction

The Standard for Chief Social Work Officers (CSWO) was commissioned by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) from Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU). It was developed in conjunction with key stakeholders, including the SSSC, Scottish Government, Social Work Scotland and CSWOs themselves. The development was informed by a combination of desk research, existing statutory guidance and consultation with CSWOs, both individually and collectively. It was also supported by the Technical Expert Group.

The CSWO Standard aims to reflect the roles and responsibilities of CSWOs and is intended to be a reference point for CSWOs and to be the foundation for the delivery and assessment of the Postgraduate Diploma Chief Social Work Officer. This CSWO qualification is accredited by GCU and will be jointly delivered by Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Dundee from October 2015. The qualification is also approved by the SSSC. This work based learning qualification will be at SCQF level 11 and will have 120 credits. Up to 60 of these credits can be gained by the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

The inter-relationship of aspects of professional development

The learning pathway leading to the qualification for CSWOs will promote three main aspects of professional development:

- professional values and personal commitment
- professional knowledge and understanding
- professional skills and abilities.

These three aspects are placed in a single structure to emphasise that they are not simply lists of competences or outcomes. They are inherently linked to each other in the development of the professional and one aspect does not exist independently of the other two. It is the interrelationship among all three which develops professionalism and leads to appropriate professional action.
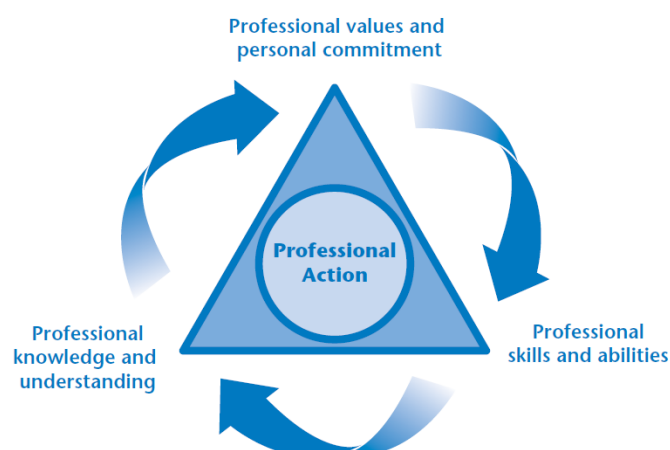
The Standard for Chief Social Work Officers

The CSWO Standard is based on the specific requirements of the role of the CSWO. Around the core of modelling social work values, there are four aspects of the Standard. Each of the aspects has attached to it an overall descriptor and a number of competencies, which overlap, and can be represented as a Venn diagram, overlain by the core aspect of modelling values.

- Modelling values
- Setting direction
- Achieving outcomes
- Self-leadership
- Working with others
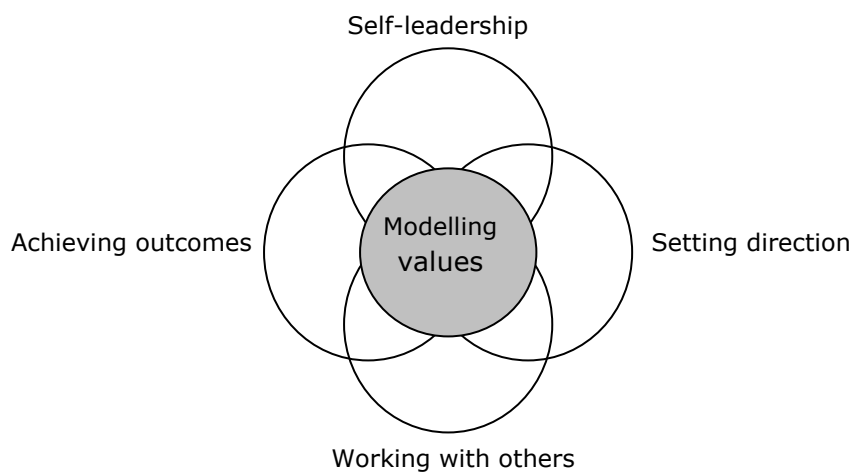
1 Modelling values

Promoting values, professional ethics and standards is integral to the current CSWO guidance and this aspect integrates the four aspects of the Standard. The Benchmark Statement for Social Work delineates key social work values as including the moral concepts of rights, responsibility, freedom, authority and power inherent in the practice of social workers as moral and statutory agents, as well as exploring the complex relationships between justice, care and control in social welfare. Further issues arise in respect of the practical and ethical implications of these, including roles as statutory agents, as well as in upholding the law in respect of discrimination. CSWOs are required to model these values.

They:
- demonstrate a critical understanding of core social work values and professional ethics
- take responsibility for the promotion of core social work values within multi-agency contexts
- use a range of advanced and specialised skills to actively communicate and promote social work values to staff
- model and communicate those values to a range of audiences that include politicians, people that use services and their representatives, other agencies and their own staff
- advocate for the most vulnerable in the community
- demonstrate the ability to deal with complex ethical and professional issues.

2 Setting direction

This aspect of the Standard relates to the ability of the CSWO to set direction, both for the services for which they are responsible and for those delivered in partnership with others.

It has five aspects:
- reading the context
- creating the vision
- embodying the vision
- communicating the vision
- managing change.

2.1 Reading the context

A CSWO demonstrates a critical understanding of the context within which they are working, as well as an evidence informed reading of the dynamic and complex nature of that context.

They:
- seek, and critically analyse, a wide range of data relating to the delivery of social work services
- anticipate and prepare for the future, dealing with complex issues, sometimes in the absence of complete data
- engage effectively with local politicians and community representatives, demonstrating leadership and organisational astuteness and make a significant contribution to change and development
- anticipate and actively explore the financial context of services
- demonstrate critical awareness of the national context of social work services.

2.2 Creating the vision

A CSWO is able to use a range of specialised skills, clearly articulate and communicate the strategic vision for the services for which they are responsible.

They:
- create, and are able to communicate, a vision that reflects core social work values
- demonstrate the ability to work effectively with partners to develop a shared vision
- ensure that the vision is informed by the promotion of a culture of excellence
- ensure that a culture is created that allows staff and people who use services to take risks appropriately.

2.3 Embodying the vision

A CSWO embodies the strategic vision for social work services and is able to provide strong and trustworthy leadership towards the achievement of that vision.

They:
- promote behaviour in others that is consistent with the vision
- act as a role model for the vision
- demonstrate confidence and self-belief in respect of the vision.

2.4 Communicating the vision

A CSWO has a clear understanding of the impact of their strategic vision on the way in which services are offered to people who use services, their carers and the communities that are served.

They:
- are able to clearly articulate and communicate the vision in a range of contexts and for different audiences
- take responsibility for ensuring that awareness of the vision is promoted both within and outwith the organisation
- demonstrate leadership in building support for the vision.

2.5 Managing change

A CSWO demonstrates the ability to lead and manage change well.

They:
- clearly communicate the need for change and inspires commitment to the change process
- make a clear and identifiable contribution to the process of change
- retain a focus on people who use services and their carers during the change process
- clearly communicate with those concerned by change throughout the process
- demonstrate responsiveness to the concerns of those affected by change.

3 Achieving outcomes

This aspect of the Standard relates directly to achieving outcomes for social work services, those people who use their services and their carers.

It has four aspects:
- managing resources
- managing people
- managing performance
- managing risk.

3.1 Managing resources

A CSWO takes responsibility for the use of available resources, or influences the management of those resources in a creative but prudent way.

They:
- take responsibility for ensuring that clear structures are in place to effectively manage resources directly under their control
- take responsibility for decisive action when resources are not being used effectively or efficiently
- demonstrate that they have a clear commissioning strategy in place that is guided by Best Value principles
- demonstrate the effective use of influencing skills in respect of resources not directly under their control.

3.2 Managing people

A CSWO makes the best use of the human resources that are available to them.

They:
- take responsibility for ensuring that there are clear policies in place for human resource management
- take responsibility for ensuring that a learning culture is in place for the organisation
- demonstrate commitment to the learning and development of staff
- maintain a focus on improving outcomes for people who use services and their carers.

3.3 Managing performance

Through ensuring a focus on outcomes, CSWOs have clear mechanisms in place to appraise report on and manage performance.

They:
- demonstrate optimum use of available information, both quantitative and qualitative
- ensure structures and processes are in place to critically reflect upon experience
- demonstrate a commitment to self-evaluation throughout the organisation.

3.4 Managing risk

CSWOs have well-developed arrangements in place to assess and manage risk, both within social work services and in inter-agency contexts.

They:
- demonstrate leadership in inter-agency safeguarding and risk management fora
- demonstrate a clear knowledge of the legislative framework within which risk is managed
- take responsibility for ensuring that systems and processes are in place to assess and manage risk as effectively as possible
- take responsibility for ensuring that frontline staff and managers receive the support that they require to manage risk
- demonstrate the ability to deal with complex ethical issues and make informed judgements in areas of uncertainty
- recognise that there may be tensions and conflict and that there may not always be one right answer
- where required to make decisions directly, do so ensuring that they have access to the best available information, whilst at the same time recognising that decisions may require to be made in the absence of complete information.

4 Self-leadership

This aspect of the Standard relates to self-leadership and is about establishing and developing the personal qualities of the CSWO.

It has four aspects:
- self-awareness and critical reflection
- managing self
- integrity
- continuing professional development.

4.1 Self-awareness and critical reflection

A CSWO is self-aware.

They:
- demonstrate the ability to recognise and articulate their own values and principles, understanding how these may differ from those of other disciplines and agencies
- demonstrate a strong sense of their own professionalism and confidence in their own authority
- demonstrate a critical awareness of their own strengths and limitations and the impact of their behaviour on others
- take responsibility for their own emotions and prejudices and understand how these can affect their judgment and behaviour
- take responsibility for obtaining, analysing and acting on feedback from a range of sources
- demonstrate the ability to critically reflect on their leadership and management practice.

4.2 Managing self

CSWOs demonstrate a personal resilience and confidence, particularly in the face of challenging circumstances.

They:
- critically reflect upon the impact of their behaviour on others
- demonstrate reliability in meeting their responsibilities
- demonstrate a commitment to consistently high standards
- demonstrate creativity by ensuring that their plans and actions are flexible and take account of the needs and work patterns of others.

4.3 Integrity

A CSWO behaves in an open, honest and ethical manner.

They:
- demonstrate the ability to uphold personal and professional ethics and values
- communicate effectively with staff, community representatives and people who use services
- demonstrate the upholding of social work values, the respecting and promotion of equality and diversity
- demonstrate an appropriate use of authority
- demonstrate the ability to take appropriate action if ethics and values are compromised.

4.4 Continuing professional development

A CSWO takes responsibility for their professional development.

They:
- actively seek opportunities and challenges for personal learning and development
- critically reflect upon errors and treat them as learning opportunities
- take responsibility for their own participation in continuing professional development activities
- demonstrate the ability to adapt their behaviour in the light of feedback and reflection
- demonstrate a commitment to high standards and quality service improvement on the basis of the best available evidence
- demonstrate the ability to apply learning they have gained in practice.

5 Working with others

This aspect of the Standard relates to the capabilities required for effective working with others, both within and outwith social work organisations.

It has four aspects:
- developing networks
- working in partnership
- building and maintaining trusting relationships
- building capacity.

5.1 Developing networks

An effective CSWO provides leadership in the development of networks.

They:
- take responsibility for the articulation and promotion of a shared strategic vision
- demonstrate the ability to identify opportunities for collaboration and co-operation across organisational boundaries
- take responsibility for ensuring that structures are in place to promote joint working.

5.2 Working in partnership

A CSWO works well with colleagues in partner organisations to build collaborative leadership capacity and enable innovation and appropriate risk-taking across organisational boundaries.

They:
- demonstrate a clear sense of their own role within the partnership arrangement
- take responsibility for retaining a focus on outcomes for people who use services and their carers
- promote self-determination and autonomy for people who use services and their carers
- take responsibility for the management of difference within partnerships.

5.3 Building and maintaining trusting relationships

A CSWO builds and maintains trusting relationships across organisational boundaries based on clear communication.

They:
- demonstrate the ability to listen to, and take account of, differing perspectives
- communicate clearly and effectively across boundaries
- gain and maintain the trust of colleagues in their own and other agencies
- demonstrate the ability to build commitment to the shared vision.

5.4 Building capacity

A CSWO supports the building of capacity across partnerships.

They:
- take responsibility for the provision of encouragement and opportunity for people who use services, carers and communities to engage in partnerships
- actively promote participation by modelling behaviours which inspire confidence in others
- demonstrate the ability to create a culture of collaboration and co-operation.

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