

Codes of practice for Social Service Workers and Employers

2024

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The SSSC Codes of Practice (the Codes) set out:

- the standards of practice and behaviour expected of everyone who works in social services in Scotland
- the standards expected of employers of social service workers in Scotland.

About the Codes

The Codes let individuals (people using social services) know what they can expect from the workers who support them. They also support employers and workers to think about how they can continually improve practice. The two sets of Codes mirror the responsibilities of both employers and workers in meeting the standards.

We first published the Codes in 2003, setting out the national standards of conduct and practice that apply to all social service workers and their employers. This 2024 revision of the Codes is the third edition and replaces all previous versions (2016 and 2003).

Code for Social Service Workers

The Code for Social Service Workers sets out clear standards that everyone working in social services is expected to meet. It is your responsibility to meet the standards and you should use the Code to reflect on your practice and identify how you can continually improve.

Code for Employers of Social Service Workers

The Code for Employers of Social Service Workers sets out employers' responsibilities for making sure their workforce is trusted, skilled, confident and valued. As employers you must support workers to achieve the standards set out in the Code for Social Service Workers and should use both parts of the Codes as a tool for continuous improvement.

Why are the Codes important?

Public protection and regulating the workforce

The Codes, alongside the Health and Social Care Standards, are an important part of regulating and improving the quality of care or support individuals experience.

All social service employers and workers make a commitment to work in line with the Codes of Practice.

The SSSC regulates the workforce to make sure that the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled, confident and valued workforce.

The Care Inspectorate regulates organisations that provide registered care services and employ workers. The Care Inspectorate also provides advice and promotes good practice to improve standards across social services.

When a registrant does not meet the standards set out in the Codes, the SSSC can take action through our fitness to practise process. The Care Inspectorate can provide advice to care service providers on following the Codes and, if necessary, take action against employers who don't meet the expected standards.

Supporting good practice every day

The Codes are a tool for continuous improvement and improving practice. For example, you can use them:

- to support regular Codes discussions at team meetings
- during induction and for staff learning and development
- to reflect on current practice.

Find out more about the Codes and the SSSC at www.sssc.uk.com

Code of Practice for Social Service Workers

1: I must protect and promote the rights and interests of individuals and carers.

As a worker I will

1.1	Work with kindness, compassion and respect and treat each individual as unique.
1.2	Respect and promote the rights and, where appropriate, the views, wishes and choices of individuals and carers.
1.3	Promote the rights of individuals to have control over their lives and make informed choices about their care or support.
1.4	Work with individuals and carers to communicate using their preferred method and language.
1.5	Respect and maintain the dignity and privacy of individuals.
1.6	Promote diversity and respect all identities, values and cultures.

2: I must build and maintain the trust and confidence of individuals and carers.

As a worker I will

2.1	Be truthful, open, honest and trustworthy.
2.2	Communicate in a respectful, open, accurate and straightforward way.
2.3	Respect confidential information and clearly explain policies about confidentiality to individuals and carers.
2.4	Be reliable and dependable.
2.5	Honour work commitments, agreements and arrangements and, when it is not possible to do so, explain why to individuals, carers and my employer.
2.6	Declare issues that might create conflicts of interest and make sure they do not influence my judgement or practice.
2.7	Follow policies and procedures about exchanging gifts and money with individuals and carers.
2.8	Form open, positive relationships and maintain professional boundaries with individuals, colleagues or carers that respect their dignity, wellbeing and safety.

3: I must promote the wellbeing and independence of individuals and carers while protecting them, as far as possible, from harm.

As a worker I will

3.1	Report allegations of harm, challenge and report any dangerous, abusive or discriminatory behaviour using established systems within appropriate timescales.
3.2	Follow practices, procedures and policies designed to keep me and other people safe at work.
3.3	Tell my employer, or the relevant authority, about any resourcing or operational matter that might get in the way of providing care or support.
3.4	Tell my employer, or a relevant authority, when a colleague's fitness to practise may be impaired.
3.5	Be open and honest with my employer, individuals and carers when practice has or may have caused harm or loss.
3.6	Cooperate with any investigations by my employer, the SSSC or a relevant authority into my fitness to practise or the fitness to practise of others. This may include attending hearings and providing witness statements, documents or other information within appropriate timescales.
3.7	Work with individuals and carers to give and receive feedback, raise concerns and complaints, take these seriously and act upon them.
3.8	Recognise and use responsibly the power and authority I have when working with individuals, carers and colleagues.

4: I must recognise that individuals have the right to take risks and will work with them to understand and manage those risks.

As a worker I will

4.1	Work with individuals to make informed choices about potential and actual risks to themselves or others.
4.2	Follow risk assessment policies and procedures to assess whether the behaviour of individuals presents a risk of harm to themselves or others.
4.3	Take necessary steps to reduce the risks of individuals harming themselves or others.
4.4	Make sure that individuals, relevant colleagues and agencies are informed about the findings and implications of risk assessments.

5: I must be accountable for the quality of my work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving my knowledge and skills.

As a worker I will

5.1	Meet relevant standards of practice and work in a lawful, safe and effective way.
5.2	Maintain clear, accurate and up-to-date records in line with policies and procedures relating to my work.
5.3	Tell my employer or the relevant authority about any personal circumstances or experiences that may affect my ability to do my job competently and safely and tell the SSSC about anything that may affect my fitness to practise.
5.4	Ask for support from my employer or the relevant authority if I do not feel able to, or well enough prepared to, carry out any part of my work or if I am unsure about how to proceed.
5.5	Prepare for and engage in supervision to reflect on my development, learning needs, wellbeing and practice.
5.6	Maintain my continuous professional learning to improve my knowledge and skills and contribute to the learning and development of others.
5.7	Cooperate and work inclusively and openly with colleagues and others and treat them with respect.
5.8	Work in a way that is informed by an understanding of the impact that trauma may have on individuals, carers and colleagues.
5.9	Be responsible for the work that I delegate to others.
5.10	Respect the roles and expertise of colleagues from other professions, who may follow different professional codes, and work in partnership with them.
5.11	Recognise and respect the roles, expertise and experience of carers, families and relevant others and work in partnership with them as appropriate.
5.12	Invite and listen to feedback from individuals, carers and others and use this to improve my practice.

6: I must uphold public trust and confidence.**As a worker I will not**

6.1	Abuse, harm, neglect or exploit individuals, carers or colleagues.
6.2	Abuse the trust of individuals, carers or colleagues, or misuse the information I hold about them and their personal circumstances.
6.3	Form unprofessional or harmful relationships with individuals or carers.
6.4	Discriminate against individuals, carers or colleagues.
6.5	Condone any discrimination by individuals, carers or colleagues.
6.6	Put myself or other people at unnecessary risk.
6.7	Behave, while in or outside work, in a way that would bring my suitability to work in social services into question.

Code of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers

1: Make sure people you recruit are suitable to be social service workers and that they understand their roles and responsibilities.

As an employer I will

1.1	Use thorough and safe recruitment processes to make sure that people with appropriate attitudes and values, and the potential to gain the necessary knowledge and skills, enter the workforce.
1.2	Follow relevant safe recruitment guidance to check criminal records, registers and gaps in employment as part of assessing whether a person can carry out the duties of the job.
1.3	Request and provide accurate and appropriate information or references relating to a person's suitability to work in a specified role.
1.4	Give workers clear information about their roles and responsibilities, relevant legislation and the policies and procedures they must follow in their work.
1.5	Provide clear information to workers about line management, communication and support.

2: Maintain a culture and have systems in place to support social service workers to meet their Code of Practice.

As an employer I will

2.1	Lead, manage and supervise workers in a way that promotes kind and compassionate practice.
2.2	Lead in a way which values diversity, inclusion and equality and upholds individual rights.
2.3	Lead workers in a way that makes sure individuals and carers, where appropriate, are involved in decisions about their care or support.
2.4	Lead workers to continuously improve their practice and professional development, while ensuring their fitness to practise.
2.5	Promote an open culture where workers are supported to discuss ethical practice and professional boundaries.
2.6	Have systems in place to seek and use feedback from individuals, carers and others to shape and improve services and practice.
2.7	Have systems in place for workers to report resourcing or operational difficulties that might have an impact on care or support and work to address such problems with relevant authorities where necessary.
2.8	Enable a culture which supports workers to whistleblow when they feel that working practices are discriminatory, inappropriate or unsafe for any reason and take appropriate action to respond to concerns.
2.9	Support workers to meet the standards in their Code of Practice and not require them to do anything that might prevent that from happening.
2.10	Support workers employed from other professions to meet their own professional codes.
2.11	Report workers whose fitness to practise may be impaired to the relevant authority.

3: Provide learning and development opportunities to enable workers to strengthen and maintain their skills, knowledge and practice.

As an employer I will

3.1	Provide good quality accessible induction and learning and development opportunities to support workers to carry out their role safely and effectively.
3.2	Support and prepare workers for new and changing roles, responsibilities and developments in practice including digital.
3.3	Contribute to education and learning, providing effective workplace placements, assessments and practice learning opportunities.
3.4	Support workers who need to be registered with the SSSC to meet and maintain their conditions for registration and the requirement for continuous professional learning and development.
3.5	Make sure that all newly qualified social workers are provided with the required level of professional learning and development during the mandatory supported year to fully meet their continuous professional learning requirements.
3.6	Respond appropriately to workers who need support because they do not feel able, or well enough prepared, to carry out their work.
3.7	Provide effective and regular supervision that enables workers to develop and improve practice through reflection and feedback.

4: Maintain a culture that supports safety and protection while respecting the rights of individuals to take risks.

As an employer I will

4.1	Have written policies and procedures in place to protect individuals, carers, workers and others from harm.
4.2	Put into action and monitor written policies and procedures, particularly about reporting allegations of exploitation, discrimination, harm, neglect or abuse to the relevant authority within appropriate timescales.
4.3	Make sure workers know and understand signs of exploitation, discrimination, harm, neglect and abuse and the action they must take.
4.4	Make sure that workers understand bullying, harassment or any form of discrimination is not acceptable and take action to deal with such behaviour.
4.5	Have procedures in place for a worker to report when a colleague's fitness to practise may be impaired.
4.6	Have procedures in place for a worker to report when practice has caused or may have caused harm or loss.
4.7	Deal with reports and allegations from workers promptly, effectively and openly.
4.8	Promote a culture that values everyone's safety and where violence, threats and abuse are not acceptable. Have policies and procedures in place for reducing and managing such incidents.
4.9	Be aware of the range of impacts trauma may have on workers, and support workers who experience these.
4.10	Be aware of the impact abusive behaviour may have on workers. Support workers who experience such behaviour.
4.11	Have policies and procedures in place that promote the health, safety, wellbeing and equality of workers and respect inclusion and diversity.

Code of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers

4.12	Support workers whose fitness to practise may be impaired and provide clear guidance about any restrictions on their work.
4.13	Report to the relevant authorities where practice has or may have caused harm or loss.
4.14	Have risk assessment policies and procedures in place.

5: Publicise and promote the Code of Practice for Social Service Employers and the Code of Practice for Social Service Workers to individuals and carers and cooperate with SSSC proceedings.

As an employer I will

5.1	Follow the Code of Practice for Social Service Employers and tell workers about my responsibility to comply with it.
5.2	Inform workers about the Code of Practice for Social Service Workers and work with them to understand their responsibilities to comply with it.
5.3	Promote the importance and connection between the Codes of Practice and other relevant frameworks and standards.
5.4	Inform individuals and carers of the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers and provide details of how to raise issues relating to the Codes.
5.5	Take account of the Code of Practice for Social Service Workers when making any decision that relates to a worker's fitness to practise.
5.6	Follow guidance on making a referral to the SSSC about a worker whose fitness to practise may be impaired. If appropriate, tell the worker that you have made a referral.
5.7	Cooperate promptly with SSSC investigations and those of other authorities, including providing documents, attending hearings and responding to the findings and decisions.
5.8	Enable and support workers to cooperate with SSSC investigations and those of other authorities.
5.9	Take appropriate action on any SSSC findings about a worker's fitness to practise, including supporting a worker to meet any conditions on their registration.
5.10	Take appropriate action on the findings of other standard setting bodies to improve the service provided to individuals and carers.

**These Codes apply from 1 May 2024
and replace all previous versions.**

**Issued under section 53 of the
Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001.**

The Codes give examples of practice, conduct and behaviour but will not include every possible type of behaviour you may come across.



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