Guide to CPD for Employers

Continuing professional development (CPD) requirements have recently been introduced for all social workers who are registered to work in Ireland. While meeting those requirements is the responsibility of each individual social worker, this guide sets out summary information that may be relevant to employers. Employers play an important role in encouraging and enabling social workers to embed CPD into their everyday practice.

1. **What is CPD?**

   Continuing professional development is the means by which health and social care professionals maintain and improve their knowledge, skills and competence, and develop the professional qualities required throughout their professional lives. **CPD is an integral component in the continuing provision of safe and effective services for the benefit of service users.**

2. **Why is CPD important?**

   Active engagement in CPD is critical to ensuring that social workers continue to have the up to date knowledge and skills necessary to deliver a safe and effective service to service users. Practice must be guided by changes in work methods, in technology, in research, in roles and in legislation. Evidence of CPD is important because it provides the mechanism to reassure the Board, on behalf of the public, that professional standards are being maintained.

3. **Why is it important to encourage staff to complete CPD?**

   Not only is CPD a requirement of statutory registration and required to retain the right to use the professional title of social worker it is also an important component of professional practice. CPD encourages personal development as well as professional development and helps develop a sense of professional identity. CPD in social work is associated with increased job satisfaction and a means of supporting those working in stressful situations. CPD is most importantly about benefiting and protecting service users, but also benefits the well-being of the practitioners.
4. **What are the CPD requirements?**

Social workers are obliged to accrue **60 CPD credits in each 24 month** cycle and document this in their portfolio through the stages of review, plan, implement and demonstrate. They must complete a range of learning activities and demonstrate ongoing commitment to CPD. A CPD portfolio must include:

1. Declaration and overview of professional role and practice setting
2. Personal Learning Plan
3. Record of CPD activities
4. Reflections on 8 different learning activities
5. Evidence of CPD learning activities

5. **Do the standards apply to all staff?**

All social workers who are on the register are obliged to meet the CPD standards as outlined above. These requirements apply regardless of work situations including part time caseloads and extended leave from work.

These standards apply to all social workers on the register regardless of whether their role is patient facing. All managers, academics, practitioners and any other relevant professionals who are on the register are obliged to meet the CPD standards.

6. **Do pro-rata CPD amounts apply to those who join the register during the cycle or those who are on maternity leave?**

No. Pro-rata amounts have not been specified in the CPD standards and requirements.

Those that are on extended leave from work such as maternity leave or a career break, and remain on the register, are obliged to meet the standards as set out. However, if called for audit, they may request a deferral. Deferrals will be considered on a case by case basis and are not guaranteed.
Social workers who join the register during the cycle should begin CPD immediately in order to be compliant with the requirements, but no pro-rata amount has been specified.

7. **What types of CPD activities are eligible for inclusion in the portfolio?**

The CPD Framework is flexible to accommodate a variety of work situations and practices. Widely recognised CPD activities in social work such as supervision and attending courses and workshops are included. However, the framework is varied and activities such as journal clubs, in-services, case discussions, team meetings and presentations are also relevant to be included. Social workers are required to identify suitable learning activities for themselves and can include any opportunity or experience which resulted in learning and impacted their practice and ultimately benefited service users.

- Research
- Multidisciplinary group
- CORU board or committee
- Professional body role
- Accredited training course
- Training colleagues
- Student education
- Online learning
- Maintaining CPD portfolio
- Professional reading
- Publication
- Learning from experience

8. **Are training courses and workshops the only acceptable form of CPD?**

Training courses and workshops are one form of acceptable CPD and may be the most suitable option for targeting certain learning needs. However, there are a wide range of suitable learning activities that can be included in the portfolio.

9. **My staff members are concerned about access to supervision.**

Supervision is just one acceptable form of CPD learning activity. Although firmly embedded in social work practice, it is not a compulsory element of the CPD
framework. Supervision may be a suitable learning activity to target specific learning needs.

10. **Can I help staff identify their learning needs and make a plan?**

Social workers may seek support and guidance from their direct line manager in the identification of learning needs and goals for the upcoming cycle. It may be useful to engage with this process to ensure that staff members are being conscious of organisational, departmental and team needs when planning learning activities. However, there is no obligation for social workers to seek guidance on this process and they may be more comfortable completing it independently.

11. **Could I incorporate the CPD system into performance management?**

Although there is no obligation to integrate the CPD system into performance management, it may be useful to align the two processes if possible. Including CPD planning into a performance management process would ensure that learning needs and goals are beneficial to both the individual and the organisation. This would also streamline the time burden associated with both activities and alleviate unnecessary work from the social worker.

12. **Why is it useful to embed the CPD standards and requirements into work practice?**

The CPD standards and requirements focus on public protection through maintenance and development of professional competence of social workers. The standard places emphasis on self-directed learning, learning in context and encourages reflective practice. Learning in context and reflective practice are more beneficial when combined with work practice. Additionally, embedding CPD into work practice will reduce the time and resource burden which may be associated with completing CPD.

13. **What can I do to support embedding CPD into practice in my workplace?**

Work-based CPD activities are strongly featured in the CPD framework and are the easiest method of embedding CPD firmly into social work practice. Introducing regular team activities such as journal clubs, in-services, case discussions and team meetings to the work schedule will support social workers in meeting their CPD requirements.
Formal training courses and workshops may be identified as suitable learning activities by social workers. If appropriate, it may be beneficial to support staff members in attending formal learning activities. To ensure widespread benefit from supporting staff members to attend formal training, it may be useful to implement lunch and learn activities whereby staff members pass on their learning to their colleagues.

14. **Can I make recording CPD easier for staff?**

All learning activities included in a CPD portfolio need to be evidenced with supporting documentation. It may be useful to introduce a staff sign-in sheet for team events as outlined above to ensure a record of attendance is available for inclusion in a portfolio.

It may also be useful to create a department template for use in evidencing meetings with supervisors as part of a supervision relationship.

15. **Staff are already very busy, what if we cannot make time for CPD?**

CPD is an important component of professional practice and should be embedded within work practices to reduce burden on time and resources. Although some time will be spent on implementing and recording CPD, this is minimal throughout the year.

In the instance a social worker is called for a CPD audit and has not maintained a portfolio, it will take significantly more time to create a portfolio in a short time period. As the CPD requirement outlines that registrants should add to their portfolio regularly, this would also represent a breach of the CPD requirements.

16. **What are the possible outcomes for staff if they do not meet the CPD requirements?**

If audited and deemed to have not met the CPD requirements, social workers will be given additional time to become compliant with the standard. A detailed report will be provided as guidance.

Following this, if a social worker is deemed to be non-compliant with the CPD requirements, they will be in breach of the Social Worker’s Registration Boards Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics and will be referred for a professional misconduct hearing.