Considerations for Gaining Feedback from Carers and People who use services during Social Work Student Placements:

A Good Practice Guide
Skills for Care: part of the sector skills council, Skills for Care and Development
Skills for Care is the not-for-profit organisation that aims to improve adult social care services across the whole of England by supporting employers' workforce development activity.
Our Vision is:
- To put employers in the driving seat on social care workforce issues
- To create a trained and qualified workforce providing high quality care
- To provide an expert voice on the social care workforce

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**About this guide**

This good practice guide has been developed in collaboration with carers and people who use services associated with Chichester University, West Sussex, and social work practitioners who have experience as practice assessors working across West Sussex.

This guide is intended for social work students undertaking practice placements, practice assessors and work-based supervisors responsible for assessing the competency of students whilst they are on placement.

It is a General Social Care Council requirement that carers and people who use services are involved in the assessment of social work students’ practice. Gaining feedback from carers and people who use services is an important process that forms part of the overall assessment of the student’s competency to practice.

This Good Practice Guide was developed as a result of a series of facilitated focus groups that involved carers and people who use services and one care worker (Julienne Nicholls, Clive Maskell, Molly Woods and Mary Downy) and social work practice assessors (Caz Mitchell, Sue Kelsey and Graham Tooth). Each focus group was held separately and then brought together to share outcomes from discussions in each group and to develop and agree the content and design of this Good Practice Guide. This project was led by Rebecca Stephens, Independent Consultant working on behalf of Skills for Care South East. The focus groups were facilitated by Rebecca Stephens and Dr Andy Mantell, Senior Lecturer, University of Chichester, West Sussex.
Please note that this Guide should not supersede any other guidance provided by your university or placement agency. It should be used in conjunction with, and to complement, your university or placement agency’s guidance on gaining feedback from carers and people who use services during social work student placements.

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**Glossary of terms**

For the purposes of this guide the following terms have been defined;

**People who use services**

People who are in receipt of a health and / or social care service, and someone with whom a student social worker works, and on behalf of, during their practice placement. This term will be used interchangeably with ‘service user’ and ‘carer.’

**Carer**

A person who provides unpaid and informal care to a relative, partner, sibling, child or friend. This involves an informal partnership with people who use services.

**Care worker**

A person who is contracted and paid to provide care to someone who is need in care. This involves a formal partnership with a person who uses services.

**Student**

A person who is undertaking a degree in social work.

**Practice assessor**

A social work practitioner who supervises and assesses student social workers during their practice placement.

**GSCC**

The General Social Care Council.
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The Core Principles and Benefits of Feedback

As a social care worker, you must strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers.
(GSCC Code of Practice for Social Care Workers 2002).

Occupational Standards and Values in Action
Gaining feedback about one’s practice is a process that needs to run through all points of contact with people receiving services whether as a student or qualified social worker. For students, feedback is linked to both good social work practice and the need to get feedback for course portfolios. It is important that it does not become just an ‘add on’ to getting the portfolio done. Applying equal opportunities in practice means giving every carer and person who uses services that the student has had contact with during their placement, the opportunity and time to give feedback and promote choice.

The feedback process should be an honest dialogue
It is important that carers and people who use services feel comfortable to give feedback to students. It is therefore important that students build and establish an open and honest relationship with carers and people who use services right from the start.

As a student, you need to be concerned with evidencing the National Occupational Standards for Social Work (see Appendix: ‘Statement of expectations from those who use services and carers’).
Students must explain the purpose of gaining feedback to carers and people who use services at the time of requesting it. Good rapport between students, carers and people who use services increases the richness and reliability of the feedback provided. However, a balance will need to be struck in consultation with the practice assessor as to whether the approach to gain feedback is likely to gain honest or reliable evidence. In other words, consideration needs to be given to whether the carer or person who uses services might be affected by authority roles or not wanting to say something that may affect a student passing the course. Carers and people who use services should always be allowed to decline to give feedback.

**Context is everything**
The ‘tip of the iceberg’ symbolises the tip of the carers’ or service users’ complex lives. The ‘tip’ is the small part of their life that the student sees. Carers and people who use services may have conflicting views or not even view themselves as carers or people who use services. The better the student can appreciate their context, the more meaningful their understanding will be of their feedback. The better the student knows the carer or service user through the development of their working relationship, the more the carer or service user is likely to reveal of their situation and the more receptive they are likely to be in providing feedback.

The student should consider what they see and hear about the lives of carers and people who use services as just being ‘the tip of the iceberg.’
The lives of carers and people who use services can be complex. It is important that students appreciate the often deep complexities and intricacies in other people’s lives.
How should feedback be gained?

As a social care worker, you must be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills (GSCC Code of Practice for Social Care Workers 2002).

The feedback continuum

If students seek feedback throughout the placement as part of the process of social work intervention, they will learn directly from carers and people who use services. This will give them valuable information to discuss in supervision with practice assessors. Some of the information may be directly used in the student’s portfolio, but in other cases, the student will need to seek additional information. Feedback can be seen as a continuum from unsolicited, non-directed feedback through solicited, non-directed feedback to solicited, directed feedback.

As the student moves along this continuum, their agenda can become an increasing influence and a source of bias in promoting their own agenda above the concerns of the carer or person who uses services. Students must be careful to avoid it becoming a bureaucratic process which ‘hits the targets, but misses the point!’
**Unsolicited, non-directed feedback**

**Examples:**

**Subtle:** Body language, level of engagement (particularly with children).

**More explicit:** Comments during or at the end of the intervention, these may be to you, your manager, another team or multi-disciplinary team member.

**Concrete:** Letter of thanks or a present, such as a picture by a child (see your placements guidance on receiving presents) or a letter of complaint.

**Ways to Encourage:** Spend time building rapport to develop a good relationship with carers and people who use services.

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**Solicited, non-directed feedback**

**Examples:**

Body language / Non-verbal communication and verbal communication.

**Ways to encourage:**

- Use of open body language and non-verbal cues such as nodding when they have provided feedback, to encourage further feedback. Summarizing what they have said - this serves to check out your understanding of what they have said and can encourage them to say more. Sometimes adding a questioning intimation can encourage further discussion.

- Use of open questions, such as –
  “How have you found this process?”
  Or
  “Would you be willing to write about how you have experienced my involvement?”
Solicited, directed feedback.

Examples:
Semi-structured interview, questionnaire.

Ways to encourage:

- *Empowering service users.* For some people (for example those who have been excluded or who have low self-esteem or expectation of services), informing them of what they could expect from a service not only provides them with knowledge they can use in the future but provides a gauge to measure the student’s level of involvement.

- For some people with cognitive difficulties, for example a person who has experienced a severe brain injury, asking open questions may be too confusing. In such cases offering *choices* and talking in concrete terms may be helpful. The use of communication aids such as light writers, alphabet boards or pictures can be helpful. Asking for marks out of ten for what you have achieved may be appropriate.

- A *semi-structured* list of questions can offer some broad areas which could be covered but which leaves considerable scope for the carer or person who uses services to respond.

- *Funnelling* or *probing* works in conjunction with semi structured lists of questions. Having elicited an answer which contains a point which you wish to explore further you then ask supplementary questions on that point.
- **Questionnaires** tend to be very directive and closed but can provide boxes for people to add further information and open questions to enable people to add points which have not been covered.

It is important to pilot or test out questionnaires to ensure that the questions are not ambiguous or difficult to understand. The student should think about who will be completing them and whether the carer or person who uses services will be motivated to complete the questions.

Always try to keep questionnaires as short as possible (preferably only one page long).

It is usually preferable to complete the questionnaire with people as this provides the opportunity for further discussion (sometimes people will say things but not be willing to commit them to paper).

This might also be helpful for those who have difficulty writing or who are not so enthusiastic about writing. However, in some cases, people would prefer the student not to be present when they complete the questionnaire so it is important to ensure they have that choice.
What feedback should be gained?

“Seeking feedback is good practice”

(Practice assessor)

The more feedback the better

Feedback should be sought as many times as possible from a range of service users and carers. For short term work with carers and people who uses services, feedback should be requested at the end of their involvement. For longer term work with carers and people who uses services, feedback should be requested at the beginning, middle and end stages of their work with them. This provides an opportunity for the student to learn and take on board any constructive feedback given.

All feedback is good feedback

There is a risk of choosing carers and people who use services who are more likely to give positive feedback than others that the student has contact with. However, some of the greatest learning happens when students receive constructive feedback from others. When gaining feedback, the student should be aware of the context in which the feedback is asked as well as the carer’s or service user’s culture, position in life course and expectations.

Remember:

Carers and people who use services can be happy with what the student has done but still disagree with the outcome.
Feedback as a mutually beneficial process

The short answer to the question about who benefits from the feedback process is: everyone involved in the student’s practice placement. This includes;

- The student
- The carer or person who receives services providing the feedback
- Third parties involved in providing feedback
- The practice assessor
- The placement agency

Effective feedback processes can minimize barriers in the relationship hierarchy between student, service user or carer, practice assessor and placement agency and moderate power imbalances inherent in those relationships.

For the student, gaining feedback from carers and people who use services provides an opportunity to learn something about themselves and how they approach situations and people in their practice. Feedback helps the student to develop their knowledge and skills and promotes better practice.

For the carer and person who uses services, giving feedback ultimately gives them and others a better service and promotes best practice in social work. Giving feedback provides carers and people who use services with an opportunity to be listened to. Asking for feedback enables the student to show appreciation of their situation.

For the practice assessor, obtaining feedback from carers and people who use services provides another way of assessing and gaining evidence of the students' performance and competency.
For the placement agency, feedback from carers and people who use services can raise the level of confidence, accountability and integrity of the agency through subscribing to best practice principles in the delivery of services.

**Integrating Feedback into the Supervisory Process**

Feedback from carers and people who use services should either be a standing item on the supervision agenda between student and practice assessor or contained within individual case discussions. This ensures that:

- Service user and carer perspectives on the student’s practice are included in supervision.
- Feedback is being sought.
- Feedback is being requested in the most effective and appropriate way.
- The student’s practice is being monitored and evaluated throughout the placement.
- Students have the opportunity to demonstrate how they have improved their practice after taking on board constructive feedback provided.
- The student’s learning needs, blocks, barriers or gaps are being identified and addressed.
- Students are given a fair assessment of their practice.

The practice assessor could contact the carer or service user directly so they can share or reinforce the feedback provided in relation to the student.
Requesting feedback from carers and people who use services

“The end of the assessment might not be the end of the student’s involvement with the carer or service user”

(Service user)

Making the request
It should be the student’s responsibility to ask carers and people who use services for feedback. The practice assessor is responsible for ensuring that the student is collecting appropriate and relevant feedback from different service users and carers throughout the placement as evidence of their practice. Students must clearly explain to carers and people who use services the purpose of requesting and gaining feedback from them.

A tailor-made process
Students should agree the best approach to obtain feedback with each service user and carer where possible. We recommend the routine use of a narrative dialogue that reflects the needs and circumstances of each service user and carer and the practice in the placement setting.

Creative methods of gaining feedback can be applied but in all cases, students should consider the service user’s or carer’s preferred method of communication and adapt accordingly.

Students should challenge any low expectations they or others might have about what and how much feedback people who have language or communication difficulties are able to give. In such situations students should use alternate communication methods as well as link in with third parties (e.g. relatives, advocates, formal or informal carers, interpreters and other professionals and agencies that the service user is involved with) to facilitate an effective dialogue.
Ultimately, students may need to note any non-verbal cues, subtle messages or behavioural changes through their interactions with service users and carers that might indicate if and when feedback is being provided and what this might mean.

“Perseverance is a crucial skill that students need in order to gain feedback from carers and people who use services where the process may be more challenging” (service user).
Deciding who to approach to give feedback

“The content of what the student discusses with the service user or carer is less important than their approach to communicate and engage with the service user or carer.” (Carer)

Whatever kinds of feedback are being sought it will be necessary for the student to agree with his/her practice assessor how this will be verified particularly where feedback is provided verbally. Some ideas are included in this section.

Who might request feedback?
In most circumstances it should be the student’s responsibility to ask service users and carers for feedback and to explain the purpose of requesting and gaining feedback from them.

The practice assessor is responsible for ensuring that the student is collecting feedback from different service users and carers throughout the placement. S/he may decide in some situations that it is more appropriate or necessary to gain the feedback themselves. The student should therefore offer the option of providing carers and people who use services with the name and contact details of their practice assessor.

Who should receive the feedback?
This is a matter of judgement by the practice assessor and student. In some cases, for example, a stamped addressed envelope returning the feedback to the practice assessor. In other cases, the student could manage the whole process.
Who might give feedback?

- People who use services including children and young people, adults and older people
- Carers
- Relatives
- Anyone who is not in paid employment and with whom the student has had direct contact or who may give their impressions of the help offered to a carer or person who uses services.

Third parties could provide triangulated, contrasting feedback and add variety to the evidence;

What kinds of evidence could be collected?

**Feedback sources;**

- Formal/planned
  - Questionnaires or other media used as a means of formal assessment.
  - A face to face meeting
- Spontaneous
  - Chance conversation or remarks
- Solicited during or at end the of an interview – some examples of questions are as follows;
‘Was it helpful talking about / doing things in this way? ‘Is there anything I could do differently?’ – this is useful where the interview might be strained.

‘Has it been helpful to talk about these things in this way and with me?’

‘Tell me, what has been helpful about meeting like this today?’

‘On a scale of 1 to 10 how helpful has this time together been….?’ Follow on question: ‘Tell me, what would have made it a (6, 7, 8)’ – ask about the number above the one the person gave.

‘it would be helpful if could write something or draw a picture of how things are going right now’

**Methods/kinds of feedback**

- **Questionnaire** – completed in the presence of the student or practice assessor or sent out to individuals or representative groups of people the student has worked with.

- **Practice assessor contacts service user or carer directly.**

- **The carer or person who receives services verifies or writes a commentary or statement of impressions and has the right to amend or add to it.**

- **Practice assessor writes a verification note for feedback received where the service user does not want his/her evidence to be included in a portfolio.**

- **Verbal feedback is reported to the practice assessor.**
Verbal and recorded (in work records, cassette/DVD/video, phone messages, during conversation with the person, group work evaluations, story telling, narrative talking).

Verbal as part of a meeting or interview process.

Written – letter, thank you card, poem, art as an expression of gratitude or other emotions, email, group work evaluations.

Visual – drawings, pictures, collage – these could be done by the person or given a selection of faces to look at to convey feedback.

Auditory/musical – to stimulate feedback discussions.

A note on using questionnaires
Using a questionnaire is one approach to gain feedback from service users and carers. If a questionnaire is considered, it is good practice for the student to develop this in collaboration with the service user or carer. In this way, service users and carers are empowered to decide what areas they want to give the student feedback on. This also reduces the possibility of the questions being too prescriptive. The questionnaire could be given to the service user or carer to complete in their own time and returned directly to the practice assessor in a stamped addressed envelope provided by the student.

Whatever questions are asked, they should be focussed and relevant to the work that the student engaged in with the service user or carer. Questionnaires using tick boxes are generally easier to use but should also include a comments section so service users and carers can provide more specific feedback and examples of the student’s practice. If scaling methods are used, they should be simplified and limited for example, bad – medium – good.
What to give feedback on

“As a practice assessor I would sometimes want the student to request feedback about outcomes or to request information about other aspects of his/her practice so that service users and carers can feed meaningfully into the assessment process of deciding on a student’s competence.”

(Practice assessor)

The expectations that service users and carers have of students will be different depending on their year level. The student should explain their level of experience because this can offer service users and carers a baseline to their level of practice maturity.

Carers and people who use services shouldn’t be guided into answering specific questions as this contradicts the idea of having a questionnaire. It is always best to ask the service user or carer what they would like to give feedback on. Feedback should incorporate aspects of the process and outcome of the student’s interventions.

Feedback should be provided in at least four areas:

- **Skill**
- **Knowledge**
- **Attitude**
- **Outcome**
Some trigger questions could be asked and these should be shared and agreed with the practice assessor. These could include;

**Skill**
- Communication, engaging and relating skills
  - Did you feel listened to?
  - Was this contact helpful?
  - Have you understood what the student has said?
  - How has it been to talk about this?
- Advocacy
  - How well did the student collaborate with others and promote the needs of service users and carers on their behalf?

**Knowledge**
- Research
  - Did the student consider all intervention possibilities by finding out the most accurate information and information that will benefit service users and carers?
  - Did the student interpret new knowledge and apply it to the individual service user and carer?

**Attitude**
- The interest factor
  - How interested in the service user’s or carer’s situation did the student appear?
  - Did the student convey a good attitude?
- Honesty
  - Did the student give a realistic picture at the beginning of their involvement with service users and carers about the possibilities and boundaries of their role?

**Outcome**

- Thoroughness
  - How well did the student identify the needs of the service user or carer?

- Creativity
  - Did the student make an effort to work beyond known or established possibilities?
  - Did the student make every effort to ensure the best possible outcome?
  - Did the student explore all avenues – did they take that ‘one step further’ to achieve a positive outcome?

- Anti-discriminatory practice
  - Were responses offered to carers and people who use services that were culturally meaningful (age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, styles of receiving help) for the person?

- Satisfaction with the outcome
  - Did the student give the best possible outcome within the authority available to them?
  - Has this been helpful to talk about?
  - Were anti-discriminatory principles applied?
The usage of feedback

As a social care worker, you must protect the rights and promote the interests of service users and carers.
(GSCC Code of Practice for Social Care Workers 2002).

How can feedback be used?

1. By providing evidence or verification of practice competence for the student and his/her portfolio.

2. As a way of sharing experiences and learning - students should be clear with carers and people who use services from the start of their relationship how their feedback will be shared and with whom. Feedback could be shared with other service users and carers, students and practice assessors to promote examples of best practice in social work provided the person has given prior permission.

3. As Learning Materials for use at University or for sharing with other service users and carers - feedback can be integrated into social work programmes by way of case studies developed into teaching materials. Critical incident scenarios could be developed and based on real accounts.

If feedback provided to students is considered to be useful learning, then it should be shared as widely as possible.
The story of my experience with the student social worker  
(Service user)  
“I am a young lady aged 15 years and I have Spina Bifida. I have been referred to Social Services as I need help to become more independent. At present, my mother helps me with all my personal care and I wish to be in control of my own care, like any other teenager.

I was pleased when I met the student social worker, as she immediately directed her questions to ME. She did not ignore my parents, but made me feel that I was in control of the assessment. The student informed me of her role in Social Services and told me that throughout our meetings she would need feedback from me. I would have the opportunity to say what I felt about her ability as a social worker. She pointed out that this would be an ongoing appraisal of her work and it would NOT affect the services I received in any way. I felt happy to be involved in this process, as, in addition to receiving help, I would be able to boost my self-esteem and ego by giving something back to society.

The student was very pleased and I was glad that she had not stereotyped me as a 15 year old suffering from Spina Bifida. As far as I was concerned, she spoke to me as if I was ‘just Amy.’ I explained what my ideal scenario would be for total independence and she gave me a realistic opinion of my desires. She always communicated and listened to me and avoided being guided by my parents’ interjections. She said that the feedback would be an ongoing procedure throughout the meetings.

I was informed that if I wanted to the student to use my case history in the portfolio for her degree, I would be asked to provide written consent. I felt very much at ease with her throughout our meetings, as she listened to me as an individual, and she genuinely wanted to help me to improve my quality of life within the financial constraints of the department.”
Ethical and confidentiality issues

Dilemmas and uncertainties can arise during the process of gaining feedback from carers and people who use services. It is important that students and practice assessors and where possible, service users and carers collaborate to identify and address any dilemmas. Some examples are given below.

Interpreting feedback
There is a risk of students or practice assessors misinterpreting feedback provided by service users and carers. It is therefore crucial that all feedback gained from carers and people who use services is clarified with them.

When complaints are made
Complaints made by carers and people who use services must be responded to. Practice assessors and students should conduct any inquiries in line with agency policies and protocols. To make this a meaningful process for carers and people who use services, students should provide the name and contact details of their practice assessor or a point of contact at the beginning of their work with them and include information about the formal complaints procedure.

Confidentiality: Service users and carers signing feedback forms
Service users and carers should be given the choice to provide their name and signature on any feedback form. If signed, the original form should be seen by the practice assessor who can verify the authenticity of the feedback provided. It is good practice to make anonymous the names and signatures of service users and carers before being included in the student’s final portfolio. This process should be explained to service users and carers at the time of requesting it.
Giving informed consent

Feedback provided by carers and people who use services are used as direct witness statements on students’ practice. Therefore, service users and carers should give informed consent to give feedback for inclusion in the student’s portfolio. Where carers and people who use services are not able to consent, while their feedback can be discussed in supervision, their feedback should not be included in the student’s portfolio. The practice assessor could write a verification note to be included in the portfolio.
Final considerations:
Empowering carers and people who use services

Whilst students are understandably focussed on achieving the criteria to become a social worker, the wider purpose of being on placement and becoming a social worker is to provide a service to carers and people who use services.

Not every service user and carer will want to give feedback. Giving feedback should therefore be promoted as a choice.

If:
- Trust
- Rapport
- Honest communication
- Openness
- Receptivity to personal experience

has been developed, carers and people who use services can be influential on the student’s practice.

Feedback from carers and people who use services should generally be requested on the effectiveness of the student’s practice and the outcome of their involvement with service users and carers.

Gaining feedback that is purposeful, relevant and genuine requires the student to invest some time in building rapport with service users and carers. This empowers service users and carers to comment on aspects of the student’s performance as fully as possible.
Service users and carers should be asked how they would like their feedback to be responded to.

Students should consider the roles of carers and people who use services as just the tip of the iceberg of those people’s lives so. . . .

“Take the time to be inquisitive – to find out what’s below the water line . . . of the tip of the iceberg.”

(service user)
A poem by Julienne Nicholls (service user)

So now you are dealing with Case Number 102,
Remembering they are people like me and you.
Try and also see your actions from their point of view,
As you will always be dealing with people in the work you do.

So you are dealing with Case Number 103,
Remember they are a person, like you and me.
Yes they are probably someone’s brother or wife,
 Asking for help as they try to cope with their life.

So you are dealing with Case Number 104,
You will be a stranger knocking on their hall door.
Remembering they are people with feelings like me and you,
And your actions will be affecting their feelings too.

So you are dealing with Case 109,
Keeping an open mind as you meet them for the first time,
Trying not to put them in categories straight away,
Listening attentively to what they have to say.

So now you are dealing with Case 126,
Remembering on the end of the phone it’s a person
Who has problems they hope you can fix.
Trying not to be too detached or getting involved too,
Yes your case loads will always be people like me and you.

Thank you for reading my poem on the many aspects of care. It was horrible when professionals talked sometimes as though I wasn’t there.
Please try to remember to listen and to talk to people face to face. Please, just because we need help, don’t ostracise us from the human race.
Appendix

Statement of Expectations from those who use services and their carers

1. Communication skills and information sharing

   Social work students should understand how important it is to:

   a. Explain their:
      - role and the purpose of contact, e.g. assessment
      - their powers, including legal powers
      in a way that can be understood by all involved
   b. Inform users and carers about what steps they are going to take
   c. Give information to users and carers about their rights and entitlements
   d. Be open and honest about what they can and cannot do
   e. Be honest if they cannot offer the resources needed
   f. Inform users and carers about what is available, beyond the brief of their organisation
   g. Listen actively to what users and carers have to say
   h. Involve users and carers in decision making
   i. Offer users and carers choices and options
   j. Share records with users and carers
   k. Build honest relationships based on clear communication

2. Good social work practice

   Social work students should understand how important it is to:

   a. Be good at time keeping
   b. Be good at starting, continuing and closing relationships
   c. Involve users and carers in all meetings which may affect them
   d. Give users and carers sufficient time to work with them properly
   e. Ensure that contact is maintained
   f. Assess needs properly:
      - making sure that all options are explored properly before deciding on a plan
      - looking for options when the services needed are not available
      - being creative
      - involving users and carers:
        - in setting goals
        - when developing a care plan, and being honest about the limitations of choice and the options
        - when reviewing and changing plans
g. Help users and carers access benefits and services
h. Assess risk and support risk taking when appropriate
i. Work with users and carers to develop and/or maintain independence
j. Link users and carers to support groups and networks and support them to extend involvement with groups and networks
k. Be accountable to users and carers for their practice

3. Advocacy

Social work students should understand how important it is to:

a. Be able to work with different kinds of advocacy:
   • develop own advocacy skills
   • be knowledgeable about local advocacy resources, including professional advocates, and citizen advocacy, self-advocacy and special interest groups
   • respect and give practical support to local citizen advocacy
   • respect and give practical support to local self-advocacy
b. Practice direct advocacy on behalf of users and carers by
   • lobbying to achieve access to services
   • making needs known within their own organisation
   • ensuring justice and equality
   • ensuring good practice and high quality service
c. Advise on and appropriately refer people to other forms of advocacy support
   • professional advocacy such as solicitors, welfare rights workers, citizens’ advice bureau etc.
   • independent citizen advocacy
   • self-advocacy groups
   • advocacy organisations, e.g. specialist voluntary organisations
d. Support self-advocacy by users and carers in meetings or other contexts where their voice should be heard, utilising other sources of advocacy as appropriate
   • assisting communication
   • ensuring respect for users’ and carers’ views
   • reinforcing people’s viewpoint where appropriate
   • ensuring equality of opportunity for contribution and involvement
   • speaking up on people’s behalf with their agreement

4. Working with other professionals

Social work students should understand how important it is to:

a. Be honest, clear and make sure all involved understand:
• what happens to the information users and carers give to the social worker
• how it is kept
• who it is shared with, and why
• how it might be used

b. Understand what information other organisations can offer and share with users and carers
c. Work effectively with others to improve services offered to users and carers.

5. Knowledge

Social work students should understand how important it is to:
a. Have knowledge of:
   • services relevant to users’ and carers’ needs and circumstances (not just those offered by their organisation) and how to access other relevant services
   • benefits and direct payments
   • legislation
b. Have in-depth knowledge of the users and carers group they are working with
c. Keep themselves up to date with:
   • all relevant knowledge and information
   • the rights of users and carers

6. Values

Social work students should understand how important it is to:
a. Have respect for:
   • users and carers, regardless of their age, ethnicity, culture, level of understanding and need
   • the expertise and knowledge users and carers have about their own situation
b. Empower users and carers in decisions affecting them
c. Be honest about:
   • the power invested in them, including legal powers
   • their role and resources available to meet need
d. Respect confidentiality, and inform users and carers when information needs to be shared with others
e. Be able to:
   • challenge discriminatory images and practices affecting users and carers
   • put users and carers first

The General Social Care Council

Code of Practice for Social Care Workers

Social care workers must:

• Protect the rights and promote the interests of service users and carers;

• Strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers;

• Promote the independence of service users while protecting them as far as possible from danger or harm;

• Respect the rights of service users whilst seeking to ensure that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people;

• Uphold public trust and confidence in social care services; and

• Be accountable for the quality of their work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills.

1. As a social care worker, you must protect the rights and promote the interests of service users and carers.

This includes:

1.1 Treating each person as an individual;

1.2 Respecting and, where appropriate, promoting the individual views and wishes of both service users and carers;

1.3 Supporting service users’ rights to control their lives and make informed choices about the services they receive;

1.4 Respecting and maintaining the dignity and privacy of service users;

1.5 Promoting equal opportunities for service users and carers; and

1.6 Respecting diversity and different cultures and values.
2. As a social care worker, you must strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers.

This includes:

2.1 Being honest and trustworthy;

2.2 Communicating in an appropriate, open, accurate and straightforward way;

2.3 Respecting confidential information and clearly explaining agency policies about confidentiality to service users and carers;

2.4 Being reliable and dependable;

2.5 Honouring work commitments, agreements and arrangements and, when it is not possible to do so, explaining why to service users and carers;

2.6 Declaring issues that might create conflicts of interest and making sure that they do not influence your judgement or practice; and

2.7 Adhering to policies and procedures about accepting gifts and money from service users and carers.

3. As a social care worker, you must promote the independence of service users while protecting them as far as possible from danger or harm.

This includes:

3.1 Promoting the independence of service users and assisting them to understand and exercise their rights;

3.2 Using established processes and procedures to challenge and report dangerous, abusive, discriminatory or exploitative behaviour and practice;

3.3 Following practice and procedures designed to keep you and other people safe from violent and abusive behaviour at work;

3.4 Bringing to the attention of your employer or the appropriate authority resource or operational difficulties that might get in the way of the delivery of safe care;

3.5 Informing your employer or an appropriate authority where the practice of colleagues may be unsafe or adversely affecting standards of care;
3.6 Complying with employers’ health and safety policies, including those relating to substance abuse;

3.7 Helping service users and carers to make complaints, taking complaints seriously and responding to them or passing them to the appropriate person; and

3.8 Recognising and using responsibly the power that comes from your work with service users and carers.

4. As a social care worker, you must respect the rights of service users while seeking to ensure that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people.

This includes:

4.1 Recognising that service users have the right to take risks and helping them to identify and manage potential and actual risks to themselves and others;

4.2 Following risk assessment policies and procedures to assess whether the behaviour of service users presents a risk of harm to themselves or others;

4.3 Taking necessary steps to minimise the risks of service users from doing actual or potential harm to themselves or other people; and

4.4 Ensuring that relevant colleagues and agencies are informed about the outcomes and implications of risk assessments.

5. As a social care worker, you must uphold public trust and confidence in social care services.

In particular you must not:

5.1 Abuse, neglect or harm service users, carers or colleagues;

5.2 Exploit service users, carers or colleagues in any way;

5.3 Abuse the trust of service users and carers or the access you have to personal information about them or to their property, home or workplace;

5.4 Form inappropriate personal relationships with service users;
5.5 Discriminate unlawfully or unjustifiably against service users, carers or colleagues;

5.6 Condone any unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination by service users, carers or colleagues;

5.7 Put yourself or other people at unnecessary risk; or

5.8 Behave in a way, in work or outside work, which would call into question your suitability to work in social care services.

6. As a social care worker, you must be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills.

This includes:

6.1 Meeting relevant standards of practice and working in a lawful, safe and effective way;

6.2 Maintaining clear and accurate records as required by procedures established for your work;

6.3 Informing your employer or the appropriate authority about any personal difficulties that might affect your ability to do your job competently and safely;

6.4 Seeking assistance from your employer or the appropriate authority if you do not feel able or adequately prepared to carry out any aspect of your work, or you are not sure about how to proceed in a work matter;

6.5 Working openly and co-operatively with colleagues and treating them with respect;

6.6 Recognising that you remain responsible for the work that you have delegated to other workers;

6.7 Recognising and respecting the roles and expertise of workers from other agencies and working in partnership with them; and

6.8 Undertaking relevant training to maintain and improve your knowledge and skills and contributing to the learning and development of others.

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Skills for Care: part of the sector skills council, Skills for Care and Development
Skills for Care is the not-for-profit organisation that aims to improve adult social care services across the whole of England by supporting employers' workforce development activity.

Our Vision is:
- To put employers in the driving seat on social care workforce issues
- To create a trained and qualified workforce providing high quality care
- To provide an expert voice on the social care workforce

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