

Advanced Practitioner Guidance

All Social Work Services (Social Workers and Occupational Therapist)

Issue Date: March 2023

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Advanced Practitioner – Social Workers and Occupational Therapist

The progression to an Advanced Practitioner within Social Work is based on a Social Worker / Occupational Therapist practicing at a higher level of competence derived from the accumulation of experience, level of expertise (academic **and** developmental) and the ability to confidently engage with situations that present greater risk and complexity.

‘Higher level of competence’ will be directly relevant to the service area in which the Social Worker / Occupational Therapist works and will look differently depending on the functional area of need and practice.

We recognise work carried out by British Association of Social Work (BASW) and Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) which clearly articulate the characteristics, knowledge and skills which reflect the attributes of what can be described as ‘advanced practice’. These will be the foundation principles for Advanced Practitioners.

BASW (2018) identified 9 key characteristics of Advanced Practice as part of the Professional Capabilities Framework:

1. PROFESSIONALISM - Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development
2. VALUES AND ETHICS - Apply social work ethical principles and value to guide professional practices
3. DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY - Recognise diversity and apply anti- discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice
4. RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING - Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic wellbeing
5. KNOWLEDGE – Develop and apply relevant knowledge from social work practice and research, social sciences, law, other professional and relevant fields, and from the experience of people who use services
6. CRITICAL REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS - Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision- making
7. SKILLS AND INTERVENTIONS - Use judgement, knowledge and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support, prevent harm and enable progress
8. CONTEXTS AND ORGANISATIONS - Engage with, inform, and adapt to changing organisational contexts, and the social and policy environments that shape practice. Operate effectively within and contribute to the development of organisations and services, including multi-agency and inter-professional settings
9. PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP – Promote the profession and good social work practice. Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others. Develop personal influence and be part of the collective leadership and impact of the profession

Further detailed information can be found [here](#), which Social Workers and Team Managers should reflect on.

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) general requirements for Advanced Social Work Award compliments the above:

1. Provide evidence of significant contribution to the development, delivery and evaluation of the service provided in a chosen area by demonstrating the ability to research, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate strategies for improvement or change;
2. Demonstrate critical appraisal of relevant theoretical models, policies and law, in their chosen area, including knowledge of local, national and UK perspectives
3. Demonstrate skilled use of a wide repertoire of methods and be able to select and use the most effective approach to meeting consumer need for the different aspects of their work;
4. Demonstrate competence in enhancing the capabilities of others as a means of informing and improving practice or service delivery;
5. Demonstrate highly developed skills in strategic networking, negotiation and collaboration;
6. Demonstrate competence in responding to and managing change in their chosen area including the ability to respond to unintended outcomes;
7. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the impact of relevant policy, practice and institutions within the European or International context in order to inform practice or service development;
8. Provide evidence of leadership in their chosen field, including the ability to work independently, and to be accountable, in fulfilling the responsibilities of their role.

The required standards of proficiency for all Occupational Therapists are determined by the Health and Care Professions Council – [standards-of-proficiency---occupational-therapists.pdf \(hcpc-uk.org\)](https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards-of-proficiency---occupational-therapists.pdf)

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) builds on these in their publication '[Career Development Framework - Guiding principles for occupational therapy](#)'. The Framework supports the professional development of the whole occupational therapy workforce, by providing guidance to practitioners, people who access services, managers and commissioners.

The Framework describes four Pillars of Practice and breaks down the level of functioning within each pillar that applies to members of the workforce across nine Career Levels, from novice to expert.

The four Pillars of Practice, and associated descriptors are:

Pillar 1 – Professional Practice

- Maintain occupation at the centre of practice
- Deliver safe, effective, person-centred and ethical practice
- Use professional judgement and evidence-based critical reasoning to make decisions

Pillar 2 – Facilitation of Learning

- Inspire, teach, mentor, supervise and/or assess others
- Facilitate practice-based and work-based learning
- Access, create and evaluate contemporary learning environments, methods, tools and materials

Pillar 3 – Leadership

- Identify, monitor and enhance own and others' knowledge, skills and ways of thinking
- Lead, guide and/or facilitate teamwork
- Influence, design, plan and implement professional and/or organisational change

Pillar 4 – Evidence, Research and Development

- Access, evaluate and implement evidence to inform practice
- Initiate, design, participate in and disseminate research
- Engage with and influence broader socio-economic and political agendas

Achievement of Levels 6 and working towards Level 7 within those Pillars of Practice which are relevant to their post, will indicate an Occupational Therapist is operating at Advanced Practitioner level. Supervising students (learners) on placement, mentoring and supporting colleagues and other non-management supervisory functions will also fulfil the requirements of an Advanced Practitioner in this context.

In addition, we recognise wider development opportunities such as secondments, leading on service developments and practitioner research that benefit the service as well as providing opportunities for professional and personal growth as key to evidencing a higher level of competence.

Competence and Eligibility

Utilising the [Good Conversations](#) (review) framework in supervision is the starting point for evidencing the increasing practitioner skillset and the higher level of competence required for an Advanced Practitioner role.

Social Workers / Occupational Therapist and Assistant Team Manager / Team Managers should reflect on the BASW Professional Capabilities Framework, SSSC Advanced Practice standards or RCOT Career Development Framework referenced above.

It is important to note that attaining or undertaking any one or more of the core minimum standards noted below will not automatically lead to Advanced Practitioner status. Rather it is how Social Workers / Occupational Therapists are using their acquired skillset (academic **and** developmental) to evidence a higher level of competence in all casework.

Minimum standards for Advanced Practitioner status will be evidenced by:

- Minimum 3 years post qualifying experience, **accompanied by**
- Evidence of Post Graduate Qualification– Outlined in Appendix 1*¹, **or**
- Evidence of additional learning and development *² - this will not be a Post Graduate Award as noted above, but post qualifying vocational learning / development that contributes to enhancing practice evidenced in the Good Conversations review, for example: Link Worker training, Person Centred Planning, Safe and Together, Permanence Planning, RoSPA Level 4 Moving and Handling, Caledonian Case Management **and**
- Management of Complex Cases *³ - Be responsible for managing complex cases as directed by Assistant Team Manager / Team Manager. Social Workers / Occupational Therapist managing complex cases will be dependent on the higher level of competence they demonstrate based on an accumulation of their experience and expertise (based on academic learning).

*¹ This is not an exhaustive list – additional relevant Post Graduate Award(s) will be agreed by the Training and Workforce Development Service

*² Employees who use this criteria to meet the minimum standards, will be required to complete a formal Post Graduate Award (outlined in Appendix 1) within 3 years of taking up post to retain their Advanced Practitioner status and by applying to be an Advanced Practitioner are agreeing to do so, this will be reviewed via the Good Conversations review. Employees who are sponsored to undertake a Post Graduate Award must sign a letter of undertaking to remain with the organisation for 2 years post award (Appendix 2). Whilst employees are waiting to enrol onto a Post Graduate course, they will be required to undertake one of the following courses, if they have not already done so, to support them to undertake their Advanced Practitioner role:

- ILM Level 3 Award in Effective Coaching
- Link Worker training
- Safe and Together Supervisors training
- Introduction to Trainer Skills course
- Learning Review and Training Audits

*³ Complex cases will be specific to each functional area of practice and will be assessed by each Assistant Team Manager / Team Manager. Reflecting on the BASW / SSSC Standards or RCOT Career Development Framework, defining features of complex cases will require the:

- Application of relevant knowledge from Social Work / Occupational Therapy practice, research, law and other professional fields
- Critical reflection in and on practice to provide a rationale for professional decision making
- Use of self when determining intervention which is based on judgement, knowledge and authority to mitigate multiple risks and enable positive outcomes
- Ability to understand and navigate multi-disciplinary working when dealing with multi-faceted issues that require bespoke responses
- Social Worker / Occupational Therapist to understand the role they play as Lead Professional in the organisation and wider partnership, using their professional leadership to network, influence and collaborate on complex cases.

In addition, Social Workers / Occupational Therapist should be able to evidence they have undertaken some of the tasks highlighted below as part of their higher-level competence.

The Advanced Practitioner role will formally include:

- **Chairing Meetings** – Chair Multi Agency / Team meetings as directed by Team Manager, commensurate with their higher level of competence.
- **To be a Team and Service Resource** – Advanced Practitioners will use their experience and acquired specialist knowledge to increase the competence of their wider team by leading a range of practice development sessions such as Action Learning Sets, themed Communities of Practice and peer and group support sessions
- **Mentoring Staff** – Based on their specialist knowledge derived from practice experience and academic learning, Advanced Practitioners will demonstrate professional leadership by taking responsibility for the professional learning and development of others by providing a mentoring role to new staff as directed by Team Manager. Whilst it is anticipated the mentoring role will be confined to Newly Qualified Social Workers / Occupational Therapist or Social Workers / Occupational Therapist new to the practice field, Advanced Practitioners may be asked to mentor other staff who are underperforming to increase competence levels commensurate with their own higher level of competence. Mentoring staff will include co-

working complex cases with less experienced staff to support their professional development.

- **Supporting Continuous Improvement** – Support the development and delivery of training to frontline Social Work / Occupational Therapy staff including but not exclusively: Self Directed Support, Adults with Incapacity, Child Protection, Adult Support and Protection, assessing complex moving and handling, postural support, and functional needs as well as selection and prescription of specialist equipment and specifying house adaptations This will include supporting to embed practice change and supporting the quality assurance.

What do Advanced Practitioners not do?

Advanced Practitioners will not have responsibility for the management of staff, this will be the responsibility of Assistant Team Manager / Team Managers.

Whilst Advanced Practitioners will be expected to address any immediate practice concerns they encounter, they will not be responsible for addressing performance of Social Work /Occupational Therapy staff which should be raised with the responsible Assistant Team Manager / Team Manager.

Selection /Interview Process

The Social Worker / Occupational Therapist with 3 years post qualifying experience can decide the right time to apply for an Advanced Practitioner position (notwithstanding the above noted criteria).

Appendix 2 must be completed and submitted as part of a portfolio, this includes:

1. Good Conversations Review – noting an employee's readiness and clear intent of willing to fulfil the Advanced Practitioner role, **and**
2. Two written practice examples detailing how they meet the Advanced Practitioner criteria, **and**
3. Statement from Assistant Team Manager / Team Manager

The Social Worker / Occupational Therapist should e-mail the **completed** portfolio to socialservices.training@falkirk.gov.uk which will be forwarded to the Service lead.

A Social Work wide panel chaired by a Service Manager / Locality Manager from Children Services and Adults Social Work Services will convene twice a year to consider requests and hold face to face interviews for Advanced Practitioners across all teams.

Social Workers / Occupational Therapists who are successful in a gaining an Advanced Practitioner post will be allocated to an Advanced Practitioner vacancy in their current Service area. This may require the Advanced Practitioner to relocate to a different locality, dependent on vacancies and service need. Where no vacancy exists across the Service, the employee will be placed on a pending list and offered the next available post, or the Head of Service may review the ratio set.

Payment will be on the first spinal column point of the Grade, from when the post is taken up, effective from a date agreed by the Team Manager.

If unsuccessful at interview, there is no appeals process. Employees will be provided with feedback and can reapply in 6 months when the Panel will reconvene.

Appendix 1

Advanced Practitioner Post Graduate Awards

Type	Social Work Awards	Occupational Therapist Awards
Post Graduate Certificate	Relative Matters: Good Practice in Permanence Planning and Kinship Care	Advancing Practice for Nurses and AHP's
	Social Work Practice Education	Child Welfare and Protection
	Advanced Social Work Studies (Mental Health)	Advancing Practice in Occupational Therapy
	Personality Disorder	Leading People-centred Integrated Care
	Substance Use	Dementia Care
	Leading People-centred Integrated Care	Dementia Studies
	Dementia Care	Adult Support and Protection
	Dementia Studies	
	Adult Support and Protection	
	Criminal Justice and Penal Change	
	Contemporary Drug and Alcohol Studies	
	Criminal Justice	
	Children and Young People in Conflict with the Law	
	Good Practice in Permanence Planning and Family Placement	
	Child Welfare and Protection	
	Advanced Practice Skills in Child Welfare and Protection	

Appendix 2

Advanced Practitioner – Post Graduate Award Sponsorship Undertaking

Background Information

The progression to an Advanced Practitioner within Social Work is based on a Social Worker / Occupational Therapist practicing at a higher level of competence derived from the accumulation of experience, level of expertise (academic **and** developmental) and the ability to confidently engage with situations that present greater risk and complexity.

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- Evidence of additional learning and development ^{*1}
^{*1} Employees who use this criteria to meet the minimum standards, will be required to register to undertake a formal Post Graduate Award (outlined in Appendix 1) within 3 years of taking up post to retain their Advanced Practitioner status and by applying to be an Advanced Practitioner are agreeing to do so, **and**
- Management of Complex Cases

Post Graduate Module Fees and Materials

Module fees will be paid for by Falkirk Council or HSCP during the period of agreed study for authorised student employees.

Specific recommended books (if required) for each module will be purchased by the Council or HSCP with student employees able to loan these during their period of study.

Application and Selection Process

Applicants will be required to:

- Complete the Falkirk CPD Manager course programme request form
- Seek line manager authorisation
- Await Training and Workforce Development service budget authorisation

- Once authorised submit an application to the relevant Higher Education programme provider, including line manager supporting statement and Employer sponsorship contact details
- Successful applicants may require to wait for a place on the next available course.

Study Time

Student employees will be offered:

- Attendance at module teaching and tutorials
- 2 days study leave per module
- Flexible working hours to carry out research, study, assignment completion at the discretion of their line manager

Contractual Undertaking

Sponsorship conditions

All employees undertaking sponsored post graduate learning are required to sign contractual undertaking. If an employee leaves the employment of Falkirk Council or HSCP within 13-24 months of the date of their successful completion of the post graduate award, they will be required to repay 50% of the fees and expenses relating to the period of study. If they leave within year one the repayment will be 100% of these costs.

Employees who, having been accepted for the programme, do not complete the post graduate award may be required to repay all or a proportion of the programme fees paid up to that point. An employee who leaves the service of Falkirk Council or HSCP whilst undertaking the qualification will require to repay all course fees.

[Sponsorship funding and repayment agreement](#)

Appendix 3

Advanced Practitioner – Portfolio Evidence

This form should be completed with reference to the [Advanced Practitioner Guidance](#)

1. Personal information

Name:	
Post held:	
Service:	
Qualification date:	
Length of post qualifying experience:	
Good Conversations Annual Conversations Form attached	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> (please note the Good Conversations Form must be attached for consideration of your portfolio)
Email:	
Mobile:	
Line Manager:	
Line Manager email:	
Line Manager Mobile:	

2. Details of any Post Graduate Qualification Awards held (SCQF Level 10 and 11 or equivalent). See [SCQF](#) for details of qualification levels and if qualifications obtained out with Scotland

Award date	Post Graduate Qualification held	Academic Institution

3. Two Practice Examples evidencing how Advanced Practitioner criteria is met

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Practice example one – in no more than 500 words please evidence how your practice meets the Advanced Practitioner criteria above. This should include the impact of the application of your knowledge, skills and experience in practice on the people you work with and on team members.

Practice example two – in no more than 500 words please evidence how your practice meets the Advanced Practitioner criteria above through your ability to mentor, coach or facilitate the professional development of colleagues.

4. Declaration

I confirm that the information given is genuine. I understand that my application will be withdrawn if any aspect of it is found to have been falsified.

5. Applicant's Signature

Signature: _____ Date: _____

6. Line Manager supporting statement

Please complete the supporting statement section below to enable us to evaluate the employee's competency and suitability for Advanced Practice.

Your statement should cover details such as how long you have known the employee and knowledge of their practice at a higher level of competence. Reference should also be made to employee development review / Good Conversation and commitment to continuous professional development.

I confirm the information provided by the applicant is an accurate reflection of their current practice.

YES ☐ NO ☐

Line Managers Supporting statement

7. Line Manager's Signature

Signature: _____ Date: _____