

Appraisal Policy Guidance

This guidance intends to support managers to promote the Continuing Professional Development [CPD] of their staff during the appraisal process.

A clear focus on the individual's Continuing Professional Development is important for ensuring a workforce that is agile and flexible to changing circumstances. For social workers, it ensures they provide quality services, develop their practice and achieve good outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

Social workers should continually develop the knowledge, skills and values required for their own role and their professional and career development. They need to proactively manage their own training and development needs as an integral part of their job.

Continuing Professional Development is an **ongoing, planned and implemented** learning and development process, which improves practice, contributes to lifelong learning and enables career progression. CPD is the process through which professionals maintain and develop their knowledge and skills throughout their career to ensure that they retain their capacity to practice safely, effectively and legally within their evolving scope of practice.

CPD encompasses any activity that contributes to the knowledge, skills and competencies of a social worker. This includes, but is not limited to;

- ✓ Completing training courses
- ✓ Reflecting on work practices through supervision
- ✓ Participating in Multidisciplinary meetings
- ✓ Reading an industry-related article
- ✓ Peer group learning
- ✓ Higher level qualifications
- ✓ Placements

Any learning activity can be regarded as CPD for social workers as long as it enables the social worker to apply this learning in their professional life.

The above enables a degree of flexibility and choice with regards to meeting individual learning needs. CPD incorporates the requirements for, but is more than, re-registration as a social worker.

Reflection is an essential component of any ongoing learning and development because it enables the individual to review their prior experience to derive new insights and lessons. Subsequently; it is vital that practitioners are given sufficient time to engage in critical reflection and provided with regular, reflective supervision.

When completing the appraisal, please consider and make reference to the following when assessing against objectives;

- The Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers in [Children's Services](#) or [Adult Services](#)
- The [Professional Capabilities Framework](#) (2018 version) for Social Workers in England and associated BASW [Guidance on using the PCF](#)
- [Professional Standards](#) published by [Social Work England](#)

Insofar as possible, completing the appraisal should be a collaborative process between the member of staff being appraised and their line manager. There will need to be a clear emphasis on the worker's Continuing Professional Development and evidence that discussions relating to planning and implementation are taking place; and successful outcomes can be clearly evidenced through the appraisal process.

CPD can be supported in a number of ways and there are a variety of resources, activities and funding streams which can be utilised to promote staff development. Some of these are included in the diagram below:



Social workers need to be active learners and collaborate with their managers to proactively identify learning and development opportunities that will enable them to continuously improve the way they work.

It is essential that workers maintain an up to date record of their CPD, their reflections on what they have learnt and how they intend to apply their learning in practice. When completing the appraisal, managers will need to gauge the impact of any CPD-related activities on the practice of the appraisee when appraising against objectives.

The CPD log will be invaluable in instances whereby registered practitioners are selected for CPD audit. Those who are selected will need to submit a CPD profile within a set deadline, which outlines the activities they have undertaken since their last registration renewal. Salient to note that any gaps in CPD which last more than three consecutive months have to be accounted for.

It is essential that managers do not wait until the appraisal as an opportunity to discuss CPD with their staff member. Rather, there needs to be clear evidence that the individual's CPD has been actively discussed and planned from their first supervision session.

The [supervision templates](#) include the following, designated sections;

- Reflective discussions [linked to KSS]
- Recent audit activity
- Direct observations
- Learning & Development objectives
- Career development / progression
- CPD training plans
- Professional Development Plan [linked to KSS]

These sections should be populated collaboratively by the supervisor and supervisee throughout the year and the resultant information should feed into the Appraisal. This evidences ongoing discussion of CPD and the planning of related activities. The appraisal is the opportunity to demonstrate **successful outcomes** which derive from previous planning and implementation.

Remember, discussion, planning and implementation of CPD and CPD-related activities should always be taking place and be clearly recorded so it can be evidenced.

CPD is a cyclical process which contains key stages, as illustrated below:



The KSS, PCF and Professional Standards

As stated previously, it is important that managers reference the relevant Knowledge & Skills Statement, the Professionals Capabilities Framework and the Professional Standards when completing the appraisal.

Together, the PCF and the KSS provide the foundation for social work education and practice in England at qualifying and post-qualifying levels. The KSS set out what a social worker should know, and be able to do in specific roles and at different levels of seniority. The KSS maps on to the practice domains of the PCF (knowledge, critical reflection and analysis, interventions and skills). The principles of the PCF are;

Purpose: why we do what we do as social workers, our values and ethics, and how we approach our work.

Practice: what we do- the specific skills, knowledge, interventions and critical analytic abilities we develop to act and do social work.

Impact: How we make a difference – our ability to bring about change through our practice, through our leadership, through understanding our context and through our overall profession.

The Professional Standards published by Social Work England stipulate that practitioners need to maintain their Continuing Professional Development and they can do this by;

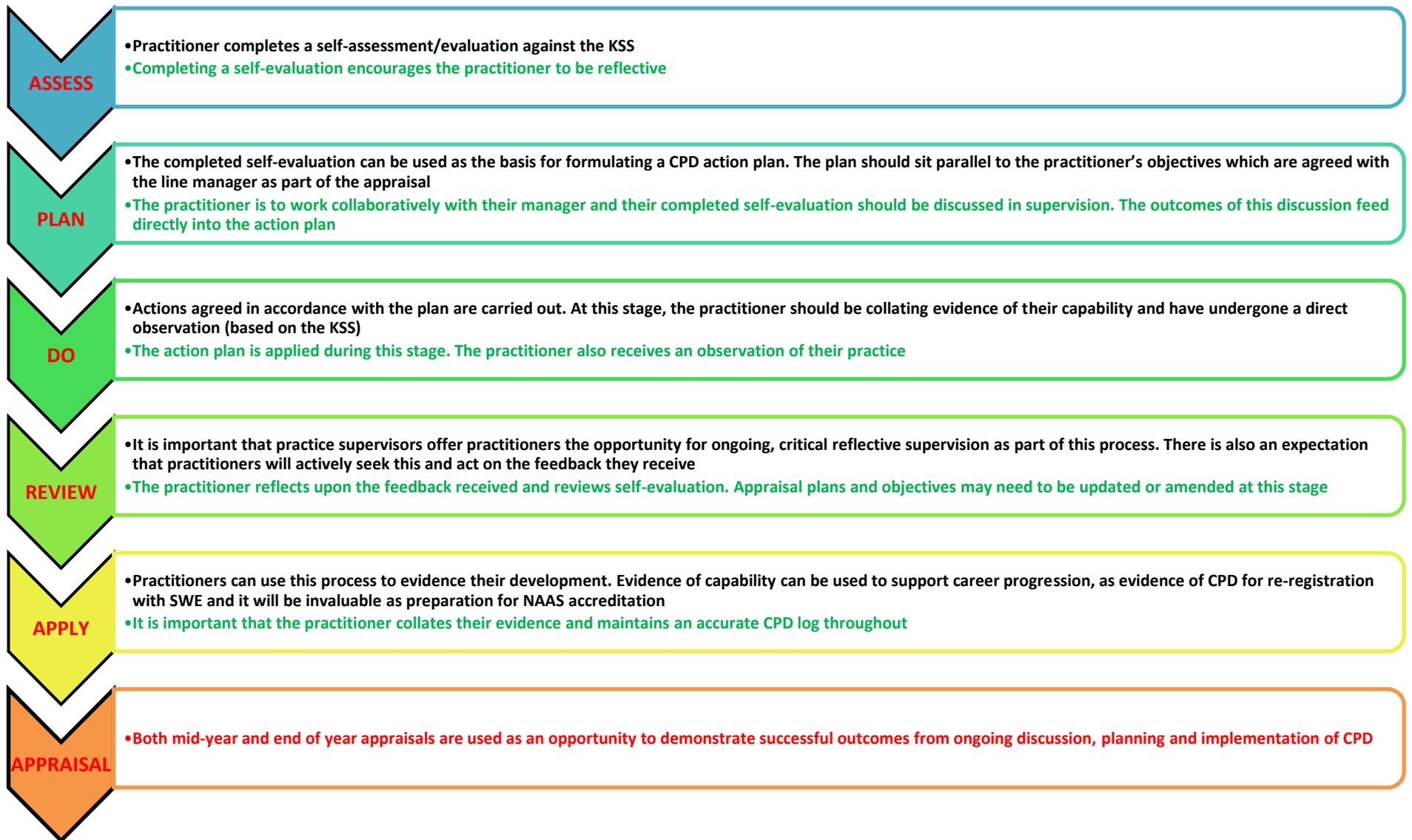
- Incorporating feedback from a range of sources, including from people with lived experience of their social work practice.
- Using supervision and feedback to critically reflect on, and identify learning needs, including the ways both research and evidence is used to inform practice.
- Keep practice up to date and record how research, theories and frameworks are used to inform practice and professional judgement.
- Demonstrate good subject knowledge on key aspects of social work practice and develop knowledge of current issues in society and social policies impacting on social work.
- Contribute to an open and creative learning culture in the workplace to discuss, reflect on and share best practice.
- Reflect on learning activities and evidence what impact continuing professional development has on the quality of practice.
- Record learning and reflection on a regular basis and in accordance with Social Work England's guidance on continuing professional development.
- Reflect on one's own values and challenge the impact they have on practice.

Self-evaluation against the KSS

After joining the organisation; a good starting point would be for the practitioner to complete a self-evaluation against the Knowledge & Skills Statement as these represent the post-qualifying standard of practice.

The outcome of the self-assessment is a good starting point for discussion between the practitioner and their manager and demonstrates that the practitioner is engaging in reflective practice from the outset.

The flowchart below provides a model for how social workers and their managers can use the self-evaluation against the KSS to gauge any developmental needs or gaps in knowledge. This is the basis for which suitable learning opportunities can be identified and planned; thereby promoting Continuing Professional Development.





When setting objectives, it is essential to ensure that they are:

- ✓ Reflective of the wider **Service plan**
- ✓ **Concise**, easy to follow and understand
- ✓ Linked to the **Knowledge and Skills Statement** at the relevant level
- ✓ **SMART** [Specific – Measurable – Attainable – Realistic – Time Bound]
- ✓ Compatible and responsive to each **individual's needs**
- ✓ Supportive to the individual's **Continuing Professional Development**

Illustrative example – Linking objectives to the KSS [Child & Family Practitioners]

Objective 1 – Improve the quality of children's plans to ensure that they are child-specific and identify timescales for change

How:

To ensure care plans are developed in **partnership with children, young people and families**; taking into account their views, wishes and feelings and that any **subsequent support provided is based upon best evidence, promotes optimal child development** whilst identifying and mitigating any **concerning adult behaviours that may indicate risk or increasing risk to children**. When formulating care plans, **utilise best evidence from research, child observation skills, chronologies, ecomaps and exchange information with partner agencies** in instances where there is concern about the welfare and safety of children; triangulating evidence to ensure that robust conclusions are drawn. Discuss, debate, reflect upon and test multiple hypotheses, using your professional curiosity and judgement along with the law and statutory guidance to reach timely conclusions and inform practice decisions. **Act in ways that protect the reputation of Waltham Forest and the social work profession, whilst always privileging the best interests of children and apply twin or triple track planning to minimise any prospect of drift or delay.**