

Continuing Professional Development Policy

Introduction

The Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) recognises that many members regularly engage in “Continuing Professional Development” (CPD) activities and that prior to the development of this policy initiative, these have not been formally recognised. Statutory registration of our profession is due to be in place in the near future and the introduction of CPD is essential for the IASW to stand over the practice of each member. IASW has prioritised the task of setting up this CPD framework as a means of formally recognising the CPD activities of members.

CPD requires a commitment by members to their ongoing professional development as responsible and accountable social workers. The purpose of the IASW CPD policy is to put in place a framework that promotes continuous learning by social workers and to integrate this learning into professional practice, management, policy development and research. The goal is to ensure that social workers maintain up to date knowledge and skills as the foundation for professional endeavour in all fields of practice. The underlying principle is that clients, service systems and the community have a right to services provided by competent and skilful practitioners.

To make the CPD framework as user friendly as possible the IASW has tried to ensure that the process is easy to understand and implement. The IASW believes the key to its successful implementation will depend upon the level of commitment that will be given by both social work supervisors/managers and their professionally qualified social work supervisees.

Part 1: Social Work and Continuous Professional Development**1.1 Social Work and CPD**

Social work practice is largely informed by professional education based on an analysis and understanding of the following; human development and behaviour, complex social processes, social work theories and methods of practice. Professionally qualified social workers are committed to working within stated IASW codes of practice and ethics. The measure of the effectiveness of the education of each social worker is the actual demonstration in our practice settings of this analysis, understanding and commitment.

1.2 The IASW definition of social work

Social work is a profession that has its basis in the promotion of social justice. It aims to empower individuals, groups and communities to take charge of their lives within their own environment and social context. It does this through its unique knowledge base which has developed from the integration of sociological and psychological theories and practice.

Social workers share a common aim of promoting equality. Social workers play a crucial role in highlighting and addressing issues relating to discrimination and inequality in society. Through their professional body, social workers have the opportunity to influence social policy in those areas relevant to their practice.

In 2000 the International Federation of Social Work provided the following definition:

“The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.”

Part 2: The Principles of Continuing Professional Development**2.1 Life long professional development**

Social work qualification provides eligibility for membership of the IASW and is the beginning point of post qualifying professional development. It is a professional commitment of the practising social worker to continually improve their practice by engaging in activities such as continuing professional development, for example through supervision and personal professional development. In joining IASW, each member agrees to practise according to the association's code of ethics.

2.2 The need to develop knowledge and skills in relation to the demands of a changing society

As professional social workers we carry a responsibility to update our knowledge and skills, to ensure we continue to practice to high standards. We do this because high standards of social work practice produce better outcomes for clients. The maintenance of skills and competencies is essential for all areas of practice, such as clinical practice, management, policy development, community development, education and research.

2.3 The CPD activities that are relevant for social workers

Members should consider what is relevant for their professional development in terms of ongoing knowledge and skill development. This should include among the following; participation in conferences and skill development programmes, reading professional publications, providing practice placements for social work students, providing or receiving professional supervision, academic study, writing or presenting professional papers, participation in research activities and active membership of social work special interest groups or other relevant voluntary bodies and committees. IASW requires that your line manager or supervisor validate in your log that the CPD activity was both completed by you and was relevant to your role as a social worker.

Part 3: The IASW CPD Process**3.1 Categories of CPD activities**

The categories of CPD activities recognised by IASW are:

- I. Supervision
- II. Skill development and gaining new knowledge and information
- III. Contributing to the development of professional social work knowledge and practice

3.2 Definition of CPD

CPD include the activities that develop the knowledge, skills and competencies for social work practice in relation to work with individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities, and it also includes knowledge and skills required for areas such as policy development, management, research, education, and the promotion of the social work profession.

3.3 Professional supervision from a professionally qualified social worker.

Professional supervision refers to the arrangement for the review of work and the development of knowledge and skills which meet professional development needs and accountability requirements. The IASW position is that professional supervision is distinguished from "consultation" in that supervision is a line-management responsibility; other supervision functions undertaken by non-line managers constitute consultation. While the IASW preference is for all social workers to have supervision from their line managers, the IASW are aware that this is not possible for all social workers at present, so the IASW will accept social work consultation in the first two year CPD cycle and will then review this policy.

For the purposes of CPD points in the supervision category, the following forms of supervision are acceptable as long as the supervisor is a professionally qualified social worker:

- I. Individual supervision within the organisation
- II. Individual consultation provided outside the workplace
- III. Peer consultation between managers/ principal social workers

3.4 Record of CPD activities.

A log of CPD activities is included in this folder for members so that they may record their CPD activities. The IASW web site can be used as a method for accessing additional CPD log recording sheets and for CPD communication updates. All new members will get a CPD folder as part of their welcome pack and they will be asked to start recording their CPD activities on receipt of the folder.

3.5 Audit of members' CPD folders

IASW will verify the CPD log folder for all members as they meet the CPD requirements of the professional body. Members can contact the IASW office on achieving the required CPD points and they will receive an acknowledgement from the IASW.

As a means to ensuring good clinical governance of this process the IASW will ask up to 5% of members, who have gained the required CPD points to submit their CPD log folders for verification purposes in each 2 year CPD cycle.

Part 4: Outline of Activities that Accrue CPD Points**4.1 CPD points**

In general one learning hour of relevant social work CPD activity will be equivalent to one CPD point. But merely networking, social and routine administrative activities will not accrue CPD points.

IASW has decided that a total of 100 CPD points are required from all full time employed professionally qualified social workers within a 2 year cycle with at least 20 points in the first category, 30 in the second.

- I. Supervision (20 points)
- II. Skill development and gaining new knowledge and information (30 points)
- III. Contributing to the development of professional social work knowledge and practice (no minimum number of points required)

Part time social workers who work 3 days or less must accrue a minimum total of 50 CPD points, with at least 10 points in the first category, 15 in the second. Social workers who are employed for more than 3 days will have the same requirements as fully employed social workers.

Members can request the IASW to take into consideration any personal circumstances that prevents them from accruing the required CPD points within the 2 year CPD cycle.

There is no limit to the total number of CPD points that members may record. However points in excess of those required in any given reporting 2 year cycle will not carry over to the next cycle.

IASW decided upon this score system after reviewing a number of professional bodies' CPD frameworks and will review this after the first two year cycle.

4.2 Recognition of a course, seminar or conference for CPD points

In order for a course, seminar or conference to be recognised and qualify for CPD points, the course will need to have been approved by the IASW for CPD purposes. Course, seminar or conference organisers can apply to the IASW for recognition of their course, seminar or conference and the IASW will officially issue them with the appropriate CPD points. The IASW will also issue the organisers with the required CPD certificate to be completed and signed by the organisers. It is the responsibility of each member to ensure that the course has the required CPD recognition prior to attending the course.

The IASW will accept the view of social work managers or supervisors as to the relevance of a CPD in-service course or seminar. The IASW reserves the right to make the final decision concerning the relevance of any course and the number of points which may be accrued for any given activity.

I. Supervision	
<i>All professionally qualified social work delivered supervision is accrued at the rate of one point per hour of supervision. It is necessary to gain a minimum number of 20 points in the supervision category but no maximum number of points is set.</i>	
Supervision Minimum 20 points per 2 year CPD cycle required (Full Time Worker)	
A. Receiving regular, ongoing professional supervision Organisationally provided professional social work supervision.	1 point per hour
B. Receiving private professional social work consultation If no organisational professional social worker is available, members can accrue points for private consultation with a professionally qualified social work supervisor.	1 point per hour
C. Providing professional supervision / consultation Providing professional supervision, whether in the workplace or external to the workplace (professional consultation). Maximum points that can be accrued in each 2 year CPD cycle are 15 points.	1 point per hour
D. Peer consultation between managers / principal social workers Managers / principal social workers who do not have access to individual supervision/ consultation can accrue CPD points for peer consultation. They will need to accrue a minimum of 5 points.	1 point per hour
II. Skill Development and Gaining new Knowledge and Information	
Minimum 30 points per 2 year cycle required	
E. In-service skill development workshops, courses or CPD events In-service training relevant to your role as a social worker and verified by your line manager, can be included if it provides transferable knowledge and skills; one point per hour of learning time.	1 point per hour
F. Attending (IASW approved) conferences, information sessions and CPD events Only actual learning time may be included; one point per hour of learning time if verified by your line manager or supervisor as relevant to your role as a social worker.	1 point per hour
G. Reading professional publications Each journal article or book chapter will accrue one point, if knowledge gained is demonstrated to and verified by your line manager or supervisor as relevant to your role as a social worker.	1 point per article / chapter
H. Academic study Any formal learning program that contributes to professional development, this may include postgraduate courses (masters, graduate diploma, and graduate certificate) or undergraduate programmes (excluding the basic social work qualification) and includes coursework and research programmes. Such study programmes will accrue one point per hour of learning time, if verified by your line manager or supervisor as relevant to your role as a social worker and is IASW approved.	1 point per hour
I. Practice-based research projects Where the social worker has undertaken a research project that is verified by your line manager or supervisor as relevant to your role as a social worker; 20 points per research project.	20 points per project

III. Contributing to Professional Knowledge and Practice	
No minimum number of points	
<p>J. Writing or publishing a journal or article If verified by your line manager or supervisor as relevant to your role as a social worker.</p>	10 points per journal / article
<p>K. Reviewing journal articles for publication If a recognised professional journal and verified by your line manager or supervisor as relevant to your role as a social worker.</p>	5 points per journal / article.
<p>L. Conducting a skill development social work related workshop Only actual presentation time in workshops. First time presentation only; five points per each hour of presentation. This will need to be verified by your line manager or supervisor.</p>	5 points per each hour of presentation
<p>M. Presentation of social work related conference papers and other professional presentations Only actual presentation time and only first time presenting may be included; five points per hour of presentation time. Also verified by your line manager or supervisor.</p>	5 points per hour of presentation time
<p>N. Practice teaching placement for social work students Being a practice teacher of social work students for their practice placement.</p>	10 points per student placement and a maximum of 20 points in any academic year.
<p>O. Active membership of professionally relevant committees and boards This includes IASW Council, Executive, Special Interest Groups or other community organisations, verified by your line manager or supervisor as relevant to your role as a social worker; IASW may give additional points to executive committee members on request.</p>	10 points per cycle for IASW committees or 5 points per other relevant committees
<p>P. Professional peer consultation Professional peer consultation that is formally structured can accrue points at the rate of one point per consultation hour. Professional peer consultation can involve senior social workers or professionally qualified social worker colleagues, across agencies, or in private practice.</p>	1 point per hour