



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**
Social Care **Wales**



Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

What is the CPEL framework?

The Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) framework describes the minimum arrangements for the ongoing education and learning of social workers in Wales. It is designed to support social workers as they progress, and take on new roles and responsibilities, through their career as social work professionals.

The CPEL framework includes a:

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| Consolidation Programme | for newly qualified social workers |
| Experienced Practice in Social Work Programme | for social workers (year 3+) |
| Senior Practice in Social Work Programme | for senior social workers |
| Consultant Social Work Programme | for consultant social workers |

Each programme has been designed to help social workers develop their practice. You can find more information at **Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) framework for social workers**.

What is the Consolidation Programme?

The Consolidation Programme is the first part of the CPEL framework. It also forms part of *The First Three Years in Practice* framework, which aims to support social workers as they make the transition from graduate to competent practitioner.

The Consolidation Programme provides opportunities for newly qualified social workers to consolidate and further develop their knowledge and skills in three core areas of social work practice:

- applying analysis during assessments to inform interventions
- working collaboratively with people who receive care and support, carers and other professionals
- intervening and applying professional judgement in increasingly complex situations.

Who is the Consolidation Programme for?

The Consolidation Programme is aimed at newly qualified registered social workers and should be carried out during their first period of practice in a social work role.¹

The Consolidation Programme, or parts of it, may also be relevant to other social workers, such as those returning to practice after a break or those working in the UK for the first time. However, this would need to be based on an assessment of the person's learning needs, and would need the agreement of their employer and a relevant learning provider.

Why is the Consolidation Programme important?

Continuing professional education and learning is a professional responsibility of social workers. To practise safely and professionally, social workers must continually equip themselves with a body of knowledge and evidence that draws on academic literature, research, legislation and local understanding. The practice guidance for social workers describes this in more detail.²

It is particularly important that newly qualified social workers establish continuous development at the start of their careers as they make the transition from student to qualified professional. This will involve embedding core professional knowledge and skills in practice, and

¹ These roles would involve carrying out social work tasks that draw upon the knowledge and skills featured in the National Occupational Standards for Social Work.

² **The Social Worker – Practice Guidance** | Social Care Wales (version 3, 2017).

taking on increasing levels of complex work in specialist areas. The Consolidation Programme supports learning and development during this crucial phase.

As the first part of the CPEL framework, the Consolidation Programme is also important in establishing a culture and expectation of career-long learning and development for the social work profession.

Is it compulsory to complete the Consolidation Programme?

Social workers who qualified on or after 1 April 2016 must, within the first three-year registration period in which they are practising as a social worker, complete the Consolidation Programme. This programme must be one we have approved.

However, if a social worker has undertaken training we deem equivalent, it will not be necessary for them to complete the Consolidation Programme. We may also accept a request for an extension to the three-year period where there is acceptable evidence of extenuating circumstances.

When will newly qualified social workers be expected to carry out the Consolidation Programme?

The Consolidation Programme will typically be carried out in the second or third year of social work practice before newly qualified social workers renew their registration. This will build on, and complement, their development in their first year.

Where will the Consolidation Programme take place?

Social work employers worked with the universities to develop two consolidation programmes, which we approved. They are:

- Porth Agored, in association with the University of Wales Trinity St David
- Consortiwm Y De Consolidation Programme, provided by the University of South Wales and Cardiff Metropolitan University.

The university where the newly qualified social workers undertake the programme will vary according to the arrangements made by their employers. A large part of the programme takes place in the workplace.

How will learning on the Consolidation Programme be assessed?

In line with national requirements³, newly qualified social workers who complete the Consolidation Programme will receive a minimum of 30 credits at Level 6. The programme is assessed using a range of work-based evidence, including direct observation of practice.

What if a newly qualified social worker is not employed as a social worker during their first three-year period of registration?

The Consolidation Programme applies in the first three-year period in which a registered person is practising as a social worker.

The Consolidation Programme is not suitable for someone who has recently qualified as a social worker but is not in a role where they are

³ Continuing Professional Education and Learning: a framework for social workers in Wales, requirements for the Consolidation Programme | Care Council for Wales, 2012.

carrying out social work tasks. Newly qualified social workers should only start the programme, if and when, they take up a social work post.

Similarly, newly qualified social workers do not need to register with us unless they are carrying out a role for which registration is required. If a social worker is unclear about their access to the programme, they should talk to their employer.

We have introduced specific arrangements for social workers returning to practice who have been off the Register for more than three years. This is to make sure their knowledge and understanding of current social work practice is up-to-date. You can find more information at **how to return to social work practice in Wales – a guide for social workers**.

What happens when a newly qualified social worker completes the Consolidation Programme?

Completing the Consolidation Programme can contribute towards newly qualified social workers' post-registration training and learning (PRTL) requirements. By completing it, they will also meet one of the entry requirements for the Experienced Practice in Social Work Programme.

What happens if a newly qualified social worker does not successfully complete the Consolidation Programme by the time they need to renew their registration?

Social workers who qualify after 1 April 2016 can only renew their registration after three years if they have successfully completed the Consolidation Programme.

If a social worker has not successfully completed the programme by the time they need to renew their registration, we may accept a request for an extension to the three-year period where there is acceptable evidence of extenuating circumstances.

What about social workers qualifying in other UK countries?

We recognise equivalent and comparable post-qualifying achievements in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland for the purposes of renewing registration. But employers and social workers may decide that undertaking parts of or all the Consolidation Programme is necessary to meet the learning needs of social workers who qualified in one of the other UK countries.

How is the quality of the Consolidation Programme monitored?

We approve every Consolidation Programme and the programmes must meet national requirements. We will continue to monitor and review the programmes after they have been approved to make sure they continue to meet these requirements.

The CPEL framework is also subject to an independent evaluation to make sure it is having the maximum positive impact on social workers, especially in terms of quality of practice, career progression, career development and social worker retention. The evaluation will also gauge the extent to which the framework has helped improve outcomes for people who receive care and support, their families and/or carers.

How do I stay up-to-date with other CPEL developments in Wales?

You can visit our website, which is updated regularly, at socialcare.wales/learning-and-development/social-work-qualifications