

By email: consultation.responses@socialworkengland.org.uk

ADCS response Social Work England's consultation on CPD.

1. The Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd. (ADCS) is the national leadership organisation in England for directors of children's services (DCSs) under the provisions of the Children Act (2004). The DCS acts as a single point of leadership and accountability for services for children and young people in a local area, including children's social care and education. ADCS welcomes the opportunity to respond to Social Work England's consultation on continuing professional development (CPD).
2. The proposals outlined in the consultation seem sensible and should enable a smoother process for recording CPD. While the increase in the number of pieces of CPD to be submitted is reasonable, the impact of the pandemic on social workers in terms of complexity of caseloads and stress or anxiety will remain into next year and beyond. Indeed, while overall referrals to children's social care have not yet reached their peak, this may happen in the coming months or year as the effects of successive lockdowns on children and families become more apparent. This should therefore be taken into account by the regulator regarding a social worker's ability to complete their CPD.
3. It is right that social work managers and leaders should engage with a social worker's professional development and to discuss how it impacts upon their learning. Children's services leaders are keen to engage where they can, although more can be done to assist with this process. For example, ADCS members would welcome greater assistance from SWE in identifying those social workers who are yet to complete and submit their CPD. For many social workers with challenging caseloads, finding time to complete their CPD can be difficult and this may not always be fed back to their manager. Local authorities employ a large number of social workers, some significantly more than others, and so attempting to manually identify which of their staff is yet to submit CPD seems to be an unnecessarily time consuming process. ADCS therefore urges SWE to provide local authorities with a list of those social workers who are yet to complete their CPD when requested to do so. This would allow leaders to provide greater, timelier support to social workers who may be struggling to complete the process. It is vital that all efforts are made to allow employers to better assist their social workers where possible.
4. ADCS acknowledges the importance of CPD and its impact on learning, however, this can often be completed shortly before the deadline for submission and therefore social workers may have less time devoted to the learning process. It is right that SWE is making a more simplified way of recording CPD, however, ADCS would welcome discussions around more flexible ways of recording CPD to facilitate social workers to reflect more on their practice. It is important that we are able to help create a culture change around CPD so that it is integral to the social worker learning experience. For example, providing each social worker with their own unique annual date for CPD completion (potentially based on the date they first registered as a social worker) may

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improve this process. Holding one single date in the year for every social worker to submit is not necessarily the most conducive way to ensuring that social workers engage with the learning process. The ease with which social workers can upload their CPD would also assist with creating such a culture shift.

5. If you would like to further discuss any of the points raised in this response, please contact the relevant Policy Officer via matt.cunningham@adcs.org.uk in the first instance.

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