

THE EXECUTIVE

14 DECEMBER 2004

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

REGISTRATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS BY THE GENERAL SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL	FOR INFORMATION	
<p><i>This report advises Members of the requirement for all staff employed as social workers to be registered with the General Social Care Council by April 1st 2005, implications for the Council and progress in the Department of Social Services.</i></p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A summary of the new government regulations• An update on the position of the Council in ensuring all existing staff are registered• A brief description of the process followed and procedures adopted for all new recruits <p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>The Executive is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the regulations2. Note progress. <p><u>Reason</u></p> <p>As a Council with Social Services Responsibilities the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is required to employ professional social workers to discharge its functions and duties. From the 1 April 2005 the term “social worker” will become a protected title and it will be a criminal offence for someone to call themselves social worker unless they are registered with the General Social Care Council.</p>		
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1. Background

- 1.1 The General Social Care Council (GSCC) was established in October 2001 under the Care Standards Act 2000. The role and function of the GSCC is to increase the protection of service users, their carers and the general public by regulating the social care workforce and social work education and training, ensuring that work standards within the social care sector are of the highest quality. The aim is also to promote social care as a high quality profession and an occupation of choice.
- 1.2 The GSCC has a duty to establish and maintain a national register of “social workers”, which will subsequently be extended to other groups in the social care workforce. The process was launched in April 2004 with the establishment of a Social Care Register and the registration of Qualified Social Workers. To be able to register, workers must have an appropriate qualification, commit to uphold the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers and be physically and mentally fit to do their jobs.
- 1.3 From April 2005 the title “social worker” will be protected. It will become a criminal offence for individuals to call themselves a social worker unless they have completed the registration process with the GSCC with a maximum penalty of £5000 fine.
- 1.4 Due to the volume of applications expected, the GSCC subsequently set a deadline of December 1 for applications to be received, and would not guarantee that applications received after this date will be processed before the deadline of 1 April 2005.

2. Purpose of encouraging registration

- 2.1 The Council needed to take active steps to ensure social workers complied with the process of registration. Because of the need to employ social workers to discharge functions in protecting vulnerable children and adults the Council would be open to legal challenge in employing staff in those roles who did not have protected title.
- 2.2 A fully qualified workforce also demonstrates to potential applicants that we are a high quality employer with a commitment to a competent high quality workforce. In addition it will demonstrate to service users and the general public that the service provide by the Council is safe and can be trusted. Social workers are routinely expected to exercise difficult judgements in stressful situations.

3. Process

- 3.1 Social workers are required to complete an application form with details of training undertaken and produce evidence of their qualification and identity which is verified and endorsed by senior staff in the Social Services Department.
- 3.2 There is a more rigorous process for social workers who trained and qualified overseas who also need to write a personal statement and produce detailed evidence to show how they meet the requirements of the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW) awarded in the U.K.
- 3.2 Like most local authorities, Barking and Dagenham adopted a policy of reimbursing social workers for initial registration with the GSCC. The fee for each application processed is £30.00 for social workers who qualified in the UK and £155.00 for social workers who trained overseas.

- 3.3 A member of staff was seconded to support and encourage all social workers who had not yet submitted applications to ensure we were able to meet the deadlines imposed by the GSCC. Regular liaison with the GSCC has also provided up to date verification of applications, and an opportunity to raise individual and general queries.
- 3.4 As the deadline for applications approached the Director of Social Services wrote to individual social workers with a formal instruction to complete their application form. Individual staff with difficulties have been provided with dedicated support and advice through individual sessions, group briefings in workplaces throughout the borough, and through contact with staff at home on maternity leave and long term absence.

4. **Progress to date**

Social Workers employed by the Council	Total number Applied	Remaining	Percentage Completed
142	139	3	98.5%

A verbal update will be provided at the Executive.

5. **New Starters and Agency Staff**

- 5.1 All new staff will need to provide evidence that they have applied for registration or are already registered as part of the recruitment process.
- 5.2 All approved agencies have been contacted to ensure their staff will be registered by April 2005. All agency staff employed after this date will need to produce evidence of registration.

6. **Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The cost of reimbursing applications this financial year will be a maximum of £7230 which will be managed within existing resources. Individual social workers will be responsible for ongoing fees of £30.00 per year which will be eligible for tax relief.

7. **Workforce Implications**

- 7.1 Every 3 years social workers will be required to submit evidence of further professional development. This will be supported through a well developed programme of accredited training and development opportunities, and personal development folders linked to the appraisal process. Ultimately, however, individual social workers will be responsible for ensuring they keep their own record of training and development.

8. **Conclusion**

- 8.1 The registration of all social workers with the General Social Care Council will provide Barking & Dagenham with a high quality professional workforce. In turn this will help to raise the status of the profession in the eyes of service users and the community.

- 8.2 The Council has an enviable track record of supporting development of social workers through a comprehensive training programme. The ongoing requirement to maintain evidence of continued professional development will stand the local authority in a good position as the employer of choice in a traditionally difficult employment market.
- 8.3 The Council will continue to focus on the continued professional development by holding an Annual Social Work Conference. The first one was held in spring this year and was well attended by over 100 social workers. The keynote speaker was Margaret Hodge, MP.

Background Papers:
Care Standard Act 2000