

**PE1418/A**

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Date: 18 April 2012

Convener  
Garry Coutts  
  
Chief Executive  
Anna Fowle

Dear Mr Todd

**Scottish Parliament Public Petition PE1418 - Safeguarding vulnerable people**

The Public Petitions Committee asked the SSSC:

What is your response to what the petitioner seeks and the issues raised in her petition and oral evidence?

Our response is set out below.

While Ms Alexander is correct in that the overall social work function in a local authority does not currently have to be managed by a registered social worker, every local authority in Scotland is required under Section 3 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 to appoint a professionally qualified and registered social worker as the CSWO.

The CSWO post provides effective, professional advice to local authorities – elected members and officers – **in the authorities' provision of social work services**. The post should assist authorities in understanding the complexities of social work service delivery and also has a role to play in overall performance improvement and the identification and management of corporate risk where they relate to social work services.

The Scottish Government has issued three documents which set out the accountability and governance required and all local authorities will have been informed of these.



The **Guidance on the Role of the Chief Social Work Officer** (CSWO) (February 2009) and the **Role of the Registered Social Worker in Statutory Interventions: Guidance for Local Authorities** (March 2010) help clarify the role of the CSWO and ensure that employers and employees have a clear understanding of the accountability and governance involved in statutory interventions with the people with whom they work.

The **Guidance on the Role of the Chief Social Work Officer** (CSWO) makes clear that the CSWO in each Local Authority is responsible for providing professional leadership; the guidance specifically puts a responsibility on the CSWO to:

- ensure that appropriate systems are in place both to promote good practice and to identify and address weak and poor practice
- ensure the provision of appropriate professional advice in the discharge of local authorities' **statutory social work duties and,**
- be visible and available to any social services worker and ensure the availability of professional advice and guidance.

The guidance recognises the varying circumstances and configurations of Scottish local authorities and therefore states that the focus of the guidance is on the role and function of the CSWO rather than position or structures. However, it states the CSWO should be positioned at a level of seniority commensurate with being able to advise the local authority and undertake the complex duties described in the guidance.

The guidance on reservation of functions to registered social workers states that accountability for exercising statutory powers to protect and promote the welfare and wellbeing of children, adults at risk and communities, should rest with a registered social worker.

The **SSSC Code of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers** requires employers to:

- manage the performance of staff and the organisation to ensure high quality services and care (Code 1.5)
- effectively manage and supervise staff to support effective practice and good conduct and support staff to address deficiencies in their performance (Code 2.2).

The **SSSC Code of Practice for Social Service Workers** specifically requires social service workers to help service users to make complaints, take complaints seriously and respond to them or pass them to an appropriate person.

The Scottish Government also published the **Practice Governance Framework** which draws on the **SSSC's** Codes of Practice, and other relevant documents, to highlight the responsibilities in delivering safe, effective and personalised practice.

The purpose of the Framework is to:

- outline the key accountabilities of employers and practitioners and what should be in place to discharge these
- provide a prompt or tool which employers and practitioners can use to assess whether the appropriate conditions are met to ensure safe and effective practice.

The guidance specifically states that Local Authorities should ensure that “**Professional** supervision is provided to social workers where their line manager is a professional from another discipline”.

Therefore, the view of the SSSC is that, although relevant professionals other than social workers might manage social work teams, the requirements on each Local Authority to appoint a CSWO, the roles and responsibilities of the CSWO, the requirements placed on employers through the SSSC Code of Practice and the reservation of functions to registered social workers all help to ensure the appropriate professional basis for the management of social work services.

Signed: Anna Fowlie  
Chief Executive  
SSSC

Date: 18 April 2012

[This response is drafted using extracts from the following Scottish Government documents:

Guidance on the Role of the Chief Social Work Officer

<http://www.socialworkscotland.org.uk/resources/pub/GuidanceRoleCSWO/DocMarch2009.pdf>

The Role of the Registered Social Worker in Statutory Interventions

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/03/05091627/2>

Practice Governance Framework: Responsibility and Accountability in Social Work Practice

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/24111247/8>