

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS ON JOINING THE SOCIAL CARE REGISTER

As a social work degree student, we are pleased to invite you to join the Social Care Register. This is a public record of those who have been assessed as fit to be in the social care workforce and hold the important responsibilities it involves.

The General Social Care Council (GSCC), the social care workforce regulator in England, opened the Social Care Register to qualified social workers in April 2003. The Social Care Register is a public record of those who have been assessed as fit to be in the social care workforce. The Care Standards Act 2000 provides the basis for registration, which involves checks that applicants are of good character, physically and mentally fit to perform their work and have completed recognised training.

A new legal restriction means that all social workers need to be registered to use the legally protected title of social worker. From autumn 2005, we are extending registration to social work degree students. You have an opportunity to be one of the first students to be registered and start your career by demonstrating your commitment to high standards in social work. This information sheet tells you more about how you can go about it.

Why should I register as a student social worker?

Registration is important for you, for your university and most of all, for people relying on social work services.

1. Registration is about higher standards of care and improved protection for service users and the public. Students will be spending around 200 days working with service users, so it is important that you meet the same criteria as qualified social workers. Service users who students come into contact with can have confidence that you have met required standards and adhere to the national codes of practice governing all social care workers.
2. Registration as a student is an important first step towards registration as a qualified social worker. Every graduating student will need to be registered once they are qualified before they can use the legally protected title of social worker. Being registered as a student will make this transition to becoming a Registered Social Worker more straightforward.
3. Social care workers are in a position of great responsibility and work with vulnerable people. It is important that those working in social care are well trained, reliable and follow best practice at all times. Registration will promote this and provide a mechanism for removing the minority that are not suitable. Joining the Social Care Register is a public demonstration of your commitment to high standards.
4. Because registration is so important, there will be a new link between registration and education support grants, which is the money paid to universities for student placements. This means that universities will only receive placement funding for those students who have registered on the Social Care Register during the academic year 2005-2006. If any funding has been paid in respect of students who do not register, the GSCC will recover this from the following year's placement money. This will help ensure that everyone gives student registration the attention it deserves and your course will require you to register promptly.
5. Having a system of regulation also gives social care the status it deserves, in line with other vital public service professions. Many other professions including teaching, nursing, the law and medical professions are regulated through registration. Registering the social care workforce, including students, will put it on a similar footing.

Should I register as a student social worker?

YES: If you are:

- studying the new degree at undergraduate or postgraduate level in England on an approved course.
- committed to high standards in social care, of 'good character' and without any background that would make you unfit to hold the responsibilities of a social worker.

NO: If you are:

- about to qualify with a DipSW in 2005. You should apply to become a fully qualified Registered Social Worker now, although it won't come through until we have confirmation of your qualification. See the separate information sheet on qualifying students.
- studying on the second or third year of a DipSW course. You will be able to register as a qualified Registered Social Worker on qualification.

How do I apply?

Your course provider will need to give us your contact details, tell us about the course you are studying, and will give the GSCC an assurance that they consider you to be suitable to be employed as a social worker. Your course provider will then give you a registration application pack. If they don't, the GSCC can send you one directly. Completed application forms need to be returned to the GSCC by 31 October 2005.

The GSCC will inform both you and your course provider of the outcome of the registration process.

We will be inviting applications from those who started courses in 2005, those in the second and subsequent year of new degree courses that began in Autumn 2004, and those in their final year that began in Autumn 2003.

How much does registration cost?

Registration for social work students is £10 per year, which works out at less than 3p a day. The fee is the same throughout the UK and is tax-deductible. The fee is used to help cover the administrative costs of registration.

What happens if I move to another course, or leave the course before completing my qualification?

You must inform the GSCC, and your registration will be put on hold. If you return to your studies, you must let us know where you are studying and your registration will continue at no extra cost.

How long will it take to apply?

It takes about 30 minutes on average to complete the application form. If there aren't any issues with your application, you could be registered within six weeks.

What are the registration criteria?

Registration criteria for student social workers cover three main areas: good character, physical and mental fitness and good conduct. The law says we have to make sure that everyone who is registered is of good character and is 'physically and mentally fit' to work in social care.

To confirm good character, we ask the applicant to disclose any relevant details, such as a disciplinary issue and any criminal convictions. These details are confirmed by your course provider. You will also be asked to declare any health conditions that could affect your ability to study on a social work course and to undertake practice placements safely.

Telling us about a criminal conviction or a health condition will not necessarily prevent you from being registered - each case will be considered individually. However, a health condition could lead to conditions being placed on your registration so that you can work or study safely. The health requirement is not a bar to registration for people with disabilities.

Disclosures about character and health may be considered by our Registration Committee, which is made up of lay people and qualified social care workers. The Registration Committee may call for medical reports to help them assess declared health conditions and determine applicants' suitability for registration.

How long does registration last?

You will be registered for the duration of your course, or seven years from the date of registration, whichever is shorter. We will tell you the dates of your registration period when we write to confirm you have been registered.

What information do you collect on the registration form?

Details collected and held about student social workers are:

- name and address;
- date of birth;
- gender;
- previous names;
- Passport number or UK National Insurance number;
- current job;
- previous jobs;
- disciplinary record;
- criminal offences; and
- health details.

There's more information about what we do with the information and our data protection policies on our website at www.gsc.org.uk.

I've already filled in a GSCC form for the Student Records Office; what is this for?

The GSCC collects data about student enrolment, progress and achievements for both the Diploma in Social Work and the new social work degree. This is an invaluable first-hand source of information for the GSCC, the Government and those involved in education and training and workforce planning and research. The data you provide is added to our social work education and training records, which now cover the last forty years.

These records are also used to confirm the qualification status of individuals, and now are used to confirm eligibility to apply for registration on the part of the Social Care Register for qualified social workers. It is however very different from registration as a student social worker.

What is the situation with Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales?

There are four social care workforce regulators in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales and each maintains its own list. You need to register with the social care council for the country where you study. If you are unsure about which social care council you need to register with, please call the registration helpline on 0845 070 0630.

Will the register be public?

The law says that parts of the register must be public, but only certain details, such as;

- your full name;
- your registration number; and
- the postal town where you are studying for your GSCC approved social work course.

Is there any guidance on filling in the form?

Yes, the application pack has a booklet to help you complete the application form, and there's a registration helpline you can call on 0845 070 0630. There is also an email address for queries about registration, registration@gsc.org.uk.

When will I hear if my applications have been successful?

This will depend on the information you supply us. If everything is straightforward, you should hear in about six weeks. We will write to you with your unique registration number, and after registration has been granted we will send you a certificate of registration. You can also check our website.

How do I tell you if any information I have given in my application changes?

It is important that you let us know straight away about any changes to any of the information you give us. It is important because it will help us make sure that we keep the register up-to-date and protect the users of social care services.

How will the GSCC store the information I supply?

Any information you give to us will be stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The Data Protection Act includes the statutory right of access to personal information.

How do I renew my registration?

Your registration lasts for the duration of your course, or seven years from the date of registration, whichever is shorter. We will write to you to let you know how you can register as a qualified social worker on the Social Care Register when you have completed your course.

What should I do if I have any further questions?

If you have any questions regarding registration, please contact our Registration helpline:

Telephone
0845 070 0630

or email
registration@gsc.org.uk
marking your email as 'student registration'

or fax
01788 532474

or write to
The Student Registration Team
The General Social Care Council
Myson House
Railway Terrace
RUGBY
CV21 3HT