Northern Ireland Social Care Council

General Guidance for Social Work Registrants

Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL)

October 2020
(Version 5)

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PART 1: Introduction

Social workers' Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) is a priority for the Social Care Council to ensure the provision of quality social work services for the public. PRTL provides benefits for registrants and employers, strengthens skills within the profession and enhances public confidence in social work.

This Guidance is intended to support all social work registrants to understand the importance of Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL). It is important that at the point of registration renewal **every** social work registrant is able to provide the Social Care Council with appropriate information about the training and learning they completed in the preceding three years of their registration. The guidance is applicable to all registered social workers including:

(a) Registrants who have recently completed the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE)

(b) Social Work Managers

(c) Registrants who are self-employed or not in employment.

What is Post Registration Training and Learning – PRTL?

The Social Care Council adopts the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW, 2014) definition of social work which states that it is "a practice based profession and an academic discipline." The Northern Ireland Social Care Council's Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Workers require social workers to maintain an up-to-date knowledge and evidence base for their practice**.**

- Standard of Practice 2: Maintain an up-to-date knowledge and evidence base for social work.
- Standard of Practice 2: Develop social work practice through supervision, consultation, reflection and analysis.
- Standard of Practice 8: Develop yourselves and others.

Throughout your career as a social worker you must maintain and expand your knowledge in a process of continuous professional development (CPD) so that your practice is informed and based on the most up-to-date research and knowledge. The Social Care Council sets a standard of completing at least 90 hours of training and learning (PRTL) within your registration period i.e. every 3 years, to evidence your continuous professional development. This is a condition which must be met in order for your name to remain on the Social Care Council Register at your renewal of registration. (See Appendix 1 – Registration Rules –PRTL)

The Social Care Council defines Post Registration, Training and Learning as the learning and development activities through which you must maintain and develop your competence throughout your professional career and that helps you to:

- Improve the service you provide
- Develop and improve your job skills, knowledge, behaviour and practice
- Keep up to date with new practice developments, legislation and policy.

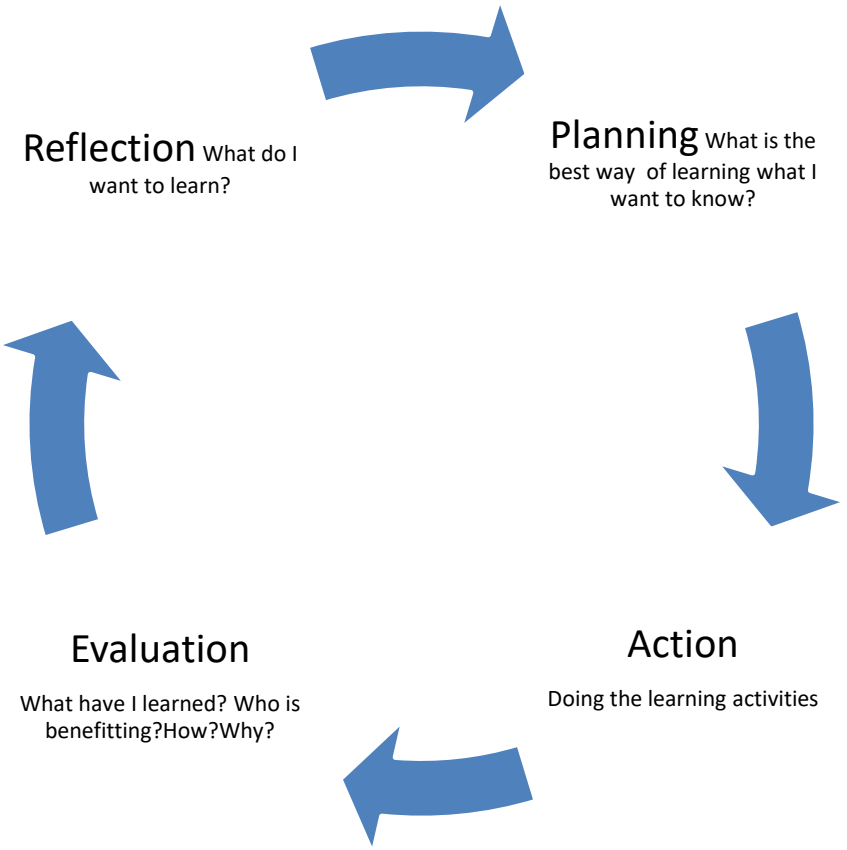
PRTL and Renewal

The Social Care Council Registration Rules require registered social workers, when they are renewing their registration (every 3 years), to provide satisfactory evidence that they have completed the required post registration training and learning. The Social Care Council will ask you to sign a personal declaration that you have met the PRTL requirements; **PRTL is a mandatory element of renewal and failure to meet this requirement may call into question your Fitness to Practise.**

The Learning Cycle

Learning and development should be a cyclical process starting with identification of learning needs. It should include reflection on those learning needs and planning activities that will meet the identified needs and contribute to improved practice (see Table 1 below).

Table 1 – The Learning Cycle



Personal Development Plan (PDP)

All registrants should have a personal development plan that incorporates the areas outlined above. (See Appendix 2 for an example).

Evidencing your PRTL

See Appendix 4 for suggested ways that you might achieve PRTL and evidence your learning.

Recording your PRTL

It is important to keep an up-to-date record of your training and learning as the Social Care Council undertakes a bi-annual audit of PRTL. Social workers can record in two different ways:

1. Via the **PRTL** facility on the Registration Portal https://portal.niscc.org/

2. Via the **Professional in Practice (PiP) (Credit Accumulation Route)** on the Registration Portal. https://portal.niscc.org/

Social Workers **are strongly encouraged** to use the **Professional in Practice Framework** which enables them to gain Professional in Practice credits whilst also meeting the PRTL requirements.

NB: Please note if social workers record their training and learning via PRTL on the Registration Portal they **will not** be able to claim Professional in Practice credits for this learning.

If you choose to record via the Professional in Practice route, contact your organisation's PiP Representative for guidance.

Click **here** for more information about **Professional in Practice**.

Responsibilities of Social Work Registrants

Registrants are responsible for their own professional development and for meeting their PRTL requirements. **The Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Workers**, 2019 (Standard of Conduct 6) states that:

"As a social worker, you must be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills".

This includes:

"Undertaking relevant training and learning to maintain and improve your knowledge and skills and meeting the Social Care Council's Post Registration, Training and Learning Requirements in line with your job role (6.17)"

Newly Appointed First Line Managers

First line managers are recognised as occupying a particularly critical position at the forefront of service delivery, and are often charged with making the critical decisions which will determine the safety and quality of care provided to those who use health and social care services.

Evidence would suggest however that social workers often take up first line management positions without the managerial skills required or the appropriate learning and development opportunities to enable effective performance in the role.

The PRTL requirements state that social workers who are appointed as first line managers should undertake learning and development activity in the professional supervision and appraisal of staff within two years of appointment to post. This learning and development activity may include:

- Undertaking a formal programme of learning, e.g. the regional Professional Supervision Programme
- Undertaking relevant in-house training
- Making a submission through the PiP Individual Assessment Route
- Receiving formal and sustained 'on the job' coaching and mentoring support
- Participating in action learning sets within your organisation

The activity, irrespective of mode of delivery, must focus on the key tasks of professional supervision and staff appraisal and be aligned to the particular requirements of the registrant's post. It must also form a significant part of the registrant's 90 hours/15 days PRTL requirement.

The learning and development activity must also take account of any regional or organisational policies and procedures related to supervision and appraisal.

Experienced Managers

Strong professional leadership and management are required at all levels within health and social care organisations to ensure improved standards in services and better protection for service users.

While the focus for newly appointed first line managers is on professional supervision, more experienced managers will need to develop more generic managerial competences in areas such as social care governance, performance management, service improvement, project management.

Within the PRTL requirements, more experienced first line managers (i.e. more than two years in post) or other grades above this, (i.e. middle or senior managers) are required within the period of registration, to undertake learning and development opportunities appropriate to their post. These development activities should include professional leadership and management.

This learning and development activity may include:

- Undertaking a formal programme of learning, agreed by your employing organisation
- Undertaking relevant in-house training
- Making a submission through the PiP Individual Assessment Route, including having prior learning accredited (APL)

Responsibilities of Employers of Registered Social Workers

As employers you have a shared responsibility in supporting your staff to meet their development needs. The Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Employers of Social Workers and Social Care Workers (Standard 4) states that:

"As a social work and social care employer you must provide training and development opportunities to enable registrants to strengthen and develop their skills and knowledge".

This includes:

- Providing appropriate induction training and on-going learning and development opportunities to help registrants do their jobs effectively and prepare for new and changing roles and responsibilities; (Standard 4.1).
- Supporting registrants to meet the Social Care Council's eligibility criteria for registration and its requirement for post registration training and learning. (Standard 4.4).

Staff Supervision and Appraisal

The Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Employers of Social Workers and Social Care Workers also sets out employer responsibilities for managing and supervising staff. This includes:

- Providing appropriate supervision and support to registrants, ensuring they provide safe, effective and values-led care (3.3.)
- Ensuring and enabling registrants to have the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to safely and effectively undertake any tasks that you delegate to them. (3.4.)
- Have appropriate systems in place to address and manager poor performance. (3.5.)

Given the emphasis on personal declaration of PRTL, there is an added responsibility on employers to ensure that their staff are undertaking appropriate development activities. The Social Care Council expects employers to have policies on supervision and appraisal that ensure adequate supervision takes place, that discussion of staff development and learning needs are integral to the supervision process and that they are reviewed at annual appraisals.

Responsibilities of Registered Social Workers who do not have an Employer

Registered Social Workers who do not have an employer, for example registrants who are:

- Self-employed
- Not in employment but wish to maintain their registration.

These registrants are subject to the same PRTL requirements as social workers in employment outlined within this Guidance.

Social work registrants who do not have an employer need to put in place alternative arrangements for the services that the Social Care Council would normally expect an employer to provide. These include:

- The development and review of a personal development plan (PDP)
- Supervision/ mentoring and support
- Training and development activities

Development of a PDP if you are self-employed or not in employment

A PDP is a tool for planning and recording learning and development needs are met. Registrants who are self-employed or not in employment may not have a PDP and may also be unsure about the direction of their career in the future. It is, however, a responsibility of all registered social workers to ensure their knowledge and skills are continuously up to date in order to ensure safe and competent practice.

A PDP should suit the purposes of the individual registrant and there are many different templates for PDPs. As a minimum it should include identified training needs, how these needs may be met and how the plan will be reviewed. The following are some triggers to help with this:

- List current knowledge and abilities and identify any gaps.
- Identify areas of expertise/ special interest and how can these be further developed
- Identify personal development which relates to a business plan (if appropriate)

A PDP should not be a static document but should be continually reviewed and amended. It is important to take time to reflect on current work, learning and plans for the future.

Registrants in employment will normally discuss their PDP and reflect on their learning with their line manager. For registrants who are self-employed or not currently in employment they will also need to find time for similar reflection and, if possible, make an arrangement with a colleague to provide them with mentoring and support.

Supervision and support

The SCC Code of Practice for Employers places a responsibility on employers to support and supervise their staff and it is expected that line managers will assist registrants to identify their learning needs and opportunities for development. Registrants who are self-employed or not in employment, will have to make their own arrangements for support and supervision/mentoring.

It is considered good practice for self-employed registrants to identify a mentor who will support and challenge their practice. This may be a manager with whom they are working under contract or a professional colleague.

For those who are unemployed the issues will be different. These registrants may need advice on the job application process or on developing new skills. A professional association may be able to help.

Training and development activities

Registrants who are self-employed or not in employment will, generally, not have access to employer supported training and will have to find other ways of meeting their PRTL requirements; there is a wide range of opportunities available. Please refer to section Appendix 4 'learning activities' for some helpful ideas.
Self-employed and unemployed registrants will not have a line manager to prompt recording of development activities. It is important, therefore, to set up a system that will support registrants to maintain a continuous, up-to-date, accurate and legible record of PRTL activities.

Voluntary Removal from the Register

Unemployed Registrants who are Unable to Meet PRTL Requirements
Unemployed registrants must consider whether they will be able to meet the requirements for post registration training and learning and whether a period of temporary voluntary removal from the register may be necessary. Registrants wishing to voluntarily remove themselves from the Register should contact the registration team for guidance at registration@niscc.hscni.net

If you remove yourself from the Register this means you are not subject to the 90 hour PRTL requirements.

You will to need to reapply to rejoin the Register prior to taking up future social work posts.

Click **here** for more information on registration.

PART 2: PRTL Standards

Post Registration Training and Learning for social work registrants is based on personal declaration. This means at your registration renewal point (every 3 years) you must declare that you have completed the required 90 hours of training and learning.

In order to meet the Social Care Council Standards for social work registrants you must:

1. Identify development needs with your manager, collate a personal development plan (PDP), evaluate your learning and maintain a continuous, up-to-date, accurate and legible record of your PRTL activities.
2. Meet the PRTL requirements for your work role as specified in Social Care Council Registration Rules (see Appendix 1).
3. Demonstrate that your PRTL activities are relevant to current or future practice which includes benefitting the service user.
4. Present written evidence that you have met these standards as required.

This means that each registrant should, in discussion with their line manager or mentor where appropriate, think about their work role now and in the future, draw up a PDP which identifies their learning needs and the activities which will contribute to furthering their development as a social worker. This plan should be reviewed at least annually. There is an example of a PDP at Appendix 2.

It is likely that your PRTL will encompass a wide range of activities from formal training to learning from others, reading journal articles etc. For each activity you need to think about how the application of your learning will improve the service you provide and benefit service users.

Deferral Due to Exceptional Circumstances

It is important that any social worker who is practising social work keeps their knowledge and skills up to date. It is appreciated, however, that there may be exceptional circumstances which are beyond your control which prevent you from completing your PRTL as required. The Social Care Council is prepared to consider requests for deferral of PRTL due to exceptional circumstances and in accordance with the Social Care Council Rules of April 2018, as set out below:

> *Rule 8 (9) The Council shall not refer a registrant to the Registration Committee in accordance with Paragraph (7)) where that registrant has failed to complete the post registration training and learning requirements due to exceptional circumstances or where the registrant is on maternity, adoption or fostering leave.*

If you think you will be unable to complete your PRTL due to exceptional circumstances you should outline the reason via email to the Social Care Council registration team at registration@niscc.hscni.net **at least 20** days before your renewal is due.

PART 3: PRTL Audit

The Audit Process

At two points in the year the Social Care Council will select a random sample of registrants to provide a submission containing information on how they have met the PRTL Standards. The submission will be assessed against the criteria as outlined in Table 2: **Standards and Assessment Criteria for PRTL Audit** (See page 14).

Any registrants who have previously deferred an audit or have had relevant PRTL conditions placed on their registration will automatically be included in the audit.

Exemption from audit

The following are the ways you can be exempt from audit:

- If you have accumulated 100 credits via the Professional in Practice (PiP) Credit Accumulation Route (this equates to one PiP requirement) within the audit period.
- If you have achieved one PiP requirement by any other route within the audit period.

PRTL submission for audit

If you have been selected for audit you will be informed five months in advance of the date you are required to submit your PRTL submission to the Social Care Council. PRTL submission dates will be **1st June** and **1st December** each year. You will be advised which of these dates you must meet. If you fail to submit within the required timescale, unless there are exceptional circumstances (see page 11), it may be considered impaired Fitness to Practise. *Rule 8 (7) Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Registration) Rules 2017.*

If you have submitted evidence of partially meeting the standards you will be given one opportunity to resubmit.

Your audit submission should include the following:

- Summary of your social work role (maximum 500 words). This should describe your current role and the type of work you do. The summary should include a brief description of your main responsibilities.
- Personal Development Plan (PDP). This should identify your learning and development needs and the activities you planned to undertake to meet these needs.(Appendix Two)
- Summary of PRTL activities undertaken. Give a brief description of each activity included.
- Personal statement - maximum 1500 words. This should demonstrate evidence of reflection and evaluation of your development and should describe how you meet Standards of Practice 3 and 4; For example, you should explain what you did, what you learnt, what you would do differently as a result and who has benefitted.

There is further information on compiling your submission in Part 4 of this Guidance.

Renewal of Registration

To prevent delays to the renewal of registration process, those registrants who are selected for PRTL audit should complete their registration renewal form in the usual way and submit it to the Social Care Council within the required timescale – separate from their PRTL submission.

TABLE 2 Standards and Assessment Criteria for PRTL Audit

Standard	Standard met	Standard partly met	Standard not met	Evidence
1. A registrant must Identify development needs, collate a PDP, evaluate their learning and maintain a continuous, up-to-date, accurate and legible record of their PRTL activities.	The registrant has submitted a PDP and a summary of their PRTL activities. There is evidence of evaluation of learning.	PDP not submitted but acceptable explanation given, Or A record of activities has been submitted but learning has not been evaluated, Or Records are not legible	The registrant has not provided any evidence that they have met the Standard	PDP Record of PRTL activities Personal statement demonstrating evaluation of learning activities
2. A registrant must meet the PRTL requirements for their work role as specified in SCC Registration Rules (see Appendix 1)	Records have been submitted which demonstrate the PRTL requirements have been met	Requirements have been partially met	No evidence has been submitted to demonstrate the requirement has been met.	Summary of work role Evidence of PRTL appropriate to work role
3. A registrant must demonstrate that their PRTL activities are relevant to current or future practice	The registrant's personal statement demonstrates that their PRTL activities are relevant to current or future practice	The personal statement provides some but insufficient evidence that the PRTL activities are relevant to current or future practice	The registrant has not provided a personal statement and summary of work role, Or Has not demonstrated that their PRTL is relevant to current or future practice.	Summary of work role Personal statement

Standard	Standard met	Standard partly met	Standard not met	Evidence
4. A registrant must seek to ensure that their PRTL has contributed to improving the quality of their practice and service delivery including benefitting the service user; or explain why this has not been achieved and outline plans for how this can be met in future	The registrant's personal statement demonstrates reflection on their learning and describes how their practice has improved and how this has contributed to better outcomes for service users. If their learning has not had the desired effect an explanation is given and plans outlined for how future PRTL activities will benefit service users.	There is some but insufficient evidence that the registrant's PRTL activities have improved the quality of their work and benefitted service users	There is no evidence that the registrant's PRTL activities have improved the quality of their work, Or Benefits to service user have not been explained	Personal statement
5. Upon request, present written evidence that they have met these standards.	Full documentation has been provided within the required timescale	Documentation has been provided but is incomplete	The registrant did not return their PRTL documentation by the deadline	Documentation as listed above returned by deadline

Assessment

The Social Care Council's PRTL assessors will assess your PRTL submission against the criteria in the table above. These PRTL assessors are qualified social workers who have been trained to assess PRTL submissions. If you partially meet a Standard the Social Care Council will write to you giving brief feedback on your submission and request further information to be submitted within 20 days. If your submission still fails to meet all PRTL Standards this may call into question your Fitness to Practise.

PART 4: Compiling your PRTL Submission

If you are chosen for audit the Social Care Council will send you a PRTL submission form to complete (there is a sample form at Appendix 3)

Your submission must include:

1. **A summary of your social work role (up to 500 words).**

   This will help us to assess if the activities you have undertaken are appropriate to your work role. You should describe your main responsibilities and the service users with whom you work, other professionals, students and learners. Your main responsibilities may be written in bullet point format but there should be some narrative about your work role.

2. **A Personal Development Plan (PDP)**

   For social workers in employment this should be agreed between you and your line manager and regularly reviewed.

   Social workers who work independently should also review their development needs and plan how to meet them. It is good practice to discuss this with a colleague or mentor.

   A sample plan is included at Appendix 2
   The plan should be signed and dated.

3. **A summary of PRTL activities undertaken**

   The PRTL Submission Form (Appendix 3) asks registrants to list the activities undertaken and the hours spent on each activity.

   Many of the activities undertaken will link to learning needs identified in the training and development plan but others will be unplanned opportunities that contribute to developing your knowledge and skills.

   It is expected that social workers' PRTL will include a range of activities, for examples of this see Appendix 4.

4. **A statement saying how you have met our PRTL Standards**

   Your personal statement should demonstrate reflection on and evaluation of your learning. You should concentrate on how you meet the PRTL Standards 3 and 4 (Table 1), that is, how your PRTL activities have improved the quality of your work and the benefits to service users.

Appendix 1: - Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Registration) Rules, 2017

Rule 8(6)(c) – Schedule 3: Post registration training and learning requirements

1 Social workers and social care workers

(1) All social workers and social care workers, within the period of registration, complete a minimum of 90 hours of learning and development activity which may include study, training, courses, seminars, reading, teaching or other activities which could reasonably be expected to advance the social worker's professional development, or contribute to the development of the profession as a whole.

2 Social workers

(1) The following requirements apply to social workers in the following categories. The training specified will contribute to the 90 hours of learning and development activity in paragraph 1(1) above.

(a) Social workers in the first three year period of registration following successful completion of the Assessed Year in Employment shall complete a minimum of two requirements of the Northern Ireland Consolidation Award within the period of registration.

(b) Social workers who are appointed as first line managers shall undertake learning and development activity in the professional supervision and appraisal of staff within two years of appointment to post.

(c) Social workers who are first line managers or managers in other grades above this shall undertake, within the period of registration, learning and development activities appropriate to their post. These development activities should include professional leadership and management.

3 Every social worker and social care worker registered with the Council shall keep a record of post registration training and learning undertaken.

4 Failure to meet the foregoing post registration training and learning requirements may be considered misconduct by the Council.

5 In the case of a social worker registered in the visiting European part of the Register, where the social worker is required to undertake post registration training and learning, the social worker shall complete 5 days (30 hours) each year, of study, training courses, seminars, reading, teaching or other activities which could reasonably be expected to advance the social worker's professional development, or contribute to the development of the profession as a whole

Appendix 2: Example of a Personal Development Plan

Identified training (development) needs	Plan to address training needs	How will this help the Registrant in their job?	Achievement timescale

Signed: ..... Registrant

Registration Number: .....

..... Line Manager/Mentor (ifavailable)

Appendix 3: PRTL Submission Form

Full name: .....

Employer name (if in employment): .....

Registration Number: .....

Total word count:.....
Summary of Work Role (maximum 500 words): .....
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Personal Statement (Maximum 1500 words) Page 1:

This should demonstrate that you have evaluated your learning and describe how you met standards 3 and 4 (Additional space is provided on pages 21 and 22).

Total word count:.....

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Personal Statement (Maximum 1500 words) Page 2:

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PRTL Submission Appendix 3 continued)

Personal Statement (Maximum 1500 words) Page 3:

PRTL Submission
Summary of PRTL Activities

Appendix 3 (continued)

Date	Duration (hours)	Brief description of activity

Total training and learning for period of registration in Hours _____

Registrant Declaration
I confirm that I have undertaken the activities recorded on this form and that the details I have provided are accurate. I understand that failure to meet Post Registration Training and Learning Requirements, or the provision of false information in relation to meeting these requirements, may be considered by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, as misconduct.

Signed ..... Registrant

Registration Number .....

Appendix 4: Examples of PRTL activities

Formal learning

- Attending seminars/conferences
- Attending formal training programmes e.g. PiP Approved Programmes
- Distance learning

Professional activities

- Involvement in a professional body
- Member of a special interest group
- Organising journal clubs or other specialist group
- Giving presentations at conferences
- Mentoring
- Supervising research
- Writing articles or papers

Professional in Practice

- Achievement within the Individual Assessment Route
- Achievement within the Approved Programme Route
- Achievement within the Credit Accumulation Route
- Achievement within the Work-based Learning Route

Self-directed learning

- Work- related reading and research (books, journals, newspapers, television programmes)
- Internet research
- Social Care Council Learning Zone

Work-based learning

- Discussions with colleagues
- Secondment to another team/department
- Mentoring and coaching from others
- In-house training related to job role
- Mandatory in-house training
- Work shadowing
- Learning from colleagues at team meetings/case discussions
- Journal club
- Project work
- Evidence from learning activities undertaken as part of progression on the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework

For further information about Post Registration Training and Learning Requirements for Registered Social Workers

Contact:
Northern Ireland Social Care Council 7th Floor Millennium House
19-25 Great Victoria Street Belfast
BT2 7AQ

Tel: 028 95 363600
Email: registeration@niscc.hscni.net
Web: www.niscc.info

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