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**Professional in Practice Framework**

**Guidance for the Work-Based Learning Route**

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# PART 1: Preparing for Approval within the Work Based Learning Route (WBLR)

# Introduction

The opportunities and ways in which we learn are constantly changing and evolving in line with new knowledge and research that influences how we practice social work and respond to the increasing complex and multi-faceted needs of the people we support. The Work Based Learning Route (WBLR) has the potential to enable employers to fully integrate a growing range of in-house training opportunities into the Professional in Practice (PiP) Framework and to enable social workers to gain recognition for their training and meet and evidence Continued Professional Development (CPD) conditions of their registration.

The WBLR was first piloted in 2015 to support recognition and PiP achievement for employer in-service courses, integrating PiP assessment at the point of delivery and conferring competence against PiP Requirements aligned to the PiP Awards. The review of the WBLR in 2022 highlighted the success of the route in enabling 292 candidates to gain PiP Requirements,127 of which were full Awards within a seven-year period.

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Council) has responsibility for managing and approving the provision of post qualifying education and training for social work in Northern Ireland. The PiP Partnership has overall responsibility for this function. The PiP Partnership comprises representatives from the main social work employers and Higher Education Institutions engaged in the provision of post qualifying education and training for social work in Northern Ireland.

This document provides information to course providers seeking inclusion via the WBLR within the PiP Framework. The purpose of this guidance document is to outline the arrangements for the PiP endorsement of in-service training courses within the WBLR*.* It also specifies the quality assurance arrangements which need to be in place to ensure alignment with other routes to achievement within the PiP Framework. These arrangements include detail on how assessment will be managed and by whom to incorporate a level of PiP assessment commensurate with other routes.

The Social Care Council is the Awarding Body for the PiP Framework. There are four Professional Awards:

* NI Consolidation Award in Social Work
* NI Specialist Award in Social Work
* NI Leadership and Strategic Award in Social Work
* NI Advanced Scholarship Award

The PiP Framework and its four Professional Awards are set at postgraduate level. Each Award is based on a range of PiP Requirements which reflect professional activity or practice from different perspectives. The postgraduate level status of the four Awards provides the opportunity to accommodate, demonstrate and recognise both vertical and horizontal progression. It also ensures flexibility by supporting professional achievement alongside the parallel opportunity for academic progression and achievement. Candidates can achieve PiP Requirements towards any of the first three awards or a full award via the Work-Based Learning Route. The number of PiP Requirements for each course included in this route is decided on a case by case basis informed by the submission documentation.

The following will be used to recognise progression and achievement:

* Transcript – The Social Care Council will provide a verified transcript of achievement of any Professional Requirement that has been approved within the PiP Framework. The Transcript will provide details of the route and pathway undertaken by the candidate.
* Certificate – The Social Care Council will issue certificates to those who achieve any of the Professional Awards within the PiP Framework.
* Course Certificate – Specific courses may issue their own certificates.

This document should be read in conjunction with *The Quality Assurance Framework for Education and Training Regulated by The NI Social Care Council* (updated 2022).

Standards for Approval within the WBLR;

1. Collaborative arrangements are in place between providers, employers and PiP Representatives to ensure that provision meets the practice and professional development needs of candidates.
2. There is a rationale for the provision that demonstrates identified need and there has been consideration of realistic resources for delivery of the course.
3. A range of stakeholders (including people who use services, carers, candidates, employers) are be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of the course.
4. The course meets relevant policy Requirements and Standards.
5. The course must meet a minimum of one professional Requirement and reflect a minimum of 100 notional effort hours (hereafter referred to as associated hours), or two hundred associated hours at Leadership and Strategic Award Level.
6. There is an entry requirement that applicants are able to undertake work and study at postgraduate level.
7. There must be an external contribution to the assessment process. The Social Care Council will provide this oversight through the existing Approval Panel and PiP Partnership resource External Assessor functions.
8. The course must have a named associated PiP link person who has experience and knowledge of the Pip Framework and assessment processes.
9. There is an internal quality assurance system that will ensure the maintenance of standards and adherence to requirements.
10. There arecomplaints and appeals procedures in place.
11. The Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Workers must be embedded in the course.
12. There is accessible information to candidates and employers which includes detail of time commitments, method of delivery and methods of assessment.

# Applying for Approval of a Course within the Work-Based Learning Route

1. Where a Provider is considering having a Course approved within the WBLR they should contact the Professional Adviser for information on the criteria and process.
2. Following a discussion with the Professional Adviser the Course Provider will be guided on whether or not the Course is suitable to be considered for Approval within the WBLR.
3. If the Course is considered suitable The Provider can progress to completing and submitting an **Application for Approval within the WBLR** **(Appendix One) and Course Mapping Matrix (Appendix Two)** to the Professional Adviser**.** The PiP Approval Panel **meets twice yearly** **in April and November.** Completed Approval documentation must be with the Social Care Council no later than six weeks before the date of the Approval Panel.

The Application for Approval and Mapping Matrix must demonstrate:

* A rationale for inclusion in the WBLR.
* Detail of alignment of the course to a PiP Award and Requirements.
* Learning outcomes and associated hours (see details below).
* Assessment methodology, administration and delivery resources
* PiP Assessor input.
* Quality assurance processes to ensure rigorous standards and robust assessment.

1. The Professional Adviser reviews the information submitted and where the Course is assessed as potentially meeting the criteria for inclusion within the route the Course Provider can progress to applying for Approval (Where the Professional Adviser assesses that more work is required support will be available to the provider to prepare the submission for Approval where the provider wishes to pursue Approval.)
2. The Course Provider submits the Application for Approval and the completed Mapping Matrix to the PiP Approval Panel. **(Appendix One and Appendix Two).**

The Course Provider or Co-ordinator of the Course will be invited to attend the Panel meeting to discuss their application and respond to any queries or questions.

1. The Panel is comprised of a Chair and Deputy Chair, an External Assessor, employer and provider representatives and is supported by a Social Care Council Professional Adviser.

There are three possible outcomes from this process:

* The course meets the criteria for inclusion.
* The course is approved with a number of conditions which must be satisfied.
* The course does not meet the criteria for inclusion.

1. The Course Provider will be informed in writing of the Panel’s decision within five working days of the meeting taking place.
2. Courses which are approved subject to meeting conditions must provide evidence to the Social Care Council of having met these conditions before being accepted on to the route.
3. Where the Approval Panel decision is to approve the Course, the Course Co-ordinator and Professional Adviser will sign the Course Approval Confirmation (**Appendix Three).**
4. **WBLR Courses will be approved for a minimum of one year and maximum of three years**. Courses which wish to continue within the route beyond the initial approval period must apply for re-approval to the PiP Approval Panel.
5. Where a course has not been approved for inclusion in the WBLR the Social Care Council may provide guidance and support to the Provider in meeting the required standard or redirect the course provider to an alternative PiP route.

# Applying for Approval of a Course within the Work-Based Learning Route Flow Chart

Course Provider discusses course inclusion in the WBLR with SCC Professional Adviser

Course is NOT considered suitable for inclusion within the WBLR by the Professional Adviser at this time

Course is considered potentially suitable for inclusion within the WBLR by the Professional Adviser

Course Provider completes and submits an ‘Application for Approval’ and Mapping Matrix forms to the Professional Adviser

Course Provider does not pursue approval at this time

Course Provider considers modifications to the Course

uitable

Professional Adviser reviews the submission

Professional Adviser assesses the Course as NOT meeting the criteria for Approval within the WBLR at this time

Professional Adviser recommends Application for Approval and Mapping Matrix form is ready for consideration by the PiP Approval Panel

# Guidance for Course Content and Structure

Learning outcomes should be designed to reflect postgraduate learning through the following indicators:

* Critical evaluation and synthesis of complex issues;
* Evidence of application of research and theory;
* Knowledge and understanding of key principles, concepts, development of ideas and practice;
* Evidence of supplementary reading and referencing, clear structure, acceptable grammar, spelling and presentation.

Course Providers will undertake an initial mapping of the course intended learning outcomes to the course module activities and their associated hours in order to ensure the course is correctly aligned to the relevant PiP Award and Requirements. Providers will be supported to map the associated hours which will reflect the amount of time it takes for the average learner to master, use and achieve the learning outcomes. The associated hours can include activities such as course attendance, tutorial attendance, reading and comprehension, completion of activities, observed practice, action learning sets, participation in online discussions, collaborative peer learning, reflection and supervision and practice hours. Future re-validation will only require amendment of mapping where significant changes in modules and activities have occurred.

Each PiP Requirement within the Consolidation Award or Specialist Award must equate to **a minimum** **of 100** associated hours[[1]](#footnote-1) therefore the full Consolidation Award should equate to **no less than** **600 associated hours** and the Specialist Award to **no less than 900 associated hours.**

Each PiP Requirement within the Leadership and Strategic Award must equate to a **minimum** **of 200** associated hours, therefore, a Course aligned to achieving the Leadership and Strategic Award must equate to **no less than 1800 associated hours.**

# PART 2: Guidance for Courses Approved Within the Work-based Learning Route

# Roles and Responsibilities of Approved Course Providers

Work-Based Learning Course Providers and Co-ordinators must work in partnership with the Social Care Council to engage in the required monitoring and re-validation processes and provide the Social Care Council with relevant, accurate and timely information on a social worker’s participation and achievement on a course as part of their approved status.

In order to undertake awarding body functions, the Social Care Council maintains a database of all PiP candidate achievement from all routes within the PiP Framework. It is essential that accurate and up-to-date data is both recorded and maintained to ensure accuracy of information and the integrity of PiP Professional Awards; the contribution of course providers to this process is therefore vital.

This information is the social worker’s record of continuing professional development and is essential for achievement of PIP Requirements and Awards. Providers must also submit course monitoring information in year two of delivery and apply for re-approval every three years to the Social Care Council Approval Panel. The documentation for both these processes is contained in **Appendix One and Appendix Five.**

All PiP candidates, on approved courses must:

* Be a registered social worker with the Social Care Council.
* Access the Social Care Council online portal and enrol on the relevant Award (Consolidation, Specialist or Leadership and Strategic).

Whilst enrolment on the relevant Professional Award is primarily the responsibility of the individual candidate, it is important that Course Providers encourage and quality assure enrolment on the correct PiP Award prior to the commencement of a course.

# Notification of Intakes and Outcomes to the Social Care Council

The Course Co-ordinator must provide the Social Care Council with a list of social work candidates using the Intake and Outcomes Form (**Appendix Four).** This form must be received by the Social Care Council no later than four weeks after the course commences to confirm the course intake. On completion of the course, the form should be updated to verify social work candidates who have successfully completed the course, indicating which Requirements have been achieved and from which Award. This information should be returned to the Social Care Council no later than six weeks after the course has been completed.

# Quality Assurance: Monitoring

Courses will be subject to a monitoring process undertaken by the Social Care Council at the end of the second year following Approval / Re-Approval, **(Appendix Five),** to ensure the course continues to meet the Standards of Approval as set out in: Arrangements for Quality Assurance of PiP Framework, (updated 2022). The monitoring visit will take place once within each three year approval period and is an opportunity for the Social Care Council to meet with employers and candidates involved in the course to explore how the course is impacting on practice and improving outcomes for service users and carers.

# 

# Course Re-Approval within the WBLR

All courses wishing to continue within the WBLR beyond three years must apply for re-approval and submit evidence of continued relevance, sustainability and impact using the same approval application process and documents as completed for initial approval. **(Appendix One)** Re-approval will be for a period of up to three years with further monitoring in year two.

# Changes to Course Provision

Any changes to course structure, content etc. should be notified to the Social Care Council as part of the monitoring process. Where changes are substantive in nature, the course Co-ordinator should submit those changes to the PiP Approval Panel. The Professional Adviser for the PiP Framework will provide guidance as to whether a change is minor or substantive. In some instances an additional submission to the Approval Panel may be required.

# Pausing or Ending Course Delivery

A decision to pause or stand down a Course may be taken by the Provider but this should always be with the agreement of its stakeholders. If there are difficulties, these should be shared with the Social Care Council. Where a Provider intends to pause or end the delivery of a course they should inform the Professional Adviser in writing providing reasons for the decision. Courses which have been paused can return to the WBLR following notice of intent to the Social Care Council; where significant changes have been made to the content of the course approval will be required form the PiP Approval Panel.

# Equal Opportunities

The Social Care Council is committed to the provision of equality of opportunity and access to assessment in the PiP Framework regardless of any real or perceived differences.

The PiP Partnership is committed to fair and objective assessment. This route stipulates that the Course Provider has responsibility for the assessment and provides assurance to the Social Care Council that the candidate has met the assessment criteria. Where a candidate feels he/she is being unfairly treated in respect of the assessment process they should raise their concerns with the Course Provider. Should further action be required the candidate should refer to the Social Care Council complaints procedure, available on [www.niscc.info](http://www.niscc.info).

**Appendix One:**

**Application for Approval (and Re-Approval) within the Work-Based Learning Route**

**Application for Approval within the WBLR**

Approval Re-Approval

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Course Title: | | |  | | | | | | |
|  | | |  | | | |  |  | |
| Course Co-ordinator:  Phone Number & Email Address | | |  | | | | | | |
|  | | |  | | | |  |  | |
| Course Location & Delivery | | |  | | | | | | |
| Pip Link Person | | |  | | | | | | |
| PiP Award Alignment | | |  | | | | | | |
| PiP Requirement(s) Alignment (as per Mapping Matrix) | | |  | | | | | | |
| Length of Initial Approval Period (min 1 year and Max 3 years) | | |  | | | | | | |
| Date of Application | | |  | | | | | | |
|  | |  | | | |  | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | **Rationale for Inclusion on the** **Work-Based Learning Route.**  Outline how the proposed course provision aims to meet the development needs and current practice context of social workers.  Who is eligible to complete the course?  How will the course benefit people who access social work servicers and carers?  Please outline the legislative, policy and practice context of the Course. | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  | | |  |  | | | | |
| 2 | Course Sustainability  What are the resource implications for delivery of the course and how will these be met?  Outline how collaborative partners are involved in the design and delivery – including service users and carers.  What funding and administration supports are in place?  Describe the supports available to social work candidates to enable course completion. | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Course Provision:  Summarise the main learning outcomes with reference to the Mapping Matrix  How does the course support professional progression for candidates (include details of any eligibility criteria)?  What is the relationship with professional/statutory/regulatory bodies and relevant professional standards?  What is the relationship with other courses / programmes or provision including opportunities for shared learning with other disciplines and professional development?  What Quality Assurance mechanisms are in place including external contributions? | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Course Content and Assessment.  *Outline or attach any course information that details*   1. How the course will be delivered 2. Aims & Learning Outcomes 3. Content and relevant reading 4. Teaching & Learning methods (include blended learning where applicable) 5. Indicative timeline for the course from intake to completion. 6. Evidence required from course candidates 7. Assessment methods for course candidates 8. Processes in place to quality assure assessment including PiP assessor role. 9. Systems in place for re-submissions   **Submit a copy of your training plan or provide a copy of this information.** | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | |

Signed\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Course Co-Ordinator

# Date:

# Appendix Two: Work-Based Learning Route PiP Mapping Matrix

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MAPPING MATRIX** |  |
| **Name of Course:** |  |
| **Course Co-ordinator:** |  |
| **PiP Award Alignment** |  |
| **commencement and completion dates** |  |
| **course activities and assessment**  **(add additional rows as appropriate)** | **PiP requirement Alignment** | **Associated hours-**  **(include direct teaching, action learning sets, practice hours, supervision, independent study, Reflection and assessment processes.** | **Learning outcomes** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

# Appendix Three: Course Approval Confirmation

This agreement is between the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Council) and:

|  |
| --- |
|  |

This course has been accepted on to the Work-Based Learning Route within the PiP Framework. Course duration including start dates, intake and outcome dates:

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**The course provider has agreed to the following**:

* The Approval Application and Mapping Matrix provided by the course provider will form the agreement between the learning provider and the Social Care Council.
* The Course Provider will provide details of social work candidates enrolled on the Course and registrants who have successfully completed the Course recorded on the Social Care Council templates within the timescale as set out by the Social Care Council.

* The Course Provider will provide all necessary information as specified by the Social Care Council as part of the agreed monitoring process (Appendix Five).
* The Course Provider will inform the Social Care Council of any planned changes to the delivery of the Course in order to seek agreement from the PIP Approval Panel.
* The Course Provider will apply for re-approval every three years from the date of first approval.

**Date by which re-approval must be confirmed…………..**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date: | Course Provider signature |

# Appendix Four: Course Intake and Outcome Proforma



Work Based Learning Route – Course

RECORD OF INTAKE and OUTCOME - CANDIDATES

**At Intake stage the Intake List should be forwarded within 4 weeks of the Course Intake Close Date**

**At Outcomes stage the Proforma with the Assessment Outcomes should be forwarded within 6 weeks of Assessment Panel**

**Date of Outcome:**

**Date of Signature:**

**Electronic Signature of Course Co-ordinator:**

***(must be included to Quality Assure data provided)***

**Course Name:**

**Course Co-ordinator:**

**Email Address/Tel Contact:**

**Course Start Date:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **FOR NISCC**  **OFFICE USE ONLY** | | **NI Social Care Registration Number** | **Candidate Surname** | **First and Second**  **or**  **Known As Name** | **Employer/Workplace Address and EMAIL**  **Tel No** | **Award – i.e.**  **Consolidation**  **Specialist**  **or**  **Leadership/Strategic**  **Must be indicated** | **Outcomes- List Requirements Passed in full** |
| **Date**  **Data Logged in NISCC System** | **Date**  **Data**  **QAed in NISCC**  **System** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

***For Intake- include all social work candidates registered for the course.When adding Outcomes- Only social work candidates who have fully completed should be included on the form.***

# Appendix Five: Monitoring – Work-Based Learning Route

|  |
| --- |
| **Course Monitoring Visit**  **Work Based Learning Route** |

**Course Title:**

**Course Co-Ordinator:**

**Course Provider (if different):**

**Duration of course**

**Monitoring period: From - To**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Areas for discussion | Comment |
| Have there been any changes to the Course delivery as described in the Approval documentation and mapping matrix? Please tell us about these. What are the positives and challenges you have experienced in delivering the Course during the monitoring period? |  |
| How have attendance rates and non-completion been managed? Are there lessons to learn for the next year ahead? If the Course is ending how will deferrals be managed?  Intake numbers for the year  Outcome numbers confirmed for the year: | **Pip Admin Team to cross-reference with SCC information** |
| How is the Course being evaluated? Please provide some examples of social work candidate and employer feedback and service user/ carer feedback if available. (Attach any relevant evaluations). |  |
| What are the arrangements in place for PiP assessor monitoring?  Confirm current PiP link person associated with the Course. |  |
| What are the future plans for the Course including potential for re-approval? |  |
| Course Co-ordinator Signature: |  |
| Date: |  |
| Date Received by Social Care Council: |  |
| Monitoring visit-  Location:  Date: | **Facility / session agreed with PA for visit:** |

**Please complete this form ahead of an agreed monitoring visit.**

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)