

**Guidance on the support
of Mental Health Social
Workers and Approved
Mental Health
Professionals (AMHPs)
working in NHS,
independent or
integrated services**



Guidance
on the support of Mental
Health Social Workers and
Approved Mental Health
Professionals (AMHPs)
working in NHS, independent
or integrated services

Published 2024

An overview for professional leads



- Why the Guidance is refreshed and updated
- Purpose of the Guidance
- Overview of unique role of mental health social work
- Outline of responsibilities of commissioners developing new services or redesigning systems

Guidance refreshed and updated

- In 2019-20 developed in partnership with Skills for Care and through wide consultation with organisations, professionals and system leaders across health and social care services
- Because of the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic HEE decided to refresh, update and relaunch it to key audiences in 2022-23
- Designed to support the NHS, the independent sector and other health and social care agencies who employ social workers
- Recognition that social work has been well established in local authorities for many years so not the focus of this Guidance.

Authors

Karen Linde

Co-chair New Roles in Mental Health Social Work, Health Education England

Jason Brandon

Mental Health Social Work Lead, Office of the Chief Social Worker, DHSC

Advisory input Sarah Blackmore *Executive Director, Social Work England*

Purpose of the guidance



The guidance complements the LGA Employers' Standards for Social Work and Adult Social Work Health Check Survey 2018,

- **Support and enhance** the role of social work in health and social care organisations.
- **Advise NHS trusts** and other organisations how to successfully employ and support social workers in a variety of partnerships.
- **Highlight the role of the AMHP**, and its added value to an NHS organisation
- **Help the NHS and other agencies** to embed social workers as a key staff group, and to support registered social workers already employed in generic teams

Purpose of the guidance



- **Develop and transform** the social work role across mental health services
- **Offer timely support** for organisations to recruit, retain and support mental health social workers including AMHPs and ensure they can contribute their vital skills to holistic care for patients and service users
- **Help expand, develop and support** the role of social work in the NHS
- **Help achieve** NHS Long Term Plan ambitions and alleviate workforce pressure.

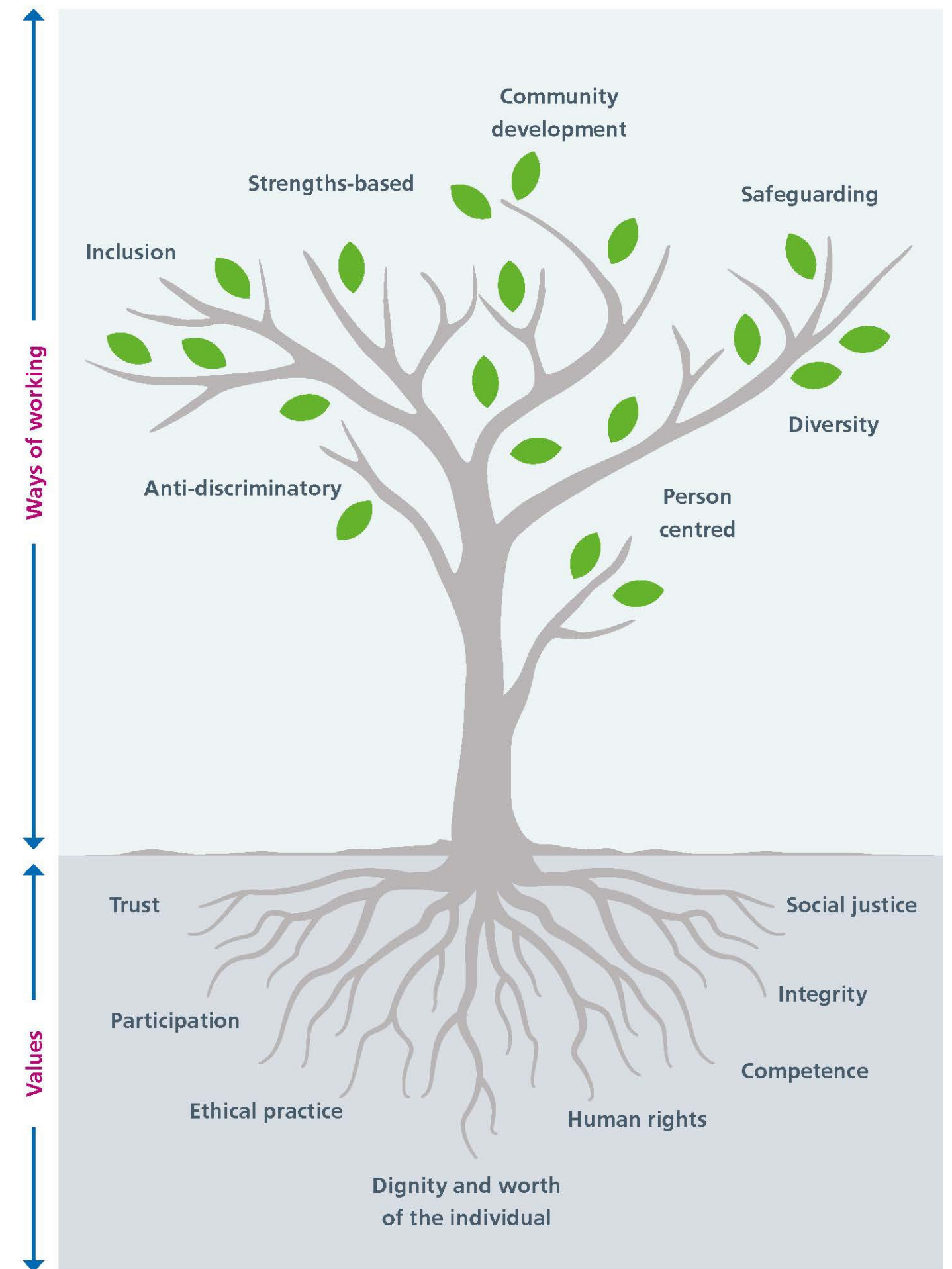
Purpose of the guidance



- **Support** the NHS and other parts of the health and care system in recruiting, retaining and developing mental health social workers
- **identify** how to strengthen social work's role in mental healthcare
- **outline** eight organisational considerations for effective support of the social work profession in mental health services wherever they may work
- **demonstrate** how the social worker/ AMHP role makes a difference in the NHS.

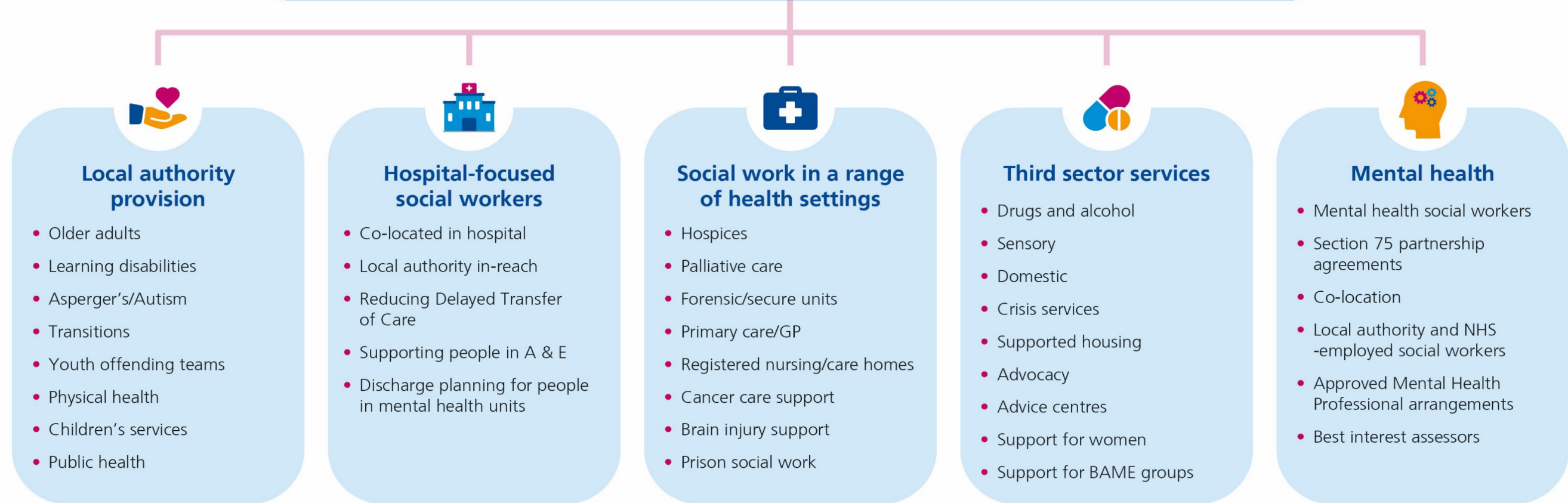
Social workers are an essential part of health and social care for both adults and children.

- transformative, relational and rights-based principles
- anti-discriminatory focus
- promoting diversity and inclusion
- working with communities, families and individuals



The social work contribution to health settings

- Strength-based practice
- A human rights-based approach
- A community and family-led approach
- Understanding the social determinants of health
- Personalised care planning
- Legal knowledge



- Careers and workforce**
- Skills for Care
 - HEE
 - Think Ahead
 - BASW (*careers website*)
 - LGA
 - HEI

- NHS Long Term Plan**
- Community mental health framework
 - Mental health crisis services
 - Rehabilitation
 - Perinatal teams
 - Rough sleeping initiatives
 - Supported housing

- Practice information and resource**
- Skills for Care
 - NICE
 - SCIE
 - BASW
 - RiPFA
 - Social Work England

- Setting standards, leadership and regulation**
- Social Work England
 - Chief Social Worker, DHSC
 - Principal Social Work Network

Acronyms • BASW: British Association of Social Workers • DHSC: Department of Health and Social Care • HEE: Health Education England
 • HEI: Higher Education Institutes • LGA: Local Government Association • NICE: National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence
 • PSW: Principal Social Worker • RiPFA: Research in Practice for Adults • SCIE: Social Care Institute for Excellence



Consideration 1: NHS organisations should ensure that there is sufficient social work professional leadership at a strategic level to develop the community-centred version

There should be a senior professional social work lead to take responsibility for higher-level professional and strategic functions

- Advise on new models of care and workforce and support strategic partnerships
- Oversee quality assurance and improvement of social work practice
- Provide professional oversight to Boards and the multi-professional clinical governance arrangements
- Provide oversight and reporting to local authority principal social workers and Director of Adult Social Services where there are delegated functions
- Support effective social work supervision and decision-making
- Develop social work practice across the NHS and collaborate with system partners
- Provide accountability to Social Work England on fitness to practise and other regulatory issues

Additions related to the AMHP role

Promoting the role of the Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) which includes

- Role description
- The AMHP contribution to care delivery: Why we employ AMHPs in health and care services
- How we employ AMHPs in health and care services



Professional and managerial leaders

Head of Social Care, AMHP lead, senior practitioners or consultant social work roles, NHS managers with a social work background, principal social workers, practice educators, practice supervisors



- Hold a clear view of the required professional functions and enable access to advice and support from a registered social worker. See
 - [The practice supervisor role](#)
 - [Professional standards guidance](#)
 - [Continuing Professional Development Guidance](#)
- Ensure the right balance of professional roles and enough experience, capacity and seniority to have oversight of the range of functions

Professional and managerial leaders



- Support the middle management role in inclusive leadership practice, especially its role in harnessing diverse contributions and partnership behaviours
- Promote effective career progression for social work and ensure the NHS recognises social work in recruitment.
- Establish a support plan for how these roles are enabled to maintain purpose and impact.

Professional and managerial leaders



- Audit and review skills and inform CPD to ensure appropriate supervision of social workers. See Post-qualifying standards for social work supervisors and ensure capacity so all social workers have access to supervision regardless of who employs them.
- develop a local multi-professional leadership strategy.
- The senior role reports to the Board
- Ensure 'critical mass' of senior and practice leaders with scope to form a virtual team

Professional and managerial leaders

Workforce planning

The LGA provides practical support to the local government sector to enable the delivery of strategic workforce planning.



The apprenticeship levy has highlighted the lack of good workforce planning across councils. There is a need for Human Resources (HR) to better inform service planning (transformation) in the short and long term.

Supporting councils to develop career pathways

- Support the middle management role. See the [NHS People Plan](#) and [local authorities workforce plan](#).
- Ensure a clear description of the social work role
- Support the conditions for continuing registration of employees with a social work background
- Support trainees and early career social workers working through partnerships to access advice and sharing of resources

Professional and managerial leaders



- Ensure supervision for other social worker roles is protected, building on the robust arrangement for AMHPs
- Enable recording and evaluation of supervision arrangements
- Encourage social workers to plan, reflect on and record learning activity, using recording tools such as an e-portfolio. Include feedback from people they are supporting to inform their practice.

See

- ✓ [Social Work England CPD guidance](#).
- ✓ [Skills for Care CPD for social workers](#)
- ✓ [Health and Care Professions Council Standards of proficiency for social workers in England](#)

Enable recording and evaluation of supervision arrangements

Further resources

Full playlist of short films made with and about mental health social workers

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrVQaAxyJE3fn52TDaw3hXueDiWWXSHdP>