



# The Role of Principal Social Workers

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A presentation by Sarah Range  
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behalf of the Eastern Region  
Principal Social Work Network

# The Care Act 2014 and the role of the PSW



Care Act 2014

## Enshrined in the Care Act 2014 as a statutory function to:

- lead and oversee excellent social work practice
- support and develop arrangements for excellent practice
- lead the development of excellent social workers
- support effective social work supervision and decision making

Oversee	Advise	Function
quality assurance and improvement of social work practice	the Director of Adult Social services (DASS) and/or wider council in complex or controversial cases and on developing case or other law relating to social work practice	at the strategic level of the Professional Capabilities Framework (Chapter 1.27 Care and Support Statutory Guidance)

# Safeguarding and the role of the PSW



Broad knowledge base on safeguarding and Making Safeguarding Personal and be Confident in its application in their own and others' work.

Lead on ensuring the quality and consistency of social work practice in fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities.

Extensive knowledge of safeguarding, practice and legal context

## Main responsibilities of the role



- **INSPIRE:** To inspire and lead the social care workforce within adult social care, operating strategically, innovatively and creatively to encourage social workers and other professionals to meet the needs of residents and communities.
- **STRATIGIC OVERSIGHT:** To be accountable for an effective practice governance framework and working alongside strategic partners to ensure social care practice is effective, efficient, fulfils its statutory functions and delivers positive outcomes in line with relevant plans and strategies.
- **INFLUENCE:** To provide professional advice and drive and influence transformation across Adults Services that will help determine the overall priorities for quality assurance and the improvement of service delivery in line with statutory requirements and the Council's value for money principles.
- **SAFEGUARDING:** To lead, develop and drive the strategic safeguarding agenda ensuring that the people experience a cohesive and robust response to all safeguarding concerns.

# Why is the Principal Social Worker role unique?

As the Principal Social Worker, you are the ambassador of **ethics, trauma informed, strengths-based practice** leading an approach to social care that is person centred, outcome focused, community connected and ensures value for money to our customers and the Council.

We encourage ingenuity and ensure that the **voice of Social Work is represented and understood**.

Create space for **innovative and courageous practice** that seeks to develop the best quality outcomes for residents.

We champion **excellence in social work practice** within Adult Social Care and contribute to developments at a regional and national level.

We take the lead in supporting all staff to have **robust knowledge and competence** in the skilled application of legislation.

Balance professional judgements on authority-wide, non-standard problems and will be responsible for putting in place appropriate and complex partnerships. This will require **excellent negotiation skills** and the need to find solutions where there are many conflicting factors.

# Feedback from other PSWs

What led you to become a PSW?

*“I ...wanted to work in an environment which influenced best practice over the entirety of the organisation. It was an honour to hold the PSW throughout the pandemic, developing practice, considering easements and the best use of the ethical framework. **Fiona Raffe, Principal Advisor, Suffolk County Council**”*

*“I have been a Registered Social worker for 25 years. Being PSW was never planned but the opportunity to cover the role arose and I grasped it with both hands!. **Alison Ansell, PSW, “Essex County Council**”*

# The biggest challenge??

“Ensuring that Social Work continues to be seen as pivotally relational and an agent of change in a landscape of performance, budget management and wider challenges.”

“The greatest challenge of being a PSW is inconsistency in team structures and practice – associated with the way the county has moved to three different areas (aligned with Health).

As we have further aligned with the different National Health Service groups, we have seen increased inconsistency in job roles and team practice, and therefore it has been increasingly challenging to engage and develop consistent good practice approaches.”

# What is the best part of being a PSW?



“...is having the **privilege** to work alongside and learn from the wider social work community whilst ensuring that this practice forms a central part of what we do in Adult social care.”

“...is the ability to **influence change** and best Social Work practice within adults services. Engaging with a wider network enables **best practice** to be shared and learnt from; ensuring our local authority is part of a wider network, **strengthening best practice**, compliance and increasing resources and relationships.”





With grateful  
thanks to....

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