



Bracknell Forest Council

**Adult Social Care**  
Social work pathway



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# Introduction

The handbook is a guide for planning your learning and career development options. The overall objective is to provide you with high quality learning opportunities to help you develop your skills, capability, and talent across the organisation.

We encourage you to use the handbook throughout your career with us. It should be complementary to any statutory and mandatory guidance aligned to your profession and any continuous professional development (CPD) requirements.



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# Social work career pathways

## **What is a career pathway?**

A career pathway is simply the route you take to achieve your career progression and goals.

These help you to think about the opportunities within your current pathway and how you can progress to more senior pathways by developing your skills, knowledge and experience.

## **Who is it for?**

Everyone should have a career pathway that is used regularly in development and performance management conversations with your line manager.

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# Deciding your career pathway

- A career pathway can help you transition from one role to another within the service/ department/organisation.
- Setting out your career pathway provides you with a road map from where you are now to where you want to be and provides structure to your journey.

## Your career pathway

### Things to consider when developing your career path:

- What are some of the council's values and behaviours you use in your current role?
- What are your strengths?
- How much experience do you have?
- What technical skills do you possess?



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# Your career development

Step up	Step sideways	Settled
Step-up can also be about gaining greater expertise in your current role or in another service or department, it isn't always about promotion.	Whatever your aspiration or ambition, there may be opportunities at your current level in another team.  Working in different parts of the organisation will extend your knowledge and experience.	If you are happy in your current role maybe you would like to consider other options to develop yourself.  Become a first aider, a mental health first aider or equality ally.



# Your career development - apprenticeships

Can I undertake an apprenticeship?	Benefits	Next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apprenticeships are available to both new and existing employees.</li> <li>• For existing employees, apprenticeships are part of the council developing careers programme.</li> <li>• Apprenticeships are available at the same or higher level than a qualification you already hold, or lower as long as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it allows you to gain substantive new skills.</li> <li>- you can evidence that the content of the training is different from any prior qualification or previous apprenticeship.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apprenticeships are a good opportunity to 'grow our own' future workforce.</li> <li>• By developing our staff with a clear career pathway, from levels 2 to level 7, we can develop a highly skilled, multi-talented workforce.</li> <li>• While working for us, apprentices can develop new talent. This benefits the council while making sure the apprentice gathers the relevant evidence and skills needed to complete their qualification.</li> <li>• Having an apprentice in the team can open new challenges and opportunities for others. Existing staff can gain valuable experience by taking on coaching and mentoring roles, developing new skills and experience of their own.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are interested in applying to take part in an apprenticeship, talk to your manager and then complete an <a href="#">expression of interest form</a> or contact Janine Watkins to discuss the options available.</li> </ul>

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# Purpose and approach

The role of a social worker will develop and grow during an individual's time in practice. During a practitioner's career there can be a range of opportunities to develop and enhance their professional skills and where desired to progress through to a management route.

This document intends to provide practitioners with an understanding of the progression offer at Bracknell Forest Council outlining how you can continue to grow and develop in adult social care with a social work qualification.

The purpose of the adult social care academy is to provide a robust and transparent career development journey for social workers to support our recruitment, retention, and investment in our workforce.

The approach can be described as:

- Providing a secure base for our academy practitioners to receive support – **sense of belonging.**
- Investment, growing our own, developing our pipeline and being creative through all available schemes.
- Scaffolding approach to opportunities for learning and development – **always learning.**
- Collaborative culture, open and honest, tailored support to individual needs – **inclusive.**
- Being ambitious and not afraid to be creative and innovative – **ambitious.**
- Continuous development -ongoing feedback- identifying our strengths and areas for development.

# The professional capabilities framework

First devised in 2012, the professional capabilities framework (PCF) has been reviewed and refreshed through a process of consultation during 2017 and 2018, aligning it to the [knowledge and skills statement for social workers in adult services](#). It was further updated to align with the regulator, Social Work England, [professional standards in 2019](#).

The PCF provides a structure to support the career development of every social worker from initial social work education, through continuing professional development, and sets out expectations of what a social worker should be able to do at each stage of their career and professional development; it is a professional rather than an occupational framework.

The PCF is not a curriculum content guide for all social work development and was not created to be such. Rather, it is the framework of generic capabilities and professional development onto which specific areas of practice knowledge and skill can be built. Key progression indicators include increased confidence, independent working, effective judgements, initiative, engagement with complex situations, appropriate use of authority, and commitment to leadership and education.

## Professional Capabilities Framework





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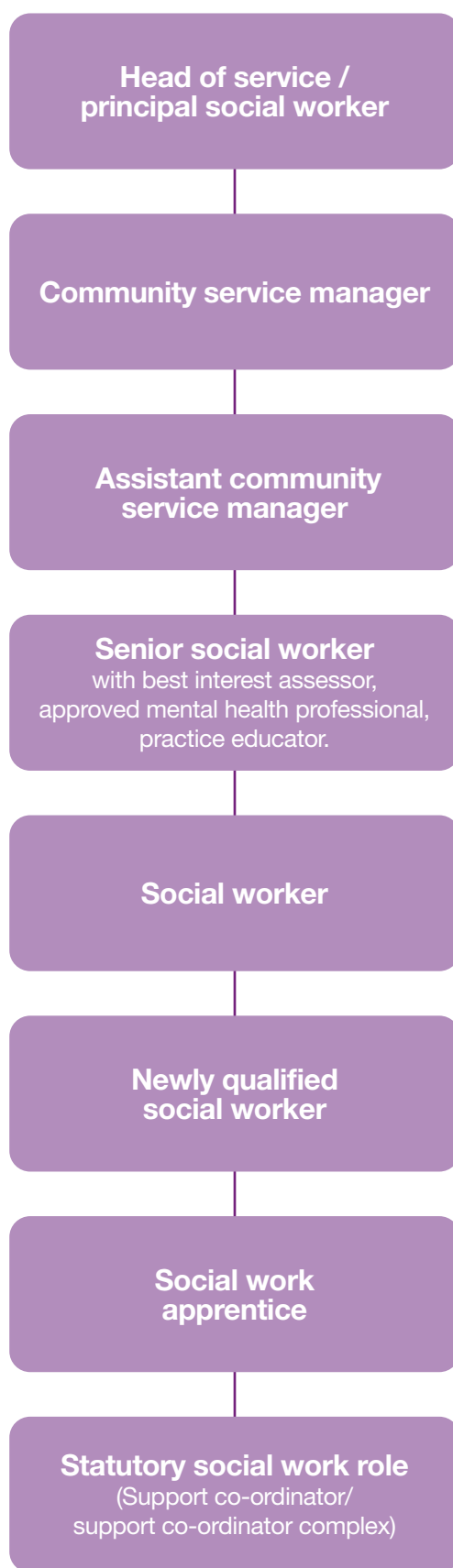
Our pathway for adult social care social work practitioners reflects the work of the [British Association of Social Workers professional capabilities framework](#).

At the point of registration, social workers must be able to:

1. Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development.
2. Apply social work ethical principles and value to guide professional practices.
3. Recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice.
4. Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic wellbeing.
5. Develop and apply relevant knowledge from social work practice and research, social sciences, law, other professional and relevant fields, and from the experience of people who use services.
6. Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision-making.
7. Use judgement, knowledge and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support, prevent harm and enable.
8. Engage with, inform, and adapt to changing organisational contexts, and the social and policy environments that shape practice. Operate effectively within and contribute to the development of organisations and services, including multi-agency and inter-professional settings.
9. Promote the profession and good social work practice. Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others. Develop personal influence and be part of the collective leadership and impact of the profession.

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This diagram shows potential progression routes for Social Work Staff.



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# Part one: Roles and pathway

## Step one: Social work degree apprenticeship

### Becoming a social worker

There are various routes to becoming a qualified social worker, with the most common being an apprenticeship through Bracknell Forest Council. We aim to offer two apprenticeships annually depending on capacity. An apprenticeship is a paid job where the employee learns and gains valuable experiences to become qualified in the field that they are studying in. Alongside on-the-job training, apprentices spend at least 20 per cent of their working hours completing learning with a training provider which leads to a nationally recognised qualification.

### Bracknell Forest Council eligibility criteria for social work apprenticeship

- Internal applicants only.
- Currently employed in a statutory social care team with Bracknell Forest Council for a minimum of one year (support worker/ support worker complex or equivalent).
- Probation passed and application endorsed by line manager.
- Not currently on a performance improvement plan.
- Evidence of GCSE maths and English Grade C/4 or above or equivalent.
- Be employed on a minimum 30 hours per week contract to facilitate on the job learning and to attend the university taught hours or agree to work at least 30 hours per week.

### Must be willing to:

- Commit to a three year apprenticeship.
- Spend one day a week at university.
- Complete the work set by the university whilst continuing your role in a statutory social care team for the remainder of your time.
- Travel to placements and university.
- Engage in a range of learning opportunities across social work.

### Qualities we are looking for someone who:

- can learn in a variety of settings.
- is able to reflect and challenge own thinking and use this to change their practice.
- can work flexibly both independently and as a part of a team.
- can show their maturity and personal resilience.
- is able to empathise with the people who use the service.
- is able to embed Bracknell Forest Council values into their work.

The Social Work Degree Apprenticeship is a demanding three-year course. As part of the degree programme, you will be required to undertake assessed periods of practice (practice learning). During these periods you will be supported and assessed by a practice educator and a work based supervisor. This may be the same person.

For more information about the The Social Work Degree Apprenticeship please see appendices.

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## Step two: Newly qualified social worker

Upon successful completion of the social work degree and registration with Social Work England, the newly qualified social worker (NQSW) will be enrolled on the skills for care assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) programme.

The ASYE programme is designed to provide twelve months of developmental support for NQSWs. It's important to understand that the ASYE is not a training course, it's a programme to support the progressive development of social work practice. It's been provided because the profession values NQSWs and understands the importance of an effective framework of support at the beginning of their social work career.

We encourage NQSWs to be active participants in their ASYE programme.

The assessment standards for the ASYE programme are set out in the post-qualifying standards (PQS) (formerly known as the knowledge and skills statements (KSS)) and the PCF at ASYE level. An NQSW evidences their progressive development to this assessment standard in a portfolio consisting of specific pieces of evidence.

Supervision is a critical element of the support provided to an NQSW and must be provided within a safe, emotionally supportive space.

NQSWs' supervision must meet the [LGA Employer Standards for Supervision](#) which, as a minimum, are:

- weekly for the first six weeks of the ASYE.
- fortnightly between six weeks and six months.
- monthly between six months and the end of the ASYE.

The NQSW will be assessed throughout the ASYE programme. The assessor must be a registered social worker, and they should have the necessary experience for the role. The assessor might already be experienced in supervising others, including students and previous NQSWs, and they may also hold the practice education (PEPS) qualification.

The assessor will support, assess and record the progress of the NQSW over the year. They may do this on their own or in partnership with others including a line manager or ASYE co-ordinator. It is helpful for the NQSW if the assessor remains constant throughout their ASYE, although this may not always be possible. If the assessor changes, the new assessor and the NQSW should review the support and assessment agreement to discuss any changes which may need to be made to the agreement. This should then be re-drafted and given a revised signatory and date.

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## Step three: Senior social worker

### Becoming a senior social worker

The post of a senior social worker is the natural progression for people that are experienced social workers and wish to take on more complex work and supervisory experience.

The role of a senior social worker should include an ability to work to the experienced social worker level of the PCF.

1. **Professionalism:** Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development.
2. **Values and Ethics:** Apply social work ethical principles and value to guide professional practices.
3. **Diversity and Equality:** Recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice.
4. **Rights, Justice and Economic Wellbeing:** Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic wellbeing.
5. **Knowledge:** Develop and apply relevant knowledge from social work practice and research, social sciences, law, other professional and relevant fields, and from the experience of people who use services.
6. **Critical Reflection and Analysis:** Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision-making.
7. **Skills and Interventions:** Use judgement, knowledge and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support, prevent harm and enable.
8. **Contexts and Organisations:** Engage with, inform, and adapt to changing organisational contexts, and the social and policy environments that shape practice. Operate effectively within and contribute to the development of organisations and services, including multi-agency and inter-professional settings.

### Criteria for becoming a senior social worker:

- A vacant post and successful recruitment are required.
- Evidence of the social worker having fully progressed through relevant continual professional development programmes including attendance at relevant training.
- Evidence of the social worker having reached the experienced social worker level of the BASW professional capabilities framework.

Once the senior social worker is established in this role, there is an expectation of following a further area of development. These are practice educator, best interest assessor or approved mental health practitioner or other specialism.

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## Step four (a): Practice educator

### Becoming a practice educator

The role of a practice educator involves teaching, supervising, and assessing social work students during their placements. Practice educators play a crucial role in maintaining the quality of practice placements and ensuring that unsuitable students do not pass.

### Criteria for becoming a practice educator

- At least two years post qualification experience.
- Registered with Social Work England.
- Demonstrate ability to practice at PCF experienced social work level.
- Demonstrate their interest and commitment to practice education through activities such as supporting students and other new staff.

### What to expect

Attend college days and complete schedule of work for practice educators.

To maintain the role as practice educator there is an expectation of undertaking a minimum of one student over each two-year period and to actively be involved in moderation panels and other practice education activities.

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## Step four (b): Best interest assessor

### Becoming a best interest assessor

A best interest assessor is a professional, often with a social work background, who assesses and determines the best interests of individuals lacking mental capacity to make specific decisions.

### Required skills

- Critical thinking: analysing complex situations and making informed decisions.
- Communication: clear and effective interaction with individuals, families, and professionals.
- Empathy and sensitivity: understanding and responding to individuals' needs.
- Assessment skills: conducting thorough mental capacity assessments.
- Collaboration and teamwork: working with various professionals to ensure a holistic approach.
- Resilience: handling emotionally challenging situations.
- Advocacy skills: making sure individuals' voices are heard in decision-making processes.

### Criteria

- Relevant qualification in social work (bachelor's or master's degree).
- Practical experience in social work or a related field.
- Registration with a professional body such as Social Work England or Health and Care Professionals Council.
- Completion of an accredited best interests assessor course. Commitment ongoing professional development.

### Expectations of best interest assessors

To maintain the role of best interest assessor there is an expectation of undertaking six deprivation of liberty safeguards best interest assessments annually and to receive annual refresher training for best interest assessors.

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## Step four (c): Approved mental health practitioner (AMHP)

### Becoming an approved mental health practitioner

AMHPs are professionals with experience in mental health services who undertake specific duties, including:

- Organising statutory mental health assessments.
- Identifying the nearest relative and coordinating with key agencies.
- Managing assessments and hospital admissions for individuals who are sectioned.
- Deciding on applications for compulsory hospital admissions.

### Criteria for becoming an AMHP

- Agreement to attend an accredited AMHP course for six-months away from current role.
- Qualified registered practitioner with mental health experience.
- Apply through the Bracknell Forest academy model.

### Requirements

- Minimum of two years post-qualifying experience.
- Minimum of six months experience working as a social worker in mental health services. If this is not the practitioners' current area of focus it is advised to apply for a secondment to the relevant team to gain experience.

### Expectation of AMHP's

As an AMHP there is an expectation that you attend twice yearly refresher training and take part in the AMHP duty rota. This could be via the community mental health team or emergency duty team dependant on role.



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# Part two: **Vertical progression into management and leadership roles.**

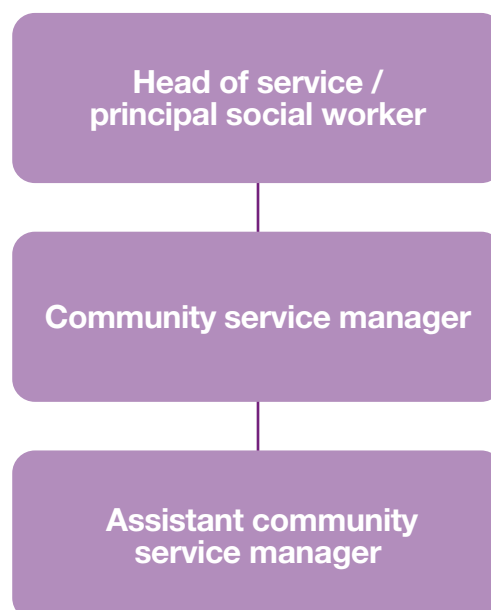
A further way for experienced social workers to progress their career is through a vertical career progression, to management roles. This means moving to a role which takes on more leadership responsibility.

When entering management and leadership roles there is less frontline interaction and towards managing the practitioners providing the frontline functions. This is usually the route from about three to five years of qualifying. It means taking on increased responsibility for managing other social care practitioners such as support coordinators including support coordinator complex and occupational therapists. As well as involvement in performance activity, budget management and leading how practice should be demonstrated.

This section describes the route and criteria for attaining management roles. It should be noted that these roles are accessed when appropriate vacancies become available, however, developing skills and knowledge prior to this is helpful, to grow your skills and knowledge. This might be by undertaking special projects, or management training such as Institute of Leadership and Management Level 5 in social care and health management. Conversations in supervision and appraisals are helpful to highlight interest and identify opportunities prior to applying for a role.

## **Recap of progression into management.**

See page 10 for full diagram of social worker progression journey.



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## Assistant team manager (ATM)

### Becoming an assistant team manager

An assistant team manager is a critical role in the day to day running of operations within adult social care. Reporting to the community services manager this role enables qualified social workers or occupational therapists to provide leadership to a core group of staff in a specific area of adult social care. An assistant team manager usually holds an area of responsibility additional to the supervision of a team. This might be overseeing a duty function, a function within the service area.

### Requirements

- A social work or occupational therapy qualification and registration with the appropriate body.
- Experience of supervising staff.
- A vacancy will need to appear in one of the team for a person to apply.
- Successful interview in which you can evidence the associated skills and experience to take the next step, as per the job description.

### How will you be supported?

Supervision and appraisal process to develop new skills, which may include the aspiring managers programme and/or the coaching and mentoring apprenticeship.

### How to gain experience prior to applying for this role

- Professional curiosity. Speak to your line manager / an assistant team manager to understand the role more.
- Become involved in projects.
- Maintain continual professional development through quarterly learning events and action learning sets.
- Take responsibility for an area of work within your team.
- Observe meetings such as budget monitoring and gain an understanding of analysing data.
- Undertake all e-learning opportunities like how to chair meetings, HR policies and procedures.
- Consider undertaking the coaching apprenticeship.
- Demonstrate the council's values.
- Explore the Bracknell managers' frame work available in the managers hub.
- Demonstrate understanding and application of issues relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Contribute to responses to adverse situations such as complaints, freedom of information requests and councillor enquiries.
- Train in and undertake the role of best interest assessor, practice educator or AMHP.

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# Community services manager (CSM)

## Becoming a community services manager

The role of a community services manager is to lead the totality of a whole service such as learning disability and autism or the community mental health team. This will include a range of roles and responsibilities. The community services manager has day to day responsibility of how the service is run including waiting list, performance in terms of activity data as well as staff performance. Lead on projects to develop and improve the service as well as ensuring best practice is demonstrated. For most services within BFC the services are either aligned or integrated which means being responsible for oversight and cohesion of health services.

## Criteria

- A social work or occupational therapy qualification and registered with the appropriate professional body.
- A vacancy in one of the teams for an individual to apply.
- Be successful at interview in which you can evidence the associated skills and experience to take the next step.

## How will you be supported?

Supervision and appraisal process to develop new skills, which may include the aspiring managers programme and/or the coaching and mentoring apprenticeship

## How to gain experience prior to applying for this role

- Professional curiosity. Speak to your line manager / a community services manager to gain a deeper understanding of the role.
- Chair or co-chair larger meetings.
- Maintain continual professional development through quarterly learning events and action learning sets.
- Attend performance, budget meetings, and gain an understanding of analysing data.
- Be a subject matter expert on a project.
- Influence service improvements.
- Consider undertaking the coaching apprenticeship if not already completed.
- Train and practice as a best interests assessor, practice educator or AMHP.
- Demonstrate the council's values.
- Look into the Bracknell managers' framework (available in the managers hub).
- Demonstrate understanding and application of issues relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Keep up to date with resources in the managers hub.
- Undertake compassionate leaders training.
- Understand the differences between social work and occupational therapy as the role of a community services manager leads both disciplines.

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## Head of service (HoS)

### Becoming a head of service

The head of service role is the natural next step after serving as a community services manager, offering a more strategic perspective leading and influencing service delivery and development. This position encompasses leadership and oversight of numerous services, including those integrated with health and those regulated by the Care Quality Commission. These services will focus on specific areas of expertise, such as drug and alcohol, older people, and disabilities.

As a head of service, you will inspire a diverse team of practitioners to deliver high-quality services that meet legislative and assurance standards (Care Quality Commission). This role requires a key decision-maker with an analytical approach, considering both internal service dynamics and the broader organizational and systemic context in which these services operate.

### Criteria

- A vacancy will need to appear for an individual to apply.
- Successful at interview evidencing the associated skills and experience to take the next step, as per the job description.
- A social work or occupational therapy qualification and registration with the relevant body.
- Previous leadership experience.

### How will you be supported?

Supervision and appraisal process to develop new skills, which may include the aspiring managers programme and/or the coaching and mentoring apprenticeship

### How to gain experience prior to applying for this role

- Professional curiosity. Speak to your line manager / a head of service to gain a deeper understanding of the role.
- Lead on areas of work.
- Maintain continual professional development through quarterly learning events and action learning sets.
- Evidence improved performance within the service and robust budget management skills.
- Show strong leadership and strategic skills within the service.
- Demonstrate the council's values.
- Look into the Bracknell managers' framework (available in the managers hub).
- Demonstrate understanding and application of issues relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Keep up to date with resources in the managers hub.
- Undertake compassionate leaders training.
- Gain understanding in the context of the wider council such as the council plan, quarterly service report (QSR).

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## Adults principal social worker (PSW)

### Becoming a principal social worker (PSW)

The PSW is a statutory role as described in the Care Act 2014. The role is to lead, oversee, support, and develop excellence in social work practice. The role also requires the skills to provide strategic influence.

### Criteria

- A vacancy will need to be applied for and to be successful at interview.
- Due to the nature of the role, extensive post qualifying experience, with at least two years as a senior manager is a prerequisite for the role.

### How will you be supported?

- Supervision and appraisal process to develop new skills.
- Participation in regional and national PSW networks.

### How to gain experience prior to applying for this role

- Show a keen interest in service and practice improvement.
- Be up to date on practice issues.
- Be legally literate and able to use legal and regulatory frameworks.
- Be able to influence change and service development.

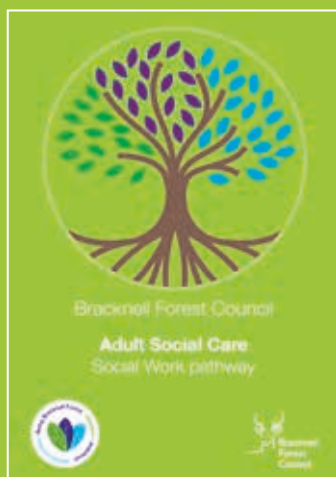
## Necessary support and actions to develop and maintain the academy model in adult social care.

1. Adult social care has a high number of NQSW who are required to undertake the ASYE programme. Currently 11 (highest ASC level in Berkshire). With the addition of the social work apprenticeship scheme for social workers and occupational Therapists, it is necessary to obtain additional coordination support to manage these processes. Which would align adult social care with children's social care support. Monies would have to be found in existing budgets to fund this.
2. Consideration as to whether there should be expert roles within the structure to retain skilled and experienced practitioners.
3. Align our job descriptions to the practice capabilities framework for the roles of newly qualified social worker, social worker, senior social worker, social work team manager and principal social worker.
4. Clarify whether job descriptions need to change for senior social workers and occupational therapists given the expectation to attain a qualification as an approved mental health practitioner, a practice educator or best interest assessor.

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For more information about our Academy Model career pathways please visit our website <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/jobs/academy-model-career-development> or if you have any questions you can email our drop box [academy.model@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:academy.model@bracknell-forest.gov.uk).

For apprenticeship queries please email the drop box [apprenticeships@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)



If you need a reasonable adjustment to communicate with us, please call 01344 352000 or email: [customer.services@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@bracknell-forest.gov.uk).