Why do we need Social Work Practice Standards?

We need to make sure:

- All social workers and managers have clear guidance on their roles and responsibilities as professionals
- We have a single set of practice standards which consistently underpin our social work practice
- Social workers and managers clearly know what is expected of them, what to do and when to do it
- We provide a high quality and professional service that is respected by our families and our partner agencies
- Ensure services are delivered to an agreed quality
- Practice and performance can be measured against the practice standards
- Managers can quickly identify and change shortfalls in practice against these standards
- Every social worker knows what support they can expect from their manager and how constructive challenge can improve our work with children

What’s the difference between Practice Standards and Policies and Procedures?

- **Standards** describe the (minimum) service or practice that can be expected by the service user. In the main they are defined through government guidance and legislation or based on research into best practice
- **Procedures** are steps that describe the actions needed to deliver that service or practice – the what. How, when, where and who; please see page 3
- **Policies** provide the strategic context and guiding principles for shaping the standards and procedures

Values and Principles underpinning Wandsworth Social Work Practice Standards:

- There is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of our children
- The approach is strengths based and safety organised – called Signs of Safety & Wellbeing
- We have high ambitions for our children - we want them to reach their potential and we want to make a difference to their lives ensuring all our children have every opportunity to experience a positive childhood
- The safety of our children is achieved by working with family networks and our partner agencies
- We do everything possible to help our children to receive the best care possible from their parents/carers
- The day to day experiences of our children and young people are seen, heard and used to inform decisions made about them and for them
- Families are treated with respect and honesty and kept informed throughout any social work intervention
- All children will have a plan that is driving change towards good outcomes, can be measured and is helping the child feel safer

Every Social Worker should know the answer to:

- Who are the most significant people in the child’s life?
- What is the child’s religious, cultural and ethnic background?
What it does it feel like for the child living in their family/with their carers?

What is the child’s understanding of why social workers are involved with their family?

What is the parents’/carers’ understanding of why social workers are involved with their family?

What needs to change and what is the plan to be able to do this?

How is social work intervention making a difference and how do we know this?

The importance of Partnerships:

- Social workers do not work in isolation or as a lone agency
- Effective social work co-ordinates a multi-agency response to children and families
- Best practice is underpinned by partnership working with families, extended families, community services and professional agencies
- ‘working with’ as opposed to ‘doing to’ families is a key practice principle
- There is a commitment to developing effective, honest and open working practices

Service culture and support:

- Staff groups work best when there is a culture of mutual support, management leadership, good communication and clarity on shared understandings of professional responsibilities, standards and expectations
- Children’s Services has adopted Signs of Safety & Wellbeing as our practice framework for working with families and partners. The bedrock of SoSWB practice is to work in partnerships using solution focussed questioning skills to move towards shared understandings and solutions to problems; leaders and managers are expected to communicate and model this in the organisation and create a supportive environment in which to practice social work
- Staff need supervisors and managers that demonstrate commitment to their professional development and provide opportunities to innovate
- Staff need support from their managers and senior managers that creates the optimum physical environment in which to practice and a manageable workload
- Effective relationships with children and their families/carers is the bedrock of effective social work; social workers will be supported and encouraged to use their professional expertise and judgement to assess and plan to meet children’s needs

How to use these standards:

- All social workers, supervisors and managers from first line managers to the Director of Children’s Services must familiarise themselves with these standards
- These standards should be known and understood throughout Children’s Services
- To avoid silo practices all staff should familiarise themselves with the child’s journey through these practice standards
- Example 1: a manager in the Children Looked After Service should know what to do if there is a worry that a child is at risk of significant harm and when and how to convene a strategy meeting
- Example 2: a social worker and supervisor/manager in the Referral & Assessment Service should know what to do if you accommodate a child
Example 3: A social worker and supervisor/manager in the Children in Need Service should know what needs to happen if a child is returning home from care.

**Every Social Worker’s responsibility:**

As a social work practitioner if, at any time, you are uncertain of what to do, or you are concerned about the safety of any child/young person, you must discuss this immediately with your manager, agree the way forward and record the decisions. If you don’t think your worries are being heard or taken seriously you must speak with your senior manager.

These are the required practice standards for all children’s social work in Wandsworth. They are not to be confused with:

- The [Standards of Proficiency](#) for Social Workers (2012) produced by the HCPC the regulatory body for social workers in England or
- The [Professional Capabilities Framework](#) (2012), the overarching professional standards framework developed by the Social Work Reform Board

And they are distinct from:

- [Wandsworth Procedures for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers](#) for procedures specific to Wandsworth
- [Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Board Policies and Procedures](#) for multi-agency protocols and procedures in Wandsworth and;
- The [Pan London Child Protection Procedures](#) for agreed child protection procedures across all London boroughs