NHS
Lincolnshire Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust

Social Work

Plan 2025 – 2027





Foreword and welcome



Sharon Harvey - Chief Nursing Officer (Quality and Professions)

It is a privilege to introduce the first Social Work Plan, a document that reflects both the strength of our profession and the ambition we hold for the future.

As the Chief Nursing Officer and executive sponsor for social work within LPFT, I am proud to champion a workforce whose values, expertise and compassion sit at the heart of high-quality mental health, dementia, learning disability, and autism care.

Our social workers bring a unique and essential perspective to multi-disciplinary practice, one that is grounded in human rights, social justice, and a deep understanding of the social determinants that shape people's lives.

This plan sets out our commitment to developing a confident, research-active and resilient social work workforce. We continue to invest in staff wellbeing, reflective practice and access to meaningful professional support, ensuring colleagues can thrive in a demanding and evolving landscape. We also reaffirm our dedication to equality, diversity and inclusion, recognising the richness that a diverse workforce brings and promoting active engagement in our staff networks, so every voice is heard and valued.

Our ambition is to strengthen a culture where social workers lead innovation, champion evidence-based practice and contribute to a vibrant research community. By supporting colleagues to participate in research forums and networks, collaborate across disciplines and embed learning into practice, we enhance the quality of care we provide and influence the wider health and care system.

I want to thank every social worker across LPFT for your unwavering commitment to the people and communities we serve. Your professionalism, integrity and compassion continue to shape services that are safe, equitable and grounded in what matters most to those who rely on us. This plan is both a recognition of your contribution and a roadmap for how we will continue to grow, develop and champion the profession together

Introduction

The social work plan for 2025-2027 outlines the strategic direction, vision and professional leadership provided for social work as a profession in Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) and reflects on the current position and achievements made by the social work workforce.

This plan sets the objectives aligned with the Trust Strategy for 2024-2029.

Our vision

To support people to live well in their communities

Our strategic objectives

A healthy population

We will use our expertise and influence to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities

Outstanding quality

We will continuously improve to deliver high quality, innovative care

Outstanding people

We will ensure an inclusive culture, where people have the right skills and values to make a positive difference

Best use of resources

We will maximise our resources for the benefit of our communities and the environment

The NHS is a changing landscape and as we move towards facing some challenging times social work will be instrumental in leading these changes and utilising social work skills within NHS systems.

We know that raising the profile and feeling proud to be a social worker is key to our social work colleagues remaining in the profession and working at LPFT. This plan is coproduced through consultation with the social work advisory and councils and builds key priority areas for action based on this feedback.

As an employer of social workers, we encourage all social workers to undertake the yearly Local Government Association (LGA) health check survey, as a tool to listen to what our social workers tell us. We also regularly hold engagement sessions to enable co-production of a shared action plan and to guide the future direction of social work in the Trust. We have encouraged and made available engagement sessions to listen to the expert views and opinions of our social workers through:

- Social Work Council
- Social Work Council evaluation and feedback
- Feedback provided by Social Work Professional Delivery Group
- LGA Social Work Health Check survey results engagement sessions
- Social Work England engagement sessions
- Annual celebration days

This approach ensures we are listening to our social workers and provides evidence of providing professional leadership. The advisory groups and councils provide the opportunity to listen to our social workers and to update and provide guidance on local, regional and national guidelines.

A definition of social work given by the International Federation of Social Workers in (2014) defines social work as:

"… a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing"

Social workers have specific training in a strengths-based, recovery, trauma informed focused approach and working in co-production with the with the overall goal of working towards better outcomes for service users.

Social workers are essential in providing and delivering high-quality care here at the Trust. Social workers embed a holistic, person centred, trauma informed, recovery focused approach to care and their contributions are essential in ensuring comprehensive and effective assessment and specialised care for patients, supporting people to live well in their communities and advocating for their careers and families.

Social work looks at the whole person and recognises the wide social care needs, as they work within the multi-disciplinary teams within the Trust. Social workers provide a distinctive contribution to mental health that focuses on the social determinants and social solutions to mental health challenges and distress. Working with the principles of personalisation and the opportunities of the Care Act 2014.

Social work in the Trust

As a Trust we employ social workers and social work assistants across a wide range of services and teams across all clinical services of the Trust.

Across all teams there is a commitment to multi-disciplinary working and staff who are qualified social workers, or in training, are part of the Trust's growing workforce.

The social work perspective within the teams enhances the multi-disciplinary approach to care, by promoting social work values and providing social care knowledge and a holistic approach to care. It that considers the impact of social structures and family/environmental factors on the mental health of children, young people and their families.

Social workers within the Trust play a critical role in the delivery of high-quality preventative, early help and complex support services, in the delivery of multi-disciplinary teams who are crucial in applying their skills, knowledge and expertise in delivering a quality service and contributing to supporting people to live well in their communities.

The social work profession understands families, and their communities and work in a person- centred way to enable and encourage service user and carer involvement with our services.

Social work recognises the importance of community in a person's recovery, and brings a social model of care that utilises community assets, strengths, and co-production as tools to connect a person with the life that they want.

Many social workers across the Trust are also employed as Mental Health Practitioners (MHPs).

Retaining a social work identity is so important and the Trust employs a Professional Lead for Social Work to ensure a strong professional identity and that the voice of social workers is heard. Without the oversight of the professional lead roles could become isolated with supervision, professional governance, training, and education.

Key contributions

Social work is well established within the NHS and LPFT and contributes to the workforce in the following ways:

1. Social workers have high levels of legal literacy and the practical application of law in clinical settings, with a strong focus on the social model, offering a different perspective for effective multi-disciplinary working.

2. Social workers are skilled at working within MDT and a wider system that includes, service users, families, carers and their communities.

3. Social work has a long history of co-production, personalisation, and strengths-focused practice. This is central in the NHS Long Term Plan, and social work will offer an invaluable advantage to any team in delivering the outcomes associated with that plan.

4. Social work has traditionally focused on the social determinants of health and rights-focused practice, working towards reducing health inequalities, and using expertise understanding and challenging for best practice.

5. Social workers are trained in anti-oppressive, anti-racist, anti-discrimination practice. Recognising and addressing systematic barriers to participation in community and professional settings is vital if we are to eliminate inequalities.

6. Social workers are trained in using ecological models and theories approach to understanding a person's circumstances, and how to use community assets to support an individual at all stages of life.

How social work contributes to the Trust's vision and values

Social work plays a vital role in the future direction of the organisation as set out in the Trust strategy 2024 – 2029 and is a valued contributor in delivering high quality, person centred, trauma informed care.

It provides specialist expertise, knowledge, skills and values in mental health, dementia learning disability, and autism services and has a key role in supporting people to live well within our communities through:



Patient centred, recovery focused patient care and trauma informed practice

Social workers provide a holistic, person-centred approach to practice, they are specialised to look at the whole person and support the social needs of the individual, recognising their context.



Health and social care legislation

Social workers are experts in legal policies and procedures and provide key skills in providing assessment, review and care planning. Working with the principles of personalisation and the opportunities of the Care Act 2014.



Specialised interventions

Social workers may access additional training and skills to specialise in a specific area such as safeguarding, Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) or Best Interest Assessor (BIA). Social workers support the individual to achieve the outcomes that matter to them in their lives.



Multi-disciplinary collaboration

Social workers work closely with the multi-disciplinary team bringing a distinctive contribution, highlighting the social aspects to the centre of care planning, which ensures a person-centred holistic approach to the MDT planning process.



Advocating for carers and families

Social work acknowledges the wider family and supports carer assessments, supporting individuals and families to live well in their communities.



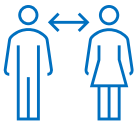
Community capacity building

Social workers link into the community, recognising the strengths approach to individuals connecting with their communities to build recovery.



Care Act responsibilities

Social workers complete strengths-based assessments to determine Care Act eligibility, alongside holistic risk assessments and personalised support planning.



Direct social work interventions

Delivery of targeted, person-centred interventions to meet assessed needs, grounded in professional social work practice.



Implementation of support plans

Coordination and oversight of commissioned packages of care, ensuring plans are delivered effectively and reviewed appropriately.



Joint s117 aftercare planning

Collaborative planning with the NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (LICB) to meet statutory aftercare duties.



Preventative and early intervention work

Strengths based preventative interventions delivered in partnership with the Integrated Mental Health Teams (IMHTs), supported by a reablement offer provided by social work assistants.



Practice approach

Social workers use a strengths focused, relationship based, and trauma informed approach across all interventions.



Mental Health Act

Social workers carry out functions of the Mental Health Act – including preparation of Mental Health Tribunal Reports and the function of social supervisor for individuals subject to restrictions within the S41 / 49 Mental Health Act 1983.



Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP)

Trust social workers contribute to the Lincolnshire County Council AMHP rota.



Mental Capacity Act (MCA)

Social workers offer expertise in the implementation of the MCA, in relation to decisions about care and treatment arrangements for individuals who lack capacity for some decision making.



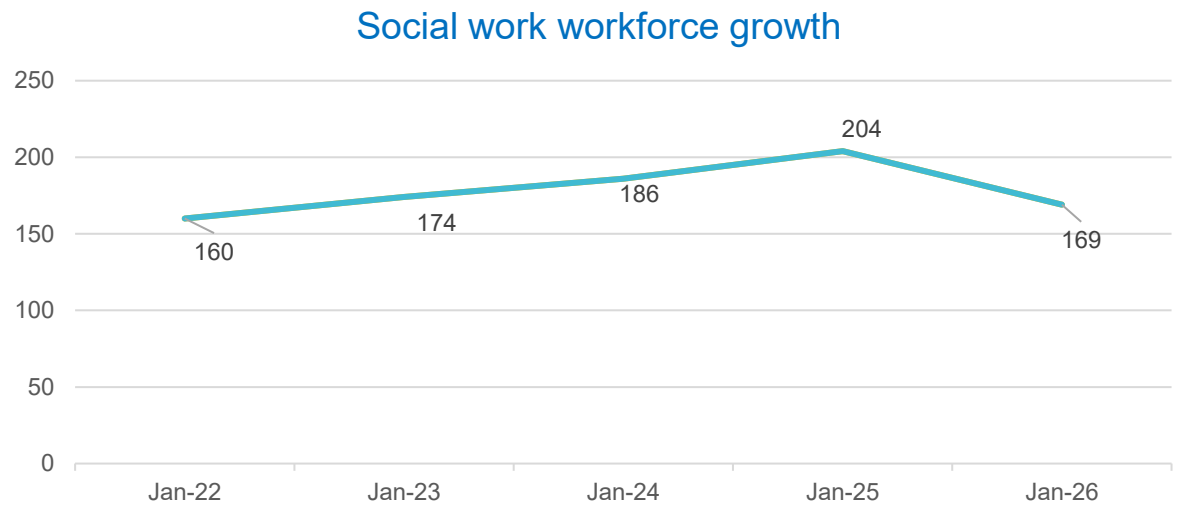
Best Interest Assessor (BIA)

Function of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) (Mental Capacity Act 2005). This is a separate countywide team offering BIA assessments for all individuals subject to DOLS.

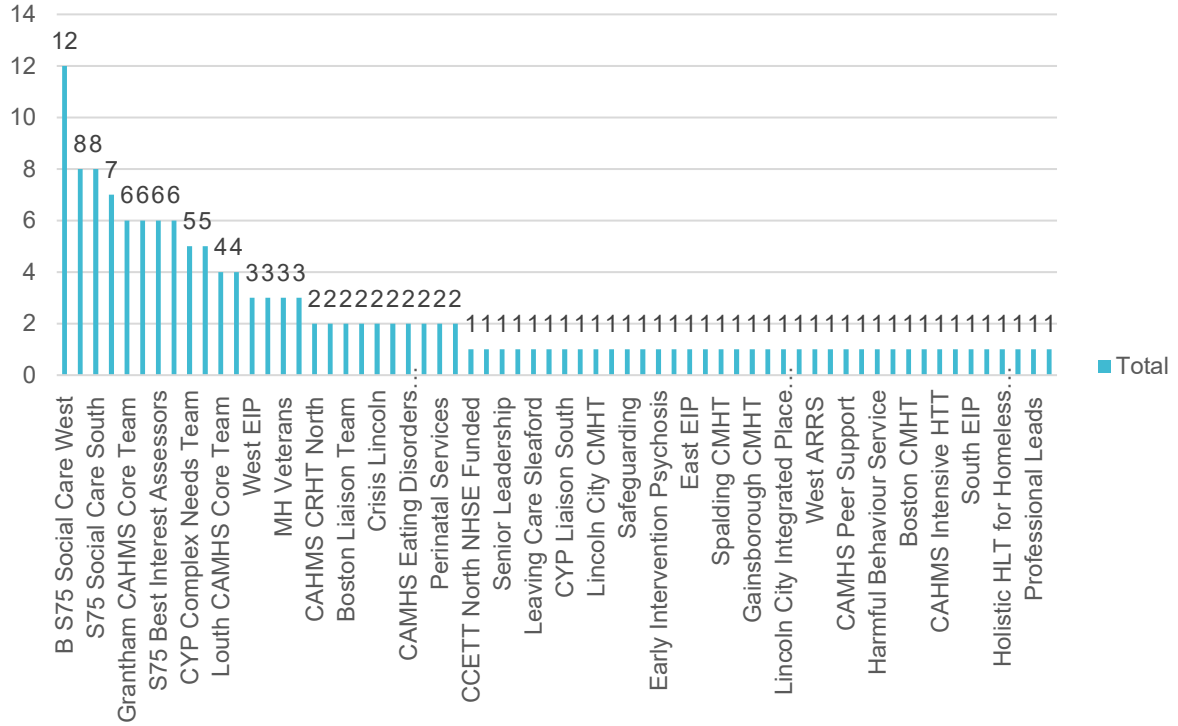
Workforce

The social work workforce within LPFT has expanded significantly over the past five years, reflecting the Trust's commitment to developing a strong and sustainable social care offer.

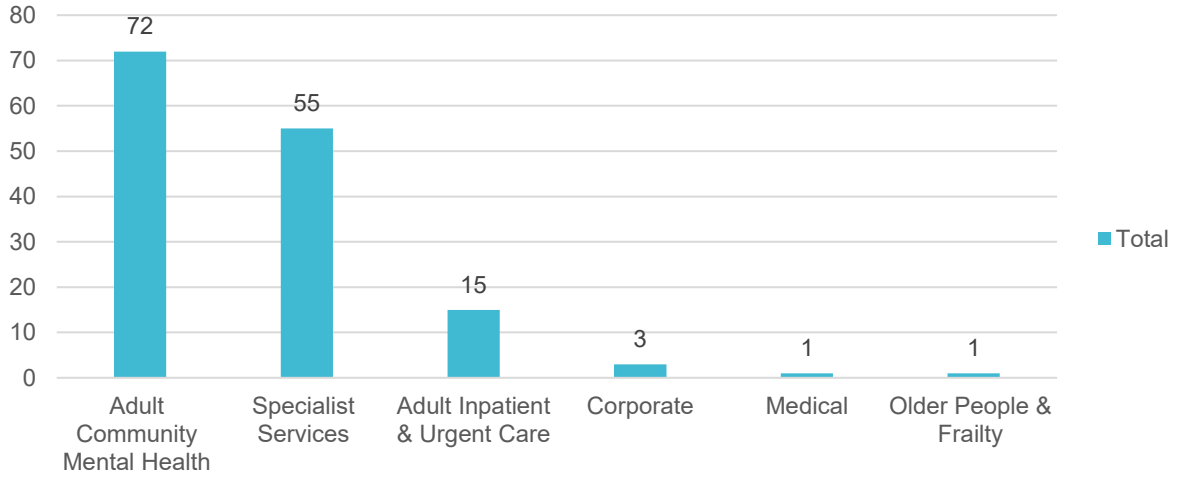
The Trust has invested in a comprehensive trainee and development pathway, including an increased number of social work placements, access to the apprenticeship route, and a well-established Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme. These initiatives strengthen recruitment pipelines and support the retention and progression of newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) ensuring a skilled and resilient social work workforce.



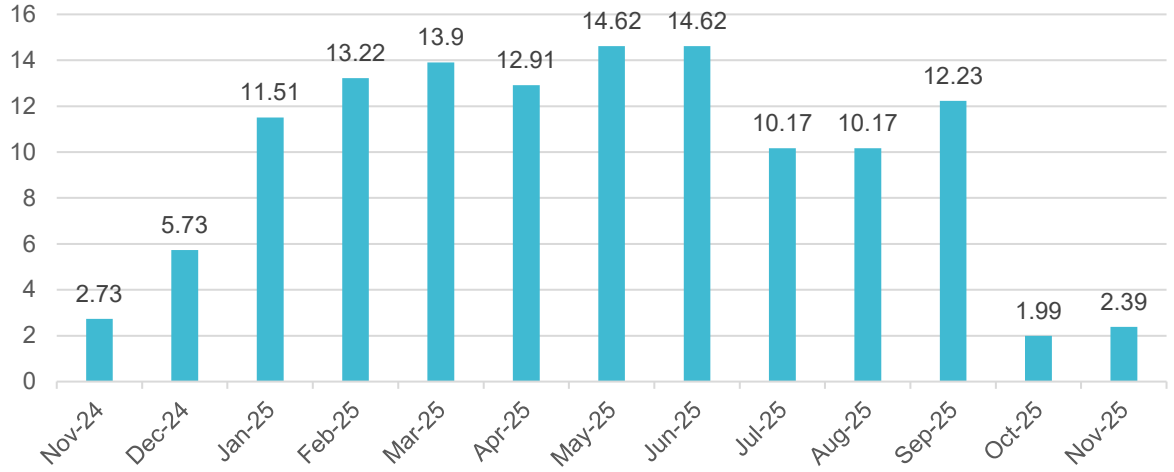
Number of registered social workers in teams



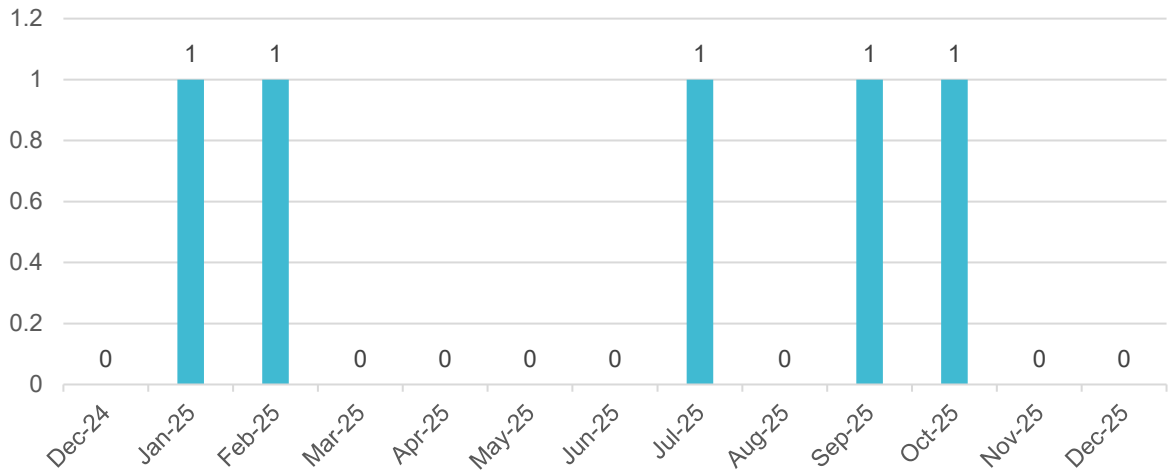
Social work areas of specialism



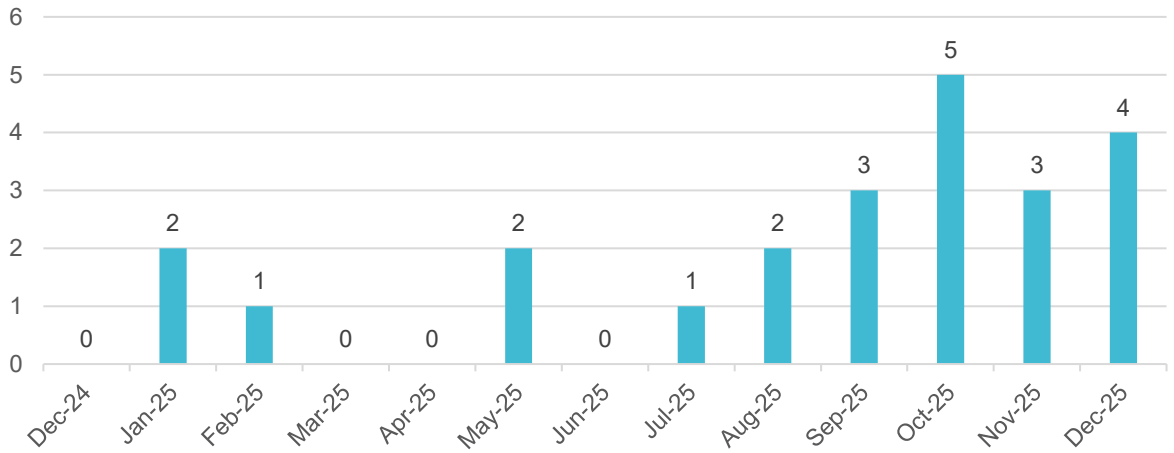
Social work vacancies (WTE)



Social work new starters



Social work leavers



The standards for employers of social work in England

The Social Work plan will align with the eight standards in the standards for employers of social work, and use the annual health check as a tool and framework to assess where we are doing well and identify areas of key focus to improve on.

The professional lead for social work has the strategic accountability to maintain the standards required.

The standards promote the value of the social work profession, by setting out a framework that creates an ethical and effective work environment and supports high quality social work practice wherever that takes place. Their purpose is to sustain high quality outcomes for service users and their families/ carers/communities.

There are eight standards, for employers of social workers, grouped into three focal areas

1. Ensure social work is well-led.
2. Enable professionalism.
3. Ensure all staff are equipped to deliver effective teamwork.
4. Enable excellence in practice throughout the social work career.
5. Enable social workers engagement and wellbeing - completion of staff health check.
6. Fair and transparent performance systems.
7. Develop a workforce fit for future challenges.
8. Show how the social work role makes a difference.

Strong and clear social work framework

The standards are about promoting a clear statement about the principles that constitute good social work practice, and how those principles function across the full range of social work settings. The standards outline the ways in which each organisation can achieve and maintain the theories, skills, research and evidence that underpin it at strategic and operational levels.

Employers should have in place a strong and clear social work accountability and assurance framework that promotes reflection and learning from experience, evidence and research of outcome-focused social work practice and from the voices of children, adults and families.

Social work is a difficult and challenging activity that involves working with uncertainty and complexity. Social workers need a supportive environment in which to work where learning and reflection upon practice is fundamental.

Annual social worker health check

The Local Government Association health check provides key themes and drivers for the Trust, which feed into the annual social work action plan, strategy and vision.

The Trust actively promotes social workers to participate in the annual health check to ensure their voice is fully represented.

While the Trust undertakes the national NHS annual staff survey, specific social work practice standards are not always captured within this broader process.

To address this, the Professional Lead for Social Work, working alongside the Professional Development Working Group, coordinates the annual social work specific health check to assess practice conditions, workload, and the working environment.

LPFT is also committed to developing a sector pledge that sets out clear actions in response to the findings of the annual social worker health check, ensuring social workers are supported to work in conditions that enable them to thrive.

Code of conduct, ethics and professional accountability

Social workers in the Trust are required to uphold the professional standards, ethics and codes of conduct set by Social Work England, ensuring that all practice is safe, lawful, and grounded in evidence based social work values.

These professional requirements shape how social workers assess need, safeguard individuals, promote rights, and deliver person centred interventions.

LPFT supports social workers to maintain these standards through access to professional supervision, continuing professional development, and a clear organisational commitment to high quality, accountable practice. This ensures that the social work workforce consistently delivers care that is ethical, strengths based, trauma informed, and aligned with national regulatory expectations.

British Association of Social Workers (BASW)

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) plays a vital role in shaping, supporting, and advocating for the social work profession in the UK.

The BASW Code of Ethics outlines the values, principles, and ethical guidance for social workers in the UK. BASW provides ethical guidance through its long-standing Code of Ethics, which underpins all aspects of social work practice promoting professional integrity, human rights, and social justice, helping social workers navigate complex moral and legal challenges.

The code aims to

Promote ethical awareness and integrity in social work and acts as a guide for practitioners in making ethically informed decisions.

Support the rights and dignity of people who use social work services.
Provide a framework for accountability, reflection, and professional development

The code is built around three central values

Human Rights	Respect for dignity and worth of all individuals. Support for self-determination and participation. Commitment to holistic, person-centred practice.
Social Justice	Challenge oppression and discrimination. Promote inclusion and equity. Advocate for fair access to resources and opportunities.
Professional Integrity	Act with honesty, transparency, and accountability. Maintain boundaries and confidentiality. Use supervision and peer support to improve practice.

Ethical practice guidance

The Code provides practical guidance on how to apply these principles in everyday work, including:

- Building respectful relationships.
- Managing risk and safeguarding.
- Acting with informed consent
- Sharing information appropriately.
- Empowering service users.
- Whistleblowing when necessary.
- Keeping accurate records.
- Engaging in supervision and CPD.
- Supporting the development of others.

Professional Registration with Social Work England

Social workers within LPFT operate as part of a regulated profession, overseen by Social Work England (SWE).

As the national regulator, SWE sets the professional, education, and training standards that all social workers must meet, and approves the universities and training providers responsible for delivering qualifying programmes.

Every practising social worker must be registered with SWE and is required to maintain ongoing compliance with their professional standards, ensuring safe, ethical, and accountable practice across all areas of work.

SWE also acts as an independent public protection body, responsible for investigating and managing fitness to practise concerns, thereby safeguarding the public and upholding confidence in the profession. In addition, SWE quality assures and reviews a range of qualifying and post qualifying routes, including the social work apprenticeship, the Think Ahead Programme, and other pathways that contribute to the development of the future workforce.

These regulatory expectations shape how social workers practise in LPFT, how they are supported, and how the Trust maintains a culture of professionalism. LPFT's commitment to high quality social work is reflected in its alignment with SWE standards, its investment in approved training routes, and its focus on ensuring that social workers have the conditions, supervision, and development opportunities required to meet their regulatory obligations and deliver safe, person-centred care.

All registered social workers are required to register with SWE and must adhere to:

- A yearly renewal of their registration.
- Meeting SWE standards which outline the skills, knowledge, and behaviours required to practice safely and effectively.
- Engaging in ongoing CPD to maintain their registration. This ensures they keep their skills and knowledge up to date.

The Professional Lead for Social Work provides guidance and support and links in with Lincolnshire's Social Work England engagement lead. A number of engagement sessions are offered throughout the year to ensure the requirements are shared and people can access guidance and support.

The renewal period runs from the 30 November each year, and the Professional Lead for Social Work undertakes annual checks to ensure that all LPFT social workers have renewed their registration and met CPD requirements.

CPD is an essential part of reflection and learning activity. Social workers are required to access CPD throughout their careers to maintain and improve practice. The professional standards set out what social workers must know, understand, and be able to do.

There are eight parts of the CPD standard, which outline the different things social workers should aim to do as part of CPD.

Fitness to practice

All social workers regulated by SWE must adhere to the codes of professional practice and provide evidence that they are fit to practice.

If a registered social workers fitness to practice is impaired, or if there are raised concerns regarding their ability to practice safety and effectively, the Professional Lead for Social Work will lead on any issues connected with SWE and fitness to practice regulations.

Leadership structure

The Chief Nursing Officer (Quality and Professions) is responsible for executive leadership and representation of all social workers at board level. This role is supported by The Director of Nursing (Quality and Professions).

Professional Lead for Social Work

The Professional Lead for Social Work plays a critical role in shaping, strengthening, and championing the social work profession within LPFT. This role provides strategic oversight, professional leadership, and assurance that social work practice across the Trust is safe, effective, and aligned with national regulatory and employer standards.

Key responsibilities for this role include:



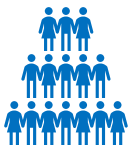
Strategic leadership
Setting the strategic direction for social work across LPFT, ensuring that social work practice, service development, and workforce planning align with the Trust's wider priorities and objectives.



Professional leadership
Acting as the senior professional voice for social work, promoting professional identity, values, and standards, and ensuring that social workers are supported to deliver high-quality, person-centred practice.



Quality of interventions
Providing oversight and assurance that social work interventions are evidence based, strengths focused, trauma informed and tailored to the needs of individuals and families.



Workforce capacity and planning
Monitoring workforce demand, identifying gaps, and supporting the development of a sustainable social work workforce. This includes contributing to recruitment strategies, retention initiatives, and succession planning.



Continuous professional development
Fostering a culture of learning by ensuring social workers have access to high quality supervision, reflective practice opportunities, and clear career development pathways, including advanced and specialist roles.



Partnership and system leadership
Building strong relationships with external partners, including local authorities, universities, and social work providers across Lincolnshire, to support integrated working and strengthen the wider social care system.

In addition to these core responsibilities, the Professional Lead for Social Work plays a vital role in maintaining high standards of care and ensuring that social workers are well supported, confident, and effective in their roles. This includes:



Practice and service development
Leading innovation and improvement initiatives to enhance social work practice, strengthen service delivery, and respond to emerging needs.



Professional consultancy and advice
Providing expert guidance, consultation, and support to social workers, managers, and multidisciplinary teams on complex practice issues.



Research, audit, and evaluation
Leading and contributing to research activity, quality audits, and evaluation processes to ensure practice is evidence informed and continually improving.



Education, training, and workforce development
Supporting the design and delivery of education and training programmes, including student placements, apprenticeships, and post qualifying development, to build a skilled and resilient social work workforce.

LPFT recognises the importance of ensuring that social workers are supported through robust professional structures that promote both personal and professional wellbeing. This includes mechanisms that provide assurance of safe, effective, and accountable practice, aligned with the Local Government Association Standards for Employers of Social Workers and the Professional Standards set by Social Work England.

These standards underpin the Trust's commitment to high-quality social work and ensure that practitioners are equipped to deliver ethical, strengths-based, and trauma-informed interventions.

In addition, LPFT is committed to providing clear and progressive career development pathway that reflects the unique professional identity of social workers. This includes access to ongoing education, specialist training, and opportunities for advancement that support the development of advanced practice skills and leadership capability. Through these structures, the Trust aims to cultivate a confident, skilled, and resilient social work workforce that is empowered to deliver high-quality care and contribute to the Trust's wider strategic priorities

The establishment of the bi-monthly Social Work Delivery Group and quarterly Social Work Councils ensures that social workers across LPFT have meaningful opportunities to shape, influence, and drive the social work agenda within the Trust. These forums provide a structured space for professional dialogue, shared learning, and collective decision-making, enabling social workers at all levels to contribute to service development and the continuous improvement of social care practice.

Social Work Councils

A collective voice that is powerful and heard

The Social Work Council provides a vital forum for social workers across LPFT to share feedback, influence decision making, and shape the ongoing development of social work practice within the Trust.

It creates a structured space for social workers to express what they need to deliver high quality practice and to advise on how the Trust could best support their professional wellbeing, development, and effectiveness. The Council also acts as a platform for sharing best practice, learning, and innovation, ensuring that social work practice remains current, evidence informed, and aligned with national expectations.

The Council meets four times per year and establishes focused working subgroups to progress key areas of practice development, including:

- Quality and risk
- Digital
- Research and innovation
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion

These groups enable social workers to contribute directly to service improvement and to influence how social work evolves within LPFT.

Effective, well supported social work is essential to the health and wellbeing of the communities the Trust serves. Providing social workers with protected time and space for peer support, reflective learning, professional dialogue, and local problem solving is central to building resilience, maintaining high standards of practice, and supporting staff wellbeing.

The purpose of the Social Work Council is to provide leadership, governance, strategic advice, professional intelligence, and expert insight into the delivery of social work across the Trust.

It plays a key role in shaping pathways for professional development, strengthening professional identity, and ensuring that social work practice is safe, effective, and aligned with both Local Government Association Employer Standards and Social Work England Professional Standards.

The Council also informs the vision and strategy for social work within LPFT, offering a mechanism to communicate changes in national and local policy, share updates on Trust procedures, and ensure that social workers remain connected to organisational priorities.

Social Work Council Vision

- To raise the profile of social work across LPFT and establish a clear, shared framework for excellent social work practice across all Trust settings.
- To maintain open and transparent communication between the profession, the Professional Lead for Social Work, the organisation, and the wider workforce.
- To align with the Trust's strategic priorities and contribute to the development and evaluation of the annual Social Work Plan.
- To foster a strong sense of professional identity and belonging for social workers within LPFT.
- To ensure the Trust has the right number of social workers, with the right skills and experience, to meet current and future service needs.
- To ensure social workers have access to the practical tools, resources, and organisational conditions required to practise safely, confidently, and effectively.

What our social workers tell us

We talked to our social work colleagues across LPFT at our Social Work Council to ask what they are most proud of in their role, and this is what they told us:

"Having a social work council to review the unique perspective of social workers is vital!"

"Keeping the distinct and different skills and values is vital to a holistic approach to those we work with. Social workers are uniquely positioned to offer a broad view of societal impact on individuals."

"It has been great to feel more connected to my profession individual social work colleagues."

Local and regional partnerships

The Social Work Professional Lead attends monthly briefings provided by Chief Principal Social Work for Adults, Chief Social Worker for Adults and Mental Health Social Work leads. Including meeting with external East Midlands partners, to provide and ensures updates and involvement in national and regional social work priorities.

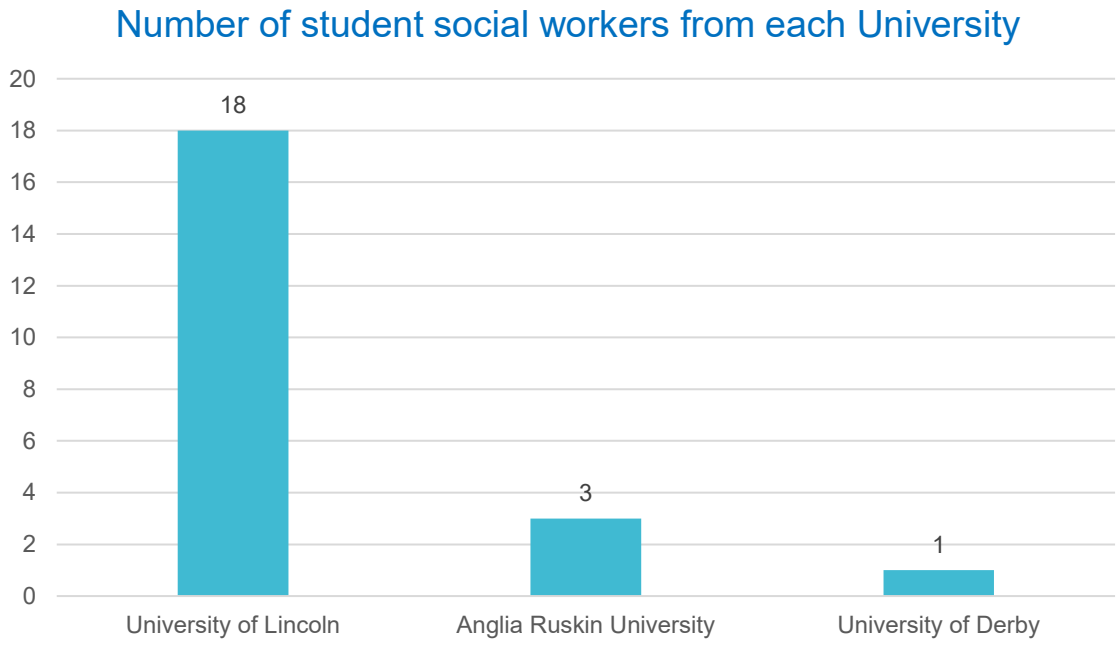
Attraction, recruitment and retention

Social work students

LPFT host a number of placements for university students pursuing social work degrees. Working in collaboration with Higher Education Institutions (HEI) The objective is to recruit newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) upon the completion of their final placements.

The Trust's social work and professional development teams have built strong links with a number of HEIs, and provide a number of social work practice placements for undergraduates from the following universities:

- University of Lincoln
- Anglia Ruskin University
- University of Derby



Students often accept permanent roles within LPFT on qualifying, this is an indicator that supporting local students is a positive future pipeline for attraction and recruitment of social work. A key objective is to increase the numbers of social work students over the next three years. To do this we need to increase the number of social work practice educators, therefore additional practice education training will be offered throughout 2025-2027 to grow the pool of social work practice educators.

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Assessed and support year of practice (ASYE)

The Trust have an established ASYE programme which is in line with Skills for Care regulations.

It is a twelve-month, employer-led programme of support and assessment to ensure that newly qualified social workers receive the support and assessment needed to develop their skills and confidence in their professional roles.

ASYE workshops and support groups are provided throughout the year for their first year of being a NQSW, to help transition into roles effectively and work towards. We want NQSW to feel confident and capable in their first year of practice.

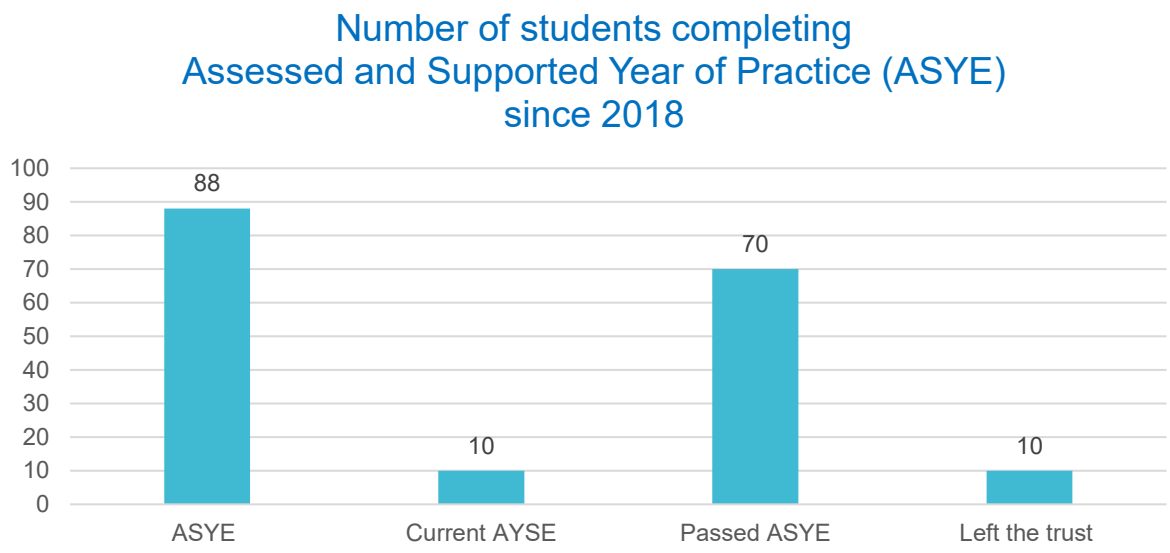
Participation in the ASYE programme supports all NQSW to consolidate their degree learning and further develop capability, skills and knowledge.

It aims to strengthen professional confidence in an employment environment and provide extra support during the first year of practice. The ASYE is part of the CPD framework and is pivotal to social work reform, in providing the structure and support for social workers to develop their capabilities throughout their career.

As someone's social work career progresses there is a need to update, extend and deepen knowledge, skills and analytical thinking to deal with increasingly complex and specialist work, whilst continuing to develop professional identity and confidence. All LPFT NQSW are supported and assessed by a professional supervisor, who has experience supervising staff and assessing practice.

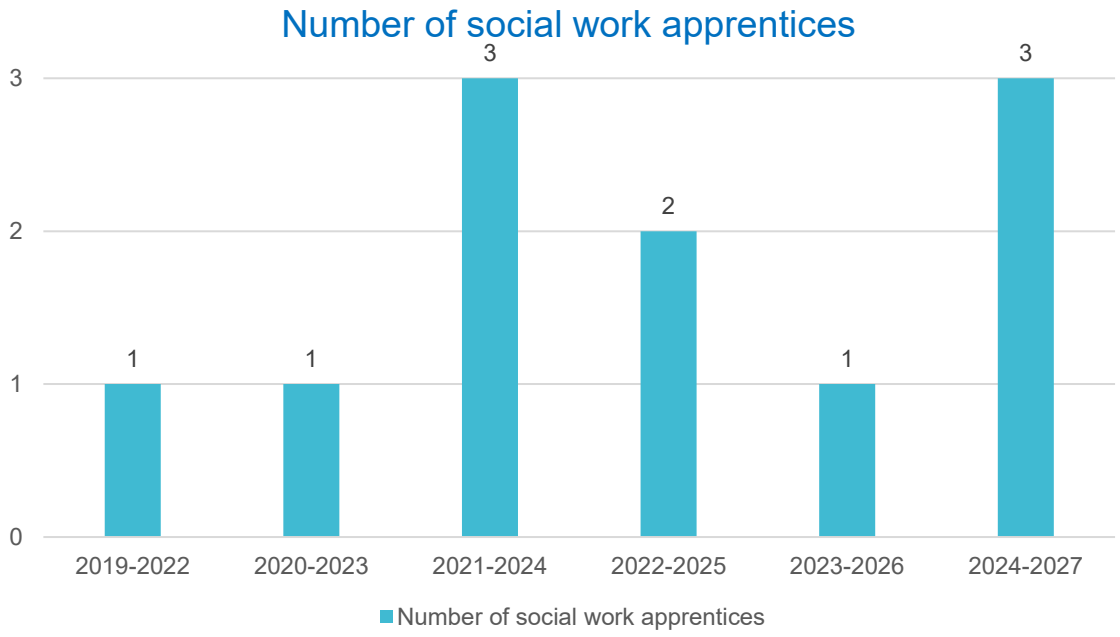
Progress is assessed holistically against the Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) for Social Workers in Adult Services and the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF).

The KSS sets out a clear statement on what a social worker for adults is expected to know and be able to do. The PCF level descriptor and capabilities provide clarity on the level of capability a social worker should be able to demonstrate at the end of their first year of practice. Support groups have been established to provide the opportunity for peer and professional support and reflective practice and case consultation.



Apprenticeships

LPFT has successfully supported 11 social work apprenticeships since 2019. The Trust has delivered the social work apprentice programme in collaboration with the University of Lincoln, to provide ongoing support to social work apprentices throughout their three-year degree programme. This includes participating in tripartite meetings to ensure continuity in the learners' experience.



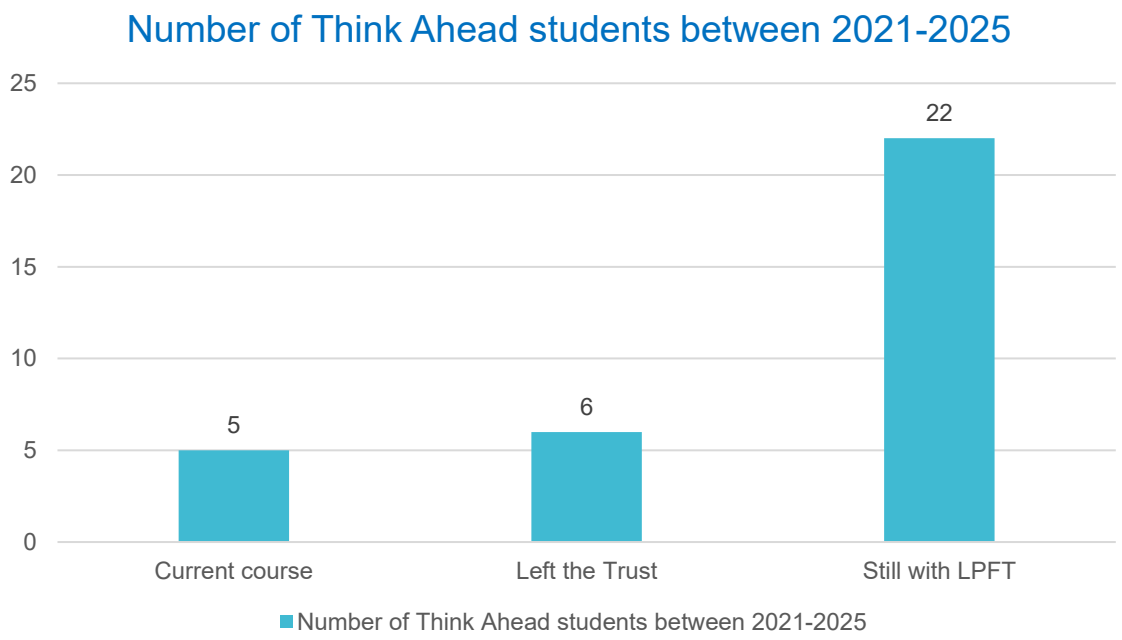
Since the Trust started the social work apprenticeship programme in 2019, one apprentice did not complete the course, four passed and three have remained working in LPFT.

There are currently six social work apprentices on their course due to finish in the next three years.

Think Ahead

LPFT have worked in partnership with Think Ahead to train the next generation of social workers. The programme helps promote the mental health workforce and enable the best support for people living with mental health needs.

LPFT have supported 33 Think Ahead students in total since starting the programme in 2021. 22 have remained with LPFT upon qualifying. We currently have five candidates on the current Think Ahead training course and hope to retain all of within LPFT.



Social Work Professional Capabilities Framework

The Social Work Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) is the profession-owned framework for social work education and development in England (BASW, 2020). It spans the entire career journey, from student to strategic leader, and is structured around three 'super domains':

- **Purpose** – Why we do social work (values, ethics, human rights).
- **Practice** – What we do (skills, interventions, critical thinking).
- **Impact** – How we make a difference (leadership, change, professionalism).

The nine domains include:

- Professionalism
- Values and ethics
- Diversity and equality
- Knowledge
- Critical reflection
- Intervention and skills
- Contexts and organisations
- Professional leadership

This framework assists social workers to:

1. Guide professional development

The PCF provides a clear structure for what is expected at different stages of a social worker's career—from student to strategic leader. This helps individuals: Understand what skills and knowledge they need to develop. Reflect on their progress and identify learning goals. Prepare for career transitions (e.g., from ASYE to experienced practitioner)

2. Support reflective practice

Each domain encourages critical reflection, helping social workers think deeply about: Their values and ethics. How they engage with diversity and difference. The impact of their interventions. This reflection strengthens decision-making and promotes ethical, person-centred practice.

3. Align with education and training

Universities and employers use the PCF to: Design social work curriculum, assess student and practitioner competence, structure supervision and appraisal conversations.

It ensures consistency in expectations across the profession.

4. Promote accountability and quality - by setting out what good practice looks like.

The PCF helps: Maintain high standards of care and support, ensure practitioners are working safely and effectively and to provide a benchmark for performance reviews and audits.

5. Encourage leadership and advocacy

The PCF includes domains on professional leadership and contexts and organisations, which empower social workers to: Influence change within systems, advocate for service users and communities and take on leadership roles with confidence.

Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) ensures all NQSW meet the Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) identified by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).



Continued Professional Development

The Trust is committed to the professional development of social workers at every stage of their career journey. Ensuring that social workers have access to ongoing training and development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge at every stage of their career.

All pre-registered social work students, apprentices, NQSW registered social workers have access to high-quality continuing professional development opportunities, which is crucial to maintaining safe, current, evidence-based practice.

By fostering a culture of continuous learning and development, the Trust aims to ensure all social workers have access to supervision and peer support as well as continuing professional development.

Career progression opportunities is a top priority to support retention, sustain the longevity and growth of skills and development throughout someone's social work career and prepare them for future service development transformation and training for new roles.

Social workers are provided with the time and opportunity to learn, keep their knowledge and skills up to date, and critically reflect on the impact this has on their practice.

The CPD catalogue provides social workers with a pathway that is consistent with the PCF. Supporting them to identify what is currently available and the process to apply. It includes areas to consider for a pathway of professional development for social workers, to ensure that people who use services are supported by social workers with consistent levels of professional skills.

Post qualifying standards

Practice education

LPFT collaborate with social workers who aspire to undertake training as practice educators and support trainee social workers.

An area identified for further development is to increase and further develop the number of practice educators available in the Trust, to have sufficient numbers to support the future social workforce from student to NQSW and enhance the overall offer we can provide to social work in the Trust.

Training more social workers to become practice educators is crucial to meet the current demand and provide the leadership, clinical expertise, and supervision and mentorship. Ensuring that future social work practices are of high quality, evidence-based and ensure professional growth and consistent standards of care.

We currently offer Lincolnshire Education Certificate (LPEC) Stage 1 and Stage 2.

The Lincolnshire Practice Educator Certificate (LPEC) has been developed and endorsed by the University of Lincoln to enable social work practice educators to evidence that they have met the requirements of the Practice Educator Professional Standards (BASW 2022).

The course is relevant for those who support, mentor, and assess social work learners, who are pre-qualified or post-qualified, and who are engaging in formal and informal learning or development activities.

The emphasis is on supporting people to develop the knowledge, values and skills needed to teach, train, supervise, holistically assess and mentor social work learners and to help consider progressing their own professional development as a Practice Educator.

As part of practice education development, the Trust also works alongside the University of Lincoln to maintain the currency of those practice educators who have not supported a learner for some time, or even when their currency has lapsed. Together we provide guidance and support to refresh their qualification.

Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) and Best Interest Assessor (BIA)

Through a positive partnership relationship with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) the Trust are able to offer postgraduate training in both AMHP and BIA.

Both are open to all relevant qualified professionals, however these roles sit very much within the social work profession and serve to enhance the social work offer within the Trust.

AMHP - Approved Mental Health Professionals

The AMHP service is provided by the local authority, and the Trust has no delegated duties in relation to this function. However, are able to offer AMHP training and practice to LPFT staff where it is appropriate to their role.

Where it is deemed appropriate any eligible qualified staff can complete the AMHP training. Once qualified as an AMHP people would then practice as an AMHP and join the monthly countywide rota.

BIA – Best Interest Assessors

This course gives the opportunity to attain the qualification required to carry out the duties of Best Interests Assessors, as required by the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) regulations.

It is open to social workers who have at least two years post-qualifying experience. Social workers wanting to pursue a BIA course need approval from their manager to be released to complete the training and should be something that is operationally needed.

This qualification leads to the role of BIA within the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.

It is a specific role, however as with AMHPs, the Trust recognises the benefit this advanced knowledge and expertise can give to qualified practitioners and in turn the service provided.

Celebrating the social work profession

Raising the profile and value of social work in the Trust is a key priority.

One of the ways of highlighting the amazing work that takes place is sharing and promoting the positive feedback social workers receive.

LPFT social workers often receive positive feedback from service users and carers, but sometimes we don't collect this well. Therefore, a key objective is to develop the appropriate systems and processes to incorporate feedback from a range of sources, including from people with lived experience, of their experience of social work practice to inform social work practice. This will be explored further during the social work councils.

Professional development, research, innovation and best practice

Another key objective is to proactively apply for local, regional, and national awards to share examples of the Trust's best practice in social work, including research publications.

British Association of Social Workers (BASW) Amazing Social Worker

A number of LPFT Social Workers have been nominated by the BASW, the UK's largest professional association for social work, in their annual national 'Amazing Social Workers' recognition scheme. These achievements are showcased nationally throughout world social work month in March, as part of wider celebrations for world social work day.

Annual celebration days

The Trust regularly hosts celebration days dedicated to social workers across LPFT. These are an opportunity to network, share resources, showcase best practice and be afforded the opportunity to access CPD. These are planned and facilitated by the Professional Lead for Social Work.

Professional supervision

Professional supervision is essential to ensure that social workers remain effective and competent. Social workers receive management supervision from within their management structure.

Clinical and profession specific supervision is arranged centrally and offered across all services.

The following internally facilitated supervision groups are consistently attended and valued by staff:

- Social Work Apprentice Group supervision (monthly)
- Newly Qualified Group supervision (monthly)

Coaching and mentoring

Coaching and mentoring is available to social workers within LPFT, either as a one-off coaching session, to reflect on a specific issue or career plan, or a fixed number of sessions. This are arranged, on request, by the Professional Lead for Social Work.

Stay Conversations

For any social worker thinking about leaving LPFT the Trust offers stay conversations with the Professional Lead for Social Work. These sessions are a chance to reflect on their current role or position, identify and address any challenges, and explore any alternative options available to support retention.

Staff wellbeing

Staff wellbeing is a priority for LPFT, and the Trust is committed to fostering a healthy, supportive, and sustainable working environment for all staff, including social workers.

Social workers have access to a range of wellbeing resources, including clinical supervision, reflective practice spaces, Schwartz Rounds, the Staff Safety Hub and confidential psychological support. Social workers can also access the Employee Assistance Programme, which provides 24/7 confidential advice, counselling, and practical guidance.

Social workers can also draw on external sources of help such as professional networks, Social Work England resources, peer support communities, and local authority wellbeing services.

The Trust continues to promote a culture where staff feel safe to seek support early, maintain a healthy work–life balance, and access the right help, at the right time to sustain their professional resilience and overall wellbeing.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is fundamental to the Trust's approach to developing and sustaining a thriving social work workforce.

We value the diverse backgrounds, identities and experiences within our workforce and recognise the contribution this diversity makes to high quality, strengths-based practice.

The approach aligns with the NHS People Plan, the NHS Equality Delivery System, and the Social Work England Professional Standards, ensuring that inclusion, anti-discriminatory practice and equity of opportunity remain embedded across all stages of people's careers.

Social workers are encouraged to take an active role in LPFT staff networks, which offer safe, supportive spaces for connection, advocacy and shared learning.

The Trust continues to promote an inclusive culture where every social worker feels respected, represented and empowered to contribute their voice, and where barriers to progression, wellbeing and belonging are actively identified and addressed in line with trustwide EDI objectives.

Innovation and research

LPFT is committed to fostering a strong and sustainable research culture within the social work profession, recognising that research active practitioners play a vital role in driving innovation, improving outcomes and shaping high quality, evidence-based care.

The Trust actively promotes opportunities for social workers to engage in research activity at every level, whether through leading innovation projects, contributing to service evaluations, participating in academic partnerships or embedding new, evidence informed approaches into everyday practice.

Social workers are encouraged to take a central role in championing research by attending research forums, joining professional networks, collaborating with multi-disciplinary colleagues and sharing learning across teams.

This commitment aligns with national priorities for research active health and care organisations and supports the Trust's ambition to continually enhance the quality, safety and effectiveness of the services we provide.

By strengthening research capability and confidence across the workforce, we ensure that social workers contribute meaningfully to the wider healthcare research community and help shape innovative, compassionate and evidence driven care for the people and communities we serve.

Social work key objectives for 2025-2027

Priority 1: raise the profile of social work across the NHS and Trust

- Continue to co-produce the social work vision and strategy for the Trust by listening to what our social workers tell us.
- Continue to encourage strong attendance and participation in social work delivery groups and Council. Ensuring a diverse representation from LPFT social workers and strong, united voice which is listened and responded to.
- Empower social workers to use their social work values, skills and knowledge to support the Trust into new ways of working. This may include changing the way social work has historically worked with individuals, families and communities and involve consultation on policy development and research to maximise people's independence, participation and recovery.

Priority 2: attract, recruit and retain a diverse social work workforce by being an employer of choice in the region

- Grow and evolve social work roles, as part of the LPFT workforce over the next three years.
- Increase the number of trainee students.
- Continue to offer social work apprenticeships and provide opportunities for LPFT staff to develop and train as a social worker. Developing a future workforce pipeline.
- Increase the number of social work placements across the broad range of LPFT services.
- Support newly qualified social workers through the ASYE programme.

Priority 3: deliver the highest standards of professional social work practice.

- Continue professional development and training for all social workers, developing opportunities internally and with local authority and higher education institutions.
- Link in with Social Work England regional reps and arrange for regular engagement and consultation sessions for LPFT social workers.
- Ensure appropriate access to clinical and professional supervision.
- Promote involvement and participation in research, to improve the quality of care provided.
- Formulate a database of Council members specific skills, knowledge and interests that can be utilised to develop future council topics, services, provide supervision and consultation on specific areas.
- Empower social workers across the organisation to form links with local partners, higher education establishments and wider organisations to continue to develop partnership working.

Priority 4: Train and increase the number of Practice Educators to support newly qualified social workers.

- Attract and grow the pool of practice educators in LPFT.
- Invite Higher Education Institutions to come talk about the ongoing training opportunities.

Priority 5: Develop the social work career pathway

- Establish parity of training and equal opportunities to other professional groups such as nursing.
- Develop clear career pathway for progression from newly qualified to senior level.
- Develop opportunities for social workers in LPFT to maintain their post qualifying standards.

Summary

Social work has gone from strength to strength over the past five years at Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT). We have built a reputation for providing excellent social work practice and been instrumental in contributing to new projects and the transforming care agenda.

The strategic direction outlined in this annual plan emphasises the importance of continuing to employ social workers, to continue to provide high-quality, person-centred, trauma informed patient care.

The Social Work Plan for 2025-2027 sets a clear and ambitious path for the future of social work, with a strong emphasis on the future ambition of continuing to attract, recruit and retain outstanding social work in the Trust and support the delivery of our services and people to ‘live well in their communities’.

Social work is instrumental in leading the way in providing transformative change, advocating and supporting service users, patients, families and carers by delivering outstanding quality care and supporting our communities. Putting patients and carers at the centre of care and supporting people to achieve positive outcomes.