

# Bristol City Council's Career Progression for Practising Social Workers

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## **1 Introduction**

This career progression policy is a clearly defined structure for the route and method of progression for practising social workers who are based in Adult and Child care settings within the People Directorate. This is not a policy structured by years of service, but rather the Knowledge and Skills levels directed in 2014 by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DoH), led by the Chief Social Workers for both Adults and Children.

To inform the thinking for this policy there have been workshops with frontline staff, meetings between Adult and Child Care Training departments, discussions at Social Work Boards, meetings with Adult & Child Care Leaders, HR and trade union representatives as well as more informal conversations with frontline staff.

This policy is part of a wider piece of work specifically trying to address the current issues we face in trying to recruit and retain good, experienced social workers.

Our turnover shows that many of our social workers leave once they have had between three and five years' service at BCC. We are conducting exit interviews to try to find out the reasons for this, but we already know that for many it is the lack of opportunity and progression within the workforce.

To try to address this we are working with our regional neighbours to try to develop a system of recruitment across the region that is fair and equitable, and offers opportunity for movement whilst retaining the employee.

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This policy is the first step in addressing the issue of retaining social workers and supporting them into a specialist role through a real progression career path.

The policy will be managed by a mixed panel of both Principal Social Workers from Adult's and Children's with a service manager, to ensure consistency of approach across the Directorate. Progression will be based on a vacancy being available and the social worker being able to demonstrate through their portfolio that they have the required skills and knowledge to be considered for a vacancy, and will be followed by a recruitment process.

### **1.2 Strengths and weaknesses of the progression policy are identified below:**

#### **Strengths**

- It is a transparent system with clear benchmarks for progression
- Salary scale rewards skill and effort rather than time served
- Consistent with HCPC CPD recording requirements (maintaining a portfolio of evidence and learning)
- In-depth look at progressing workers' practice has helped define learning and development goals
- Evidence suggests that staff retention is more stable if staff know what is expected of them and what they can expect from the Local Authority.
- Skills matrix will lead to more focus on appraisal for staff with clear identification of developmental goals

#### **Weaknesses**

- Portfolio may not be popular with social workers – seen as time consuming and a distraction from casework.

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- Risk of inconsistency in appraisal processes and implementation of the career progression policy by managers supporting staff through the process.

These weaknesses are addressed within this policy.

### **1.3 Supporting Research**

The Principal Social Worker for Children's has contacted other Principal Social Workers across the region and most are in the same position as ourselves in writing a career policy that incorporates Knowledge and Skills (K&S). Cornwall and Poole have developed a structure, and this is in line with Bristol's. There are regional retention meetings where the 16 Local Authorities talk about the impact of staff retention, and how we manage this. These are attended by both Principal Social workers and HR for a joint approach.

### **1.4 Staff commitment and responsibilities**

All registered social workers will be expected to maintain a portfolio of evidence of continuing professional development (CPD) as required by the registering body, HCPC.

The paragraph below will be incorporated into all guidance to staff on progression:

“As with all further education and professional development we commit to, it costs the council several thousands of pounds to support you through your development programme to become a “specialist” in your chosen field of practice. As a commitment from you there will be a requirement for you to sign an agreement that if you leave the council within two years of successful completion of your course you will refund

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the money on a decreasing basis (for example if you leave after twelve months we will ask you to pay half back to us).

If you wish to undertake secondary employment whilst you are employed by the council you can do this but you must tell us. If you are paid at BG9 below SCP 28 you only need the permission of your line manager, but you need to tell them in advance. If you are employed at BG9 above SCP28 then you will need the express consent of your chief officer and again this should be sought in advance of undertaking any additional employment.

If you do undertake secondary employment you should not exceed 48 working hours per week as per the Working Time Directive.

For more information on Secondary Employment you should read Section 9 of the Code of Conduct.”

## **2. Current and Future Developments in Professional Social Work**

### **2.1 The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)**

All newly qualified social workers registered on the ASYE programme from December 2014 are now required to be assessed against the K&S statement for social workers alongside the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and the HCPC Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers. The new ASYE framework introduces a national system of quality assurance.

### **2.2 Adult Social Workers**

The Department of Health published the Knowledge & Skills Statements for Social Workers in Adult Services in March 2015 ([KSS Adults](#)). This

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now underpins the assessment and learning of social work education with adults. This is to be used alongside the PCF currently in place.

### **2.3 Children and Families Social Workers**

The Department for Education have now approved the final Knowledge and Skills (K & S) Statement for Child and Family Social Workers ([K & S Child](#)). The accreditation exam for Child and Family Social Workers is in its pilot stage. This policy will be updated and once there is clear guidance on this, this policy will be updated.

#### **2.3.1 Approved Child & Family Status and Approved Supervisor Status**

The DoE announced at the end of November 2014 alongside the final K & S Statement that they plan to introduce the following national system of assessment and accreditation at 3 levels for Children and Families Social work.

**Approved Child and Family Practitioner** for those who are lead professionals for named children and working with them under the local authority's statutory framework commonly referred to as "case responsibility";

**Practice supervision** for those with responsibility for educating, developing and supervising social workers;

**Practice leadership** for those with responsibility for social work services for children referred to in.

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Further work is now being done to ensure all Higher Education Institute (HEI) Social Work courses incorporate K&S statements in their curriculum and partnerships agreements are in place to support pre and post qualifying social workers.

Social workers will have a one year probation period which is in line with the HCPC framework.

### **3. Progression pathways**

#### **3.1 Social Work Progression Adult Services**

Adult Social Work within the local authority is increasingly linked to statutory roles. This has developed following the introduction of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) requiring social workers to become legally knowledgeable and literate in using the principles of the MCA 2005 in all work with non-capacitated adults. The introduction of the Care Act 2015 puts Safeguarding Adults onto a statutory footing and promotes the development of knowledge and skills in involving adults in outcomes focused assessment and support planning. Adult Social Workers are also required to train as Approved Mental Health Professionals to enable the local authority to fulfil its statutory duties under the Mental Health Act 1983/2007. For these reasons in adult social work there will be a choice of pathways open to social workers during their career. This will reflect the wide variety of statutory work and requirement to promote learning and education in social work practice linked to recent law, research and evidence base.

The pathways will be:

- ❖ Mental Capacity/Best Interest Assessor
- ❖ Approved Mental Health Practitioner

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- ❖ Specialist Social Work (Safeguarding/Personalisation and Wellbeing, other modules will be developed as the practice landscape emerges)
- ❖ Practice Educator Stage 2, as well as portfolio to evidence learning and impact on practice.

### **3.2 Social Work Progression – Children and Families**

To mirror the national development in social work CPD, Children and Families will use a benchmark for social work career grade levels.

These are:

- ❖ AYSE
- ❖ Level 1 - To get to level 1 - Complete all essential training post ASYE
- ❖ Level 2 - To get to level 2 - Graduate Certificate or Post Graduate Certificate in Professional Development Social work; or MSc Certificate in Advance Social Work or PEPS stage 1 as well as a portfolio to evidence learning and impact on practice.
- ❖ Level 3 - To get to Level 3 - Graduate Diploma or Post Graduate Diploma in Professional Development Social Worker or Diploma in Advanced Social Work, or PEPS stage 2, as well as a portfolio to evidence learning and impact on practice.

The process to move from ASYE to Level 1 social worker will be built around the social work training in practice areas as agreed in the appraisal process.

The role of case audits in level progression will be strengthened to ensure that a number of cases are 'live' audited by one or more independent assessors.

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### **4. Social Work Progression Evidence for Child and Adult Social Workers regardless of work place.**

Each year all social workers will be required to demonstrate their learning and progression over the past year by keeping a CPD log reflecting on their learning. This will include a **minimum** of 12 weekly peer learning; a **minimum** of one direct observation by a line manager with feedback per year; evidence of feedback from people who require services and their carer's and other professionals. This will link with the social workers professional development plan and goals which are to be reviewed twice a year alongside the appraisal. The evidence will link to the HCPC requirements and PCF/K&S Frameworks. The progression portfolio will be in the same format as the CPD evidence required for HCPC, so avoiding any duplication. All registered Social Workers will have access to the CPD tool to support them in completing a portfolio.

The Progression Panel will meet twice a year, in September and June (ASYEs tend to be registered with HCPC in the autumn). Gathering evidence for the HCPC Portfolio is an ongoing process and there should be evidence of learning every 12 weeks throughout the year. Any social worker can submit to the panel with their Line Manager's approval. Feedback from the outcome of the panel will be given by the Principal Social Worker for Children and the Lead Adult Social Worker. If the panel identifies that further work is required before progression, a plan of how this can be achieved will be devised.

A social worker can be employed at any point in their career, including as a newly qualified practitioner. There is an expectation that all staff will complete essential training. Any new starters will provide evidence of participation in learning previously undertaken, and if not, must complete

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the essential training. External candidates for posts from BG10 – 14 will be expected to submit their HCPC portfolio demonstrating the requirements for the post they are applying for.

All training will be discussed with individuals and their managers through normal supervision.

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## BG 10 Adult & Child Care Social Workers BCC Employment Induction & Probation Period

There is an expectation that all new starters will undertake all mandatory training unless evidenced learning is demonstrated to their manager

### Adult

#### MANDATORY TRAINING:

- Safeguarding Adults
- Safeguarding Children Foundation
- Introduction to Legal Framework inc Care Act, Safeguarding Adults, Mental Capacity and DoL
- Welfare Benefits Intro

### Children

#### MANDATORY TRAINING

- Safeguarding Adults Foundation- Signs of Safety
- Child Protection
- Court Skills
- Child Development & Observation
- Motivational Interviewing

## ASYE (Year 1) Assessed & Supported Year in Employment

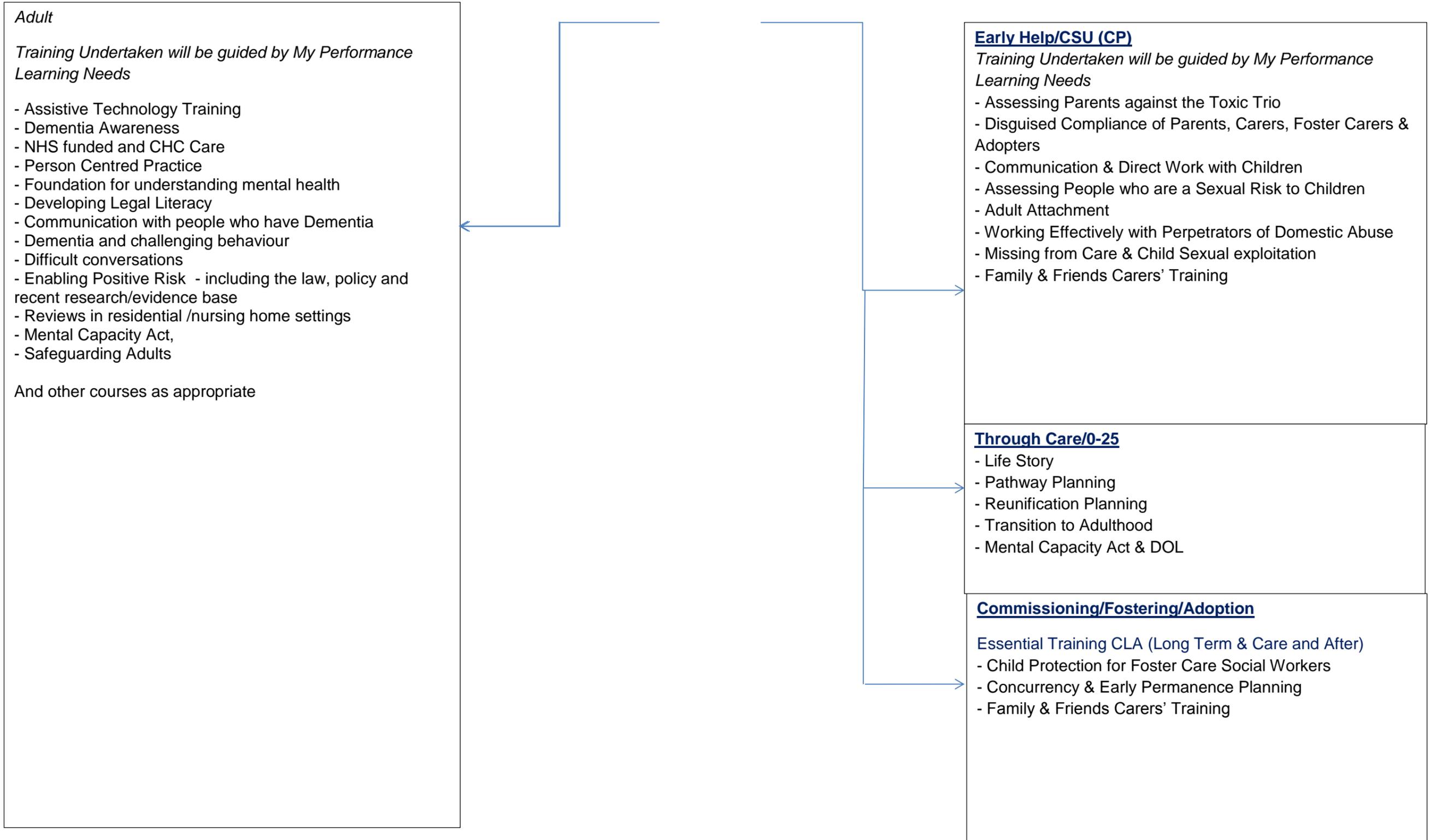
- Lone Working
- Care Act E-Learning
- Equalities Issues Foundation – Respect Training
- 1 to 1 reflective supervision
  - 3 & 6, 12 Month review
  - 12 Monthly Workshops

## Level 1-BG 10

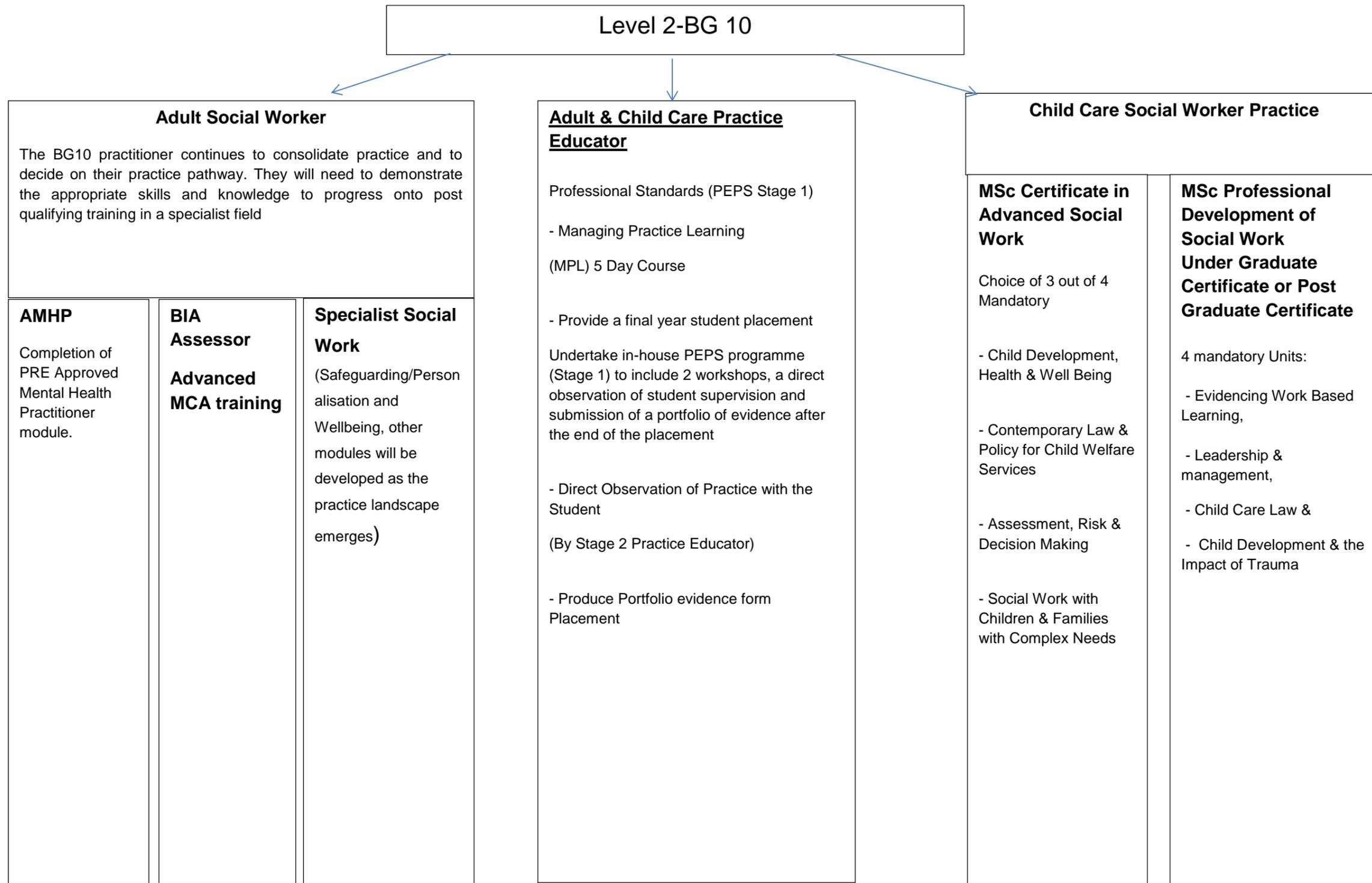
### Ongoing Training CPD

Training is open to all at any time, but in each Service area there is essential training which you must undertake. Please follow boxes below.

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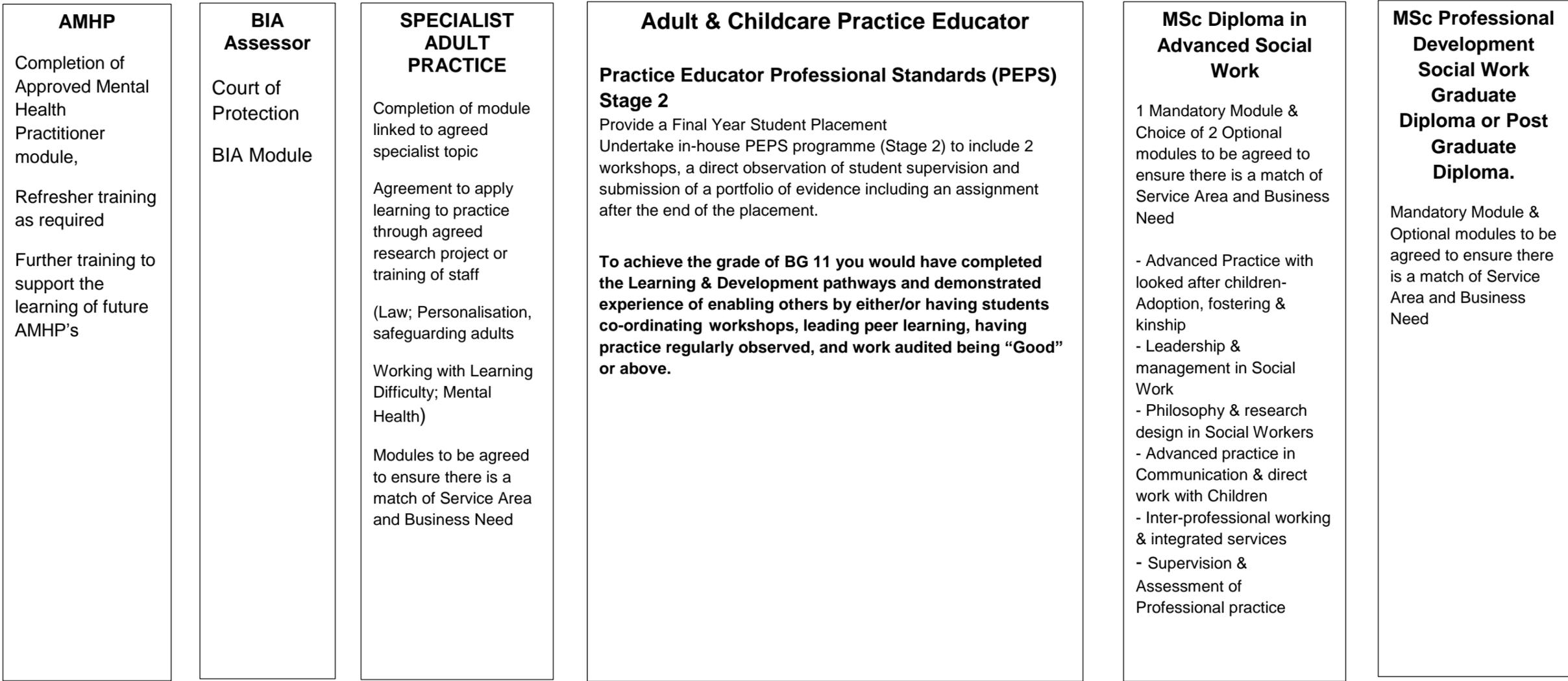


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BG11



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