Capabilities Statement for Social Work with Adults who have Learning Disability
This *Capabilities Statement* was made for the Department of Health and Social Care for England.

It was made by the British Association of Social Workers.

‘Capabilities’ means something that someone can do.

This statement explains all the things a social worker needs to be able to do to support people with learning disabilities.

This statement is very important because there has not been anything like it in a long time.

There are over 1.5 million people with a learning disability in the UK.
Social workers support people with learning disabilities in lots of different ways.

It is important that these social workers have good knowledge of all health and social care.

They also need to know about learning disabilities to make sure people with learning disabilities get the best care.

This is particularly important now because some care is not good enough and people with learning disabilities sometimes face abuse.

What we did

The Capabilities Statement was made between October 2018 and March 2019.
It was made by a group of people with learning disabilities, their family, friends and carers; social workers, and professionals.

Everybody in the group worked together to think about what is important.

They also asked other people for their ideas:

- An online survey
- Talking to people with learning disabilities in groups and services
- Interviews important people
Who is it for?

This guide is for anyone who do social work with people with learning disabilities.

It will also help people with a learning disability and their families to know what to expect from social workers.

Professional Capabilities Framework

The ‘Capabilities Statement’ is part of the ‘Professional Capabilities Framework’ (PCF).

You can find out more about this here: https://www.basw.co.uk/professional-development/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf
The ‘Professional Capabilities Framework’ describes how all social work should happen.

There are three key headings: Purpose, Practice, Impact.

Under these headings, there are nine areas of capabilities. The 9 areas are:

1. Being Professional
2. Thinking about right and wrong
3. Diversity and Equality
4. Rights, Justice, and Money

5. Knowledge

6. Thinking ability
   This means thinking about things for yourself, with your own point of view.

7. Skills to stop problems

8. The world around organisations

9. Leadership
Structure of the Capabilities Statement

The Capabilities Statement is structured around three headings: Purpose, Practice, and Impact.

- **The Purpose** section describes how social workers should think about what is right and wrong and how they should deal with people’s rights.

- **The Practice** section describes the knowledge, skills and thinking ability social workers need to have.

- **The Impact** section talks about how social workers need to be professional, organised and good leaders.
What was most important to people with learning disabilities?

The Steering Group decided three things were important to good social care:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Thinking about what is right and wrong

These need to all happen at the same time to get the best care.
Thinking about what is right and wrong and being well behaved was very important.

Thinking for yourself is also very important as it helps social workers use their capabilities well.
The Capabilities

Section 1: Purpose

The Purpose section includes Right and Wrong; Diversity and Equality; Rights, Justice and Economic Wellbeing.

Recognising strengths and empowering people

Social workers should:

- Involve people with learning disabilities in deciding their care
• They should also involve friends, families and carers if appropriate.

• Support people to identify and use their own strengths and abilities

• Help people to make their own decisions

Promoting people’s rights

Social workers should:

• Understand human rights laws and how they impact people with learning disabilities
- Understand the abuse that people with learning disabilities might face

- Work to stop abuse

Making sure people are treated with dignity

Social workers should:

- Listen to people with learning disabilities and act on what they want

- Be understanding of peoples feelings
• Make sure other people listen to people with learning disabilities and their friends, families and carers.

Section 2: Practice

This section is about the skills, knowledge, interventions and ability to think for yourself.

Understanding social, psychological and medical models of learning disability

Social workers should:

• Know how to use the social model of disability.

The social model says that people with disabilities aren’t limited by their medical condition, they are limited by barriers in society.
• Understand how different models of disability affect people’s care and how other people treat them

Understanding and improving health for people with learning disabilities

Social workers should:

• Understand the things that lead to worse health outcomes for people with learning disabilities

• Support people with learning disabilities to get their voices heard to reduce health inequalities.

• Understand how to use communication technology
Knowledge and skills in safeguarding

Limiting people choices, such as with a bedtime, can become a safeguarding issue.

Social workers need to look out for little limits like this and make sure people have the right to choose what they do.

Social workers need to:

- Understand the law and protect people as it says in the Care Act 2014 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Understand how to judge the safety of a person’s care and housing
• Think for themselves to make sure safeguarding practices are the best to keep people safe

Knowing and Following the Law

Social workers should

• Understand the Care Act 2014, the Mental Capacity Act 2005, the Mental Health Act 1983, and the Children Act 1989

• Update their knowledge of the law through regular learning

• Think about how the law works with values to improve social work
Knowledge of life changes

A life change is when someone goes from one stage of their life to another, for example, going from childhood to adulthood.

Social workers should:

- Understand the rules about the change from childhood to adulthood. This includes the Children and Families Act 2014, the Care Act 2014 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005

- Make sure planning for changes is person-centred

- Speak up if they don’t think people are getting good enough support
Assessment, support and care planning

Social workers should

- Give people with learning disabilities copies of assessments and care plans in accessible formats
- Make sure people’s care plans help them lead the best life
Communication skills

Social workers should:

- Understand that some people with learning disabilities like to communicate differently
- Provide accessible formats of information and documents
Mental capacity

Social workers should

- Know about the history, and theory of mental capacity, human rights, and supporting people to make their own decisions

- Understand and think about the ‘Mental Capacity Act’ and the ‘Liberty Protection Safeguards’

These are rules to make sure people can make their own decisions if they can
The people with learning disabilities who helped make this statement said that there were 3 really important parts of ‘relationship based practice’:

**Building relationships**
Being friendly, listening, respecting people’s feelings, and communicating well.

**Keeping relationships**
Taking the time to visit people, listen to them and understand their feelings.

**Ending relationships**
People with learning disabilities often have to change social workers. Here are some good ways to end the relationship positively:
• writing letters

• visiting them to explain the end of the relationship

• Giving them copies of their care plan and explaining the work that the new social worker will do

Social workers should:

• talk face to face as much as possible

• use bold text, and little colour, in their written communication with people with learning disabilities
• use simple language

• Be professional

• Get feedback from people with learning disabilities and their careers, colleagues, and managers
Section 3: Impact

This section is about how social workers make change. It talks about being professional, being a good leader and understanding organisations.

Understanding the context of learning disability service

Social workers should:

- Understand how national policy affects local care services
- Think about how different organisations affect how care works
Being responsible

Social workers should:

- Meet with their boss often

- Think about how being a social worker gives them power, and use that power to help others
Managing yourself and your skills

Social workers should:

- Regularly think about their skills and if there are any gaps
- Plan their professional training regularly
Working together

Social Workers should:

- Understand co-production
  Co-production means producing services with people with learning disabilities

- Make sure people with learning disabilities are included in planning and delivering social work
Supporting family, friends and carers

Social Workers should:

- Understand and follow the law to support carers
- Work with family, friends and carers to develop good relationships based on openness and honesty.
- Provide accessible information about money and making decisions