NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

Guideline scope

Adults with complex needs: social work interventions including assessment, care management and support

The Department of Health and Social Care has asked NICE to develop a guideline on social work for adults with complex needs.

The guideline will be developed using the methods and processes outlined in developing NICE guidelines: the manual.

This guideline will also be used to develop the NICE quality standard for social work for adults with complex needs.

1   Why the guideline is needed

People with complex needs often experience difficulties in their daily lives and in their relationships with other people and social institutions.

Social workers, in partnership with adults who have complex needs and their families, carers and advocates, help people to identify, agree and meet their goals. They do this by using approaches such as relationship- and strengths-based practice. Personalised communication and using professional values, including empathy, empowerment and understanding, enable people to be heard and have more control, choice and autonomy.

Social work includes long-term support to maintain quality of life, and short-term support to reduce the need for ongoing support. These are intended to improve health and wellbeing outcomes, as defined by the Care Act 2014.

The Department of Health and Social Care's framework and handbook outlines a strengths-based model to guide social workers in practice,

supervision and quality assurance. This guideline will evaluate approaches in this model that are relevant to adults with complex needs.

Key facts and figures

- The 2019 King's Fund Social care 360 report found that local authorities received 1.84 million new requests for social care support in 2017/18, nearly three-quarters (1.32 million) from older adults. Requests for support have risen by 2% since 2015/16, with the rise mainly among working age adults.

- But the report showed that the number of people receiving social care is falling. Between 2009/10 and 2013/14, the number of adults receiving publicly funded social care fell by 400,000.

- Total local authority expenditure on adult social care in 2017/18 was £21.3 billion. This has risen since 2013/14 but is still £700 million below the level of spending in 2010/11, despite increasing demand. Self-funded spending on care has been estimated at nearly £11 billion a year.

- About 1.5 million people are employed in social care jobs in England, including just over 30,000 registered social workers. There are around 20,500 social worker jobs in the adult social care sector and about 3,700 social workers are approved mental health professionals.

- Disabilities, including serious mental illness and intellectual disabilities, are associated with increased risk of preventable secondary conditions, earlier onset of conditions associated with ageing, and premature mortality.

Current practice

Social workers support adults with complex needs in a range of settings, on a long- or short-term basis. They help people with social and interpersonal difficulties, promoting human rights and wellbeing. Social workers' responsibilities include facilitating the local authority's duty to conduct needs assessments under the Care Act 2014. They also work with individuals and families to address identified needs, effect change and organise support.

The Care Quality Commission State of Care report 2017/18 notes that most people in England receive a good quality of adult social care. Nearly

two-thirds of people using social care services are very satisfied with the support they have received, and this figure is unchanged in recent years.

But the report shows significant variation in quality, access, and workforce recruitment and retention. In 2018, 21% of adult social care services and 30% of NHS mental health services were rated as requiring improvement. People from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups report lower levels of satisfaction than those from white ethnic groups. And the number of formal complaints is increasing, with many being about systemic issues rather than individual incidents.

With an increasing need for social care, variation in provision and stretched resources, it is vital to ensure commissioning and delivery is informed by the best available evidence about effective ways of working. The Chief Social Worker for Adults' annual report: 2018 to 2019 identified knowing what works and developing a better evidence base for social work practice as priorities. This guideline will support these priorities.

Policy, legislation, regulation and commissioning

This guideline will be developed in the context of the following statutory guidance and legislation which is particularly relevant:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Mental Health Act 1983 and Mental Health Act 2007
- Care Act 2014 and Care Act Statutory Guidance (2018)
- Health and Social Care (National Data Guardian) Act 2018
- Mental Capacity Act 2005 as well as the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019

The guideline is intended to complement the legislation and statutory guidance and should be used alongside them.

2   Who the guideline is for

This guideline is for:

- registered social workers

- occupational therapists

- approved mental health professionals

- social work supervisors and managers

- social work academics, educators and practice educators

- health and social care staff who support people with complex needs

- adults with complex needs, their families or carers, and the public.

It may also be relevant for:

- people aged 16 to 18 with complex needs who have completed the transition from children to adult services.

NICE guidelines cover health and care in England. Decisions on how they apply in other UK countries are made by ministers in the Welsh Government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive.

Equality considerations

NICE will carry out an equality impact assessment during scoping. The assessment will:

- list equality issues identified, and how they have been addressed

- explain why any groups are excluded from the scope.

3   What the guideline will cover

3.1   Who is the focus?

Groups that will be covered

People aged 18 or older with complex needs.

For the purpose of this guideline adults with complex needs are defined as people needing a high level of support with many aspects of their daily life and relying on a range of health and social care services. This may be because of illness, disability, broader life circumstances or a combination of these. Complex needs may be present from birth, or may develop over the course of

a person's life and may fluctuate. (Based on a [definition of complex needs by the Think Local Act Personal partnership](#)).

3.2 Settings

All settings where social work is provided for adults with complex needs.

3.3 Activities, services or aspects of care

Key areas that will be covered

When developing the guideline we will look at evidence in the areas below for work led or delivered by a registered social worker. It may not be possible to make recommendations in all the areas.

1   Social work assessment and care planning – models and approaches to assessment, care planning and review in:
    – needs assessment
    – risk assessment
    – supporting people to plan for the future, including considering changing needs, wishes and capabilities
    – preventing an escalation of need, or providing urgent support if needs escalate
    – the role of social workers within multidisciplinary teams and how they communicate, support and work with others.

2   Individual or family casework approaches to support the person and their family and carers in:
    – problem solving, for example through restorative practice, family group conferencing and building positive relationships
    – promoting self-esteem, confidence and self-advocacy by building on strengths, enabling communication and supporting the development of coping strategies
    – complex risk planning using signs of safety and wellbeing with people who are at high risk or are experiencing uncertainty, including working with people who have the capacity to understand the risks they are facing and are refusing support

    – coping with changing life situations and learning new approaches to existing, new or emerging difficulties

    – enabling positive risk-taking to promote independence

    – helping people to connect with their local communities and reduce isolation by using neighbourhood networks and local area coordination, including peer support.

Areas that will not be covered

1   Organisation of services.

2   Advice specific to particular disabilities or health conditions, although we will take into account any contexts stakeholders raise as relevant to this guideline.

3   Topics already covered by related NICE guidance, unless there are specific issues related to social work for adults with complex needs.

Related NICE guidance

Published

- [End of life care for adults: service delivery](#) (2019) NICE guideline NG142
- [Post-traumatic stress disorder](#) (2018) NICE guideline NG116
- [Decision-making and mental capacity](#) (2018) NICE guideline NG108
- [Preventing suicide in community and custodial settings](#) (2018) NICE guideline NG105
- [Dementia: assessment, management and support for people living with dementia and their carers](#) (2018) NICE guideline NG97
- [Care and support of people growing older with learning disabilities](#) (2018) NICE guideline NG96
- [Learning disabilities and behaviour that challenges: service design and delivery](#) (2018) NICE guideline NG93
- [Intermediate care including reablement](#) (2017) NICE guideline NG74
- [Mental health of adults in contact with the criminal justice system](#) (2017) NICE guideline NG66
- [Coexisting severe mental illness and substance misuse: community health and social care services](#) (2016) NICE guideline NG58

- [Physical health of people in prison](#) (2016) NICE guideline NG57

- [Multimorbidity: clinical assessment and management](#) (2016) NICE guideline NG 56

- [Mental health problems in people with learning disabilities: prevention, assessment and management](#) (2016) NICE guideline NG54

- [Transition between inpatient mental health settings and community or care home settings](#) (2016) NICE guideline NG 53

- [Community engagement: improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities](#) (2016) NICE guideline NG44

- [Transition from children's to adults' services for young people using health or social care services](#) (2016) NICE guideline NG43

- [Autism spectrum disorder in adults: diagnosis and management](#) (2016) NICE guideline CG142

- [Older people: independence and mental wellbeing](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG32

- [Care of dying adults in the last days of life](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG31

- [Transition between inpatient hospital settings and community or care home settings for adults with social care needs](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG27

- [Older people with social care needs and multiple long-term conditions](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG22

- [Home care: delivering personal care and practical support to older people living in their own homes](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG21

- [Challenging behaviour and learning disabilities: prevention and interventions for people with learning disabilities whose behaviour challenges](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG11

- [Violence and aggression: short-term management in mental health, health and community settings](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG10

- [Domestic violence and abuse: multi-agency working](#) (2014) NICE public health guideline PH50

- [Psychosis and schizophrenia in adults: prevention and management](#) (2014) NICE guideline CG178

- [Common mental health problems: identification and pathways to care](#) (2011) NICE guideline CG123

- [Coexisting severe mental illness (psychosis) and substance misuse: assessment and management in healthcare settings](#) (2011) NICE guideline CG120
- [Depression in adults with a chronic physical health problem: recognition and management](#) (2009) NICE guideline CG91
- [Mental wellbeing in over 65s: occupational therapy and physical activity interventions](#) (2008) NICE guideline PH16

In development

- [Carers: provision of support for adult carers](#) NICE guideline. Publication expected January 2020
- [Depression in adults: treatment and management](#) NICE guideline. Publication expected February 2020 (update of [Depression in adults: recognition and management](#))
- [Safeguarding adults in care homes](#) NICE guideline. Publication expected October 2020
- [Self-harm in over 8s: short- and long-term management and prevention of recurrence](#) NICE guideline. Publication expected January 2022 (update of [Self-harm in over 8s: short-term management and prevention of recurrence](#) and [Self-harm in over 8s: long-term management](#))

NICE guidance about the experience of people using NHS and social care services

NICE has produced the following guidance on the experience of people using the NHS and social care services. This guideline will not include additional recommendations on these topics unless there are specific issues related to social work for adults with complex needs:

- [People's experience in adult social care services](#) (2018) NICE guideline NG86
- [Managing medicines for adults receiving social care in the community](#) (2017) NICE guideline NG67
- [Medicines optimisation](#) (2015) NICE guideline NG5
- [Patient experience in adult NHS services](#) (2012) NICE guideline CG138

- [Service user experience in adult mental health](#) (2011) NICE guideline CG136

- [Medicines adherence](#) (2009) NICE guideline CG76

3.4   Economic aspects

We will take economic aspects into account when making recommendations. We will develop an economic plan that states for each review question (or key area in the scope) whether economic considerations are relevant, and if so whether this is an area that should be prioritised for economic modelling and analysis. We will review the economic evidence and carry out economic analyses, using an NHS, individual or societal perspective, as appropriate.

3.5   Key issues and draft questions

While writing this scope, we have identified the following key issues and draft questions related to them:

1   Social work assessment and care planning – models and approaches to assessment, care planning and review

    1.1 Needs assessment:

    – What is the effectiveness of social work approaches to assessing and reviewing complex care and support needs (including strengths-based approaches)?

    – Based on the views and experiences of everyone involved, what works well and what could be improved about social work assessments of complex care and support needs?

    1.2 Risk assessment:

    – What is the effectiveness of social work approaches to assessing and reviewing risk with adults with complex needs?

    – Based on the views and experiences of everyone involved, what works well and what could be improved about risk assessment with adults with complex needs?

    1.3 Supporting people to plan for the future, including considering changing needs, wishes and capabilities:

– What is the effectiveness of case management and care planning approaches in social work to support future planning (in relation to changing needs, wishes and capabilities)?

– Based on the views and experiences of everyone involved, what works well and what can be improved about case management and care planning approaches in social work to support future planning (in relation to changing needs, wishes and capabilities)?

1.4 Preventing an escalation of need, or providing urgent support if needs escalate:

– What is the effectiveness of case management and care planning to prevent the escalation of need, or to provide urgent support if needs do escalate?

– Based on the views and experiences of everyone involved, what works well and what can be improved about case management and care planning to prevent the escalation of need, or to provide urgent support if needs do escalate?

1.5 The role of social workers within multidisciplinary teams and how they communicate, support and work with others:

– What is the effectiveness of integrated working among registered social workers and other practitioners to support adults with complex needs?

– Based on the views and experiences of everyone involved, what are the facilitators and barriers to integrated working between registered social workers and other practitioners to support adults with complex needs?

2   Individual or family casework approaches to support the person or family and carers

2.1 Individual or family casework to support problem solving, promote self-esteem, confidence and self-advocacy (for example by enabling communication) complex risk planning, coping with changing life situations and enabling positive risk-taking to promote independence:

– What is the effectiveness of social work approaches to individual and family casework for adults with complex needs?

– Based on the views and experiences of everyone involved, what works well and what could be improved about social work approaches to individual and family casework for adults with complex needs?

2.2 Helping people to connect with local communities and reduce isolation:

– What is the effectiveness of social and community support approaches (including peer support) in promoting social inclusion of adults with complex needs?

– Based on the views and experiences of everyone involved, what works well and what could be improved about social and community support (including peer support) to promote social inclusion for adults with complex needs?

The key issues and draft questions will be used to develop more detailed review questions, which guide the systematic review of the literature.

3.6　　Main outcomes

The main outcomes that will be considered when searching for and assessing the evidence are:

- person focused:
  - quality of life (both health- and social-care related)
  - wellbeing
  - independence
  - ability to carry out activities of daily living
  - experience of services
  - participation and inclusion (including progress into employment)
  - self-efficacy and resilience
  - personal goal attainment
  - social capital (range of social contact that provides access to social, emotional or practical support)
  - communication
  - morbidity

- mortality

- social work approach focused:

  - reduction in crises

  - timeliness (this could relate to timing to prevent an escalation of need, timing to address current need, or timing to provide urgent support)

  - access

  - continuity of care and support.

The exact list of outcomes to be considered for each topic are context dependent and will be discussed when detailed review questions are formulated.

4 NICE quality standards and NICE Pathways

4.1 NICE quality standards

NICE quality standards that may need to be revised or updated when this guideline is published

- The potential impact of this guideline on quality standards that include statements on social work assessment, care planning and casework for adults with complex needs will be reviewed.

NICE quality standards that will use this guideline as an evidence source when they are being developed

- Social work for adults with complex needs. NICE quality standard. Publication date to be confirmed

4.2 NICE Pathways

NICE Pathways bring together everything we have said on a topic in an interactive flowchart. When this guideline is published, the recommendations will be included in the NICE Pathway on social work for adults with complex needs (in development).

An outline based on this scope is included below. It will be adapted, and more detail added as the recommendations are written during guideline development.
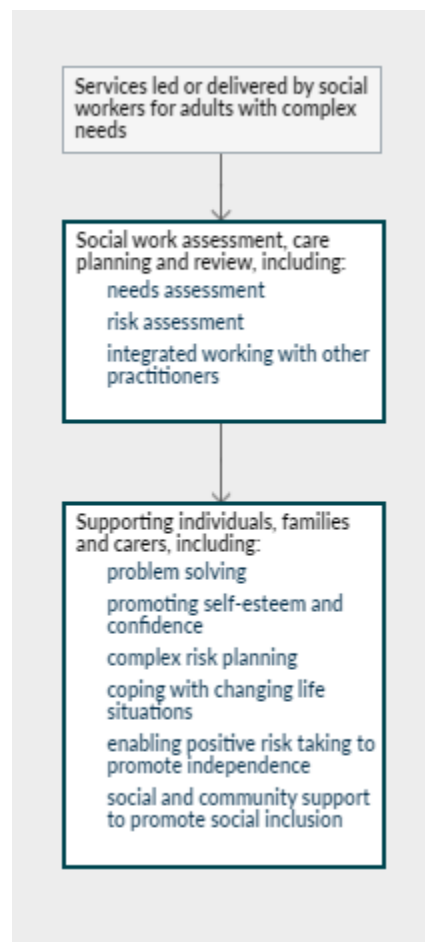
5   Further information

This is the final scope, incorporating comments from registered stakeholders during consultation.

The guideline is expected to be published in January 2022.

You can follow progress of the guideline.

Our website has information about how NICE guidelines are developed.