

Northern Ireland

**Social**

**Care**

**Council**

# Fitness to Practise and Hearings

Frequently Asked Questions

**Last Updated: 31 March 2020**

# Introduction

As the regulator for social workers and social care workers in Northern Ireland everything we do is focused on supporting high quality care for people who need it. We are all adapting. As the regulator we remain committed to supporting high quality standards of social work and social care for everyone who needs it. However we understand and know the impact this is having for social workers, social work students and social care workers, as they respond to challenges never experienced before.

We are committed to protecting people who use services while also maintaining public confidence in social work and social care. The onset of Covid-19 doesn't change that, but it is changing, and will continue to change the way we work. Like other regulators we have made some changes to how we do things. Our approach going forward is based on the core principles of:

- **Minimising the time pressure we impose on registrants and;**
- **Maximising the flexibility for registrants to manage their professional development activities during the challenges of Covid-19.**

The information below outlines the actions we have taken to support registrants, providers and people using services during this time. This document was published on Wednesday 25th March and will continue to be updated as the epidemic and its consequences unfold.

People in our communities are relying on the skills, compassion and kindness of the social work and social care workforce over this challenging period. We want to thank everyone working on, and supporting, the frontline for their professionalism and dedication at this unprecedented time.

# General Advice

## Frequently Asked Questions



### **Do you have any general advice about how we should work at this time?**

The best place to go for up-to-date information on coronavirus is the Public Health Agency and Government websites, where you will also find more specific information for certain providers of care and support. We also encourage our registrants and employers to use and share our free open access digital [Learning Zone](#) with targeted Covid-19 resources.

### **Where can I find more advice related to my local area?**

For more localised advice, you should first and foremost speak to your line-manager or employer who may have more specific guidelines about how you go about your work in a safe and professional way.

### **As a social worker or social care worker where can I find more specific advice?**

First and foremost speak to your line manager or employer who may have more specific guidelines about how you go about your work in a safe and professional way. Also follow Department of Health updates and guidance on their website and on social media.

# Fitness to Practise and Hearings

## Frequently Asked Questions



### **Can I still raise a concern during this time?**

The safety and wellbeing of people who use services remains our priority. Even in current circumstances, people may have legitimate concerns, and it is important that they are able to raise them with us. If they do, the Social Care Council is under a legal duty to investigate them. We will continue to record and make a risk assessment of new fitness to practise concerns and we will continue to progress new and existing cases as far as we can. We will focus specifically on high risk concerns that are raised with us.

### **Will Hearings continue during this period?**

During this period we will focus specifically on high risk concerns that are raised with us. Fitness to practise hearings will not be taking place during this time. However, we will continue to take forward urgent Interim Order cases where we believe people pose a risk and if necessary suspend them from working in the sector. During Covid-19, we will be holding interim order hearings remotely using videoconferencing, and registrants will be invited to provide information to the Committee in writing rather than in person.

### **How do we contact you with any Fitness to practise Concerns?**

For raising concerns and enquiring about any current cases please contact the Fitness to practise Team by email: [Ftp@niscc.hscni.net](mailto:Ftp@niscc.hscni.net)

For concerns and enquiring about your case being heard by Committee, please contact: [committee@niscc.hscni.net](mailto:committee@niscc.hscni.net)

Also see our [Standard of Acceptance](#) for guidance.

# Further Information

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Further Information

Our information and services will be reviewed and updated as the Department of Health, NI Assembly and UK Government make new announcements and we will be responding with agility to what is a fast-moving situation.

Our website will be regularly updated.

In the meantime we are grateful and deeply humbled by how the social work and social care workforce along with our health care colleagues are working together to provide the highest standards of care.

For all the most up to date information from the Department of Health visit: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/coronavirus>

# Contact Us

## Frequently Asked Questions



**If you have further questions you can contact us directly:**

For all new registration application queries and renewals contact:

**Registration: [Registration@niscc.hscni.net](mailto:Registration@niscc.hscni.net)**

For account password reset, employer portal access and any other related digital queries contact:

**Portal: [Database@niscc.hscni.net](mailto:Database@niscc.hscni.net)**

For raising concerns and current cases contact:

**Fitness to practise: [Ftp@niscc.hscni.net](mailto:Ftp@niscc.hscni.net)**

For employer liaison, careers, Degree in Social Work, Professional in Practice (PiP) and learning and development for the social care workforce contact:

**Learning and Training: [Workforcedevelopment@niscc.hscni.net](mailto:Workforcedevelopment@niscc.hscni.net)**

For further information: [Contact Us](#).



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