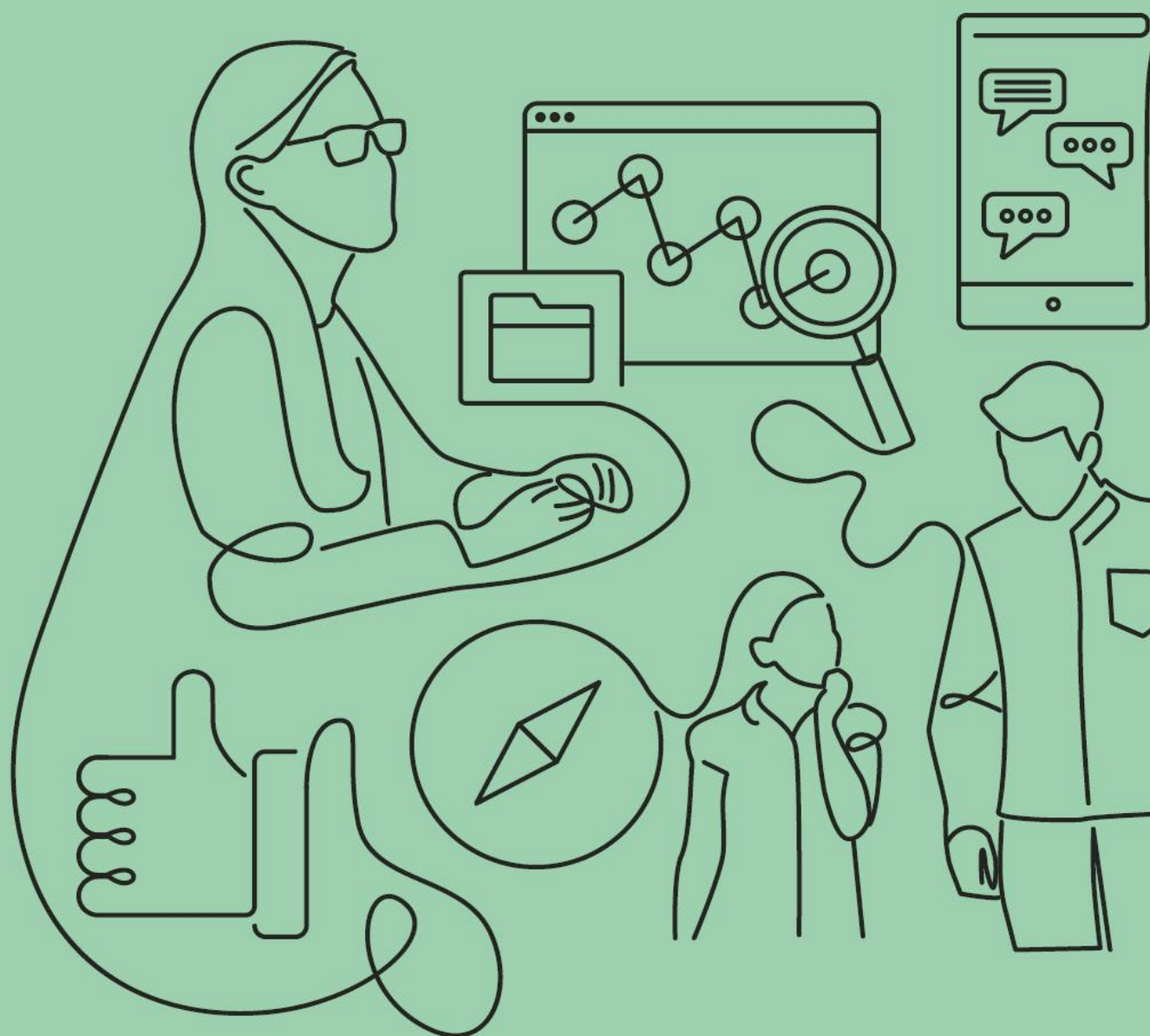


Applicant Guidance Consultation Response

21 November 2019



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Introduction

Social Work England is the new, specialist regulator for social workers in England. We're taking over from the current regulator: the Health and Care Professions Council.

Our purpose is to protect the public and raise standards across social work in England so that people receive the best possible support whenever they might need it in life.

In preparation, we're speaking with those who have an interest in our work to help shape the regulator we will become.

On 8 August 2019, we launched a 10 week public consultation including three pieces of guidance that will support people who wish to make an application to join the Social Work England register.

This report is an overview of the consultation. It includes a summary of our activity, who responded, and the feedback we received.

How we consulted

We previously consulted on the registration rules as part of our rules and standards consultation in Spring 2019.

People and organisations were able to provide via email, post and social media. We publicised the consultation on social media, our web pages, through our regional engagement leads and at external events and workshops.

Consultation responses

We read and considered every response to the consultation. We received eight responses, two of which were from organisations. The two organisations who responded were BASW and the PSA.

What you said and our response

Below is a summary of the feedback we received. The draft guidance was well received, and feedback focused on gaps that were identified in the guidance and some suggestions of areas where we could be clearer about our procedure and how they link with other processes (appeals, for example).

You wanted:	We then:
More information about verifying an applicant's identity	Added further explanation in the guidance
Clarification about updating practise: how much can be private study?	Clarified this in the guidance (no more than 30 days)
Clarification about timescales for processing applications	Made sure the reference to Registration Rule 24(1) is more prominent
More information about appeals	Created separate guidance about appeals which is referred to in the applicant guidance

Clarification about the importance of professional standards	Increased the prominence of the reference to professional standards in the guidance to signify their importance
More information about registration with conditions	Produced separate guidance on this and have made sure the applicant guidance makes reference to it
More information about alternatives to an online application form	Included information about alternative ways to apply
Clarification about the meaning of honesty and integrity	Clarified the statement to applicants that it's their responsibility to declare any relevant information when applying for registration and at any point during their registration period
More information about convictions and cautions	Given more detailed information about what information should be shared with Social Work England
EEA guidance should include information about arrangements that will apply if the UK is no longer a member of the European Union	This information has been put on our website and we've referenced it in the EEA guidance

Overall, we've updated the three sets of guidance to expand on the identified areas and give further clarification.

Equality impact

What you said

Respondents did not raise any concerns about how the guidance and/or process would impact on groups with protected characteristics. One response raised a need for clarification about people who may not be able to access/use the online account.

What we did

- We set out, in the guidance, the process for those registrants concerned they may not be able to access the online account; and
- we're reviewing the system to make sure it'll be compatible with assistive software.

What we've learned

- That applicants want clarity about periods of adaptation and requirements for updating knowledge and skills;
- that applicants want clarity about what should and should not be disclosed at the point of application about criminal convictions and offences; and
- People did not raise concerns about the application process being online.

These lessons have been useful to us and we've been able to use all the comments to improve the guidance we provide for applicants.

What happens next?

The consultation closed on 18 October 2019, but we'll continue to work with people with lived experience of social work and social workers in developing our proposals and embedding new processes. We look forward to working with all those who have an interest in social work to become a responsive, fair and effective specialist regulator for social work.

The improved guidance documents to support applicants can be found on our website.