Profession: Social Work

Roles and responsibilities of the professional

Social work internationally is described as:

‘a profession which promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.’

(International Association of Schools of Social Work/International Federation of Social Workers.)

In England, these aims are expressed in terms of six ‘key roles’ for social workers:

**Key role 1:**
Prepare for, and work with individuals, families, carers, groups and communities to assess their needs and circumstances

**Key role 2:**
Plan, carry out, review and evaluate social work practice, with individuals, families, carers, groups, communities and other professionals

**Key role 3:**
Support individuals to represent their needs, views and circumstances

**Key role 4:**
Manage risk to individuals, families, carers, groups, self and colleagues

**Key role 5:**
Manage and be accountable, with supervision and support, for your own social work practice within your organisation

**Key role 6:**
Demonstrate professional competence in social work practice


**Modern Perspective**

Social work involves the carrying out a wide range of activities, incorporating the assessment of risk and need, and the planning and delivery of services to safeguard and promote the well-being of service users.

Central to its purposes are the principles of recognising and challenging those factors which generate disadvantage and inequality, and it is therefore committed to speaking out with and on behalf of people whose life chances may be limited in
various ways. Like other professions, social work often encounters an inherent
tension between the rights of service users and the priorities and limited resources
available to provide appropriate services – practitioners are expected to square this
circle as a matter of course.
Social work is often seen as a function predominantly carried out and resourced by
statutory agencies, but it is also practiced in both voluntary and private sectors,
where expectations and constraints may be somewhat different.