



**Social Workers
Registration Board**

Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

EXPERIENCE PATHWAY: S13

POLICY & IMPLEMENTATION

Relevant legislation:

The Social Workers Registration Act 2003 sections 13, 88, Schedule 1AA clauses 1 and 2
The Social Workers Registration Legislation Act 2019 section 24.

Other related SWRB policy documents:

Fit and Proper Policy
Supervision Policy
Competence Policy
English Language Policy
Continuing Professional Development Policy

DEFINITIONS/GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

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| The Act | Social Workers Registration Act 2003 |
| The Board | The Social Workers Registration Board, established by section 97 of the Act – regulates the social work profession in Aotearoa New Zealand |
| SWRB | The Crown Entity responsible for the regulation of social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Refers to both the Board and the operational staff who work under the governance of the Board. |
| Registered social worker | A social worker whose details are entered in the register of social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand |
| The Criteria | The requirements described in section 13 of the Act which guide the Board's decision as to whether to register an applicant who does not hold a prescribed qualification. |
| CPD | Continuing professional development relevant to social work practice as defined in SWRB Continuing Professional Development Policy |
| ANZASW | Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers – the professional body for social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand |
| Fit and proper person | Someone who can satisfy the Board they are fit to practise social work according to the SWRB Fit and Proper policy |
| He Arapaki | The SWRB Māori development strategy and action plan |
| Registrar | Administers the Register of Social Workers in Aotearoa New Zealand |
| Social work advisor | A registered social worker employed by the SWRB |
| Kaiarotake | Assessors of social work experience and competence. Kai – agent (person) Aro – to pay attention to, take heed, take notice of, to consider Take – topic, subject, matter, issue, concern, reason, purpose |
| Rōpū | The kaiarotake and SWRB social work advisor and who together assess applicants' experience and competence in practising social work |

PURPOSE

The Act establishes the framework for the registration of social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand for the purpose of protecting the safety of members of the public and upholding the professionalism of social work. This framework ensures that social workers are competent and accountable for their practice.

Generally, social workers are required to have a prescribed New Zealand qualification or the overseas equivalent to become registered. However, Section 13 of the Act provides for registration based on practical experience. If the Board is satisfied that a person applying for registration based on experience meets the criteria in the Act the Board may register the applicant.

This policy sets out the criteria and evidence required for the Board to register as a social worker, an experienced social work practitioner who does not hold a prescribed social work qualification.

WHO IS COVERED?

Applicants for registration who do not hold an SWRB-recognised formal social work qualification and are applying based on their practical social work experience in Aotearoa New Zealand are covered by this policy. Those who are currently enrolled in an [SWRB-recognised social work qualification](#) (Bachelor or Masters in Applied Social Work) and those whose social work experience is solely outside Aotearoa New Zealand are excluded.

The Experience Pathway: S13 Policy is valid until 27 February 2024, from which time applications for registration through this pathway will no longer be accepted.

INTRODUCTION

Social work in Aotearoa New Zealand originated from a committed workforce striving to improve outcomes for others within their communities. As social work qualifications became more accessible, more social workers were able to build on their knowledge and skills through formal study.

The passing of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 signalled the government's expectation that social workers would become a regulated and qualified professional workforce. Section 13 of the Act was included to acknowledge the contributions of social workers who had been working in their communities before the Act came into force, when education leading to a recognised New Zealand social work qualification was not as accessible.

Under the Act, the Board has full discretion to register a social worker based on their experience practising social work, where they meet all the Criteria outlined in the Act.

THE CRITERIA

To register you based on your practical social work experience, the Board must be satisfied that:

- a) your practical experience in practising as a social worker in Aotearoa New Zealand is enough to compensate for the lack of a relevant qualification; **and**
- b) you are competent to practise as a social worker, **and**
- c) you are a fit and proper person to practise as a social worker; **and**
- d) you are competent to practise as a social worker with Māori; **and**

- e) you are competent to practise as a social worker with different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand.

All these Criteria must be met to ensure that the purpose of the Act is fulfilled. However, the Experience Pathway: S13 is discretionary, so meeting all the requirements does not guarantee registration.

EVIDENCE

To consider your application, the Board requires evidence that you meet the Criteria. This evidence is considered under three broad categories:

- experience
- competence, and
- fitness to practice.

The evidence the Board requires of your experience, competence, and fitness to practice is outlined in the following table:

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| Practical experience | <p>You will need to demonstrate practical social work experience through evidence of your social work skills and responsibilities in roles that fit within the SWRB General Scope of Practice. You are expected show a substantial amount of experience in social work aligned roles and be able to draw on those experiences in practice examples. Both voluntary and paid work is relevant. Required evidence includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your work history • case study examples from your own practice • endorsements from other social workers who are familiar with your practice • reflection on your engagement in regular professional supervision • a record of your social work aligned CPD. |
| Competence | <p>Your competence will be assessed against all ten SWRB Core Competence Standards. Evidence of your competence includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • case study examples that demonstrate how you have applied each of the SWRB Ten Core Competence Standards in your own practice • reflection on your own practice that demonstrates application of the SWRB Code of Conduct and ANZASW Code of Ethics • demonstration of application of te Tiriti o Waitangi in your own practice • showing understanding of te ao Māori perspectives in your practice • showing how you consider and adapt your practice to account for cultural and ethnic perspectives • a record of the relevant CPD you have undertaken during your career • reflection that demonstrates how your practice has been enhanced by professional supervision • endorsement of your competence from other social workers who are familiar with your practice. |

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| Fitness to practice | <p>In assessing your fitness to practice, the Board is required to consider your character and reputation, ability to communicate, and health. Evidence that you are a fit and proper person to practice social work includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police vetting • a professional reference from your direct line manager • your declaration which includes statements regarding your health, convictions, and involvement in professional disciplinary proceedings. <p>If you have any convictions, you may also be required to provide one or more character references, related reflective statement, and other information depending on the nature of the conviction/s.</p> |
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THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Effective communication is fundamental to competent social work. Therefore, the Experience Pathway: S13 assessment process involves both written and verbal components. He Arapaki – pathways of discovery and transformation, uses Māori cultural paradigms as an approach for this assessment:

He ara pūkenga, he ara tauwhiro, hei whakamana mātā waka

The many pathways of knowledge, the many pathways of social work, to uphold the dignity of all

The application process supports you:

- to share your social work knowledge – *he ara pūkenga*
- to tell your story of how you have weaved your knowledge into your social work practice – *he ara tauwhiro*
- by acknowledging the mana of your narrative that is unique to you within your own whānau context - *hei whakamana mātā waka*.

A template is provided to help you present the written evidence the Board requires. You must answer all questions in the template. You have the option of completing the template in either English or te reo Māori.

You may also submit additional documentation relevant to the Criteria, if you believe it will support your application. The Board will consider all the information you provide.

The principles of natural justice apply to the assessment of applications. That means, before making any decision, the Board will provide you with the opportunity to respond to anything that may potentially adversely affect your application.

Ensuring your application is valid

A valid application is one that is complete and contains all the information the Board needs to determine whether you meet the Criteria. An application is considered valid when:

- it is in the form required by the Board
- it contains all the information that is required by the Board
- it is accompanied by the required evidence, and
- the relevant fee has been paid.

If you have not provided enough evidence of practical social work experience in Aotearoa New Zealand, we will contact you to give you an opportunity to provide additional evidence.

If any other evidence is required, we will let you know and give you an opportunity to provide the additional evidence, or to withdraw your application.

You are welcome to contact the SWRB for clarification of the requirements of the application at any time through the process.

When the Registrar has determined that your application is valid, a social work advisor will be assigned to look after your application and will be your main point of contact while your application is being assessed.

Assessing your application against the Criteria

The assessment of whether your application meets the Criteria is conducted in two parts:

- 1) **Assessment of competence and experience** – this is conducted by kaiarotake; an expert rōpū of social workers. First, the rōpū will assess those components of your written application that relate to your competence and experience.

Following this you may be invited to meet with the rōpū, either online or in person. To enable you to prepare, we will send you copies of the initial assessment and let you know the questions the kaiarotake will ask. Whakawhanaungatanga is a vital part of the hui process, and we encourage you to invite people of your choice who are welcome to participate in this meeting, including your endorsers.

Your endorsers may also be contacted and asked additional questions relevant to the information you have provided in your application.

- 2) **Fitness to practice assessment** – your Police vetting results, professional reference, and your declaration will be assessed according to the SWRB Fit and Proper policy. If a character reference, reflective statement, or other information is required, we will let you know.

The assessment rōpū

Members will be selected by the SWRB to ensure that every rōpū consists of expertise in the following areas:

- i. te ao Māori
- ii. social work practice
- iii. social work education
- iv. SWRB

Kaiarotake must meet the following criteria:

- registered as a social worker with the SWRB,
- holds a current practising certificate,
- understands and demonstrates application of te Tiriti o Waitangi principles,
- participates in regular professional supervision (at least monthly)
- experienced in social work practice, and
- endorsed by another registered social worker.

Our Kaiarotake Tangata Whenua all have active Māori networks for support, advice, and guidance. They bring their expert knowledge to the assessment of how you demonstrate application of te ao Māori models and perspectives in your social work practice. Every rōpū has at least one Kaiarotake Tangata Whenua member.

Rōpū members are required to declare any conflicts of interest. The hui will usually be conducted online, and this is covered by your application fee. See the fees section of this policy for further detail.

Endorsers

Endorsers are required to provide additional evidence of your competence and experience practising social work.

Use the following points to help you decide who is suitable to act as endorsers for your application:

- Must be well acquainted with your social work practice
- Should have known you for at least one year
- Must be able to give an impartial view of your practice
- At least two of your three endorsers should be registered social workers
- One should be your current line manager

One endorser may also act as your professional reference.

MAKING A DECISION ON YOUR APPLICATION

The Board will carefully consider your application and ensure that fair process is followed to reach their decision. The Board's decision on whether your application meets the Criteria is informed by advice and recommendations from SWRB social work advisors, the assessment rōpū, and the evidence you have provided.

The Board may ask the social work advisors to contact you to request further information or evidence to inform its consideration.

The Board may:

- grant you full registration, or
- grant you full registration with conditions, or
- grant you temporary registration with a request for further information to enable it to reach a final decision, or
- propose to decline registration.

If the Board's decision is to grant you registration (with or without conditions), you will become a fully registered social worker, authorised to practise under the General Scope of Practice, and entitled to apply for a practising certificate. You are legally required to hold a current practising certificate to practise social work in Aotearoa New Zealand.

If the Board proposes to decline your application, or to grant you temporary registration, or full registration with conditions, it will contact you before a final decision is made. You will be informed of the proposed decision in writing, setting out the reasons for that decision and the information this is based on, and you will have a reasonable opportunity to make your written submission. You can also ask to be heard by the Board, which will be granted if the Board decides that is required to ensure fair process in consideration of your application. The Board will make a final decision on your application after considering your views.

FEE

The Experience Pathway registration application fee (as published in the New Zealand Gazette), covers all aspects of assessment of your application, and includes registration if your application is successful. The fee must be paid in full and is non-refundable.

If you ask to meet the rōpū kanohi ki te kanohi and this results in additional costs (for example, for travel, accommodation, and meals), you are expected to cover these additional costs.

The fee does not include your Practising Certificate. If your application is successful, you will have to pay the Practising Certificate application fee and Disciplinary Levy to practise legally.

TRANSITIONAL PROCESS

If you started your application under the previous process and were advised by the SWRB to “proceed to Stage Two,” we recommend using the revised application template by starting at Part 2: Practice Study. If you choose to continue using the previous version (Experience Pathway: S13 Stage Two template), you must submit it before 6 June 2022.

From 6 June 2022, only applications completed on the current application template will be accepted.

APPEALS

An applicant who has been declined registration following an application has the right of appeal to the District Court. Any appeal must be on a notice of appeal and lodged within 20 working days of being advised of the Board’s decision in relation to the outcome.