



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**
Social Care **Wales**

Misuse of 'social worker' title



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Misusing the title – committing an offence

To be able to use the title 'social worker' in Wales, a person must be registered with one of these organisations:

- Social Care Wales
- the Health and Care Professions Council
- the Northern Ireland Social Care Council
- the Scottish Social Services Council.

A person in Wales, who is not a registered social worker, commits an offence if they:

- use the title 'social worker',
- use any title or description that implies they are a registered social worker, or
- pretend to be a social worker in any other way,

with the intention to deceive others¹.

If a person is found guilty of the offence, they could have a fine imposed on them by a magistrates' court. This only applies to misuse of the qualified social worker title.

Where an offence is not committed

It is unlikely that a person who is not registered will have committed an offence if they use the title 'social worker' with a prefix, such as 'trainee' or 'student'. This is because the title clearly indicates that they are not fully qualified. Assuming that the person is a trainee or a student, the prefix would show there is no intention to deceive.

Similarly, where another person or organisation describes an unregistered person as a 'social worker' without their knowledge, the person would not be guilty of an offence. Examples of this would include reference to them as a 'social worker' in:

- social media, for example, Twitter
- a televised news item
- a newspaper article
- a website.

In these circumstances, the use of the title is a mistake by the person or organisation responsible for the tweet/item/article. There is no intention to deceive on the part of the unregistered person.

¹ Section 111, Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016



However, a person would be committing an offence if they made a false claim about a person who was not registered, knowing it was incorrect and did so with the intention to deceive.

Where an individual is working as a social worker but has failed to register or failed to maintain their registration as a social worker

This occurs in the following circumstances:

- where an individual lapses from the Register by failing to renew their registration
- where an individual fails to make an annual payment
- where an individual qualified as a social worker, but has never registered with Social Care Wales or another appropriate regulatory body
- where there have been changes to the requirements in an individual's job role requiring them to be registered, but they have failed to register as a social worker.

What to do if someone is misusing the title 'social worker'

If you know, and have evidence, that someone is misusing the title 'social worker', you need to report them to us in writing (by letter or email). You will need to send us:

- their name
- contact details, for example, their home address, where they work or email address
- evidence that they are misusing the title and committing an offence, for example, an email, business card, advertisement, CV, and so on.

If you do not want the individual to know who supplied us with their name, please tell us when you write to us.

Please send the information to:

ftp@socialcare.wales or to:

Fitness to Practise Team
Social Care Wales
South Gate House
Wood Street
Cardiff CF10 1EW



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What we will do

When we become aware of allegations that an individual is misusing the title 'social worker', we will:

- write to them asking them to stop working as a social worker if we have their contact details
- ask them to respond and confirm that the misuse has stopped
- notify the person's employer if we have their details and ask them to investigate what has happened, or refer the person to the police if we don't have their contact details.

Where we receive confirmation that the misuse has stopped, we will close the matter.

In some circumstances, we may initiate our own prosecution if we decide it is in the public interest to do so. We may also refer the person to the police. Where we decide to prosecute and the person is convicted, they could be liable for a fine of up to £5,000.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

