

Council, 27 March 2014

Reviews of social work education in England

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

In February 2014, two independent reviews of social work education were published. The reviews were commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove MP and by the Minister of State for Health, Norman Lamb MP. Both reports are appended.

The attached paper looks at the themes in the reports which are of direct relevance to the HCPC's role in regulating social workers in England. It provides a commentary on the key areas and identifies actions for the HCPC, if any.

Decision

The Council is invited to discuss the attached paper and appended reports. The Council is invited to identify any further actions for the HCPC.

Background information

Please see paper.

Resource implications

There are no resource implications as a result of this paper.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications as a result of this paper.

Appendices

- Martin Narey (2014). Making the education of social workers consistently effective. Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of the education of children's social workers.
- David Croisdale-Appleby (2014). Re-visioning social work education. An independent review.

Date of paper

14 March 2014

Reviews of social work education in England

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In February 2014, two independent reviews of social work education were published. Martin Narey was asked by the Department for Education to review initial education for children’s social workers. David Croisdale-Appleby was asked by the Department of Health to review social work education.
- 1.2 The separate reviews reflect the division of responsibility between the two departments. The Department for Education is responsible for social work with children. The Department of Health is responsible for social work with adults. It also holds responsibility for professional regulation.
- 1.3 This paper has been produced to assist the Council in its discussion of the reports, both of which are appended. This paper is divided into four sections.
- Section one introduces the document.
 - Section two outlines some background to the regulation of social workers in England by the HCPC.
 - Section three summarises the role of the College of Social Work.
 - Section four looks at the themes from the reports which are directly relevant to the HCPC. This section includes the following.
 - A summary of the conclusions and recommendations of the reports in each area.
 - Any relevant background information and the observations of the Executive.
 - An indication of any actions identified by the Executive at this stage (if any).

2. Social workers in England

- 2.1 The HCPC became responsible for the regulation of social workers in England on 1 August 2012. The profession was previously regulated by the General Social Care Council (GSCC), an arm's length body under the direction of the Department of Health. Social workers are regulated separately in each of the four countries.
- 2.2 Both reports refer to previous work undertaken in recent years to reform social work education and training owing to concerns about its quality, particularly with respect to the calibre of entrants to training; the quality of practice placements; and the support available in the workplace for newly qualified social workers (NQSWs).
- 2.3 Most recently, the Social Work Task Force (SWTF)¹ made a number of recommendations about improving social work education and training and practice. The Social Work Reform Board (SWRB)² was subsequently established to lead implementation of the recommendations. The HCPC was represented on the SWRB and its sub-groups following the announcement that the GSCC would be abolished in 2010.
- 2.4 In 2011, Professor Eileen Munro published the outcomes of her review of child protection. The review made a number of recommendations for reform, including revising statutory guidance; reforming the way in which performance was measured and reported; and introducing the post of a chief social worker. The recommendations did not relate directly to the HCPC, or to pre-registration social work education and training, but our role was referenced in the final report.³

3. The College of Social Work (TCSW)

- 3.1 A number of the recommendations made in both reports also relate to the role of the College of Social Work (TCSW). The creation of a college to represent and lead the development of the profession was a recommendation of the SWTF. TCSW was created through initial funding from government. The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) also represents the social work profession.

¹ SWTF (2009). Building a safe, confident future - The final report of the Social Work Task Force <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-01114-2009>

² SWRB (2012). Building a safe, confident future – Maintaining momentum. Progress report from the social work reform board. https://www.gov.uk/goverMNent/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175947/SWRB_progress_report_-_June_2012.pdf

³ Eileen Munro (2011). The Munro review of child protection. Final report. A child-centred system. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175391/Munro_Review.pdf

3.2 TCSW has taken ownership of the outcomes of some of the work overseen by the SWRB, some of which it was anticipated would have been owned by the GSCC had it not been abolished. This has included ownership of the newly developed curriculum for pre-registration social work education and training and the profession's framework for post-qualifying education and training. Two areas of TCSW's role which are of particular relevance to the HCPC and the recommendations made in the report are as follows.

- **The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)** published by TCSW sets-out the capabilities expected of social workers at entry to the profession and at various stages of career development beyond. These standards are one of the products of the SWRB and were being developed at the same time as the HCPC was developing the standards of proficiency for social workers. The HCPC has published a document mapping the standards of proficiency against the PCF's capabilities for the end of the final placement.⁴ A joint statement was also published by the HCPC and the TCSW explaining the links between the two sets of standards.⁵
- **Endorsement of qualifying social work programmes.** One of the ways in which the College uses the PCF is as part of its endorsement of pre-registration social work programmes. TCSW also publishes endorsement criteria. The purpose is to 'promote and celebrate high quality education and training' above the requirements set out in the HCPC's standards.⁶ Education providers are not compelled to seek endorsement, but many choose to.

⁴ HCPC (2012). Mapping of the HCPC's standards of proficiency for social workers in England against the Professional Capabilities Framework.

<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/publications/standards/index.asp?id=569>

⁵ HCPC / TCSW (2012). Joint statement on the standards of proficiency for social workers in England and the Professional Capabilities Framework.

<http://www.hcpc->

[uk.org/mediaandevents/statements/sopforswandtheprofessionalcapabilitiesframework/](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/mediaandevents/statements/sopforswandtheprofessionalcapabilitiesframework/)

⁶ <http://www.tcsw.org.uk/Qualifying-programme-endorsement/>

4. Themes relevant to the HCPC's regulatory role

4.1 Responsibility for the regulation of social workers

Summary

- Narey recommends that consideration should be given to transferring responsibility for the regulation of social workers to TCSW. This recommendation is based on conclusions which include the following.
 - The HCPC's standards and processes are insufficiently robust.
 - Separation of the professional body function and regulatory function is unnecessary for social work.
 - Social work 'sits very oddly' amongst the other professions regulated by the HCPC (Narey, pg.21).
- In contrast, Croisdale-Appleby concludes that there is 'little support' for TCSW taking on a regulatory role owing to concerns about a conflict between regulation and representing the interests of the profession (Croisdale-Appleby, pg.73).

Relevant recommendations

- 'The Department for Education should consider whether the role of the HCPC in regulating the social work profession, including prescribing standards of proficiency and approving HEI social work courses, duplicates the role of the College of Social Work, and, if so, whether those duties should be transferred to the College.' (Recommendation 4, Narey, pg.27.)

Background and HCPC observations

- The role of the professional body is to promote and develop the profession and the role of the professional regulator is to protect the public. These roles are complementary but are normally considered to be separate. Regulatory policy over a number of years has been towards separating these roles to avoid any perceived or actual conflict of interest.
- There would be considerable cost implications for social workers if regulatory functions were transferred to TCSW. The Government previously estimated that every social worker would have had to pay between £232 and £274 per year if the GSCC had become an independent self-financing regulator.⁷ As a multi-professional regulator, the HCPC benefits from economies of scale. The HCPC's registration fee is £76 rising to £80 from 1 April 2014.

⁷ Department of Health (2011). Health and Social Care Bill 2011. Impact assessments. https://www.gov.uk/goverMNeNent/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/215820/dh_129917.pdf Paragraph E.77.

- To date, the HCPC has enjoyed a good working relationship with TCSW.

HCPC actions

- None identified at this stage

4.2 Genericism versus specialisation

Summary

- The issue of whether social work should be a 'generic' profession at entry, with newly qualified practitioners able to work in all areas, or 'split' to reflect differing competencies to work in adult social services and children's social services, is a continuing debate which is reflected in both reports.
- Both reports conclude that the profession should continue to be 'generic' at entry, but with different conclusions reached.
- Narey argues that students should be able to specialise in work with children after the first year of undergraduate degree programmes. This is necessary he argues to ensure that newly qualified social workers are better prepared to work in children's services. He argues that at present experience of, and knowledge related to, children's services is diminished by maintaining a 'generic' qualification (Narey, pg.35-39).
- Croisdale-Appleby in contrast argues that it is important to maintain students' ability to work with all groups including children, adults and their families. He reports that lack of preparedness of newly qualified practitioners is 'not a particularly widely experienced situation'. In his view, increased specialisation during qualifying education and training is not a solution to the other issues he identifies (Croisdale-Appleby, pg.64-68).

Relevant recommendations

- 'Universities should be encouraged to develop degrees for those intending to work in children's social work. Such degrees would build on a first year common to all social workers, with a second and third year focusing exclusively on children and related issues.' (Recommendation 16, Narey, pg.44.)
- 'The requirement that social workers have placements in contrasting service settings (typically, one with children and one with adults) should be relaxed to allow those intent on a career in children's social work to spend all 170 days of placement in a children's setting.' (Recommendation 17, Narey, pg.44.)
- 'All educational routes to qualification must demonstrate authentic pedagogical evidence that they will provide an in-depth knowledge of the fundamental conceptual frameworks for social work, to ensure that they equip students with the basis for a career in social work with all service user groups and in whatever settings they choose to work.' (Recommendation 9, Croisdale-Appleby, pg.87.)

Background and HCPC observations

- The profession of social work in England is a 'generic' profession at entry. This is supported by legislation which protects the title 'social worker' and does not distinguish between those qualified to work with specific client groups. The standards of proficiency were therefore developed for a 'generic' profession.
- Although Narey does not suggest a 'split at registration' in the profession, we might question whether the extent of specialisation he suggests would produce a 'generic' social worker in anything other than name. A student who undertook only placements in children's social work would arguably graduate with the demonstrated ability to work with a narrow client group, limiting their employability in other settings (a point made in Croisdale-Appleby's report).
- Some degree of specialisation is possible as part of pre-registration education and training. However, students have to meet all the standards of proficiency by completion of their programmes in order to graduate with an award which confers eligibility to apply for registration.

HCPC actions

- None identified at this stage

4.3 Standards

Summary

- Both reports are critical of the content of the existing standards of proficiency, concluding that they do not adequately describe the knowledge and abilities of a newly qualified social worker (Narey, pg.6-7; Croisdale-Appleby, pg.72).
- Both reports are critical of the standards of education and training, concluding that the standards are neither specific enough to social work and social work education, nor sufficiently demanding of education providers (Narey, pg.6-7; Croisdale-Appleby, pg.72-3).
- Narey concludes that TCSW's endorsement criteria should replace the HCPC's standards (as part of TCSW taking on the HCPC's regulatory role) and be strengthened to be more prescriptive (Narey, pg.24).
- Croisdale-Appleby concludes that the HCPC's and TCSW's standards (and approval processes) should be brought together, with the HCPC regulating the social work profession using these 'enhanced' standards. There is, he concludes, little appetite amongst education providers for continuing with two sets of standards (Croisdale-Appleby, pg.73).

Relevant recommendations

- 'Universities are sovereign bodies and it is entirely appropriate and justifiable, not least in terms of student choice, that social work degree courses vary. But there needs to be a concise, single document drafted, drawing on the advice of the College of Social Work, academics and, particularly, employers, which offers in a single publication a GMC style summary of what a newly qualified children's social worker needs to understand. Such a document should cover not only factual issues but those which are best described as philosophical or attitudinal. I recommend that the Chief Social Worker for Children take the lead in drafting such a document. I suggest she first needs to draft a definition of children's social work.' (Recommendation 1, Narey, pg.13.)
- 'That the regulation of social worker education is made more coherent, seamless, and rigorous in terms both of standards and processes by bringing together the standards of the HCPC and the endorsement criteria of TCSW into a new, single regulatory regime in which both the rigour of the regulatory process and the stringency of the levels assessed in regulation must be substantially strengthened. HCPC should continue to regulate social work education to these new standards.' (Recommendation 12, Croisdale-Appleby, pg.87.)

Background and HCPC observations

- The standards of proficiency for social workers in England were developed by a Professional Liaison Group (PLG), which included key stakeholders from the profession, drawing on a range of existing reference points. They were also subject to a public consultation.
- The GSCC did not publish the equivalent of standards of proficiency. As an arm's length body, it regulated social work education against requirements for training published by the Department of Health.⁸
- Many of Narey's criticisms in this area are made with specific reference to children's social workers. The standards of proficiency describe the threshold knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for entry to the Register as a so-called 'generic' social worker. As a result they set-out the standards required for safe and effective practice with a range of client groups, not just with children.
- The standards of education and training are focused on ensuring fitness to practise at the point of entry to the Register. They are focused as far as possible on 'outcomes', avoiding prescription which might unnecessarily fetter flexibility and innovation. They are designed to be applied across a range of training models delivered in higher education, the private sector and in employment-based education settings.
- Amongst the other professions regulated by the HCPC it is normal for the professional body to have developed its own standards for education and practice which are often more aspirational in nature and focused on developing the profession further. The PCF published by TCSW is an example of this – setting capabilities beyond pre-registration education to establish a career framework for social work. The HCPC's threshold standards and those of the professional body perform different, but complementary roles.
- The conclusion that the standards fail to be sufficiently challenging contrasts to the outcomes of the first academic year of visits to social work programmes. The report recently published shows that none of the programmes visited to date were approved without conditions attached, with an average of 6.9 conditions made per programme. Conditions were most frequently set in the areas of programme management and resources;

⁸ Department of Health (2002). Requirements for social work training.
<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide04/files/requirements-for-social-work-training.pdf>

practice placements; and assessment. Programmes have therefore had to make changes in order to come-up to standard.⁹

- Given that at the time of writing the HCPC was part way through its programme of visiting transitionally approved social work programmes, it may in any event be too soon to draw any conclusions about the impact of the standards of education and training in assuring, and driving improvements in, social work education. Visits are taking place over three academic years to 2014-2015.

HCPC actions

- The HCPC's policy is that its standards should be subject to a thorough periodic review approximately every five years. However, in the past, the standards of proficiency for new professions have normally been formally reviewed at the end of any grandparenting period.
- The Executive suggests that the standards of proficiency for social workers should be reviewed once the visits of all transitionally approved social work programmes have concluded – from the end of the 2014-2015 academic year. This would take account of the views about the existing standards outlined in each report. This timing would ensure that the standards will not change part way through the on-going process of visiting all transitionally approved social work programmes.
- The standards of education and training were last published in 2009. The Executive intends to bring a discussion paper to the Education and Training Committee at its meeting in September 2014 looking at the content and scope for a future review of the standards.
- At this stage we anticipate that the review might have a similar structure to that of the review of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics. The initial stages of this review have involved engaging with stakeholders through meetings and research to gather views and evidence. This might potentially include commissioning research with students and employers in order to look at newly qualified registrants' preparedness for practice (across the professions), the outcomes of which could be fed into considering whether the existing standards of education and training need to be strengthened in some way.

⁹ HCPC (2013). Review of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) approval visits to social work pre-registration education and training programmes in the 2012–13 academic year. <http://www.hpc-uk.org/Assets/documents/100042FESWapprovalreview12-13.pdf>

4.4 Approval of education and training programmes

Summary

- Both reports are critical of the HCPC's and TCSW's processes for approving and endorsing education and training programmes against their standards.
- Both reports conclude that practice placements should be visited (by both the HCPC and TCSW) and that scrutinising education providers' processes for the quality assurance of placements is insufficient on its own (Narey, pg.25-27; Croisdale-Appleby, pg.57).
- Narey is critical of the HCPC's approval methodology, particularly the length of visits, 'paper-based' scrutiny of programmes and a failure to observe teaching (Narey, pg.21).
- Croisdale-Appleby argues that a more 'rigorous' approval process should also include desk analysis of information; written questions based on that analysis; and visits which have a focus on achieving triangulation of evidence (Croisdale-Appleby, pg.73).
- Narey comments that the HCPC's practice of encouraging joint visits where the professional body is also present indicates 'unnecessary duplication'. He also raises concerns about the credibility of the HCPC's visitors (and those used by TCSW) (Narey, pg.21).

Recommendations

- 'The College needs radically to increase the rigour of the endorsement scheme. Teaching should be observed; entry standards scrutinised; the extent to which course sizes might inhibit individual student development probed; the curriculum examined; and the rigour of examinations and other forms of student assessment audited.' (Recommendation 6, Narey, pg.27)
- 'The endorsement process needs also to include an evaluation of the quality of practice placements. Universities which fail to provide every student with at least one statutory placement (or an alternative which is genuinely comparable and accepted by employers as comparable) should not receive endorsement.' (Recommendation 7, Narey, pg.27.)
- 'That the regulation of social worker education is made more coherent, seamless, and rigorous in terms both of standards and processes by bringing together the standards of the HCPC and the endorsement criteria of TCSW into a new, single regulatory regime in which both the rigour of the regulatory process and the stringency of the levels assessed in regulation must be

substantially strengthened. HCPC should continue to regulate social work education to these new standards.’ (Recommendation 12, Croisdale-Appleby, pg.87.)

Background and HCPC observations

- The quality and availability of practice placements has been a subject for debate in the social work profession for some time. Concerns raised previously include the quality of practice placement experience for students and the availability of placements which give students the opportunity to gain experience of undertaking statutory assessments. It is perhaps too early to assess the impact of the HCPC’s standards and approval process on this area of social work education.
- The HCPC’s approach to date has been to assure the quality of practice placements through the standards of education and training and the approval of education providers. Education providers are responsible for ensuring that processes and systems are in place to assure the quality of practice placements. For example, the standards require education providers to ensure that placements are appropriate to the delivery of the learning outcomes; that processes for monitoring placements are in place; and that the number, duration and range of placements are appropriate to the programme, including to the size of student cohorts.
- The existing approval process is already focused on triangulation of evidence. Visitors scrutinise documentation and use this to inform their questions for the programme team. They undertake a tour of resources and facilities. They also meet with students, senior staff including commissioners, practice placement providers / educators and service users / carers whilst on the visit. If conditions are agreed, there will be further subsequent scrutiny of documentation to ensure that the conditions have been met. Narey’s observations that visits last ‘just a day and a half’ and are solely based on documents are, therefore, perhaps a less than complete description of the end-to-end process (Narey, pg.21).
- The HCPC holds joint approval visits with professional bodies, across all the professions, where an education provider has requested this. This avoids unnecessary duplication of effort for the education provider.
- To date the HCPC has had no significant concerns about its ability to attract visitors of a suitable quality to contribute to the approval process. The recruitment process for visitors is aimed at ensuring that visitors have relevant academic and/or practice experience and can demonstrate the ability to contribute to effective decision making.

HCPC actions

- None identified at this stage.

4.5 ASYE and licence to practise

Summary

- The Croisdale-Appleby report recommends the creation of a probationary first year of qualification as a social worker, the successful completion of which would lead to a 'licence to practise' and continued registration (Croisdale-Appleby, pg.75-76).
- This probationary year would build on a strengthened version of the current Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme undergone by some newly qualified social workers (NQSWs).
- Croisdale-Appleby concludes that increased support for NQSWs is important to avoid problems that occur when they are faced with unrealistic workloads to the detriment of the quality of their practice. It would also avoid placing 'inappropriate burden on to social work qualifying education to create fully ready-for-practice NQSWs' (Croisdale-Appleby, pg.76).
- For a probationary year to be introduced as a part of registration, legislation would be required (Croisdale-Appleby, pg.75). This has been confirmed by previous legal advice sought by the HCPC.
- This area is not addressed in the Narey report.

Relevant recommendations

- 'The first year of post-qualifying work should form a probationary year, at the end of which a Licence to Practise will be awarded to those who pass as a result of a process of independent scrutiny and formal assessment of their capability to practise in the workplace. Such a licence should be mandatory for a social worker to practise in that role. It is appreciated that this is a major step which will require careful planning and considerable financial and personnel resources, and primary legislation. Work to scope it should begin. Meanwhile, any changes in the regulatory and endorsement processes should be undertaken in a way that is consistent with such a direction of travel.' (Recommendation 15, Croisdale-Appleby pg.88.)
- 'Whilst the profession moves towards embracing a License to Practise, the current ASYE programme should be extended in scope to include all NQSWs entering practice. The requirements asked of employers engaged in the ASYE programme should be subject to a much more exacting and auditable process than is presently the case. Its assessment methodology should be strengthened and made much more open to independent validation.' (Recommendation 16, Croisdale-Appleby, pg.88.)

Background and HCPC observations

- The ASYE involves a year of practice in the workplace in which an NQSW receives additional training, mentorship and support and a balanced workload in order to consolidate their pre-registration education and training in practice. Assessments take place against the PCF. TCSW issues certificates to those who successfully complete the ASYE.
- Amongst the other professions regulated by the HCPC similar arrangements to the ASYE exist, but are profession and/or employer led – for example the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists' Newly Qualified Practitioner Framework or Flying Start in the NHS in Scotland.¹⁰ In physiotherapy, the majority of newly qualified registrants will spend two years working in the NHS in which they will undertake rotations in different areas of physiotherapy practice to consolidate their pre-registration learning. However, in all these examples, there is no mandatory national requirement for employment or registration.
- When the suggestion of a statutory link between the ASYE and registration was being discussed by the SWRB shortly prior to the transfer of the Register, we advanced the following view in meetings with stakeholders.
 - We are supportive of the ASYE and its aims. We support arrangements for induction and preceptorship that support newly qualified registrants in their first months and years in practice.
 - We expressed concern that without issues such as funding, capacity, the assessment model that would be used, and the impact of HCPC regulation upon the quality of pre-registration social work education resolved or known, it was too soon to make any conclusions about the desirability of a link with registration. In other words, we considered that (leaving aside the principle of a statutory link) a link to registration might risk regulating a different problem into the system (e.g. by leading to employers unable or unwilling to support the ASYE preferring experienced practitioners over NQSWs).
 - An alternative to a statutory link would be arrangements which were owned by the profession and employers without any need for additional regulatory burden.

¹⁰ http://www.rcslt.org/speech_and_language_therapy/NQP_competency_framework
<http://www.flyingstart.scot.nhs.uk>

HCPC actions

- None identified at this stage.

4.6 Revalidation

Summary

- Croisdale-Appleby concludes that the HCPC's registration and re-registration procedures are generally considered by employers and social workers to be insufficiently stringent (Croisdale-Appleby, pg.77-78).
- He recommends that social workers should have to revalidate every five years to demonstrate that they are fit to practise. This would involve a formal appraisal against the PCF. This, he argues, is necessary to 'protect the public' and 'to assure all stakeholders of that continuing quality of practice'. Social workers would need to pass revalidation in order to retain their licence to practise (Croisdale-Appleby, pg.78-79).
- Croisdale-Appleby does not elaborate further or give a rationale on the proposed model for revalidation. He refers generally to having 'sought opinion and evidence on this matter' (Croisdale-Appleby, pg.79).
- This area is not addressed in the Narey report. However, the ministerial statement accompanying publication of the report, made by Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education, said the following.

'The Chief Social Worker [for children's social work] is also developing plans for the introduction of a more rigorous testing regime for children's social workers, including a license to practice examination, continuing professional development and compulsory revalidation; and I am personally supportive of this work.'¹¹

Relevant recommendations

- 'Once the recommended Licence to Practise has been introduced, then there should be a process of revalidation by which Licensed social workers are required to demonstrate that they are fit to practise. Revalidation aims to give confidence to service users that their social worker is being regularly checked by their employer and the professional organisation responsible for awarding the license. Licensed social workers should have to revalidate at least every five years, by having comprehensive formal appraisals that are based on the social worker as a practitioner, the social worker as a professional, and the

¹¹ Department for Education (2014). Written Ministerial Statement. Sir Martin Narey's Report on initial training for children's social workers.
http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-vote-office/February_2014/13%20February/9.Ed-Narey.pdf

social worker as a social scientist, and the PCF as the core guidance for social workers.’ (Recommendation 21, Croisdale-Appleby, pg.89.)

Background and HCPC observations

- Revalidation is the concept that registered professionals should be subject to some kind of periodic check to ensure that they continue to remain fit to practise beyond the point of initial registration. The HCPC uses the alternative term ‘continuing fitness to practise’ because this is more outcomes-focused; and because ‘revalidation’ is poorly defined.
- The suggestion that revalidation should be based upon appraisal is similar to the model recently introduced for doctors. Medical revalidation involves doctors undertaking appraisal in the workplace and maintaining a portfolio of evidence including evidence of CPD and quality improvement activity. This informs the recommendations of a network of ‘responsible officers’ in the workplace. The General Medical Council (GMC) then makes the final decision about whether to renew a doctor’s licence to practise. As medical revalidation is in its relative infancy, an evaluation of its efficacy has yet to be completed.
- The HCPC’s registration and re-registration requirements are outlined in the Croisdale-Appleby report (pg.78). Social workers will be audited to check their compliance with HCPC’s CPD standards for the first time from September 2014. We will audit 2.5% of social workers at random who will be required to demonstrate that the standards have been met. If a social worker fails to participate in an audit, or does not meet the standards, they will be unable to renew their registration. Audits take place every two years – more frequently than that suggested for revalidation by Croisdale-Appleby.
- There is no specific requirement for registrants to undertake annual appraisals, although we are very supportive of this. Many registrants who work in managed environments will have appraisals each year and this will inform the CPD they undertake and their compliance with our standards. This is more challenging for those who work in independent practice or who do not have professional line management.
- The report references an ‘extensive’ programme of work being undertaken by the HCPC to look at whether additional measures are needed to ensure the continuing fitness to practise of registrants.¹² Croisdale-Appleby seems to infer that there is a specific case for different arrangements in social work

¹² HCPC Council (May 2013). Revalidation – update and PSA report. <http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003FDDenc06-updateontherevalidationresearchprogramme.pdf>

from the other HCPC regulated professions, but arguably this case is not really made in any substantive detail in the report.

- As part of this programme of work, the HCPC will be commissioning two pieces of work this year. One will look at the cost, benefits and outcomes of the CPD audits to date. This will include collecting additional data from the audits, for example, on the content of profile submissions. The second will seek to establish the views and experiences of stakeholders who have interacted with or who have an interest in, the CPD process. This work will inform a review of the CPD standards and audit process, helping to indicate whether any changes are required.

HCPC actions

- None identified at this stage.

Making the education of social workers consistently effective

**Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent
review of the education of children's social
workers**

January 2014

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Foreword

Earlier this year the Secretary of State for Education asked me to take a look at the initial education of children's social workers, and advise him of the extent to which reforms to social work over the last few years had impacted upon basic training, and whether there were improvements that still needed to be made.

This has not been a formal inquiry in the sense that I have not asked for submissions of evidence nor held formal hearings. I haven't gathered a working party around me. Instead I have had a large number of private interviews with employers, academics, students and newly employed, established and retired social workers. That approach encouraged many individuals to be rather more candid than they might otherwise have been. That has been vital.

In turn, in writing these observations, I have been frank about the deficiencies I have found. I have made eighteen recommendations, which if implemented will significantly increase the confidence we can have in the initial training, and therefore the calibre, of newly qualified social workers. The cost of implementing those recommendations would be minimal.

There are some reforms recommended here which, if accepted and implemented, would affect all universities which teach social work (not least my call for a much clearer prescription of the things a new children's social worker needs to understand at graduation, and my suggestion that there should be greater specialisation allowed in both undergraduate and postgraduate study). But it is important for me to acknowledge at the outset that there are many universities doing a good job: they recruit students of high ability and ensure that academic standards are high. I reject entirely the suggestion that we do not currently produce some very good social workers. But there are universities and colleges where entry and academic standards appear to be too low and where the preparation of students for children's social work is too often inadequate. In the words of one Director of Children's Services: "We need to lift the lid on the quality debate." That is what I have tried to do in this report, not least because, without it, the reputation of good universities will continue to be damaged by concerns about poorer institutions.

I have had excellent cooperation from officials in the Department for Education who have been simultaneously challenging and supportive. In particular, Bekah Little has been an invaluable source of advice. But this report and the recommendations are entirely my own responsibility.

Martin Narey
January 2014

Part One: What social workers learn at university

Before being allowed to enter a profession students need to acquire a basic professional understanding sufficient to allow them to begin practice safely and competently. In the case of medicine, the General Medical Council (GMC) outlines its expectations of the universities which train new doctors. In *Tomorrow's Doctors* (available on the GMC website) - a succinct, well-drafted, nine-page document - they list the things newly qualified doctors need to understand, whether as scientists, as practitioners or as professionals.

So, for example, as a scientist, a newly qualified doctor needs to be able to explain:

- *normal human structure and functions;*
- *the scientific bases for common disease presentations; and to be able*
- *to select appropriate forms of management for common diseases, and ways of preventing common diseases, and explain their modes of action and their risks from first principles; and*
- *to demonstrate knowledge of drug actions: therapeutics and pharmacokinetics; drug side effects and interactions, including for multiple treatments, long-term conditions and non-prescribed medication; and also including effects on the population, such as the spread of antibiotic resistance.*

As a practitioner, the graduate has to be able to:

- *carry out a consultation with a patient;*
- *take and record a patient's medical history, including family and social history, talking to relatives or other carers where appropriate;*
- *elicit patients' questions, their understanding of their condition and treatment options, and their views, concerns, values and preferences;*
- *perform a full physical examination;*
- *perform a mental-state examination;*
- *provide explanation, advice, reassurance and support.*

And as a professional, the graduate must be able to:

- *demonstrate awareness of the clinical responsibilities and role of the doctor, making the care of the patient the first concern;*
- *be polite, considerate, trustworthy and honest, act with integrity, maintain confidentiality, respect patients' dignity and privacy, and understand the importance of appropriate consent;*
- *respect all patients, colleagues and others regardless of their age, colour, culture, disability, ethnic or national origin, gender, lifestyle, marital or parental status, race, religion or beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, or social or economic status. Respect patients' right to hold religious or other beliefs, and take these into account when relevant to treatment options; and*
- *recognise the rights and the equal value of all people and how opportunities for some people may be restricted by others' perceptions.*

There is no equivalent single publication for the social work profession. Instead, universities construct curricula drawing on a number of sources. This was identified as a problem as recently as 2009 by the Education Select Committee (then the Children Schools and Families Committee), which recommended that:

Current requirements for the social work degree should be rationalised, combined and, where appropriate, set out in greater detail to form a basic common curriculum. We particularly wish to see consensus on the content of training on child protection, child development and communication with children.

This rationalisation has not happened. The result, in terms of the quality and the content of teaching, is seen by many employers as unsatisfactory. One distinguished Director of Children's Services told me: *it's beyond me why universities don't work to a common list of need to know issues.* Another suggested that in the uncertainty about exactly what needs to be taught, we have been left with an academic vacuum, *which we have filled with attitudinal stuff rather than skills.*

This is not all the fault of universities. To their evident frustration, and in determining the academic content of the social work degree whether at Bachelor or Master's level, universities need to draw upon, at least, five source documents:

The Health and Care Professions Council

The first is published by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), which regulates sixteen professions, including physiotherapy, chiropody and occupational therapy. It has regulated social work – which sits oddly in the HCPC portfolio – only since the abolition of the General Social Care Council in 2012. HCPC describes its main function as the protection of the public; hence it seeks to set standards for the education and training of the professionals it supervises, and approves educational programmes which lead to entry to one of its professions.

HCPC – which, curiously, is independent of Government in England (the regulators in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not independent of Government) – publishes *Standards of Proficiency*. These outline HCPC's threshold standards, which, it believes, are necessary for safe and effective practice as a social worker. The *Standards* seek to set out what a social worker in England must know, understand and be able to do following completion of their social work degree. In that respect they serve a similar role to the GMC's *Tomorrow's Doctors*. But, I would argue, they do so with considerably less success.

HCPC argue that the standards *set out clear expectations of a social worker's knowledge and abilities when they start practising*. But most of the standards (76 of them in fifteen groups) are general in nature and could be describing almost any professional and, in many instances, non-professional occupation. Very few are measurable. So, for example, registrant social workers must:

- *recognise the need to manage their own workload;*
- *be able to respond appropriately to unexpected situations;*
- *be able to manage competing or conflicting interests; and*

- *be able to maintain records.*

Only a handful of the seventy-six standards have direct relevance to children's social work. One of the 76 standards refers to the knowledge base required of social workers. So a social worker needs to understand:

social work theory;
social work models and interventions;
the development and application of relevant law and social policy;
the development and application of social work and social work values;
human growth and development across the lifespan and the impact of key developmental stages and transitions;
the impact of injustice, social inequalities, policies and other issues which affect the demand for social work services;
the relevance of psychological, environmental, sociological and physiological perspectives to understanding personal and social development and functioning; concepts of participation, advocacy and empowerment; and
the relevance of sociological perspectives to understanding societal and structural influences on human behaviour.

This is both an incomplete and an inadequate summary of the things a children's social worker needs to know. And in any case, because HCPC insists that the standards are not hierarchical and all are equally important for practice, it is lost in a sea of genericism.

The *Standards of Proficiency* are linked to two other HCPC publications, *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics* (another 14 standards) and *Standards of Education and Training* (another 59 standards). These documents apply to all HCPC professions but were first drafted before social workers became the responsibility of HCPC. The documents are general in nature and undemanding. So, for example in the *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics*, the first three ethical standards are:

- *You must act in the best interests of service users.*
- *You must respect the confidentiality of service users.*
- *You must keep high standards of personal conduct.*

The *Standards of Education and Training* outline the standards against which HCPC assesses education and training programmes. But universities are unlikely to be troubled in meeting the standards. For example, in managing admissions the standards require that:

- *The admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme;*
- *The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including evidence of a good command of reading, writing and spoken English;*
- *The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including criminal convictions checks;*
- *The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including compliance with any health requirements;*

- *The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including appropriate academic and / or professional entry standards;*
- *The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms;*
- *The admissions procedures must ensure that the education provider has equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.*

It is perfectly possible to envisage a university being able to demonstrate compliance with these processes while, at the same time, admitting students who are unlikely to become successful social workers.

I believe that neither the *Standards of Conduct Performance and Ethics*, nor the *Standards of Education and Training* are of very much use to universities in preparing social workers. Nor can they give Ministers, or the public, confidence about the quality of social work education. And the core document, the *Standards of Proficiency*, does not remotely provide adequate guidance to universities about the skills and professional knowledge required of graduate social workers.

The College of Social Work

The newly established College of Social Work produces a number of curriculum guides for about twelve subject areas including, *disability, diversity and oppression, social work law, and human growth and development*. That initiative is to be welcomed, although the quality of the guides is variable, and their impact on universities seems to be limited. More significantly, the College produces the *Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)*, which was first created by the Social Work Reform Board.

The College describes the PCF as an overarching professional standards framework, which:

- *sets out consistent expectations of social workers at every stage in their career;*
- *provides a backdrop to both initial social work education and continuing professional development after qualification;*
- *informs the design and implementation of the national career structure; and*
- *gives social workers a framework around which to plan their careers and professional development.*

The PCF has nine domains: professionalism; values and ethics; diversity; rights, justice and economic well being; knowledge; critical reflection and analysis; intervention and skills; contexts and organisations; and professional leadership.

I am not convinced that these nine domains or priority areas for social worker training and long-term development are the right nine (and I would like to see a prioritising of them). But the PCF, in my view, is a significant improvement on HCPC's *Standards of Proficiency*. It is to be regretted that the College and HCPC did not work together to produce a single source document for social work training. Instead, HCPC publish a twenty- one- page

document that maps their *Standards of Proficiency* to the *Professional Capabilities Framework*. Simultaneously, the College has produced its own twenty-four-page document mapping the PCF to the Standards of Proficiency. This is, frankly, embarrassing.

Universities might find responding to separate guidance from HCPC and the College of Social Work reasonably challenging. But their world is yet more complicated. As well as considering HCPC and College documentation, they must also take account of *The Benchmark Statements for Social Work*, produced by The Quality Assurance Agency For Higher Education (QAA). As the QAA website explains:

Benchmark statements represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.

I found the QAA document to provide an unbalanced description of what social work is, and the skills which a successful children's social worker needs to have. At paragraph 4.6, the QAA say that the six things a social worker must learn to do are:

- *recognise and work with the powerful links between intrapersonal and interpersonal factors and the wider social, legal, economic, political and cultural context of people's lives;*
- *understand the impact of injustice, social inequalities and oppressive social relations;*
- *challenge constructively individual, institutional and structural discrimination;*
- *practise in ways that maximise safety and effectiveness in situations of uncertainty and incomplete information;*
- *help people to gain, regain or maintain control of their own affairs, insofar as this is compatible with their own or others' safety, well-being and rights; and*
- *work in partnership with service users and carers and other professionals to foster dignity, choice and independence, and effect change.*

Although the commitment to understanding the social and economic influences on peoples' lives and a commitment to challenging discrimination and injustice are laudable, there is no balancing reference, or even allusion, to the necessity of prioritising the interests of a child above the interests of the adults who care for the child, or to the need for scrutiny and scepticism alongside compassion. There is no acknowledgement that when one is protecting the interests of a neglected or abused child, there are very real limits on the extent to which working in partnership is appropriate.

Despite (or because of) the hundreds of pages to be found in this plethora of guidance documents for universities, there is very little clarity about what a newly qualified social worker needs to know. In some cases, such lack of clarity may allow higher education institutions to develop their curriculum, at least in part, according to the expertise and research interests of their staff. As The General Social Care Council observed in 2012:

Many of the institutions delivering the degree have specialist interest and knowledge in certain areas of social work practice and – whilst having to meet the same requirements – courses have tended to reflect that specialised interest.

That may often be acceptable, but I was told repeatedly of universities which dedicated time to interesting, but relatively obscure, subjects while providing limited time for some core issues. At one university I was told that, during the undergraduate degree, there had been nothing on parenting and hardly anything at all specifically about children. One social work student wrote to me and said:

To be brutally honest I don't think the course is good enough. I don't feel it is preparing students for the reality of social work. We spent weeks and weeks in our ethics and values module looking at Plato, Socrates and Aristotle etc. Interesting yes, but I feel that time could have been better spent equipping us with skills relevant to social work. We had very little teaching on the law module, which was a concern to me. Two modules we studied were structured round the core texts written by a particular lecturer.... We had a seminar of "social work as art" which I felt was a waste of time. Will anybody I work with as a social worker care whether social work is an art? Probably not... I thought the time would be used effectively teaching us skills applicable to social work practice.

Another student approaching graduation wrote on the Guardian website in September:

As a mature student in my final year of a BA in social work I feel I have been let down by the course. I have so far learned nothing concerning signs of abuse... I feel my course concentrates upon the past, and how social work came to be what it is today. There is not enough practical experience or theory related to its actual use in practice.

Universities, and the student social workers who attend them, need to be clear about what are the essentials of social work training. This is not to suggest that university curricula should be identical. But employers need to be more confident that students at every university will graduate with an adequate grasp of the basics necessary for them to develop into competent and confident children's social workers. They can have no such confidence at the moment.

There is nothing new in saying this. When The Times published my report on adoption in 2011, I quoted a newly qualified social worker working on child protection in a London borough who wrote to me and summarised his university experience. His anxiety about the extent to which university failed to provide a basic knowledge of statutory processes is not untypical:

[The] content of the course and its delivery was grossly deficient... There was no training for the real nature of social work. I wrote many essays on theoretical viewpoints but I was never once taught how a statutory team in children's social services worked... When I started my first job (in a child protection team) I had never heard of an initial assessment form or ever seen or been schooled in the strategies for questioning parents... I never had any quality child development training and I never had sessions on how to work directly with children.

The Munro Report, published the same year, said:

Not all newly qualified social workers are emerging from degree courses with the necessary knowledge, skills and expertise; and they are especially unprepared to deal with the challenges posed by child protection work. Degree courses are not consistent in content, quality and outcomes. For child protection, there are crucial things missing in some courses such as detailed learning on child

development, how to communicate with children and young people, and using evidence-based methods of working with children and families.

Lord Laming reported in 2009 that:

Social workers themselves do not think that their training is equipping them to take on the responsibilities for which they are being trained – two-thirds of newly qualified social workers felt that the degree prepared them just enough or not at all for their current role.

Just a few months ago, the Social Worker of the Year for 2013, Estelle Thain, told *Community Care* that:

I don't feel that the degree prepares you adequately for the on-the-ground work. There were basics missing from my degree training – I didn't even know what a core assessment was when I left university and that's key to the job. It was very difficult those first few months in the job because I felt I didn't quite have enough skills or experience to take on the role.

A list of the things a newly qualified children's social worker needs to understand at graduation will be a long one. But such a list should include, I suggest, a comprehensive grasp of the basics of:

- child development;
- attachment theory;
- the longer term impact of neglect and maltreatment on children;
- communicating with children;
- the law and the primacy of the child in social work related legislation;
- the evidence base around successful family support and parenting capacity; and
- assessment: how to collate and critically analyse information to arrive at the right decision (particularly vital when defending decisions at court).

But none of these examples flow from HCPC's *Standards of Proficiency*, The QAA's *Benchmark Statements For Social Work* or the College of Social Work's *Professional Capabilities Framework*.

The politics of social work teaching

This is not just about the things that need to be taught, it's also about the politics of social work education. I have been troubled for some time by the priority given in social work education to what is known as non-oppressive practice. According to Professor Lena Dominelli in *Social Work, Themes issues and Critical Debates*:

Anti oppressive practice with its strong commitment to people's holistic wellbeing... has become part of mainstream social work practice in Britain... Its main components, social justice and human rights, have become commonplace.

Anti oppressive practice is vital, she goes on to argue, because social work should be about empowering:

People whose lives are configured by struggles against structural inequalities like poverty, sexism, racism and disablism.

The view of those receiving social work support as being necessarily victims is captured by a recent Community Care blog published in the summer of 2013:

Good practice [in social work] is based on building relationships. It also depends on being given the scope to use them to the benefit of service users whose issues are the product of being at the bottom of a very unequal and oppressive society... the service user is a victim rather than creator of their life situation.

Anti oppressive practice in academic social work is closely linked to concepts of empowerment and working in partnership. While a number of social work academics reject them, these are not extreme notions at the fringes of academic social work. One newly qualified social worker from a well-regarded University told me that the concentration in her course on non-oppressive practice was at the expense of understanding practicalities about the job. I don't believe her experience was unique. Although some academics are dismissive of these philosophical approaches, they have a prominent place in some of the university social work curricula I have seen and enjoy significant prominence in core texts. In part they represent a challenge to the views of successive governments that the child has primacy in children's social work and needs to be viewed as an individual. In the wake of the controversy surrounding the death of Daniel Pelka, one respected, senior, and influential academic, chastised me on Twitter for arguing in the Guardian that greater scepticism about his parents might have saved Daniel, saying we:

need to weigh up the costs of such scepticism if we seek a democratic and humane society.

She later tweeted that it was *profoundly mistaken to focus on children as individuals* and said she was *opposed to the term child protection on ethical and practical grounds.*

I stress, being fully aware of how my argument here is likely to be caricatured, that I am not ignoring the reality that many families in which parenting is inadequate struggle with disadvantage, poverty and social isolation. Those at the bottom of an unequal society face day to day challenges, including coping with cramped living conditions, limited income and often grinding debt, which can significantly undermine their ability to cope and to provide children with the safety and security on which they thrive. On the other hand, many families of modest income provide loving and safe homes for their children and it is vital – I would argue – not to seek to persuade students that poor parenting or neglect are necessary consequences of disadvantage. There may be a partial correlation between disadvantage and poor parenting but there is not a causal link. I reject entirely the sometimes expressed view that removing children from unsatisfactory homes is about victimizing poor families.

Sometimes, parents and other carers neglect and harm children. In such circumstances, viewing those parents as victims, seeking to treat them non oppressively, empowering them or working in partnership with them can divert the practitioner's focus from where it should be: on the child. Numerous deaths of children who were being observed by local

authority and voluntary sector social workers should have taught us this by now. As Brandon reminded us in a biennial analysis of serious case reviews: 2003 – 2005:

Apparent or disguised cooperation from parents often prevented or delayed understanding of the severity of harm to the child and cases drifted. Where parents made it difficult for professionals to see children or engineered the focus away from allegations of harm, children went unseen and unheard.

Lord Laming reminded us in 2009:

Social workers [need to be] prepared for the realities of working with children and families who may have complex needs and parents who, in some cases, may be intentionally deceptive or manipulative.

More recently, Peter Hay, Birmingham's Director of Adult Social Services, who has recently taken responsibility for Children's Services as well, reflected on how social workers working with the family had contributed to the death of two year old Keanu Williams. Speaking to the Guardian, he highlighted a case conference in 2009 when a social worker put together a clear report on the risks posed to Keanu.

For the first and only time in his life, Keanu was the focus. But at the conference it was decided to give support to the family. That became the defining motif of poor quality work, which, wrongly and ineffectively, responded to the needs of Keanu's mother and not his safety.

The immensely impressive Jenny Hope, who once took herself and her siblings to a police station and asked for them all to be admitted to care, is now a successful author and is a visiting lecturer at a number of universities. She explained to me how the needs of adults can dominate:

All too often I hear Social Workers talking about adults and what is best for them. Keeping the child at the centre of all we do is, at times, seriously lacking in social work.

Finally, as Davies and Ward reminded us in Messages from Research (2012):

A focus on empowerment can lead to an over identification with birth parents, as was evident ... in the numerous, ultimately fruitless, opportunities given to some parents to demonstrate that they had made sufficient progress in overcoming their problems to provide a nurturing home for a child.

I am not suggesting that the role of disadvantage and inequality in exacerbating poor parenting and child neglect or abuse should not be discussed at university. But it is vital that social work education for those working with children is not dominated by theories of non-oppressive practice, empowerment and partnership.

A definition of social work

Part of the problem is that we do not have a satisfactory definition of children's social work. I find many of the definitions offered in academic texts to be profoundly unsatisfactory. So, for example, in their recently published and warmly acclaimed *The New Politics of Social Work*, Professors Stephen Webb and Mel Gray argue that social work in the UK should be about:

A renewal of a progressive Left agenda... contributing to the abolition of exploitative and despotic regimes maintained by the capitalist class and its neoliberal economic order. [And that this requires] a militancy which confronts the system of capitalist power that redefines, limits and rejects the core values of social work.

Less dramatically, the international definition of social work - accepted by the British Association of Social Workers - states that the social work profession:

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.

I have not discussed the international definition with the current Secretary of State for Education, nor with any of the three of his predecessors for whom I have worked and know reasonably well (David Blunkett, Charles Clarke and Ed Balls). But I should be more than a little surprised if any one of them considered it adequate. It's not that it's an appalling definition. But in terms of describing the work of a Children's Social Worker in England it is, I would argue, thoroughly inadequate. We need a more satisfactory and relevant definition. And we need a definition that concentrates on that work, generally carried out in the statutory sector, which is about protecting children. We need a definition which makes plain what Government, employers and the College of Social Work expect from children's social workers. The Chief Social Worker for England should lead the work on providing that, as a foundation for her work in developing a core curriculum.

Recommendation

1. Universities are sovereign bodies and it is entirely appropriate and justifiable, not least in terms of student choice, that social work degree courses vary. But there needs to be a concise, single document drafted, drawing on the advice of the College of Social Work, academics and, particularly, employers, which offers in a single publication, a GMC style summary of what a newly qualified children's social worker needs to understand. Such a document should cover not only factual issues but those which are best described as philosophical or attitudinal. I recommend that the Chief Social Worker For Children take the lead in drafting such a document. To provide a foundation for that work, I suggest she needs first to draft a definition of children's social work.

Part Two: The calibre of students entering higher education institutions

The calibre of students studying for social work degrees has been an issue of debate since the social work degree was introduced in 2003. That debate continues quite properly in my view. There may have been recent improvements, not least that secured by the Social Work Reform Board, which agreed that universities should increase minimum entry requirements for students applying with A-levels. But anxieties remain: I did not speak to a single employer who said that he or she was always satisfied with the calibre of students entering social work study (although, often, there was a high level of satisfaction expressed about particular universities). And some academics were candid in their criticism of entry standards. One, at one of the UK's top universities, told me that some social workers graduating from some other institutions were barely literate.

Until its abolition in 2012 and the transfer of its responsibilities to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), the General Social Care Council (GSCC) was responsible for regulating social work education. Last July it published a commendably frank account of the history of that regulation.

The GSCC took over responsibility for regulating social work in 2001, two years before the introduction of the degree. From 2005 it became necessary to hold a social work degree before being first registered with the GSCC as a social worker. As well as registering social workers, the Council also had responsibility for approving and regulating social work degree courses. Since the introduction of the degree in 2003 and until its abolition in 2012, the GSCC approved 307 social work degree courses at 83 institutions.

Between 2003 and 2012 a significant imbalance developed in the distribution of courses, and in the number of students studying social work across England. This suggests that expansion was not related solely to employer demand. In 2010-11 one in five of all social work students in England were enrolled at a higher education institution in the North West. In the same year the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside trained twice as many social workers, relative to their population, as the East Midlands and the South West. Overall, the numbers of students studying for the degree have been significantly higher than those studying for its predecessor, the Diploma in Social Work. Between 2005 and 2012 average annual student enrolment on social work degrees was 6,111, a 47% increase on the numbers enrolling annually for the Diploma.

Alongside this expansion – and despite the Social Work Reform Board's recognition that there needed to be a way of forecasting social worker supply and demand - there has been a startling absence of any serious workforce planning. The GSCC had the powers to determine how many individuals should be admitted to social work courses each year, but it declined to use those powers throughout its life. What little workforce planning there has been, has been completed by the Centre For Workforce Intelligence (CWI). Its evidence suggests that employers might be better served if we produced fewer, but better prepared, social workers. Despite social worker vacancies in some local authorities, there is no evidence of a shortage of individuals being trained. When compared to an annual student intake of around 6,100 (about 55,000 students have enrolled on social work degrees since

only 2005), the number of registered social workers in England is relatively small at only 87,929. Of those, it was estimated in 2012 that only 47,000 are working as social workers in local authorities.

A-level students

I found employer - and sometimes academic - concern about the calibre of new social workers to focus on the undergraduate degree. Those who lacked confidence in the consistency of those qualifying with a first degree frequently, if not inevitably, expressed concern about low entry requirements at some universities. Their concerns have some justification. According to GSCC data, since 2003 only 31% of Social Work students have had one or more A-levels. And where students hold A-levels their grades are likely to be low. In their written evidence to the 2009 Select Committee on Social Work Education, the Association of Professors of Social Work (APSW) were honest about this, telling the Committee:

An issue, which has been of concern to members of the APSW, concerns the variability of the academic requirements for entering degree programmes. There are concerns that students with good A Level grades are not applying for courses and that entry requirements for some programmes are very low.

The Select Committee found that the proportion of A-level entrants to social work degrees, and with fewer than 240 UCAS points (the equivalent of 3 Cs at A level), was twice the proportion entering teaching or nursing. Partly as a consequence of that criticism, there has been an attempt to increase the minimum requirements for entry to a Social Work course to 240 points. I was told by a number of academics and employers that this was likely to make a substantial difference. But 240 points, or 3 Cs at A level, is not a demanding requirement. No Russell Group university, and only a small minority of others, will allow any student to study for a degree in any subject with such indifferent grades.

However, I'm not convinced that even this modest uplifting in entry requirements is adhered to. First of all, I have been told that many institutions routinely relax the formal 240 points requirement as the annual recruitment cycle closes and where vacancies on courses need to be filled. And some institutions appear from the outset to have lower requirements. In the current *Which? University Guide*, nine UK institutions (six in England and three in Scotland) advertise minimum UCAS requirements for social work study starting in 2014, of fewer than 240 points, Six will accept students with 200 points or fewer and one will accept students with just 120 points (equivalent to 2 Ds at A level).

Entry standards for non A-level students

GSCC data suggests that only about 31% of social work students have one or more A-levels, with the majority applying with other degrees, diplomas or qualifications or starting study after completing an *Access To Higher Education Course*. We know very little about the proportion of students being accepted through *Access* and similar routes at different universities, and we know just as little about the extent to which these alternative

entry requirements are robust. As the Association of Professors of Social Work told the Select Committee:

We note the difficulties there appear to be in assessing the quality of Access programmes or the quality of a student's overall performance on Access courses.

So we have a situation where employers cannot be confident about the abilities of newly qualified social workers, in part because of uncertainty about their raw calibre. Sometimes, for this reason, they are unwilling to recruit from universities they don't know. I found that both employers and academics had an informal list of those universities where, they believed, standards were poor (as well as a list of those institutions in which they had confidence).

Widening access

Since its introduction, and despite excellence at some institutions, and the undoubted quality of some newly qualified social workers, the reputation of the social work Bachelor's degree has been, at best, mixed. That reputation has fallen further in recent years as some highly regarded universities have withdrawn from offering the first degree. Sheffield, which has a very good reputation, and whose undergraduates very much impressed me when I met them earlier this year, is the latest to withdraw from offering the Bachelor's degree. At another university with a fine reputation, I was told that they declined to offer an undergraduate degree in social work because of the potential damage it would cause to their reputation.

Some believe that the expansion in student numbers at some HEIs has been inappropriately influenced by financial considerations. Firstly, because the greater the number of students recruited to a course, the greater is the fee income. One academic was candid with me about the pressure from their Vice Chancellor to over-recruit students for financial reasons.

Additionally, some question whether additional recruitment has been for the benefit of the social work profession, or has been primarily motivated by universities' wish to improve their performance in attracting students from non traditional backgrounds. Inducements for universities to widen access do exist. The Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) has a Widening Participation policy, which encourages HEIs to recruit more students from low participation neighbourhoods, from certain socio-economic groups, with low qualifications and with a disability. Funding is allocated to HEIs according to the number of students from those groups accepted for study. There is no data on which degree courses recruit relatively large numbers of students from the four priority groups, but there are those who believe that social work might carry too much of the burden.

It is entirely proper that we allow students with poor, few, or no qualifications to study to become social workers if they can demonstrate an ability, aptitude and commitment. But we need to ensure that we have not made social work too easy an option for university entry and, in seeking to increase access, locked too many poor students into social work while - as the Association of Professors of Social Work fear - discouraging the more able. I visited one university last year, which offers hundreds of degrees but for only one, social

work, offered a dedicated preparation course (of just one half day a week for twenty four weeks) to allow students without qualifications to begin studying for the Bachelor's degree.

As the GSCC were candid enough to opine in their closing report:

Concerns about the calibre of individuals studying to become social workers have regularly been raised during the lifetime of the GSCC. Often these concerns have focused on the level of qualifications held by those enrolling to the degree... Where HEIs have made efforts to increase access to the social work degree amongst people from a wide range of backgrounds, this has sometimes meant opening routes to the degree to individuals who do not have strong conventional academic qualifications... A tension exists in the sector between the desire to ensure that social work is open to those from all backgrounds, particularly backgrounds where attendance at university has not been common, and a desire to see entrants to the degree with high levels of previous educational attainment.

Despite this, the GSCC:

did not see it as its role to set national qualifications requirements for entry onto the social work degree.

We need to be confident that the calibre and potential of those entering social work study, either with A-levels, or through non-traditional qualifications or through access routes, is sufficiently high to enable those individuals to be successful social workers. Suspicions that efforts to widen access have involved the compromising of entry standards must be resolved.

Recommendations

2. Agreement needs to be reached with Universities to ensure that the minimum UCAS requirement of 240 points for A-level students is not breached save in exceptional circumstances.

3. The calibre of students entering through Access courses and with qualifications other than A-levels needs to be audited at individual institution level.

I recommend that the College of Social Work provide that assurance as part of a radically more rigorous endorsement process (see part three).

Part Three: Ensuring the quality of education at higher education institutions

Concerns about the calibre of students entering undergraduate study might be reduced if there was greater confidence about university rigour and less suspicion, as the 2009 Select Committee speculated, that social work degrees – with a failure rate of just over two and a half per cent - have become difficult to fail.

The GSCC reported in 2012 that social worker vacancy rates in some English local authorities remained high while:

there have been reports of newly qualified social workers struggling to gain their first employment.

One explanation for that is there is not enough employer confidence in some newly registered social workers. Policy Exchange's *Reforming Social Work*, published in June 2013, confirmed the apparent contradiction between the continuing demand for social workers and an unwillingness to appoint some of those who are newly qualified. They discovered that:

Of 155 Local Authorities surveyed, 13 per cent had a vacancy rate of over 20 per cent and 50 per cent had a vacancy rate of over 10 per cent in 2012; [Simultaneously there was] limited recruitment of new social workers: 27 per cent of NQSWs in England being unemployed in 2011.

They argued that:

A key problem is that many potential employers are reluctant to take on newly qualified social workers... This suggests that they may not believe that the current level of social work education prepares students for practice.

I am quite clear that there are universities where standards are high, and where students, however modest their entry qualifications, are required to meet rigorous academic requirements. But there are others which, to say the least, have a mixed reputation. The variability in standards is neatly captured by the experiences of two recent graduates whom I met earlier this year. They had first degrees of an equivalent standard and in the same subject. But while one had applied to study for a BA, she was surprised to be offered a place on a Masters course. The other applied to a different university to study for a Masters but had been steered toward undergraduate study. I was not surprised to learn the identity of the universities. The first had an uncertain reputation among employers, the second was held in high regard.

One social worker who supervised students while on practice placement told Community Care in 2010 that:

Over the past three years I have assessed about 30 students and have often been dismayed at the standard. I have been asked to take on repeat placements and on reading the previous practice assessor's reports have been astounded that the student has been allowed to progress when they have clearly been unsuitable for social work... It sometimes feels that it is impossible to fail a student.

Course sizes

Many employers and students – and some academics - believe that financial considerations, represented by the recruitment of very large numbers of students, dilute the quality of social work education at some HEIs. Employers in particular, frequently if informally, correlated smaller courses with higher quality.

The numbers of students at different universities certainly varies. At many the class sizes are strictly limited. At one, for example, course sizes for the BA and the MA are each limited to 30. As a result, seminar groups are rarely bigger than 12 and often smaller. But there are other courses which have a hundred students and more, and where seminar groups of 30 are sometimes found.

One student wrote to me describing how high student numbers on her degree course made obtaining a statutory practice placement difficult and damaged academic delivery:

The number of students in my year totalled 126 in September 2011 falling to 100 in September 2012. Those who have left cite unsuitable placements and over subscription of the course. The high numbers have impacted greatly on the taught aspect of the course with overcrowding in lecture rooms. Overall my experience has been extremely varied.

There will be instances where large course sizes are managed well, where students are still put into small seminar groups where they are able to engage closely with other students and with lecturers, and where lectures are not so huge as to inhibit discussion. If students are to develop they need support, advice and guidance and need to be able to explore issues through discussion in which they can take an active part. We need to be confident that such opportunities are present at all HEIs preparing social workers.

There are also concerns about the ease with which students are able to graduate. In evidence to the Select Committee, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) said that its practice teachers had "on occasion" advocated that a student should not be allowed to progress, but had come under pressure from their institution, to pass them. A senior lecturer in social work at a London University, told the Committee that students were *often given the benefit of the doubt about their suitability to practice or their performance in placements*. More recently, a frustrated lecturer from a long established university told me that he believed the current training was simply inadequate and that he was deeply concerned about the ability of students whose work he was "pressurised to pass".

Students have widely differing views of their own experience at university, and data on employment after graduation shows significant variation between universities. Drawing on data from the National Student Survey and from the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey, *Unistats* provide an independent analysis of both. Student satisfaction with social work courses at different institutions has a mean of 76%, with thirteen universities having a satisfaction score of 90% or higher. But one HEI has a satisfaction score of only 12% and a further six score 60% or lower. In terms of the proportion of graduates employed in the profession six months after graduation, one university scores 100% and 14 others score at 85% or higher. But 13 HEIs have 60% or

fewer graduates employed six months after graduation. One establishment is recorded as having only 34% of graduates employed. Against such figures it is hard to argue that variations in HEI performance are acceptable.

The problem is that employers, and prospective students, find it difficult – other than relying on the *Unistats* and similar polling data – to distinguish the good universities from the indifferent. This is despite universities being subject to various forms of inspection and audit by a number of bodies.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

The Quality Assurance Agency For Higher Education (QAA) uses their *UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)* to assure the standards and quality of higher education in the United Kingdom. The Quality Mark can only be awarded to higher education providers which are QAA subscribers (an arguably dubious condition) and which meet, or exceed, QAA expectations of quality and standards. The QAA say that the quality mark:

Communicates to everyone that an institution has a guaranteed minimum level of quality and standards.

But a visit to their website reveals a list of 309 Institutions in England and Northern Ireland alone which have obtained the Quality Mark (including all nine Institutions which allow Students with fewer than 240 UCAS points to enrol for the social work degree). There is no list of Institutions which have failed to meet the QAA minimum standards. When I e-mailed the QAA and asked how they might help me to select a good university social work course they replied – quickly and courteously – that:

You would probably be better off looking at the UCAS website than ours.

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

HCPC (and before July 2012, the General Social Care Council (GSCC)) approve social work degrees in England. An individual who has successfully completed an approved programme is then eligible to apply to join the HCPC Register of Social Workers. As part of the approval process HCPC visit education providers to ensure that their standards of education and training are being met and that graduates will be able to meet their *Standards Of Proficiency*.

Between 2003 and their abolition in 2012, the GSCC approved 307 Social Work degrees at 83 higher education institutions (as at July 2013 there were 80 Institutions offering social work which have HCPC approved status). But in their *Learning Report*, published as they were abolished, the GSCC was candid about the limitations of their approval mechanism and regretted the absence of a single set of standards against which institutions could be audited:

There has never been a detailed prescribed curriculum for the social work degree... [The absence of] a single set of standards, which the GSCC owned... made the task of regulating complicated.

Rather apologetically, but honestly, the GSCC admitted:

When faced with an institution or a course that was not meeting the requirements, or had weaknesses in certain areas, the GSCC only ever had one formal sanction available to it, which was to withdraw approval for that particular course.

In the event, the GSCC did not decline to approve or withdraw approval from a social work course during its entire existence. Nor has HCPC done so in the relatively brief time it has held responsibility for course approval. HCPC's recent report (November 2013) of the first year of its approval visits to universities, records a reduction in the number of approved social work degree courses. But that is entirely due to universities closing courses of their own volition, or because courses previously approved, but which have never recruited students, have had approval withdrawn. In the academic year 2012/13 HCPC inspected 72 Social Work programmes and approved them all. So, since the introduction of the degree in 2003, no course has failed to gain GSCC or HCPC approval and no course has lost approval.

HCPC told me that they contract with just twenty-three university inspectors (*Visitors* as they describe them) on a fee per day basis. They would not allow me to see the list of visitors, so I was unable to establish the veracity of claims that some were distant from practice and relatively junior (although since HCPC pay them just £180 a day I would be surprised if all of them were sufficiently senior or experienced to be credible). The inspection visit lasts just a day and a half. It includes a tour of the teaching facilities but teaching is not observed. It involves a paper review of student placements but placements are not visited. HCPC may point out that, of the courses approved after their inspection visits this year, 86% of them had conditions attached to their approval. But I remain entirely unconvinced that an overwhelmingly paper based exercise and which measures universities against HCPC's inadequate prescription for social work training, can provide Ministers, employers, or potential students with adequate assurance about the quality of individual degree courses. The fact that HCPC has been keen to conduct inspection visits simultaneously with the College (so there are two teams present on the same day but measuring compliance against different documents) betrays an unnecessary duplication. Essentially, we have two weak inspection processes instead of a single robust one.

I question the utility, including the value for money, of HCPC involvement either in the registration and regulation of social workers, or in the approval of social work degree courses. I know that professions are often regulated by one organisation while a separate body upholds standards of professionalism (in medicine, the GMC does the former while the Royal Colleges do the latter). But I'm not convinced that such a model is necessary for social work in England and it is not present for other professions such as accountancy. In Wales, the Care Council for Wales (CCW) is the single registering and regulating body for student and qualified social workers, as well as being the standard setting body for social work education and which approves university social work programmes.

I am not suggesting that HCPC is not an entirely competent body in its regulatory role with other professions. But in the list of professions it regulates, social work sits very oddly. The other fifteen, most of which were once known as the *Professions Supplementary*

To Medicine, have much in common (art therapists, biomedical scientists, chiropractors, podiatrists, clinical scientists, dietitians, hearing aid dispensers, occupational therapists, operating department practitioners, orthoptists, paramedics, physiotherapists, practitioner psychologists, orthotists and radiographers) but very little in common with social work.

There is limited expertise in children's social work in HCPC either in the executive or in the body's governance. The Governing Council of 20 includes one social worker (not from a children's background) and in a pending reorganisation and reduction in Council numbers, that representation may be lost. HCPC's approval process and its inspections do not provide any assurance that cannot be provided by the College. And, as I have explained in part one, its three main prescriptions for social work education (*Standards of Proficiency, Standards of Education and Training and Standards of Conduct performance and Ethics*) are of limited utility. If the College of Social Work could emerge, as intended when it was established, as a reforming body driving forward social work professionalism and effectiveness, then I see a strong case for transferring HCPC duties in relation to social work to the College. The College's financial viability would be strengthened through the professional registration fees, which currently go to HCPC, while the duplication, confusion and expense caused by two bodies, each prescribing their own professional standards for social workers and each inspecting university social work departments, would be removed. There would be some conflicts that would need to be managed. For example the College, which advocates for the profession, would have to conduct fitness to practice hearings for individual professionals. But credible and independent arrangements could easily be formulated. It would not be in the College's wider interests to deal other than robustly with individuals allegedly unfit to practice.

The challenge facing the College would not be in demonstrating its fitness to deal competently with registration issues, but the need considerably to strengthen what would be, in the absence of HCPC's approval system, the only audit of higher education social work study.

It is a matter for the College Board whether they want to take on that challenge which, inevitably, will strain relationships with some in academia (although others will welcome audit by a single body). I have, however, been sufficiently impressed by the very able new Chief Executive to believe that the challenge of making the endorsement scheme sufficiently robust might be met. That said, she will not be helped in seeking reform by the tortuous governance arrangements she has inherited at the College. There is a board of eight people, an eighteen person assembly and four faculties, each of which has a steering group. The Children and Families Faculty Steering Group has 22 members.

I hope the College grasps the opportunity. If it does not, then an alternative body to quality assure social work training at university will have to be identified, and the possibility of the College fulfilling the optimism present at its establishment is unlikely to be fulfilled.

The current College of Social Work endorsement scheme

The College claims that its endorsement scheme:

will promote and celebrate high quality education and training, over and above the threshold standards required by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

The process involves five stages: the submission of the endorsement request form; the submission of documentation; the visit; the post visit consideration; and the formal decision making process by the College. But some weaknesses are immediately apparent. Although this five-stage process appears reasonably rigorous, there is only one day spent at the university. Like HCPC's approval process, the endorsement scheme rests primarily on a review of documentation. The scheme is voluntary and universities may decline to seek endorsement and, most troublingly, any university failure to obtain endorsement will not be made public by the College.

The College has had a difficult start and may have considered that it had to tread carefully, not least with universities, which one senior figure at the College told me, had greeted the introduction of the endorsement scheme with outrage. But the current scheme does not appear remotely robust enough. The College tells higher education institutions that they will need to demonstrate that their educational programmes are underpinned by:

- *current theory, knowledge values, and ethics;*
- *evidence informed practice and research;*
- *high quality placement provision;*
- *active learning;*
- *critical reflection and analysis;*
- *transfer of knowledge and skills; and*
- *the involvement of people who use services, and carers.*

This does not seem, to me, to be an adequate list. There is nothing here about the quality of teaching (which, regrettably, is not observed), the entry calibre of students, the robustness of examination or other assessment systems, or the extent to which new graduates are ready for employment. And it is impossible to believe that the quality of placement provision can be assessed on a day visit to the university. In any case - and rather predictably - the College says that the emphasis of the inspection will not be on the various alleged weaknesses in some social work degrees, but on:

- *valuing diversity;*
- *challenging own prejudices;*
- *maintaining probity and dignity;*
- *preventing and challenging discrimination; and*
- *reflecting own practice and working inclusively.*

Credibility of college inspectors

Inspectors are paid modestly. They receive £300 for preparation, including reading extensive documentation, the visit to the university itself and then writing up a recommendation. According to some critics, the College has failed to attract sufficient inspectors of the required seniority or reputation to make the endorsement scheme credible. Certainly, at the moment, there have been too few senior employer or academic figures recruited.

Making the endorsement scheme more robust

The reality is that, at the moment, neither the HCPC approval scheme nor the endorsement scheme can provide Ministers, or employers, with sufficient confidence about the preparation of social workers at individual institutions. Little has changed since Lord Laming's 2009 assertion that:

The quality and content of degree courses are not yet sufficiently well developed and there is no rigorous assessment regime in place to ensure that standards are being met by providers.

While I believe that the College of Social Work has the potential to correct this troubling inadequacy, I am equally certain that current arrangements are simply not adequately robust. The endorsement scheme is underpinned by the *Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)* which, while being an improvement on HCPC's *Standards of Proficiency*, still falls far short in terms of listing the things a new social worker needs to understand. The *PCF* is open to wide interpretation by universities and others, and it certainly fails to provide the succinct and clear guidance for HEIs that, for example, the GMC provide to medical schools.

The endorsement scheme's greatest weakness perhaps, is that it concentrates too much on process. So, taking admissions as an example, rather than the scheme seeking simply to establish that the calibre of students admitted to the degree are of adequate ability and potential, inspectors assess – inter alia – whether there are:

systems and policies in place for the regular review of the student selection and interview process; and that admission and selection procedures are carried out in accordance with the guidelines on calibre of entrants (selection, admissions and suitability) held by the College of Social Work, including that people who use services, carers and employers, are involved in the process.

In my view, an institution which adequately conforms to process, is likely to pass the current College endorsement test even where there might be deficiencies in the quality of graduates being produced. It is simply vital to make the endorsement process significantly more robust. Teaching should be observed; entry standards scrutinised; the extent to which course sizes might inhibit individual student development probed; the curriculum examined; and the rigour of examinations and other forms of student assessment audited. Endorsement needs to be compulsory for all institutions offering the social work degree and when an HEI fails to obtain endorsement – which should happen from time to time if the scheme is genuinely robust – that failure must be made public.

Practice placement quality

It is important that we can be more confident about the academic content of the social work degree. But the degree is a sandwich with academic work being built around two practice placements, which, together, take up the best part of one year of the three-year course. The College of Social Work has, quite properly, described the placement experience *as the cornerstone of social work students' learning*.

The current national requirements for practice learning are set out by the College and by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). They require that social work students undertake two placements of 70 and 100 days. Each student must have experience of two practice settings. One must be in a statutory setting where social work involves legal interventions. And the two placements need to provide experience of different settings (for example, child care and mental health).

Since the establishment of the social work degree there has been a considerable challenge in finding student placements of consistently high quality. The rapid expansion in the numbers studying social work has made this more difficult. I heard on a number of occasions how the aggressive growth of student numbers at some universities had led to extreme, and sometimes sudden, pressure on placements in that locality. Even at those universities that enjoy excellent relationships with local authorities, and where expansion of student numbers has not been as pronounced as elsewhere, securing high quality placements has often been a struggle. Obtaining at least one placement for every student in a statutory setting has been particularly challenging.

This is not to suggest that placements other than in the statutory sector are a waste of time. Some non-statutory experiences are very useful. One highly experienced and senior social worker wrote to me to remind me that many individuals, like him, had not had a placement in a statutory setting but enjoyed experiences elsewhere which were challenging and of immense benefit to future practice.

But that is often not the case. I have heard too often about placements which were, in any view, unsatisfactory, including some allocated to students studying at highly regarded universities. A number of universities whom I visited, or contacted, admitted they were unable to provide statutory placements for every student. That reality is borne out by *Community Care*, which, in 2011, surveyed 77 institutions offering a qualifying social work course: 22 had not provided statutory placements for all their students (a further 17 refused to provide any information).

It was sometimes put to me that, strictly speaking, the rules simply require one of the two placements to be in an environment where legal interventions are involved. It was argued, for example, that students placed in a voluntary adoption agency, were obtaining adequate experience of statutory or legal interventions. Having managed a large voluntary organisation, which was also a voluntary adoption agency, I am quite sure that the student experience which might be obtained there falls far short of that which is likely to be experienced, and needs to be experienced, in a local authority setting. And students with whom I spoke and corresponded, as well as some experienced social workers, made plain that they shared the view that local authority experience was vital.

One social worker of forty years experience told me:

The shortage of local authority placements means that many [graduates] obtain the social work degree without ever having undertaken the social work role in children's services. It seems crazy that people who want to be children's social workers can qualify without any experience of doing the job.

A number of students wrote to me to express deep anxiety that the relatively poor quality of their placement experience would make it very difficult for them to obtain a post within a local authority children's services department.

One student completing her Masters degree told me:

Statutory placements appear to be few and far between in my area...Both my placements have been non statutory, the first being with the XXX Fire and Rescue Services (Prince's Trust programme) and I'm now with an Independent Fostering Agency. This means I do not have any opportunity to experience statutory provision and gain the knowledge, skills and experience required to fulfil my role as a qualified social worker. I am not alone. Many of my fellow students are in the same position and while [non statutory] placements can provide excellent learning opportunities they still fall far short [in ensuring] that student social workers are fully prepared.

She went on to say:

Furthermore many vacancies are now stating that statutory experience is essential so, those like myself, that have not had a statutory placement, have yet another hurdle to climb before being able to apply for posts.

Her fears are justified. Policy Exchange concluded earlier this year that:

The main reason that NQSWs have trouble finding employment is that their education does not give them sufficient practical experience for them to be desirable candidates from an employer's point of view. Many of the social workers we interviewed emphasised that one of the decisive factors affecting the employability of NQSWs was the nature of the placements the student had undertaken as part of the qualifying social work course. Most social workers we interviewed highlighted a statutory placement as indispensable.

So, those leaving university without having had a statutory placement experience are likely to struggle to gain employment and, even when they are successful, they are likely to be unfamiliar with some key statutory procedures. That explains the entirely proper caution of some local authorities about appointing some newly qualified social workers.

The reality is that although we continue to produce some very fine social workers, we are producing too many ill prepared for local authority employment and, consequently, with poor employment prospects. And this is despite the government's investment in the social work bursary scheme of around £70m a year, and a further annual investment in the Education Support Grant (ESG) of £28m a year.

The Education Support Grant

The ESG has been in existence since 2003 and is used to compensate employers who accept placement students from social work courses. At the moment, the Government is consulting on how the £28m might more effectively be spent and how overspending might be avoided (the grant is demand led). Expenditure is routed from the Department of Health to universities which then, after paying for their own expenses related to placement preparation and administration, distribute the cash to employers. In my view, universities should only receive ESG funding for those students whose placement experience is satisfactory, and where at least one placement takes place in a statutory setting, or a setting of genuine equivalence in terms of readying a student for practice in a local authority.

Recommendations

4. The Department for Education should consider whether the role of HCPC in regulating the social work profession, including prescribing standards of proficiency and approving HEI social work courses, duplicates the role of the College of Social Work, and, if so, whether those duties should be transferred to the College.
5. The College of Social Work endorsement scheme needs to be compulsory for all institutions offering the social work degree. An HEI unwilling to agree to the endorsement process should not be allowed to train social workers.
6. The College needs radically to increase the rigour of the endorsement scheme. Teaching should be observed; entry standards scrutinised; the extent to which course sizes might inhibit individual student development probed; the curriculum examined; and the rigour of examinations and other forms of student assessment audited.
7. The endorsement process needs also to include an evaluation of the quality of practice placements. Universities which fail to provide every student with at least one statutory placement (or an alternative which is genuinely comparable and accepted by employers as comparable) should not receive endorsement.
8. The Education Support Grant should be distributed only to universities which can demonstrate the quality of their placements, including providing every student with statutory experience, or an alternative experience which is genuinely comparable.
9. The College must be willing to fail institutions, temporarily or permanently, and to publicise such failings; and
10. The College needs to recruit a more senior cross section of assessors, particularly from the ranks of employers, to secure the credibility of the endorsement process. This will almost certainly necessitate an increased level of compensation.
11. If the College membership is unwilling to agree to this more robust role for the College, an alternative assessor of the quality of social work education at individual HEIs will need to be found.

Part Four: The Masters Degree, Bursaries, Step Up To Social Work and Frontline

Since the introduction of the Social Work degree there has been a significant increase in the proportion of courses at postgraduate level. In 2003, only seven percent of social work qualifications were obtained through postgraduate study. By 2012, this proportion had reached 42%, caused in part by the closure of a number of undergraduate courses, some at highly regarded universities.

While I discovered considerable anxiety about the raw ability of some entering social work through the undergraduate route, I found greater employer confidence in those who enter social work with a Masters degree. In part this is to do with age, Masters students being at least in their twenties when they begin their studies. The proportion of very young adults entering social work degrees is sometimes significantly overstated. In reality, since 2004, only about 12 per cent of those beginning social work study have been aged nineteen and under. But, nevertheless, that proportion is much greater than the one or two per cent who studied for the pre 2003 Diploma. Some of those with whom I have discussed this issue urged me to recommend a minimum age for practising as a social worker and I understand the rationale behind that. I certainly believe maturity should be an important issue for universities to consider when accepting applicants to the undergraduate degree. But I am not persuaded that a hard and fast rule is necessary.

The higher academic calibre of Masters students also fuels employer confidence in postgraduate study. Since 2003, 95 per cent of those beginning Masters degrees have possessed either an undergraduate or another Masters qualification. The comparison with undergraduate qualifications at entry – where only 31 per cent hold one or more A-levels – is stark.

Bursaries

One of the reasons for the introduction of the social work degree in 2003 was the alarming fall in the number of applications to social work programmes in the 1990s. To address this, and coinciding with the introduction of the degree, a non-means tested bursary scheme was introduced by the Department of Health. It is generally assumed that the bursary scheme has contributed significantly to the recovery in the numbers applying and the marked expansion in the numbers studying social work in England. In fact, a review of the evidence by Kings College, for the Department of Health in 2012, was surprisingly lukewarm about that assumption. It found little published empirical data on the impact of the scheme other than *some* evidence that it had helped to increase the diversity of social work students, and that *some* had been able to study who might otherwise have been unable to do so. The number or proportion was not quantified. On the other hand, it was sometimes suggested to me that the bursary scheme might have encouraged applications from some students primarily motivated by the non-means-tested financial support. Certainly, the availability of bursaries is sometimes marketed very strongly by universities when recruiting to social work courses.

It is not surprising, therefore, that last year the Department of Health sought to reform the scheme, in part to reduce costs but also further to improve the quality of social work graduates. This was in line with a recommendation from the Social Work Task Force that the bursary scheme should be used as a lever for improving quality. Consequently, and from this year, full time undergraduates will only get a contribution toward living costs in years two and three of the degree. The grant, about £4,500 outside and a little under £5,000 within London, continues to be non-means-tested. Social work students may, additionally, apply for loan funding from Student Finance England.

The number of undergraduate bursaries has also been capped at each higher education institution. Where numbers of students exceed the cap, HEIs are required to send a list of all first year social work students who have passed year 1 of the course to the NHS Business Services Authority where they are assessed for eligibility. Universities are required to rank their lists but universities have discretion over which factors to take into account when ranking.

Full time postgraduate students continue to be eligible for support for both years of their study. They can apply for a grant for living costs of around £3,300 outside and around £3,700 inside London, and a contribution to tuition fees of up to £3,700. Additionally a second grant to provide further help with living costs can be applied for, but is means-tested. Postgraduate bursaries have also been capped at each university and, in the event that the number of students exceeds the number of bursaries, the university has discretion in prioritising students.

Spending pressures on bursary funding are inevitable. Annual expenditure is planned to fall from £73m a year in 2013-14 to £65m in 2014-15. Against those pressures the relatively greater protection given to providing bursaries for postgraduate study is to be welcomed. Postgraduate students will frequently already be carrying student debt from their undergraduate studies and a number explained to me how vital the bursary was. More significantly, when satisfaction with social workers coming through the Masters route remains relatively high, and when we can have far greater confidence about their raw intellectual ability, it is important that bursary scheme arrangements do not halt the growth in the proportion of social workers taking the postgraduate route. Indeed, I would go further: there is a case for further tilting support in favour of funding for Masters students.

Step Up To Social Work

Step Up to Social Work is a social work training programme for those already possessing a good degree and which, originally, provided successful trainees with a Masters in social work. Successful participants now receive a postgraduate diploma but can continue study to achieve a Master's qualification. *Step Up* was specifically designed, by the then Children's Workforce Development Council, as a way of attracting career changers into social work. It was launched in 2010 and the third cohort of *Step Up* trainees began their course in January 2014. 76 local authorities, grouped together into 13 regional partnerships, are taking part and training 310 students. To be eligible, all students must hold an Upper Second, or First, and a grade C or above in both GCSE English and Maths.

Step Up is an employer-based course: that is the student is employed within a local authority, and is based at his or her workplace, rather than on campus. Employer-based courses are not new: of the 307 Social Work degree courses approved by GSCC, about a quarter were employer based. But the proportion of students taking the employer-based route, typically at around 11%, has been much smaller than the availability of employer-based courses might suggest.

Those on the *Step Up* programme can reasonably expect a job after finishing the course (for the first cohort of *Step Up* some local authorities required trainees to sign a contract stipulating they would work for the local authority for a set period of time after completion). I was surprised to learn that has not been repeated for cohort two and is unlikely to be repeated for the third cohort. Because students are employed, and likely to remain in employment after finishing *Step Up*, there is significant commitment by the local authority to their training and *Step Up* participants report much greater satisfaction with, for example, their practice placement experience.

The *Step Up* participants I met have been bright, committed and, patently, intellectually able, not surprising when they all have a good first degree. At one meeting of a mixed group of newly qualified social workers, the contrast in the apparent potential of those who had come through the *Step Up* route and those from the undergraduate route was troublingly stark. But this is not simply about high intellectual ability, which other Masters students frequently possess. There are three other things about *Step Up* that have impressed me and make it more than simply another postgraduate programme.

The first is that *Step Up* tilts the balance of influence about the content of the curriculum, very much a university prerogative, in favour of the employer. Local authority *Step Up* partnerships contract with an HEI to provide the academic content of the programme, the content of which (within HCPC parameters) the partnership can specify. While there may be good examples elsewhere of effective partnerships between universities and employers, relations are often strained and employers often expressed a dissatisfaction with some aspects of the curriculum and the difficulty of getting universities to respond to changing requirements. As one Director of Children's Services told me:

Universities have been allowed to provide too much theory, too much sociology and not enough about spotting things in a family which are wrong.

A senior social worker who had, for some years, sought to manage the partnership between a number of local authorities and a group of universities told me:

[A Director of Children's Services] chaired the partnership board but with little success... Institutions resisted efforts from employers to influence the content of degrees. Employers wanted the Common Assessment Framework to be covered on the degree, but universities insisted that was an issue for practice placement... Universities saw social work as a cash cow, in one instance doubling their number of students at short notice and putting immense strain on placement provision.

By contrast, and as the De Montfort University 2013 evaluation of *Step Up Cohort One* found:

For [employers] there was a clear sense of being more in control, and feeling empowered to determine how HEI partners should go about facilitating trainees' learning. The sense of genuine partnership was strong, enabling HEIs and agencies to work closely together throughout. Agencies felt that they had greater capacity to contribute directly to learning.

The second encouraging thing about *Step Up* is that it has certainly been successful in bringing high calibre graduates into social work. As the De Montfort evaluation of the first cohort concluded:

The programme is generally believed to have generated a significant group of highly capable and committed new entrants to the social work profession.

Research into the second cohort offers further encouragement. While 15 per cent of Cohort 1 respondents had obtained a first class degree at the end of their undergraduate studies and 11 per cent had a post-graduate qualification; 19 per cent of Cohort 2 had a first class degree and 39 per cent had a post-graduate qualification. Just under 20 per cent of Cohort 1 respondents but 29 per cent of Cohort 2 respondents had ten years or more paid employment or mixed employment and voluntary work experience considered relevant to social work.

Thirdly, *Step Up* has begun to address one of the significant weaknesses of traditional university preparation in that the quality of practical experience, so often a weakness with the BA degree, is much higher because employers have a commitment to students whom they employ and intend to employ in the future.

As the evaluation of cohort one found:

Support for trainees was very thorough and seemed to be closely aligned to individual needs and progress. Practice learning in particular was more easily managed, in the sense that it could be aligned with academic elements of the programme. It was repeatedly observed that linkages between theory and practice were more easily made than had previously been experienced, both because of the structure of the programme and the abilities of the trainees.

The evaluation of cohort one was not entirely positive. De Montfort expressed anxiety about a lack of diversity in *Step Up* recruits (although my understanding was that ethnic diversity was very similar to other postgraduate programmes). But, in any case, the ethnic diversity of cohort two appears satisfactory with only 189 of 224 trainees (where ethnicity is known) describing themselves as White British.

The cohort one evaluators also expressed concern about the concentration in *Step Up* on children's social work. They were troubled by:

both the feasibility and desirability of achieving a truly 'generic' social work qualification, in the context of a programme deliberately and explicitly targeted at achieving improvements in children's social work.

But this criticism is only important if it is seen as necessary to persist with a generic degree for social workers. As I shall argue later, I don't believe it is.

If I have a criticism of *Step Up* it concerns the hard and fast nature of its requirement that all participants should hold a First or Upper Second degree. I applaud entirely the success of *Step Up* in drawing the most able graduates into social work, something which addresses many of the weaknesses identified in this report. But there are university graduates who matriculated some years ago, when Firsts and Upper Seconds were much less common, who should certainly not be excluded from *Step Up*. Indeed, I would go further by suggesting that the scheme should be open to any participant who can demonstrate that he, or she, has the intellectual calibre equivalent to that needed to obtain an Upper Second currently. Such participants, I suggest, should either already be in the employment of local authorities in order to ensure that there can be absolute confidence in their ability and potential; or have very clearly demonstrated excellence in careers elsewhere.

The evaluation of *Step Up* Cohort One and Cohort Two¹ both found very high levels of overall student satisfaction, albeit that satisfaction levels with academic input varied widely by university and was sometimes troublingly low (hardly surprising in the context of my wider concerns about variability between universities). Satisfaction with practice placements was very high with all *Step Up* graduates in Cohort 2 enjoying at least one long placement in a statutory setting, and two thirds having both placements in a statutory setting. The proportion of graduates securing permanent employment at the end of their studies was also high. By the end of the training, 93 per cent of Cohort 1 respondents had accepted posts as social workers, while the figure for Cohort Two was just under 80 per cent with some applications still being processed.

Cohort Three of *Step Up* began in 2014 and involves 310 participants from 76 local authorities. It has the potential to go to greater scale and I should like to see it do so. It is important to state that, in my view, *Step Up* and *Frontline* (see below) are not alternatives but have the potential to complement one another. *Frontline* is aimed at bringing a relatively small number of outstanding individuals into social work and is based, at the moment, in just two centres, London and Manchester. *Step Up* has the potential to work with a very large proportion of local authorities and deliver into the profession a greater number of high quality, if not always outstanding, individuals. For that reason I very much hope to see the continued funding of *Step Up* beyond cohort three.

Frontline

Frontline has developed at remarkable speed and, relatively soon after the concept was first proposed as a possible new route into social work, it is recruiting its first 100 students. Based on the very successful *Teach First* initiative it will offer participants qualification as social workers within 13 months and a Master's degree qualification within two years.

¹ *The views of Step Up to Social Work Trainees - Cohort 1 and Cohort 2*, Baginsky & Manthorpe, Kings College London 2014 (in press)

Training will begin in 2014 at a Summer Institute, which will provide five weeks of intensive preparation before students start work within a local authority. Students will work together in groups of four in child protection work in either Greater Manchester or Greater London, being supervised throughout by an experienced social worker. In Year 2 as qualified social workers they will be managing their own cases while completing their Masters degree.

The rapid development of *Frontline* and its pathway to qualified social work status in just thirteen months has divided the academic profession with the largest and most vocal group expressing robust opposition. There is no doubt that the initiative has developed at speed. Not surprisingly, therefore, the rationale for its introduction can sometimes appear a little thin. On *Frontline's* website for example, they list ten facts about the world of children's social care. But it's a simplistic list, concentrating entirely on children in care, and in confusing correlation with causation it perpetuates old myths about the failure of the children's care system (and by implication, the failure of children's social work).

And I am troubled about the extent to which *Frontline* is being marketed to those who might want just a brief taste of social work rather than entering social work as a career. The encouragement to potential applicants to the Civil Service Fast stream to complete *Frontline* first and defer entry to the Civil Service, suggesting *Frontline* should be no more than a step up to something better, is unfortunate. One of the great achievements of *Teach First* has been to deliver high quality individuals into teaching who have - contrary to some expectations - stayed there. If *Frontline* is to be as successful as *Teach First* it is vital that participants do not view it simply as a platform for better remunerated careers.

On the other hand *Frontline* has been marketed with immense energy and enthusiasm. As a consequence, it has excited a great deal of interest with 5,931 registering for the application process for the 100 places. And the *Frontline* curriculum is appropriately sensitive to the skills required in children's social work, and child protection particularly. Some critics argue that the 13-month qualification period is too short. I don't think that criticism holds water. The truth is - as one senior academic at the University of Kent, Professor David Shemmings, told *The Economist* earlier this year - that *Frontline* students will get about the same amount of face-to-face lecturing before qualification as students on a traditional university course. If *Frontline* succeeds in attracting the best of graduates and, after completion, a large proportion remain in social work - measures which will be established by independent evaluation of the initiative - it will be a most worthwhile initiative.

Recommendations

12. In further revisions to the allocation of bursaries and in the light of the financial need further to reduce expenditure, postgraduate study should be protected.
13. *Step Up* should be funded for a fourth year and beyond as a now proven way of bringing high calibre graduates into children's social work.
14. Entry to *Step Up* should be open only to those of the intellectual calibre sufficient to obtain, currently, an Upper Second Degree. But where that ability can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the employer, possession of an Upper Second or First should not be mandatory.
15. *Frontline* should seek to recruit individuals the majority of whom are likely to stay in social work for a considerable time. In evaluating the initiative, the proportion of *Frontline* graduates remaining in practice should be an important measure of success.

Part Five: A children's social work degree?

When the social work degree was introduced in 2003 it was decided that the degree should be a generic one and that students should undertake practice placements in two contrasting service settings (generally a children's setting and an adult setting). By contrast, and before the introduction of the degree, many Diploma students were allowed a degree of specialisation, aimed at preparing them, once qualified, either to work with adults or children. When that option was removed, immediate concerns were expressed that generic degree graduates would not have sufficient knowledge and experience for the challenges of children's social work. Those concerns have grown rather than abated, although a considerable body of opinion, particularly from academia, robustly rejects the proposition that the generic degree provides an inadequate platform for children's social work.

The General Social Care Council (GSCC) examined the issue in 2008, and after research by Blewett and Tunstill, concluded that children's issues were being adequately covered in the generic degree. But they admitted that:

The sample in the research is small and it is interesting that there is other evidence coming forward that suggests that the depth of understanding of new social workers is variable.

A year later, in his 2009 report, Lord Laming challenged the GSCC conclusion:

At the heart of the difficulty in preparing social workers through a degree course is that, without an opportunity to specialise in child protection work or even in children's social work, students are covering too much ground without learning the skills and knowledge to support any particular client group well.

Lord Laming's concern was not confined to anxiety about the academic content of the degree:

There are few placements offered in children's services and fewer still at the complex end of child protection or children 'in need'. It is currently possible to qualify as a social worker without any experience of child protection, or even of working within a local authority, and to be holding a full caseload of child protection cases immediately upon appointment.

He concluded that:

The current degree programme should be reformed to allow for specialism after the first year, with no graduate entering frontline children's social work without having completed a specialised degree including a placement within a frontline statutory children's social work team, or having completed further professional development and children's social work experience to build on generic training.

The 2009 Select Committee probed this issue and noted that in the evidence they had received, those speaking on behalf of employers were typically the most supportive of introducing specialisation. The Chief Executive of the Children's Workforce Development Council told the Committee:

When the newly-qualified social worker joins them, our employers need to know that they understand what it is like to operate as a children's social worker in the children's services context, understanding the wider integrated working that is underway.

The Association of Directors of Children's Services told the Committee there was a strong justification for specialisation in initial training. And Janet Galley, an independent consultant with 40 years' experience in social work and inspection, argued that:

The reality is that there is now little commonality, apart from the basic principles and values, in the work of the adult social worker and the children and families' social worker. The legislative, policy, practice and organisational frameworks are completely different, and the opportunities for working in depth across the interface minimal... It could be argued that it is equally important that children and families social workers understand the role of teachers, named nurses and doctors, and police officers working in child protection, as it is to understand the role of the social worker for adults.

The Social Work Task Force, established to undertake a comprehensive review of frontline social work practice had been more cautious about Lord Laming's recommendation. Dame Moira Gibb, the Task Force Chair, spoke of:

Not wanting to pull up the drawbridge once [children's and adults'] services had separated.

Academic evidence to the Committee was adamantly opposed to specialisation. Professor Hilary Tompsett, Chair of the Joint Universities Council social work committee, argued that:

In order to do a good job with children and families, it is clear that we have to recognise that children live in families, they live in communities. The needs of the adults around them will be absolutely critical... If social workers did not understand what the issues were for the parents, and the law in relation to mental health and childcare, they would not be able to give such good service to children and families.

The Select Committee was persuaded and, although they observed that social workers were often insufficiently prepared for work with children, they supported the continuation of a generic degree. In my more recent discussions with academics I found generally – although not always – continued and profound resistance to the notion that there should be greater specialisation. It was put to me that children's social workers need to understand, for example, adult issues including those around mental health, domestic violence and drug misuse. And so they do. No one would argue – certainly I would not – that children's social workers do not need to know about those and other adult issues. But they do not, I would maintain, need to know quite as much about issues relating to elderly people, which now amounts to about two thirds of adult social work. And children's social workers who spend weeks in placement practice in, for example, residential care homes for the elderly could spend their time much more constructively in a children's setting. If that happened they would be better prepared at graduation for the challenge of children's work.

The reality is that demographic changes are stretching the notion of social work as a single profession. According to a House of Commons Library briefing paper in 2010, there are currently around 10 million people in the UK aged 65 and over. But that figure will

increase by more than 50% by 2020 and the number will have doubled by 2050. Within that total, the number of very old people will show particular growth. The current population of around three million people aged 80 and over will grow to six million by 2030 and eight million by 2050. As a consequence a greater integration of adult social care and adult health care seems inevitable. As one senior academic admitted to me, that will necessarily re-open the question of the generic degree.

Peter Hay is in an ideal position to offer a view as he manages both adult and children's social workers in Birmingham, England's largest local authority. He suggested that there was a middle ground of social work training which both children's and adults' workers needed. But he argued that building on that middle ground, there now needed to be specialisation. At least one Dean of a university training social workers agrees. He told me that rather than combining study of adult and children's social work in the generic degree, there was a strong case for combining a study of children's social work with Health Visiting and he regretted that, to date, he had been discouraged from pioneering such an initiative.

Teaching time on the social work degree

In the past, the lack of teaching time available in a typical social work degree has been used to support the case for genericism. Professor Dominelli, representing Universities UK, told the Select Committee that three years was:

A very short time... to learn what I would argue is one of the most difficult professional tasks in the world.

Universities UK's rationale was that the limited time available for academic study meant that specialisation would necessitate the exclusion of vital material. I take the alternative view. There is too little time available within the generic degree for adequate coverage of some vital issues. Were social work undergraduate and postgraduate study to be longer in duration, or of greater intensity, there might be greater force in the arguments in favour of genericism. It is indisputable that knowledge of social work across the age ranges might sometimes be beneficial to a children's practitioner. But I would argue that there is too little time, whether in a Bachelor's or a Master's programme of typical intensity, to allow such breadth of study.

The Department of Health requirements for social work training include a requirement that the number of hours spent in structured academic learning, under the direction of an educator, are sufficient to ensure that students meet the required level of competence. Although there is no prescription, the Department's expectation is that achieving competence will require an academic input of at least 200 days or 1,200 hours. I have found it difficult adequately to assess just how frequently that expectation is met. A number of universities claim that the burden they put on students is onerous (although some, quietly, claim that other institutions are not as conscientious).

No student or newly qualified social worker suggested to me that the academic burden on him or her – in terms of hours or days they were in teaching – was onerous. Some suggested that that the overall input was too little and that the amount of teaching

dedicated to some key issues, particularly practical issues (the core assessment of children in need was often mentioned) was inadequate. One group of students facing fees of £9,000 a year were blunt enough to challenge the value for money of their degree in terms of the amount of teaching they received.

Masters students at one very good university told me that their academic input was limited to about 64 days over the course of the two-year degree. A particularly able group of undergraduates at the same university calculated that over the course of their three-year degree they had academic input for only 80 days. At another University - one which told me that they worked their students relatively hard - the total number of days during which undergraduates were taught seemed to be around 130 days. What is clear is that, compared to undergraduate study to enter professions like medicine or accountancy, the amount of teaching on a social work degree, at Bachelor's or Master's level, is severely limited.

For those intending to become children's social workers, more of that teaching, and both practice placements, need to be relevant to the world of children. That is not to say that the degree should only teach things which are exclusively about children, or that both placements must be within a children's setting. I accept entirely the relevance of, for example, sociology, social policy and research methodology both to adult and children's social work. And I can see the potential benefit to a children's social worker of a placement that offers experience of, for example, domestic violence or mental health. But when the time dedicated to teaching over the term of either the Bachelor or Master's degree is relatively light, and when days on practice placement are limited, it is vital that more time is dedicated to core issues. So, for example, the study of human growth and development across the whole life cycle, currently taught at many universities, could be more usefully replaced by a more concentrated study of child development.

The alternative is that we will continue to produce some graduates whose knowledge of key issues is inadequate. At least one large local authority, conscious of serious gaps in new graduates' knowledge, puts some newly qualified social workers through a basic course introducing them to safeguarding. More authorities may have to resort to that unless the specialisation nettle is grasped. As Lord Laming told me last July:

I think the well intended legislation that brought in combined social care services in 1971 had the negative effect of confusing a generic service with generic staff. During the Victoria Climbié Inquiry I was shocked by the repeated evidence of qualified staff being ignorant of the legislation under which they should have been operating and which should have underpinned their practice. Social work training has too often become a general education. I suspect it has been captured by academics more comfortable with theory than preparation to practice.

It is sometimes argued that specialisation is impractical because, at the outset of a degree, students do not know whether, after graduation, they wish to work with adults or children. That has not been my experience. Almost every student and newly qualified worker I have met told me that they were confident about the area in which they wished to work before, or very soon after, beginning their studies. My conviction is that students would have greater confidence in degrees which allowed specialisation and, upon graduation, so would their potential employers.

I am not however suggesting that we split the social work profession. Those following a specialised course of study to equip them to work with children or adults would still qualify as a social worker. And it may be that, at some point in the future, an individual might want to move from children's to adult work or in the opposite direction. Such a move might require some element of conversion training. But in terms of registration and the legal ability to practice, I believe social work should remain a single profession but with specialised degree programmes.

Recommendations

16. Universities should be encouraged to develop degrees for those intending to work in children's social work. Such degrees would build on a first year common to all social workers, with a second and third year focusing exclusively on children and related issues.
17. The requirement that social workers have placements in contrasting service settings (typically, one with children and one with adults) should be relaxed to allow those intent on a career in children's social work to spend all 170 days of placement in a children's setting.

Part Six: A note about professional recognitions for non-graduates working in social work

The degree in social work was introduced in 2003 and was intended to improve the supply, quality and status of social workers. While there have been improvements in the supply, this has been at some cost as newly qualified social workers either fail to enter the profession or leave it relatively soon. There is little evidence to support the contention that the quality of social workers has generally risen. Certainly, since 2003, anxiety about the calibre of social workers has been greater than before the introduction of the degree. And the status of social workers has not visibly improved since 2003 and has probably fallen.

In this paper I have made a number of recommendations, which I believe have the potential to improve the calibre of students entering university to study social work, achieve greater consistency in standards of education at universities, and produce more graduates who are adequately prepared for the challenge of children's social work.

My brief was to take a look at university education of social workers. It was not to review the general principle, established in 2003, that social work be an entirely graduate profession. But I want to suggest that the wisdom of that decision is worthy of review.

My experience of running Barnardo's, the UK's biggest children's voluntary organisation, and confirmed by discussions with some local authority employers, is that there are many extremely effective social work practitioners whose work, while being vital, does not require validation through university study, certainly not through the obtaining of a Bachelors or a Masters degree. Many such workers are able and effective and hugely valued by their employers. I believe their contribution deserves greater professional recognition. I am referring here to those working with families in support roles but not engaged in the most complex assessments; those with limited or no managerial responsibilities; those who are unlikely to be making key decisions about legal interventions and appearing in court to defend those decisions. Such individuals are a significant proportion of the children's social care workforce. They do not need to be graduates.

In their evidence to the 2009 Select Committee, the Association of Professors of Social Work (APSW) made a tentative proposal that there might be two types of qualified social worker in England. They told the Committee that local authorities should build on the Foundation Degree in Social Care, making that a qualification route for:

Those who may not have the critical thinking, capacity and intellectual skills to be social workers.

They went on to argue that, accompanying the greater use of the Foundation Degree for this second tier of social work practitioner, a higher intellectual capacity might be required for those admitted to the full degree. These individuals would be those needing:

The critical analysis and appraisal skills [needed for] collating dispersed and diverse information, making complex and crucial decisions based on sometimes incomplete and possibly conflicting information, managing risks whilst also seeking not to be unnecessarily restrictive, and being able

to present judgements logically and cogently. They would also be the leaders of the future within social care and social work, promoting its value and competence base, and ensuring its contribution is developed and safeguarded for the benefit of children, families, and disabled and older people.

I think the principle behind that proposal is worthy of further consideration. If such a route was followed it might lead to a workforce of fewer, but intellectually more able graduate social workers, supported by those with qualifications short of a full degree. Those more modest qualifications might include the Foundation Degree, as suggested by APSW, but also other attainments, including National Vocational Qualifications.

Probation officers and social workers once obtained the identical professional qualification, the Certificate in Qualified Social Work (CQSW) and social work and probation work were seen as two parts of the same professional family. They have drifted apart academically in the last twenty years or so, although the families and individuals they work with are often indistinguishable in terms of their disadvantage and often-chaotic life style.

I believe the Probation Service has made important progress recently in acknowledging and recognising the skills and professionalism of many of its non-graduate workforce: those able to demonstrate professional competence but who do not possess a degree. In the Probation Service, those holding the professional title of probation officer have generally qualified – in a process familiar to social work - through obtaining a dedicated Bachelor's or Master's degree. Probation service officers do not have a degree but achieve a limited professional recognition through qualifying, while at work, with a Vocational Level 3 Diploma in Probation Practice. Able probation service officers can, after further study, become qualified as probation officers. But from the point at which they gain their diploma, and qualify as probation service officers, they are able to work with all but the highest risk offenders, including assessing the risk of offenders harming others, and the need for interventions that might reduce re-offending. Crucially, while under managerial supervision from senior probation officers, probation service officers are allowed to manage their own cases.

There are a number of examples in children's social work of dedicated training courses for social work support staff, some of which are well regarded. The development of a level three qualification, *Work with Parents*, was funded by the previous Government. It includes teaching on subjects including child development and attachment theory and it is still thriving in some local authorities.

There is a level three qualification for those working in children's residential care and consultation is beginning on the development of a level five (foundation degree) alternative. But none of these qualifications confers any recognised professional status on the practitioner.

If my recommendation that there should be an agreed curriculum for undergraduate and postgraduate social work training were to be accepted, then I believe that such a curriculum could also provide the foundation for a secondary qualification for non-graduate social work assistants. Such a qualification would allow practitioners to obtain a measure of professional status, fulfill their potential and enjoy greater autonomy. If those

staff were allowed to manage less complex cases it might help considerably with the pressures of case management and lift some of the burden, in terms of caseload, from graduate social workers.

More importantly, I believe that the option of an alternative, work-based route to limited professional recognition might prove very popular. Some individuals who take the undergraduate route to becoming a qualified social worker – because there is no other – might prefer to pursue the secondary route. And I am confident that many able practitioners, for whom three years of undergraduate study is an impossibility whether for domestic or financial reasons, would be attracted to the alternative.

Recommendation

18. Ministers should consider whether there is a case for introducing a work based, non-graduate qualification for those in children's social care. Such a qualification, while providing an alternative to the undergraduate degree, would provide a measure of professional autonomy including, under appropriate supervision, the management of cases.

Summary of recommendations

1. Universities are sovereign bodies and it is entirely appropriate and justifiable, not least in terms of student choice, that social work degree courses vary. But there needs to be a concise, single document drafted, drawing on the advice of the College of Social Work, academics and, particularly, employers, which offers in a single publication, a GMC style summary of what a newly qualified children's social worker needs to understand. Such a document should cover not only factual issues but those which are best described as philosophical or attitudinal. I recommend that the Chief Social Worker For Children take the lead in drafting such a document. To provide a foundation for that work I suggest she needs first to draft a definition of children's social work satisfactory to the College of Social Work, employers and Ministers.

2. Agreement needs to be reached with universities to ensure that the minimum UCAS requirement of 240 points for A-level students is not breached save in exceptional circumstances.

3. The calibre of students entering through Access courses and with qualifications other than A levels needs to be audited at individual Institution level.

I recommend that the College of Social Work provide that assurance as part of a radically more rigorous endorsement process (see part three).

4. The Department for Education should consider whether the role of HCPC in regulating the social work profession, including prescribing standards of proficiency and approving HEI social work courses, duplicates the role of the College of Social Work, and, if so, whether those duties should be transferred to the College.

5. The College of Social Work endorsement scheme needs to be compulsory for all institutions offering the social work degree. An HEI unwilling to agree to the endorsement process should not be allowed to train social workers.

6. The College needs radically to increase the rigour of the endorsement scheme. Teaching should be observed; entry standards scrutinised; the extent to which course sizes might inhibit individual student development probed; the curriculum examined; and the rigour of examinations and other forms of student assessment audited.

7. The endorsement process needs also to include an evaluation of the quality of practice placements. Universities which fail to provide every student with at least one statutory placement (or an alternative which is genuinely comparable and accepted by employers as comparable) should not receive endorsement.

8. The Education Support Grant should be distributed only to universities which can demonstrate the quality of their placements, including providing every student with statutory experience, or an alternative experience which is genuinely comparable.

9. The College must be willing to fail institutions, temporarily or permanently, and to publicise such failings.
10. The College needs to recruit a more senior cross section of assessors, particularly from the ranks of employers, to secure the credibility of the endorsement process. This will almost certainly necessitate an increased level of compensation.
11. If the College membership is unwilling to agree to this more robust role for the College, an alternative assessor of the quality of social work education at individual HEIs will need to be found.
12. In further revisions to the allocation of bursaries and in the light of the financial need further to reduce expenditure, postgraduate study should be protected.
13. *Step Up* should be funded for a fourth year and beyond as a now proven way of bringing high calibre graduates into children's social work.
14. Entry to *Step Up* should be open only to those of the intellectual calibre sufficient to obtain, currently, an Upper Second Degree. But where that ability can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the employer, possession of an Upper Second or First should not be mandatory.
15. *Frontline* should seek to recruit individuals, the majority of whom are likely to stay in social work for a considerable time. In evaluating the initiative, the proportion of *Frontline* graduates remaining in practice should be an important measure of success.
16. Universities should be encouraged to develop degrees for those intending to work in children's social work. Such degrees would build on a first year common to all social workers, with a second and third year focussing exclusively on children and related issues.
17. The requirement that social workers have placements in contrasting service settings (typically, one with children and one with adults) should be relaxed to allow those intent on a career in children's social work to spend all 170 days of placement in a children's setting.
18. Ministers should consider whether they agree there is a case for introducing a work based, non-graduate qualification for those in children's social care. Such a qualification, while providing an alternative to the undergraduate degree, could provide a measure of professional autonomy including, under appropriate supervision, the management of cases.

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Re-visioning social work education

AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW

DAVID CROISDALE-APPLEBY

February 2014

PREFACE

During the course of 2013 the Minister of State, Norman Lamb MP, invited me in my personal capacity to conduct an Independent Review of Social Work Education. The background to this invitation was the change that had taken place in the practice of social work itself following the Social Work Task Force which undertook a review of frontline social work practice and made recommendations for its reform which were taken forward by the Social Work Reform Board. Both commented on social work education and made recommendations as to its improvement.



PROFESSOR DAVID CROISDALE-APPLEBY OBE

I was asked whether following these reforms, social work education itself was ideally structured to best serve the profession. To answer this I felt it essential to seek the informed views, and the evidence underpinning those views, from all those who had a stake in the education of social workers; service users and carers, employers, educationalists, social work practitioners, students and others, and to seek that evidence from as wide a field as possible. I ensured non-attribution in order to encourage openness, and in the few written comments I have directly quoted I have sought and received permission. Throughout my Review I have attempted to validate the evidence I have found and to eschew any reliance on anecdote.

To quote from Bertrand Russell (1957):

“ *A habit of basing convictions upon evidence, and of giving to them only that degree of certainty which the evidence warrants, would, if it became general, cure most of the ills from which the world is suffering.* ”

I have found a very great deal that is good about social work education, indeed some of it is world-leading, and whilst identifying shortcomings I have suggested how these can be remedied. What I felt was important was to try and set out a vision for the future of social work education which builds upon everything that has been achieved so far.

The world is changing so quickly and the pace of that change is increasing. Nowhere is this more evident than in social work, so we need both incremental change and transformational change in the contribution social work education can make to the profession. That is why I have entitled my Review a **re-visioning**, for that is what is needed if we are to equip the profession of social work to realise its potential to impact upon our society in the early 21st century. This **re-visioning** aims to be both internally coherent and externally relevant, and encompasses education throughout the career of a social worker: from selection to undertake initial education; through qualification to early, supported practice; to greater seniority as a practitioner, with continuing professional development throughout their career.

My findings are given in the course of the text, and my conclusions are derived from these findings. Recommendations are made where major changes are being proposed to the current situation. In this way I have drawn a number of clearly-identified conclusions from my consideration of the evidence, and from those conclusions I have made twenty two recommendations for action, including the way in which funding decisions can be prioritised.



Paul Conville

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To have any validity, proposals about social work education must be rooted in an understanding of the perspectives of the service users, and I am indebted to Peter Beresford and Andy Cheng for sharing their knowledge of how far the profession of social work education has come in the engagement of these key stakeholders, to Michael Preston-Shoot for giving me access to examples of good practice in the involvement of service users, and to Nina Osborne for her invaluable insight into service user and carer perspectives. Keith Wright, Steve Bridge and Glen Mason of the Department of Health have been ever-patient in answering my many questions.

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All the views expressed in the Review are my own, an ownership I also claim for any inaccuracies or inadvertent misrepresentations for which I apologise in advance and which I hope you will forgive.

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Re-visioning social work education. An independent review.

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CHAPTER 1 | BACKGROUND

My first consideration when setting about undertaking this Review of social work education was that I was conscious that there had been an extensive series of examinations of social work in England, including from 2009 to 2012 the work of the Social Work Task Force and The Social Work Reform Board. Additionally, over the last 13 years there have been significant innovations in social work education, leading to the qualifying degree at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and to the opening up of additional postgraduate routes, frequently referred to as fast track routes, to professional qualification.

I was determined that this Review, if it was to have value, needed to be rooted in evidence and conducted with rigour, otherwise it could be accused of being impressionistic or ideologically-led. My own background has included involvement in professional education in fields such as medical, health, social care, forensic science and business schools in both academic and vocational forms. Whilst my perspectives have been influenced by my understanding and experience of those fields, the capturing of the knowledge and views of social work educationalists, those with regulatory responsibilities, social work employers, social workers, social work students, and service users and their carers, means that my recommendations are rooted in the evidence such stakeholders have provided and my interpretation of such evidence.

During the compilation of the Review

I have had the benefit of a great deal of involvement with the many contributors to, and participants in, social work, an opportunity which has confirmed me in my view that there is a very great deal of good practice and indeed some excellent practice in social work education. I have also found evidence of shortcomings which I have identified and for whose alleviation I have offered practical recommendations.

I also believe that if we are to take the opportunity to engender transformational change in social work education then this necessitates identifying the situation we want to bring about; a vision of what the profession requires in order to be excellent; and recognition of the hurdles to be overcome to get there, but with practical recommendations of how those hurdles can be circumvented or overcome. Meanwhile I think it is important that any further moves made in social work education should be aligned to a strategically explicit direction of travel created to meet the ideal, and not as short-term tactical diversions which may inadvertently give rise later to lack of focus on the vision being realised. Why should we settle for less?

Social work, like medicine and other clinical professions such as nursing, midwifery, therapies and dentistry, increasingly has an international perspective through which the knowledge and expertise of social work in other countries is available for inspection to see what has relevance to England and the UK. Indeed we are very fortunate in the UK to have four nations

in which there is variety and indeed some significant differences in both social work and social work educational practice, knowledge of which provides contrasting experience. The variation in requirements for the qualifying social work degree for the four UK countries is shown in APPENDIX 1, and the variation in requirements for post-registration and post-qualifying education and training for the four UK countries is shown in APPENDIX 2.

Where there has been evaluative evidence underpinning or following from different practice then I have sought to inform the Review by incorporating that information and reflecting on its interpretation and applicability to the UK as a whole and to England in particular. Beyond these shores are circles of relevance to our own situation: Europe; North, Central and South America; Asia; Asia Pacific and Australasia; and Africa, from which I have

sought to find illumination and evidence of relevance to our own situation through accessing published work and seeking and assessing written submissions from leading international and national experts. Such an international perspective has also been available to me through organisations such as IASSW (International Association of Schools of Social Work), COSW (the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work), ICSW (the International Council on Social Welfare), IFSW (the International Federation of Social Workers), and from a great number of internationally-recognised social work education academics who have contributed their views and the underpinning evidence for those views. From those responses, in Chapter 14 I have tried to provide a very brief summary of some of the relevant points where they impact upon the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Review.

The first stage in compiling the evidence for the Review was to identify from the many thousands of papers on social work education, a selection which were informative to my task. I sought and received advice from a number of academics and practitioners on this and I have included a selective bibliography. I do not suggest that this is an authoritative listing, but I have sought to reference evidence which seemed to me to add clarity to the discourse and to encapsulate different viewpoints. I have also included reference to some of the information which was relied on in the earlier work of the Social Work Task Force (SWTF) and the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) in relation to social work education.

Such evidence came from social work education throughout the world. This gave me the opportunity to interrogate the findings, conclusions and recommendations with some of the groups and individuals who authored them. This I did in an extensive programme of correspondence and in one-to-one discussions in which I contacted internationally-recognised experts in social work education in some 18 countries. Those countries were the ones generally acknowledged as providing social work education which had achieved international recognition, and from knowledge and understanding of which I felt social work education in England could benefit.

I asked them to provide a perspective on our social work education practice in relation to that in their own country and also from their

knowledge and experience of social work education in other countries with which they were personally familiar. In this way I set out to try and secure the greatest knowledge of social work education from a variety of new and relevant viewpoints with which to inform the Review.

At the same time, I wanted to understand social work education from a variety of relevant stakeholders in this country: this included individuals receiving social work interventions; the carers of individuals receiving social work interventions; organisations representing the interests of the two foregoing groups, such as the Social Work Education Partnership (SWEP); experienced social workers at all levels in employment or working from agencies or on short-term contracts; independent social workers; the recently-created principal social workers; newly-qualified social workers; current social work students undertaking their HEI (Higher Education Institution) qualifying courses at undergraduate and postgraduate (Masters) levels; social work managers; HEI academic staff providing education; practice educators and practice supervisors providing education and supervision in the workplace; those commissioning social work; those employers providing social work services; coordinators of employer/HEI networks/partnerships often organised on a geographic sub-regional basis; third sector and private sector organisations with the interests of particular user-groups as their point of focus; institutions such as the regulator, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), The College of Social

Work (TCSW), the British Association of Social Workers (BASW); unions such as UNISON representing the interests of social workers; the recently-appointed Chief Social Workers; and educationalists from other professional fields.

Such a programme of group and one-to-one interviews was carried out with representatives of these very wide-ranging stakeholder groups whom I felt were in a position to provide an evidenced viewpoint. This provided evidence which whenever possible I triangulated, cross-checking the data from multiple sources to seek out both consistencies and differences in the information in order to validate the evidence I was to use in reaching my conclusions. Endeavouring to use data arising from such disparate sources gives a richness in the type of information which can be used, but triangulation is highly desirable in order to avoid bias and selectivity and thereby have more validity and credibility than would be the case where findings and conclusions were based on single sources.

I then codified the resultant information into coherent patterns, which allowed me to formulate a series of topics, hypotheses and focussed questions to constitute formal Calls for Evidence, with the addition of an invitation to submit information outside the confines of the questions. All respondents were assured of non-attribution in order to encourage frankness.

I wished the routes for the evidence collection and the more formal calls for evidence to be made through and with the endorsement of the networks which already exist in the sector, which included the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), the Joint University Council - Social Work Education Committee (JUCSWEC), the Association of Professors of Social Work

(APSW), the Learn to Care network and the Skills for Care area networks, and involved representative bodies such as The College of Social Work and the British Association of Social Workers.

Throughout the process of compiling this Review I have paid particular attention to eliciting the views of those who use the services of social workers and those who act in a care and support role with users of services. In this I drew on the methods and the findings of the Social Work Education Partnership, SWEP, which acts as the information hub for user and carer participation in social work education. The involvement of service users and carers by HEIs in informing their educational provision is impressive in relation to other professions, but it is something to be built upon further in ensuring that the experience and views of users and carers is at the very heart of realising the vision for social work education.

It is this upon this comprehensive evidence from the literature and the views of the multi-faceted stakeholder groups on which I have formed my conclusions. By this explicit and rigorous process I have reached conclusions and recommendations which are supported by evidence and logical derivation. In this way I hope to have provided a Review which will move forward social work education in a transformational way and which will have the authority to stand the test of time. Social work enriches our society, focussed as it is on the needs of people who need care and support to live independently and contribute to society, some of whom are vulnerable and disadvantaged, and if a society is to be judged by the way in which it treats such members, then social work itself justifies being served by education and training of the highest possible quality, and we as its society must support it.

In a profession as significant to the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities as that of social work, the learning outcomes and education and training pathways through which those outcomes are delivered need to be regulated to ensure that practitioners are properly equipped to provide the services required of them in an effective and efficient way in which the safety of the public is protected and the rights of individuals are respected.

Clearly the initial qualification as a social worker is just that, an initial qualification in a journey in which continuing professional education is expected to take place throughout a professional's career in practice. So in commenting on social work education, it is logical to look at the educational journey over a professional's lifetime in practice in reaching conclusions about any individual stage in that process.

SECTION

3.1

THE CONSTITUENTS OF PROFESSIONALISM
IN SOCIAL WORK

I see the capability of social workers to both enable and protect as a duality which is at the heart of social work practice. The role of education and training is to equip social workers to do this to an increasing degree of quality and consistency throughout their careers in social work. These objectives are at the very heart of this Review into social work education, because ultimately it is what really matters to those receiving social work services and to those professionals providing it. There is a great deal of evidence to show that the impact and effect of high quality social work on those receiving it is transformational in their lives, and listening to the views of service users and their carers, students and practitioners, it is clear that this capability to transform rather than merely deliver a service is the overriding motivator to them.

I found a remarkable enthusiasm and

absence of cynicism amongst these groups involved in social work education, despite their frequent references to the adverse criticism in the media concerning both the value and the delivery of services by social workers which they see as a challenge to reverse rather than an inevitability to be accepted. If this is to happen then it will take recognition within the profession that its viewpoint on contemporary issues in society with which it is involved needs to be expressed in a way that is designed to be both informative and persuasive. This should not be the preserve of a single organisation as there is a richness in the variety of the professional groups within the sector, but as with medical and other clinical colleges and organisations such as the National Institute of Care Excellence (NICE), the profession's reputation is enhanced when public utterances demonstrate views that are factual and

evidence-based rather than anecdotal and opinion-based. As a facilitator and a lead for the profession it is encouraging to see The College for Social Work working collaboratively with others such as the Chief Social Workers and the many representative organisations within the sector in order to contribute to the voice of the profession.

The evidence I have seen, both of itself and in comparison with the other professions with which I am familiar as mentioned earlier, leads me to the view that social work education is an extraordinarily complex subject because it draws upon a wide range of other academic disciplines, and synthesises from those disciplines its own chosen set of beliefs, precepts, ideologies, doctrines and authority. As a profession, social work requires its practitioners to understand intricate and often seemingly impenetrable behaviours and situations, whilst not having the same level of objective scientific support for their analysis and conclusions to assist them and upon which to rely as have, for example medical and other clinical practitioners or expert witnesses with forensic science expertise. Rather, social workers have to rely on their understanding of social work theory, their knowledge of lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people and their own mental processes and judgement.

The nature of social work is coping with contradictory and partial information, identifying the type and degree of risk, and selecting interventions which take a balanced view of the multifaceted risks present in most social work settings. It is about both enabling and protecting, and any attempts to reduce the discussion of this to one of a simplistic dualism is to fail to recognise the limitations of such reductionism's usefulness in addressing the emergent properties of complex systems such as social work. So the task for social

work education is to equip practitioners with the theoretical knowledge and practical capability to do high quality work which is characterised in this way. It requires education in which both *theory-informing-practice* and *practice-informing-theory* are inexorably linked. Such considerations as these have led me to conclude that the outcomes of social work education need to be expressed in a new way which reflects this thinking, namely:

(1) the social worker as a practitioner, with the ability to exhibit resilience under conditions of high pressure; able to communicate with the service receiver and carer; to diagnose and understand the situation and assess the risks involved; determine priorities in allocating limited resources; decide appropriate courses of action and manage that process; and communicate effectively with professional colleagues who can contribute to those processes

(2) the social worker as a professional, understanding and applying to their practice the appropriate ethical and legal principles associated with working with a wide range of disadvantaged and vulnerable people; engaging in reflective practice; learning from and teaching other social workers; learning to work effectively with and contribute to other professions and disciplines; protecting and safeguarding those who receive social work services; improving the quality of their care and support; empowering them and increasing their independence.

(3) the social worker as a social scientist, able to understand and apply to their social work practice, the relevant principles, methods and knowledge of social work; seeking to further the understanding of social work through evidence gathering and through research.

From this, it is evident that we need to have information as to how such knowledge, skills and competencies can be inculcated during the educational process, what needs to be achieved by the stage of initial qualification, and what subsequently needs to be the subject of continuing professional development (CPD).

Therefore I see qualifying education as the process by which social workers are equipped with the capability to enter the profession ready to engage in practice as newly-qualified social workers (NQSWs), and to continue their career-long professional development through CPD in which the first year in practice is the most formative part.

But that initial engagement as a NQSW should be of a form that permits that which the former student has learned to be applied in a manner which recognises that they are still at the very beginning of their professional career, and that it is essential that they gain their experience of practice through receiving effective supervision in a supported environment.

For this reason, I strongly support programmes such as the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) which provide such an environment of support, supervision and continuing education. But it is my conclusion that whilst this provides strong elements of what is needed, its take-up is as yet only partial and its content and rigour of assessment insufficient to fully meet the needs of the newly qualified social worker. The SWTF recommended that consideration be given to making this compulsory and forming a licence to practise (SWTF 2009, 1.48), and I address this specific point later in the Review.

In my suggested new expression of

the desired outcomes from social work education given above, special mention should be made in relation to the importance for the credibility of the profession of social work that it creates its own codification of beliefs and taught principles - its doctrine - based on its discipline as a social science, which means that its own rigorous research must underpin its teachings and beliefs. This languishes at present and, even in 2006, JUCSWEC concluded that:

‘Furthermore, with the low level of actual research being funded, there are few research posts available for social workers and little motivation for staff to take up such posts because of the absence of recognised research career paths and poor job remuneration and security. Another traditional route to developing a research workforce has been to recruit and train doctoral students. However, opportunities for doctoral studies in social work have been limited not only by the low historical base but also by ESRC funding practices in respect of part-time studentships. In addition, social work academics have sometimes prioritized teaching excellence at the expense of research excellence, contributing to a slow rate of bids for outside funding for post-graduate research. As social work was only awarded separate disciplinary status by the ESRC in late 2004, recognition for post-graduate research training and consequent funding are difficult to access. The sustained resistance of the General Social Care Council (in England) and its predecessor bodies to recognise a place for doctoral level post-qualifying work reflects on the wider image of social work as resistant to research.’ (JUC/SWEC 2006)

Since that was written little has changed, and I strongly believe as do the leading academics in this country and internationally, that this situation must be

remedied, which is why I have included it in the third of my three proposed outcomes from social work education mentioned above. To be a really credible profession, social workers must be equipped to carry out research as part of their critical and reflective practice.

There is a general view that the two aspects of theory-informing-practice and practice-informing-theory are at the very heart of professional education in social work. One of the most challenging considerations is how best to integrate these two components into professional practice. Qualifying

education was seen as the first step, but a vital one in which the fundamental attributes of a social worker are formed, but there should be an immediate follow-up from this into CPD, the first stage of which is a qualifying year in supported practice. In delivering this sort of professional education it is assumed that it is a process of lifelong learning, and therefore as mentioned elsewhere the three outcomes of a social worker as a practitioner, as a professional, and as a social scientist are fundamental to the development of the profession.

SECTION 3.2

THE PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK

In England the current overarching professional standards framework for education and training, the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), was developed by the Social Work Reform Board and is now intrinsic to the work of The College of Social Work (www.tcsw.org.uk/pcf.aspx). It sets out consistent expectations of social workers at each stage in their career, setting a context for both initial qualifying social work education and continuing professional development thereafter. It provides social workers with a coherent framework around which to plan their professional development.

The Professional Capabilities Framework has nine domains (or areas) within it, which are:

PROFESSIONALISM - Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development

VALUES AND ETHICS - Apply social work ethical principles and values to guide professional practice

DIVERSITY - Recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice

RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING - Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic wellbeing

KNOWLEDGE - Apply knowledge of social sciences, law and social work practice theory

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS - Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision-making

INTERVENTION AND SKILLS - Use judgement and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to

promote independence, provide support and prevent harm, neglect and abuse

CONTEXTS AND ORGANISATIONS

Engage with, inform, and adapt to changing contexts that shape practice. Operate effectively within own organisational frameworks and contribute to the development of services and organisations. Operate effectively within multi-agency and inter-professional settings

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others through supervision, mentoring, assessing, research, teaching, leadership and management.

Such domains are different in form to those used in medical education and other clinical education frameworks. The PCF has attracted a great deal of support across the social work profession, where it is seen as providing a coherent and salient framework to inform the practice of a social worker throughout their career. Of course as social

work itself and the societal environment in which it is practised change, as occurs with ever-increasing frequency, such domains as those of the PCF will need to be reviewed and refreshed at appropriate times, which is the case for any such framework if it is to remain current.

The PCF is divided into levels, both before and after qualification. The levels relate to the complexity of work that someone with those capabilities would be able to manage. There are currently nine levels, from entry to training as a social worker, to social work at the strategic level. Progression between levels is determined by demonstrating capability to manage issues such as complexity, risk and responsibility through their practice and continuing professional development in a range of professional settings.

The PCF applies to all social workers in England - in all roles and settings, including independent social workers. For social workers in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, National Occupational Standards (NOS) for social work apply.

SECTION 3.3

THE HCPC STANDARDS OF PROFICIENCY AND THE PCF

In addition to The College of Social Work's PCF, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) has published Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers in England – SOPs (HCPC 2012a). The SOPs have been mapped against the PCF domains for the level expected of social work students at the end of their last placement (i.e. at qualifying

level). The mapping is available on the HCPC website (HCPC 2012b). However, the mapping is not convincing in itself, and rather it exemplifies the problem that the profession is regulated and endorsed by two very different sets of criteria, which is a continuing major problem which needs to be addressed.

Conclusion 1: That the shaping and direction of travel for social work education and training should be directed at producing social workers whose professional profile is comprised of three components: **the social worker as a practitioner, the social worker as a professional, and the social worker as a social scientist.**

Conclusion 2: That the regulation of social work education is made more coherent, seamless and more rigorous in terms both of standards and processes by the bringing together of the SOPs and PCF based procedures.

In reviewing social work education, in addition to recognising the importance of the educational process, the curriculum covered and the learning outcomes expected, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the workforce numbers and capabilities if social work education is to be reflective of the needs of society and the requirements of employers charged with meeting those needs.

The starting point for planning for the provision of the social work workforce is an understanding of the future demand for social work, in order to relate it to an understanding of the capability of the workforce and the numbers required. Employers have made it clear that the present workforce planning for social workers is inadequate, and will need to be radically improved if we are going to plan the workforce to meet the nation's need. Symptoms of that inadequacy are the

attrition rates on some of the qualifying courses, concerns about the calibre of some students, number of qualified social workers who choose not to practise as social workers, the number who are unable to gain employment with social work providers, and those who, failing to get a social worker post take a support role for which they are over-qualified – such roles often operating as a “career waiting room” until a social worker vacancy occurs. Indeed the situation would be even more severe were it not for the unwelcome lack of retention of social workers in practice within a few years of qualifying. Understandably this retention problem is viewed by employers as creating a serious workforce capability situation, and whilst they can replace the numbers by recruiting NQSWs there is a great loss in terms of the expertise of relatively recently trained social workers who have gained some years of experience.

SECTION

4.1

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE PROCESS FOR STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING

The numbers of social workers in qualifying education increased following the introduction of the qualifying degree in 2003, and there is a need to develop an informative methodology applied to the social work workforce. As the major problem is one of retention of qualified and recently-experienced social workers in the

profession, the remedy is unlikely to be producing more newly-qualified social workers, many of whom already cannot gain employment as social workers, and simply perpetuating rather than addressing the major problem of retention.

In March 2012 the Centre for Workforce Intelligence (CfWI) published a paper

entitled *Workforce Risks and Opportunities – Social Workers* (CfWI 2012a), in which they assembled information from a variety of sources which showed that from a demographic/societal perspective there was an increasing underlying need for social services for both adults and children. This was really significant in the case of adults, in particular with an ageing population, with the over-65s expected to grow by 25% and the over-85s by 42% in a decade.

It also concluded that there was an oversupply of social workers coming through qualifying education caused in part by employers preferring to employ those with more experience. Whilst employers' demand for social worker numbers in adult services has been declining overall, there was still a shortage of social workers in children's services. The report went on to comment in referring to the *Voice* programme that children's own strongly-expressed preference was to have a named social worker, a consistent presence in their lives, to whom they could turn. There was also an increase in the demand for people to work in services in roles other than as professionally qualified social workers, as for example with health visitors working alongside social workers and other staff providing services to vulnerable children, and with some qualified social workers only able to find jobs as care assistants. The paper also suggested that employers should seek to improve their retention of experienced social workers and look at career progression opportunities, however increasingly employers were finding their staff learning and development budgets under great pressure.

In August 2012 the CfWI published a report on the assumptions underpinning the supply and demand model for student social workers (CfWI 2012b), in which they concluded that the overwhelming factor

influencing numbers was the number of practice placements likely to be available. They also commented on the difficulty in finding practice educators and supervisors. In terms of the availability of information, CfWI expressed their concerns about the lack of a register of social work students since the demise of GSCC, and their difficulty with accessing and using the data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Despite what is still a shortage of social workers in adult mental health and children's services, many newly qualified social workers are unable to gain employment as a professional social worker, a view confirmed by the employers, HEIs and representative organisations, and referred to by social work students and recently qualified former students. This is hardly surprising with the number of students qualifying since 2003 having nearly doubled (CfWI 2012a) and the cuts to local authority budgets due to austerity in the past few years.

All of these factors mean that we need to have a very much firmer view of the need (in terms of job opportunities) for social workers in this very different world: this provides a real opportunity for the profession to reassert itself in terms of its workforce planning. The challenge in doing this is not to be underestimated - in the clinical professions there have been a number of major difficulties in such planning - but there are many lessons the social work profession can learn from those examples.

If it is to be reliable, amongst other information requirements future workforce planning needs to be based upon knowing the numbers and characteristics of those coming into social work education and later qualifying as social workers; whether there

are correlations with outcome measures at the point of qualification and thereafter in practice; a clear understanding of the demand nationally and regionally/locally;

and the geographic flexibility of social workers such as whether place of work maps to place of qualification

SECTION 4.2

RESPONDING TO A FAST-CHANGING SOCIETY

In assessing and planning for the numbers of social workers required in future we need to take account of a number of transformative changes in the way in which care and support services are taking place. In *A Vision for Adult Social Care: Capable Communities and Active Citizens* (DH 2010), personal budgets were introduced as part of a move towards the provision of self-directed support. The employment by people who use services of personal assistants (PAs) was encouraged as part of the implementation of personalisation of care and support services. As a consequence of the *Health and Social Care Act* (HMG 2012) there were major changes introduced into the architecture of care provision, including clinical commissioning and intended changes to the legal framework for adult care. The move towards the provision of integrated services has accelerated, both in terms of the integration of social care and healthcare budgets and the large-scale piloting of personal health budgets, but also in joined-up working involving community-based local services to improve outcomes for children, adults and families. This is all part of a strong direction of travel in which people who use services are much more involved in planning and designing their own care, both for adults and children. There is also an increasing move towards the concept of wellbeing as a strong directional signpost in healthcare and social care provision.

Such transformative changes in the demand for, and structure of, service provision require social work and social workers to recognise and adapt to the very different expression of needs which has occurred and continues to occur at a great pace, and social work education needs to be responsive and on occasions anticipatory of the implicit educational requirements. Despite the many well-intentioned attempts to do this, the sector has found it difficult to elicit and promulgate a sector-wide view of the changes to social work education which will facilitate and contribute to this re-visioning.

So we need to determine what is necessary to achieve an effective process for transforming workforce planning for social work, and which can be used to inform the education process. During the compilation of this Review, this point has been advised to The Department of Health (DH) which has now asked Skills for Care to take on the function previously performed by the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to analyse and report on the data on social work qualifying courses collected by the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA). This includes data on admissions, numbers on courses, student demography, employment destinations and other variables. This will provide some of the supply side data analysis which, when combined with the employment information provided by the National Minimum Data Set – Social Care (NMDS-SC) will form an

essential part of future workforce planning for social workers that employers consider is so essential.

Although important for supply side workforce planning, the analysis of social work student data was not a statutory function and so was not prioritised in the closing down of the GSCC. The data and processes were transferred to the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) in July 2012, however the HSCIC has not taken on the function of analysing the data on a permanent basis.

The Department of Health considers that Skills for Care taking on this data and analysis work from HESA will provide information on social work education and, working alongside the existing NMDS-SC data collection on social workers in employment, will allow a much richer analysis and thereby assist better planning for the social work workforce. For example, such data analysis will be of benefit to local authority employers and NHS Local Education and Training Boards (LETBs) for workforce planning. There are also linkages to the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) for social workers and the sector skills council's wider work in supporting workforce development. The outputs from such work need to be precisely specified and should include building on the former GSCC Data Packs in order to create trend data, and using the data analysis in conjunction with all work on social worker supply side planning such as is done by the Centre for Workforce Intelligence (CfWI), the Health and Care Professions Council, the Department of Health and the associations of directors of adults and of children's services.

The service envisaged should be set up to be responsive to requests from all sources for information held in this new, more

comprehensive information base, and act as the portal through which other organisations can access the data, such as HEIs, The College of Social Work, the Chief Social Workers, commissioners, employers, policy makers, think tanks, and so forth. This will also provide essential support to area and sub-regional partnerships between employers and HEIs which facilitate the delivery of social work courses (for example, provision of such data could inform practice placement planning where this is done at this level of granularity).

Such work is intended to be part of creating a new and much needed social work supply and demand model, which itself will inform decisions about social work educational provision. To do that, we should seek the views of its relevant stakeholders such as the associations of directors of adults and of children's services (ADASS and ADCS), SWEP, the advisory bodies to the HEIs such as JUCSWEC and APSW, and others with specialist expertise such as CfWI. If this is done then information of the supply side and the demand side will be brought together to provide the necessary basis for thorough workforce planning.

Conclusion 3: That proper use be made of the information already collected on social work qualifying courses by the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) to inform the supply side in a way that accords with demand side information from the National Minimum Data Set – Social Care (NMDS-SC), in order to form the basis for future workforce planning.

Conclusion 4: That work is accelerated to create a strategic workforce planning methodology which takes account of major strategic drivers in the system of social work, social care and healthcare.

Conclusion 5: That an assessment be made of the benefits and practicalities of registering social work students at their point of entry into qualifying social work education.

CHAPTER 5 ROUTES FOR QUALIFYING EDUCATION

In the past there were multiple routes to qualification, which were amalgamated into a unified qualification, the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW). Then, since 2003, the qualifying degree in social work has been available following programmes of study at both undergraduate and postgraduate level: the degrees, the professional qualification, and the entitlement to register and use the reserved title of Social Worker thereby first awarded by the qualifying route in 2006 and 2005 respectively. These degrees are currently delivered by some 82 HEIs, a majority of which provide degrees at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in three and two year courses respectively.

There is widespread support amongst employers, academics and other stakeholders for the continuation of the mainstream qualification routes established in 2003, namely the change to degree-level qualification achievable by both undergraduate and postgraduate level courses, although there are differing views about their relative strengths. The decision to move to a degree-based profession brought social work into alignment with other professions, and any move to undermine or reverse this would be a serious retrograde move for the profession.

SECTION 5.1 COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE MAINSTREAM AND FAST-TRACK COURSES

At present, and planned for the future, is the development of alternative graduate routes into the profession (such as *Step Up to Social Work* and *Frontline*). Although not envisioned to involve large student numbers, the initiatives are aimed at supplementing the current undergraduate and postgraduate mainstream courses by encouraging into the profession an additional cohort of proven high academic achievers who were felt otherwise not likely to be attracted to a social work career. The students are then equipped to qualify through accelerated courses, which are regulated in the same way and to the same standards as the

mainstream undergraduate and postgraduate courses by the HCPC, and it is anticipated will be able to seek endorsement by TCSW.

Amongst the HEIs, there is an open-mindedness about there being a variety of routes to qualification. However, there is a widely-held belief that the qualification by whichever route is taken should result in the same qualification in name, substance and quality, namely a generic social work qualification which equips the student to continue after qualification to practise as a social worker in all of the fields of social work. There is major disquiet about any suggestion of altering the standard at which

the qualification is achieved by restricting coverage of the theoretical underpinnings of social work, or restricting the access to a variety of service user groups, or through creating a split between the basic tenets of theory-informing-practice and practice-informing-theory. This is not to suggest that currently all students are practice-ready at that point of qualification – indeed there is a very widely-held view that the first year of post-qualification practice should take place in a supported environment such as is provided in the ASYE programme, in a similar way to that employed in most professions, clinical and otherwise.

Despite the controversy surrounding such accelerated courses, I have found the arguments in favour of them to be mainly founded on a faster route to being practice-ready in particular fields in which there are shortages of practitioners, namely mental health and child protection, and the aforementioned attraction of an additional high-capability cohort possibly otherwise unavailable or unattracted to social work. Fast track entry schemes were seen to benefit from being particularly well-funded and have established strong partnership working with practice placement providers. Students receive support in the form of substantial bursaries in the case of *Step Up to Social Work*, or salaries in the case of *Frontline*.

The arguments expressed against them include the risks of dumbing-down the educational content, providing a restricted experience of other user groups, and a lack of confidence in the current regulatory and endorsement regimes to ensure the adequacy of the outcomes at qualification. There was also concern that if the only way to attract such students into social work was by financial incentivisation, whether subsequently they would be attracted away from social work after a short time.

At the time of compiling my Review, *Step Up to Social Work* has been established for several years and has been subjected to independent evaluation, whereas *Frontline* is still getting underway, and HEIs and employers do not see the two initiatives as being similar: *Step Up to Social Work* having gained a degree of acceptance, whereas there has been and still is deep concern over the capability of the practitioner coming through the *Frontline* scheme to be adequately equipped for a career in social work. It is important that the issues of the adequacy of the structure of such courses and the necessity that the standards of qualification are not compromised in terms of the outcomes at the point of qualification are matters which can be assured by the regulator and, where requested, the endorser.

There is anxiety that such courses through their focus on pre-qualification specialisation will not provide a sufficient knowledge and practice of research, coverage of the underpinning theoretical basis for understanding human and society's behaviours, nor an adequate internalisation of some of the major attributes (knowledge, skills and capability of application in a sufficiently representative range of practice) which educators feel newly qualified social workers should possess. These views are widely held, and I would suggest that one of the real issues underlying this anxiety is whether the current regulatory framework of the HCPC and the endorsement framework of TCSW are of sufficient breadth and saliency and will be applied with sufficient rigour to ensure that the courses which fall into this category, currently *Step Up to Social Work* and *Frontline*, are designed in a way which meets the learning outcomes specified and the professional capabilities in the PCF framework. If they fail to do so, then it is the regulatory and endorsement standards and/or the rigour of their

application which need immediate attention in order to make their processes fit for purpose.

This reinforces the importance on the ability of all such qualifying courses to meet the outcomes set for social work qualification, which are the Standards set by the regulator, the HCPC. The majority of the HEIs believe that the additional criteria set by TCSW in accord with the Professional Capabilities Framework should also be met as a condition of qualification, as the criteria set by HCPC in their Standards are not felt to be adequate. There was virtually unanimous support for combining the latter into an enhanced and expanded version of the former, and no support for continuing with the two sets of criteria in the future. As mentioned earlier, the PCF has achieved widespread acceptance amongst all stakeholder categories, and has a sense of being “owned” by the profession. Addressing this particular concern about the adequacy of current and future initiatives is one of the ways in which the controversy surrounding such innovative educational approaches can be resolved. Other ways include ensuring that the initiatives are piloted before any widespread adoption, and ensuring that they are rigorously evaluated by independent scrutiny to pre-set action standards as arguably indeed happened with *Step Up to Social Work*. Such evaluations should be conducted on a longitudinal basis so that effectiveness and cost efficiency can be properly established. But provided the courses themselves are rigorously assessed as being fit for purpose, the inclusion of additional numbers of proven high calibre entrants to the qualification process can only be of potential value in enhancing quality in the profession, provided candidates are selected in a way in which their values and resilience are properly assessed, and their appetite for a career in social work is proven.

In responding to the Calls for Evidence, both employers and HEIs were asked to give their views, experience and point to any evidence underpinning those views which might assist in the development of the qualifying requirements. They commented in a way which firmly reinforced their confidence in the mainstream undergraduate and postgraduate routes to qualification, and commented on fast-track schemes against that benchmark. They were worried that comparability might be compromised in several ways, and I have summarised these as follows. If the new routes were specific in the user group on which they focussed (*Frontline* with its focus on children and child protection was most frequently cited), the profession was in danger of qualifying social workers inadequately informed and qualified to understand the various perspectives in any situation. Using the example of the prospect of *Frontline*, the concern was that understanding the child as a member of a complex context involving families, adults, children and community would receive inadequate attention. The result could be the imposition of simplistic versions of child protection methodology which could lead to selective information gathering and the utilisation of a narrow processing methodology and a consequently narrow view of social work involving children as being only child protection and safeguarding. This could result in the unnecessary removal of children from families into a looked-after context, an intervention which remains largely unevidenced as to the longer term outcomes for the child.

Step Up to Social Work was criticised in the evidence from HEI’s for being process and task driven, weak on reflective practice and on understanding anti-oppressive approaches, and not adequately teaching the ability to use theory to inform practice.

This programme has been independently evaluated (DfE 2013), and in some degree of contrast to these views the evaluation conclusions included:

- *Step Up to Social Work* did contribute to the enhancement of employing agencies' role in the design and delivery of training for social work, through the partnership and commissioning arrangements established. In particular, the programme seems to have created the basis for effective dialogue between training providers and employing agencies, promoting a greater sense of responsiveness, not just in terms of the overall construction of the programme, but in the delivery phase, too.
- Particular strengths of the recruitment and selection processes were felt to be their focus on the practical demands of social work and on personal attributes such as resilience and social work values, although clear concerns arose about the lack of diversity amongst those recruited to the programme. Nonetheless, there was a general consensus that the quality of *Step Up to Social Work* trainees and their subsequent level of achievement on the programme were of a particularly high standard. Both HEIs and employing agencies recognised that the trainees demonstrated key attributes and seemed to be 'ready for practice' in precisely the way that had sometimes been identified as lacking with conventional programmes, such as in their ability to link theory and practice.
- A note of caution, however, relates to the demands of a compressed timescale and the associated implications for diversity in recruitment.

The shorter duration of such courses may lead to the theoretical underpinnings of

social work to be overly compressed (for example in the intended plan for *Frontline* is an intense programme of 5 weeks of 5 days/week of 9-5 teaching, amounting to only 175 hours actual teaching time). Disquiet was expressed that this approach is pedagogically unproven, with the risk that fundamental conceptual frameworks for social work, such as theories of human development, attachment, ethics, human rights, mental capacity etc. might not be covered or fail to be internalised into influence on practice, thereby equipping students with a bag of frequently-used tools rather than a comprehensive diagnostic toolkit. In seeking to clarify the pedagogical integrity of this proposed approach, I have found the research literature to be silent, and I recommend that this be properly researched as part of the evaluation of the outcomes of fast track initiatives in order that any shortcomings can be addressed and remedied.

Concern was also expressed that in fast track routes there would be insufficient opportunity for students to reflect on the circumstances and the situational context in which they would be able to select and apply the methodology they felt would be most appropriate to the particular circumstances, and learn in a supervised manner how those choices worked out in practice. Unease was expressed too, that the experience of working very closely with the same group of students and supervisors could lead to a very narrow experience of practice, rather than providing the student with the opportunity to observe a wide range of different social work professionals' practice methods, and it could provide a restricted environment in which to develop critical thinking skills.

Further, it was felt that the fast track courses offered very limited opportunities for involvement in research which, particularly

if the students were labelled as the “elite” of the profession (an unfortunate term used in promoting the initiatives), would undermine the credibility and standing of the profession as one built on knowledge and practice derived from research. It could become a profession built on “know how” rather than “know why”: the essential difference between training and education. So this concern is one of great significance.

Whilst the guarantee of two placements in statutory settings was viewed as a strength of the newly-emerging fast track routes, there was a concomitant danger that the lack of variety of practice settings could be a limitation to student learning. Also, there are other basic conflicts which need to be resolved, such as the need to be equipped to work with a variety of service user groups in order to avoid the emergence of a variety of criteria for qualification or the emergence of a variety of different qualifications, both of which were viewed very negatively by employers and HEIs as likely to fragment a profession which needs coherence and a consistently enhanced canon of knowledge underpinning professional practice. Many of those involved in social work were concerned that arguments with policy makers over a number of such fundamental issues was giving a poor message to other professions about the coherence and leadership of the social work education profession.

There is concern that the current focus on children and particularly on child protection may be detracting from the important contribution social work makes to adults and in particular in mental health with the continuing role of social workers as Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHPs), and in the increasing quantum of demand from those with learning disabilities. The recent scoping exercise (IPPR forthcoming) which looked at the

creation of a fast track programme for social workers who work primarily in adult settings, particularly mental health, could represent a very welcome rebalancing of this focus if it leads to implementation. Generally, mental health services are provided through multi-disciplinary teams in which professionals from both the social care and healthcare sectors participate. This partnership-working approach across a variety of professional disciplines benefits from the inclusion of social workers proficient in mental health assessments and services. Currently two options are under consideration for this, both fast track schemes, one specifically covering mental health, and the other covering generic adult social work recognising particularly the needs arising from an ageing population increasing in size and longevity, with a specific role analogous to that of the General Practitioner in the health service. Both have merit, although the latter one could be designed in a variety of formats other than the “social work GP” which are yet to be explored.

There was unease that despite the relatively small numbers of students involved in the fast track schemes, their enhanced financial position compared to other students on mainstream (post-2003) routes, the much-publicised over-subscription, and their securing of a disproportionate number of placements in statutory settings may create the sense of their being a future elite of the profession, a worry exacerbated as mentioned earlier by some of the elitist expressions selected for use in publicising the courses. The unease was that as a result of the creation of a perceived or indeed a self-referential elite, the remainder of student social workers would see themselves (and be seen by employers) as second class, with a consequently unnecessary and altogether detrimental erosion of the internal cohesion in the

profession and the external perception of the standing of the profession. It also risked placing unrealistic and over-ambitious expectations of what this “elite” group could achieve in practice, as a result of ideologically-favoured pilots influenced by a culture of unquestioning optimism.

Of concern too was that such fast track initiatives secured a great deal of attention disproportionate to their scale, and also attracted disproportionate amounts of funding, both factors seen as being to the detriment of building on the strengths of the existing post-2003 qualifying course configuration or resolving acknowledged more important and deeper issues such as the dual assessment (HCPC/TCSW), although quite how innovation is expected to take place without experimentation of this nature is unclear.

A point which emerged time and again from academics, employers, students and practitioners was that we should be educating for a career, not training for a job.

There was also scepticism expressed (in the case of *Frontline*) of the analogy employed by their protagonists with *Teach First* in the teaching profession. This scepticism focussed on two elements. Firstly, that whereas school classrooms are a common experience of everyone, so a student teacher entering a school classroom is an entry into a familiar environment, whereas for most social work students, entering a household or family in which there is social worker involvement is a very unfamiliar and challenging experience. Secondly, the publicity around *Frontline*, transposed from *Teach First*, initially suggested that if only 50% of students remained in the profession after two years it would have been worthwhile because of the impact they would have made. Again I have sought in the educational research literature for the

evidence for this claim of impact and been as yet unable to validate it, nor to have seen a business model that demonstrates similar arguments for social workers. So in the evaluation of outcomes from the various routes of qualification, including the two post-2003 routes, I have concluded that we need to commission a longitudinal study to measure the retention, assess the impact, and thereby reach conclusions as to the relative efficacy of the different forms of qualifying courses.

The general move in social work education internationally is towards longer rather than shorter qualifying courses, a move which has been well evidenced in social work education literature. I am unclear where the pedagogical research is to be found which would validate the different direction of travel in England towards shorter courses to that of other countries, and where it is found we would benefit from an appropriate meta-analysis being carried out to clarify the differences. The most constructive way to address such differences of view is to ensure that the learning outcomes are very explicit; the measurement of these outcomes is through a transparent and robust process; evaluation of the outcomes is rigorous; and the evaluation methodology and action standards are non-contentious.

In considering the various entry routes into social work, there is a noticeable decline in the prevalence of “grow your own” schemes in which employers supported existing staff to undertake formal education to become qualified social workers. Yet when asked, many employers and HEIs felt that this was a considerable loss of opportunity to enhance the careers of those who had proved their worth in social care provision. Amongst the routes still open for this is the Open University qualification route, which was commented upon very favourably by many of those who have experienced it

either as a student or an employer.

It must be remembered that HEIs are autonomous organisations, and although firm indications can be made as to entry requirements, they will always, quite rightly, retain the autonomy over which candidates they admit. However, what needs to be done is to get HEIs' acceptance of the proposed increased entry standards, and make any variation something for which they give a full explanation. Because there will always be the occasional extraordinary candidate whose particular strengths are unusual and deemed of great value such that an HEI will wish to step outside of the guidelines and admit them. This is entirely acceptable provided it happens as an occasional exception to the normal standards being insisted upon. Such justification could be checked by TCSW as a condition of its endorsement criteria.

Some HEIs offer a multi-stage academic programme leading to eventual qualification as a social worker for those whose entry qualifications may not match the requirements for immediate entry onto a social work course. In one such HEI I visited, students could enter onto a foundation degree course in social care, complete an extra year to convert the qualification to an undergraduate honours degree in social care, then enter a social work qualifying degree at Masters level.

The quality of that educational pathway is very high.

A question arises as to where innovation would come from if we re-focussed social work qualification on training rather than education. Also, it is the research-intensive universities which originate most of the social work research and provide the environments in which good research is encouraged and supported. If the number of students from such universities declines, this loss of research focus will mean the profession will lose its generative capability for evidence-based change to practice.

However, in discussing the merits of alternative routes for qualifying education, it must be remembered that the major problem faced by employers lies in their retention of social workers after a few years of practice much more than in their recruitment of newly qualified social workers, and any moves which inhibit the richness of the nature of social work, such as neglect of developing its evidence base for good practice, is likely to exacerbate rather than remedy this problem. Retention is likely to be increased if all aspects of education, from entry to progression through the respective courses into the first and early years of practice are all linked to ensuring a reasonable and supported workload with effective supervision.

SECTION 5.2

STUDENT BURSARIES

Currently, financial support in the form of student bursaries is provided which are varied in nature and eligibility depending upon the route to qualification.

HEIs strongly support the availability of bursaries for the qualifying degree. They view the financial support available for students engaging in *Step Up to Social Work* and about to engage in *Frontline* to

be strong and positive features of those initiatives, but indicated concern that such funding may put pressures on the funding of the other undergraduate and postgraduate qualifying degrees. They point to this already happening with the recent capping of the bursaries and withdrawal of year 1 bursaries for undergraduate courses.

But there is a deeper concern over the postgraduate courses, where HEIs feel that the bursary is essential for nearly all their UK-based students and without which many who already carry a burden of student debt from their first degree or have family commitments which make the bursary almost essential, would otherwise not apply to qualify as a social worker. Evidence of this was clear in the current round of applications, where many postgraduate courses are only recruiting to the numbers of bursaries they can guarantee, with the exception of overseas students whose position is unchanged.

When pressed to suggest which bursaries were most essential in ensuring the highest outcome quality of the qualifying social worker, there was a significant majority who considered it of greater importance for students on the postgraduate courses.

Any further change in bursary eligibility and availability is an extremely sensitive issue, and it may be that arguments of equity imply that means testing for the remaining bursaries might be necessary.

Through the 2000s there was a great increase in number of students qualifying as social workers, and there remains no lack of demand for places on the courses, whereas the numbers of social workers gaining immediate employment in that role has declined as a proportion. This suggests the number of students being qualified is

unnecessarily high and could be reduced, and consequently the number of bursaries can be reduced. The difficulty in this is the lack of a robust workforce planning framework and its populating data, which is addressed earlier in the Review. In a situation in which funding in support of all aspects of social work education is strictly limited and where there are competing priorities for that funding, whilst bursaries are important and valuable, I would recommend that they are targeted primarily at postgraduate courses for reasons that were given earlier.

I fully support the cap on bursaries which was introduced for 2013/14, and believe this decision should be extended to ensure we are not financially supporting many more students than are required. The social work bursaries in my view should be specifically targeted to improving quality and not used to serve other objectives disproportionately such as widening participation for which HEIs are separately funded.

I have concluded that bursaries should be strictly targeted to where the greatest gains in quality can be achieved, and take up a much smaller part of any overall support budget for social work education. In contrast, I suggest that more resources should be expended in supporting the quality of placements through practice educators' and practice supervisors' own training being supported financially to a greater extent than at present. Similarly, very strong support should be given to ensuring that newly qualified social workers are supervised and supported through their first year of practice, and this too should be financially supported to a greater extent than at present. The allocation of funding is a matter of where the greatest priorities lie, and this summarised in Chapter 15.

Conclusion 6: That provided the rigour of the process and the stringency of the levels assessed in regulation are appropriately strengthened, encouragement should be given to alternative routes to social work qualification, provided these are adjuncts not replacements for the current scheme of provision, and subject to a rigorous evaluation process the form of which and the action standards are set before the alternative route is given approval and funding. It is imperative that such routes do not provide a stripped down, form of social work education – a sort of “*social work lite*”, but seek to achieve higher learning outcomes than are current. Also, such fast track routes should be available to contribute to adult social care.

Conclusion 7: That the current and proposed fast track initiatives indicate a strong direction of travel in England towards shorter qualifying courses than those in other countries, and research should be commissioned (probably initially simply in the form of a meta-analysis) as to the evidence upon which such moves are based.

Conclusion 8: That proposed alternative educational routes to qualification should be required to demonstrate the pedagogical evidence that they will provide an adequate knowledge, particularly of the fundamental conceptual frameworks for social work, such as theories of human development, attachment, ethics, human rights, mental capacity and so forth, to ensure that they equip students for a career, not just a first job, in social work.

Conclusion 9: That all future qualifying education delivers newly qualified social workers with the capability to engage in research throughout their career, inculcating an understanding that the ability to carry out research is an essential component in their professional capability in practice.

Conclusion 10: That in order to evaluate the outcomes of the various routes of qualification, including the two post-2003 routes and the fast-track initiatives, a longitudinal study should be undertaken by an independent body to reach conclusions as to the relative efficacy of the different courses.

Conclusion 11: That we are qualifying too many students, and in a situation when support funding for social work education is strictly limited, there are greater priorities than maintaining the current number of student bursaries which could be reduced. If this takes place, then the financial support for those on postgraduate courses should be protected, and if necessary bursaries can be made subject to means-testing.

This subject of the proper selection of candidates is an important one for the profession as a whole. In the Call for Evidence, HEIs were asked about the principles underpinning their recruitment practices for entry into the various social work qualifying degree programmes.

Consideration of their very detailed evidence leads me to conclude that HEI selection processes need to be improved to the level of the best practice in the sector in order consistently to select candidates with the personal and academic qualities needed to be a successful social worker.

SECTION

6.1

QUALIFYING DEGREE ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS

There is a very wide range of selection methods and selection standards in operation amongst the HEIs. Currently, there is a minimum standard of 240 points at A level, with a requirement for some prior experience capable of being taken into account. There is still some entry at below this level, and it is doubtful whether 240 points at undergraduate level is a sufficiently high standard for entry to a profession which has elements of very high intellectual demand such as the need for mastery of advanced sociological constructs, understanding of complex risk assessment, decision-making under uncertainty, and reflective practice. There is no doubt that social work is seen internationally as an intellectually complex discipline, demanding the ability to understand, master and thereby be able to apply it in students' future professional careers in social work practice.

Currently, the majority of HEIs already recruit students whose average A level points score is well above 240 points, and

such is the extent of the demand for social work entry, even after the removal of the first year's undergraduate bursary, that a rise in academic standard by the vast majority who qualify via an academic (A level) route should be raised to accord with this. I have concluded that entry requirements in this form should be set at the more appropriate level for the intellectual demands of the profession of at least 300 points. Already a number of HEIs have a minimum in excess of this. If some courses are not able to recruit at this level whilst others clearly can, then there is a question as to whether they should continue to offer the qualifying degree.

HEIs unanimously supported the requirement of a good honours degree (1st or 2.1) for entry to the postgraduate qualifying degree, and for both entries the requirements included GCSE grade C passes in English and Maths.

However, there is an issue concerning the appropriateness of alternative entry

by the accreditation of prior learning and experience in a significant minority of HEIs in terms of its robustness, but also in terms of its purpose. There seems little evidence as to whether prior experience has a causal relationship or even an associative relationship with outcomes from the education process of qualification or indeed any future outcomes in terms of quality of practice. Where there has been extensive prior learning assessed as being sufficient for entry without A levels or equivalent academic qualifications, there is an issue as to whether experience gained before adequate and appropriate education and training is likely to be of value: a counter argument to its being of value put forward by many student selectors is that it may merely have served to ingrain unproven practices which might have to be “unlearned” rather than forming a foundation upon which to build.

There are arguments about diversity, and these are essentially twofold. Firstly, that users of social work themselves come disproportionately from certain groups in society (which itself is not questioned), and therefore it is important that such groups are proportionately represented in the profile of social workers (which is questioned). The cited examples of this were expressed primarily in terms of minority ethnic groups, rather than in any wider form of diversity. The research evidence for social work interventions being more successful when delivered by someone of the same ethnic background is not strong except in instances where there are large, disadvantaged indigenous population

groups, or where there are specific language issues. Secondly, there is a corporate requirement on HEIs to demonstrate they are addressing diversity and widening participation agendas *per se*, but in my view this is a matter for the HEIs’ corporate management and not one that should disproportionately influence recruitment policies in the specific field of social work education.

The practices in recruitment and selection of students generally include the use of interviews and prior completion of some form of written work relevant to the values expected of future social workers. It is impressive and a credit to the profession to see the extent to which service users and carers are invariably involved in the selection process, as usually are employer representatives. But as is generally the case with student selection processes for HEI entry, there is little independent evidence as to the validity of the processes used. The greater use of values-based selection, assessment centres and wider utilisation of the Professional Capabilities Framework in this process of selection would be beneficial, and should be the basis for moving towards greater consistency of selection amongst HEIs which in turn could lead to better outcomes. I believe this is an activity which should receive more attention and be much better evidence-based than at present, and would recommend that the academic representative bodies, JUCSWEC and APSW be asked to present evidence-based proposals to improve the quality of entrants into social work qualifying education on a more consistent basis.

HEIs were asked about the particular student profiles that result from any such entry qualification differences between undergraduate, postgraduate, *Step Up to Social Work*, and *Frontline* programmes, and how this might shape the qualities of the qualifying social worker.

There is more diversity in the profile of the student entry at undergraduate entry level in comparison to postgraduate entry, but the views of HEIs as to whether or not the relative profiles affected or shaped the qualities of the qualifying social worker were inconclusive, with certain exceptions. There was, understandably, a widespread recognition from those in a position to compare, that the average intellectual/academic qualities of the postgraduate students were higher, although there was a great deal of overlap. It was felt that the prior experience of success in a 3 year undergraduate degree course meant that such postgraduate students coped much more easily with the complexities of social work theory and had more maturity, although it should be noted that use of the term “maturity was related to the ability successfully to acquire and assimilate knowledge and to integrate theory and practice rather than to attributes such as emotional intelligence or resilience.

Both entry groups were almost always required to demonstrate some evidence of prior experience in a relevant field such as social care or wider community involvement in either a voluntary or employed capacity, this requirement being even more stringently applied to postgraduate students. Having commented earlier that there are differing views as to the value that can be ascribed to

prior experience, many employers and academics felt that it was of direct value in that it demonstrated an awareness of the service user groups in which social work interventions took place, and others viewed it as a demonstration of likelihood of a determination to complete the course and take up a career as a social worker. However, there was also a view expressed, albeit a minority one, that a *tabula rosa* was to be preferred, to prevent the danger of fixed ideas being formed based on inadequate knowledge, which were then carried through into the course. This comment referred to students who had extensive rather than a little prior experience. But the consensus was that some relevant experience with typical user groups is beneficial.

In its *Report on Social Work Education*, the GSSC (2012) concluded that postgraduate students with prior experience had the highest successful graduation and immediate employability rates, but were not able to evidence that they went on to make better social workers. There were differences in the profiles for the various entry groups, although the evidence for this conclusion was less well documented than is the case, for example, in the *Step Up to Social Work* entry where the profile of both candidates and successfully-recruited students was fully reported on in the various independent assessments, such as that by De Montfort University (Smith et al 2013), that have been made. The age profile of undergraduate students is younger, and amongst them the academic entry qualifications differ between the younger and older students. There was no significant difference in the entry qualifications between postgraduate students on the

mainstream postgraduate courses and those on the *Step Up to Social Work* students, although those selected under the latter scheme came from a narrower range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, which took them further away from the background profiles of those receiving social work interventions.

Fast track routes into qualification as a social worker have the opportunity both to benefit and cause confusion and concern, a situation which can only properly be

illuminated by evidence rather than rhetoric, and so I have concluded that it is important that fast track schemes are subject to rigorous independent evaluation and that the results of such evaluations of their cost-benefit are heeded in decisions as to their continuance. In this way any merits and shortcomings can be made apparent, and the discussion as to their value and their continuance can be removed from the discourse of ideology to that of the discourse of evidence.

SECTION 6.3

THE ACADEMIC LEVEL AT WHICH SOCIAL WORKERS QUALIFY

There is support amongst HEIs for the continuation of the availability of the social work qualification at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, with a significant minority firmly of the view that it should be at postgraduate level only. There does not seem to be any significant evidence that those qualifying at postgraduate level become more effective social workers than those qualifying at undergraduate level, which is hardly surprising since the comparison would only have been available for direct comparison of cohorts qualifying 6 years ago, but such questions can only be accurately answered through evaluative research. Since this is a very fundamental issue, the answer to which will have a major impact on shaping future educational policy in the profession, I will be recommending that such evaluative research should be undertaken as soon as possible to answer this question.

Perhaps the first issue is that of quality of entry, and clearly the average academic quality of entry to the postgraduate courses (2:1 degree) will be higher than at undergraduate level of whom only some

two thirds (the current national average) will eventually achieve passes at that level. Added to which the students entering a postgraduate course almost without exception will successfully have completed a higher education course and thereby already gained the skills which contribute to academic success.

I found that the requirements of being able to demonstrate relevant work experience in a paid or voluntary role to be more stringent for entry at postgraduate level, which implies that such students generally will have experience related to social work. This suggests their decision to choose to take up a career, with the intention to remain, in social work is a better informed one. It is noted that there are significant exceptions to this in that some students at undergraduate entry have very extensive relevant experience on which to base such a judgement.

Those who firmly believe that social work should be a postgraduate profession, point to the intellectual complexity of social work, in particular the need to understand

and be able to master the range of underpinning theoretical bases in a way that allows them to take a variety of approaches to the situations they encounter in practice, rather than being dependent upon a limited choice of approaches. The median age of postgraduate social work students is higher than that of undergraduate social work students, and it is felt by many employers and service users closely involved in social work education that this is reflected in their maturity, breadth of life experience and resilience, all attributes considered of direct relevance to capability at the point of qualification as a NQSW. One can point too to international experience, where in many of the most highly regarded social work educational regimes in other countries, qualification is at postgraduate level.

There is a widely-held view amongst social work academics that social work education demands a degree of maturity that many other degree courses do not require, although whether that view is held in relation to clinical disciplines such as medicine, nursing and therapies is less clear. As a result they have a preference to taking a higher than average proportion of their undergraduate entry from slightly older students than just immediately post-A level, and again look to evidence some prior involvement in relevant work situations or with similar service user groups to those they will encounter in their subsequent

social work practice. Indeed in the past there has been a minimum age threshold imposed for qualification as a social worker, and many academics and employers expressed a wish to see this reintroduced, although service users and carers expressed little concern about the subject of age of entry. The reasons for preferring slightly older entrants, often aged over 21 on entry, and over 23-24 on qualification was expressed in terms of maturity and life experience, but my recommendation is not to impose any such restriction as it is only a proxy for the required characteristics and should be left to be addressed in the selection criteria of the HEIs.

I have been unable to find any reliable research evidence that finds social work qualification at undergraduate level to be inappropriate, but rather that in general at postgraduate level students are more proven in their abilities in complex skills such as critical thinking and reflective practice. There is no consensus as to an exclusivity of the academic level of the qualification being at postgraduate level, but there is a strong majority view for a rebalancing of the educational provision towards a much higher proportion of students qualifying at this level in future, which accords with the direction taking place internationally. Of course the fast track schemes add to the numbers qualifying at postgraduate level.

SECTION

6.4

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT SELECTION

The involvement in social work education of people who receive social work interventions and their carers is widespread and was highly valued by the HEIs. In particular, their involvement

in student selection was extensive: indeed it included the involvement of people from a wide variety of user groups such as disabled people, those with sensory deprivation, those with enduring mental health

conditions, those in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction, those who had suffered abusive relationships, those who had prolonged periods of disorganisation and disfunctionality in their lives, looked-after children (with appropriate local authority support) and others.

In the selection process for student entry, all HEIs reported their use of the expertise and experience of employers, almost invariably from employers providing practice placements. This involvement came from a variety of sectors/employer types, such as local authorities, NHS mental health organisations, private and voluntary sector employers, prison service, adoption agencies, drug and alcohol treatment agencies and so forth. Representatives from local authorities featured particularly strongly in their participation in such

selection processes.

Of concern is the much lower level of involvement of representatives of the newly-emerging organisations key to the future of healthcare and social care commissioning and delivery, currently in the form of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs), in the selection of future social workers. In my view the inclusion of representatives from such organisations would be beneficial of itself in the perspective they would bring but it would also demonstrate the profession's determination to engage in, and contribute to, the shaping of the emerging integrated health and social care landscape, a key part of what I believe the future vision for the profession should include.

SECTION 6.5

STUDENT SELECTION METHODOLOGY

The evidence I have found leads me to conclude that the practice of student selection could be further improved. Guidance was produced by the SWRB and is now held by TCSW (TCSW 2011), but so far this has failed to stimulate the behavioural changes to the selection process which could be greatly beneficial to the social work profession. Indeed if the PCF is to be used as a cornerstone of all social work education and continuing professional development, then it should form a significant part (but not the totality) of the criteria for future student selection.

Again as mentioned previously, a weakness is that the recruitment processes themselves have not usually been subject to any rigorous evaluation, and many HEIs felt that capturing the involvement of employers

in the selection process was at least as valuable as the expertise they brought to the process itself. In *Step Up to Social Work* use was made of assessment centres in which candidates were evaluated against a battery of validated tests, which demonstrated an intention to select students on an objective basis.

Whilst selection for academic study is clearly the responsibility and prerogative of each HEI, it is my view that it is in the best interests of the profession that a set of widely-accepted and applied selection criteria is developed, informed by the PCF. The selection criteria should be reliably assessed with validated instruments and used as the basis, not the whole, of HEIs' selection methodology. In this way some degree of inter-institutional coherence and

comparability in terms of student selection will be achieved. Business School entry uses a commonly applied assessment tool in the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) very successfully, and if a similar assessment system were to be adopted across the field of recruitment for social work qualifying courses by the HEIs then this would improve the saliency of the selection process, basing it much more closely on the qualities captured in the PCF, and this in turn would make selection for entry into the profession more uniform and comparable across HEIs.

There was a consensus amongst academics and employers that more use should be made of values-based selection, which is gaining ground in its use by employers in their own selection processes. Most HEIs use some form of assessment of values, but prior experience is often used by them as a proxy for this, their argument being that values are best exhibited in behaviours, and the behaviour most easily assessed is the presence or otherwise of involvement in activities with people from groups likely to be receiving social work interventions.

Conclusion 12: That recognising the intellectual complexity of the subject of social work, and given the continuing over-supply of newly qualified social workers and the high level of demand for entry into qualifying courses, the entry level to the undergraduate degree should be increased to at least 300 points or its equivalent, and the entry at postgraduate level be retained at a minimum 2:1 classification for the previous degree.

Conclusion 13: That the entry selection processes be made more consistent, more rigorous and closely related to the elements of the PCF, and consideration be given to utilising values-based selection procedures, and proven and validated selection tools preferably administered in an assessment centre as a major part of the selection methodology.

Conclusion 14: That the impressive progress made in involving people who use services and their carers in student selection be further encouraged, with financial support being made available to HEIs to facilitate this, as well as continuing to involve employers from all sectors and types of service in the selection process.

Conclusion 15: That the rigour with which value is accredited for prior experience should be scrutinised much more forensically to ensure that the weight it carries in student selection is capable of validation as to its relevance and value as a basis for entry into social work education.

Conclusion 16: That a highly focussed review be commissioned, ideally from the representative organisations JUCSWEC and APSW, working with TCSW, to provide evidence-based proposals to improve the quality and consistency of entrants into social work qualifying education basis. These proposals should take account of the foregoing four conclusions.

Conclusion 17: That fast track schemes are subject to rigorous independent evaluation and that the results of such evaluations of their cost-benefit are heeded in decisions as to their continuance.

Conclusion 18: That a minimum age restriction on qualification to the profession and therefore to HEI entry, should not be reintroduced, as such restriction would be using age as a proxy for the required characteristics, and those characteristics can be assessed directly in the selection criteria and processes of the HEIs.

Conclusion 19: That at a time when the trend internationally is towards a social worker qualifying at postgraduate level, evaluative research should be undertaken as soon as possible into the question of whether the qualifying degree should continue to be offered at undergraduate as well as at postgraduate level. However until such evidence shows otherwise, qualifying education should continue to be offered at both levels, providing the learning outcomes continue to be identical.

Conclusion 20: That as part of transforming the profession in a way that will ensure its inclusion as a mainstream contributor to future social care and healthcare, there should be involvement of representatives of newly-emerging organisations key to the future of healthcare and social care commissioning and delivery, such as is currently the situation with Clinical Commissioning Groups and Health and Wellbeing Boards, in the selection of future social workers.

Conclusion 21: That a set of widely-accepted selection criteria is developed, informed by the PCF and values-based measures, which can be reliably assessed with validated instruments and used as the basis, not the whole, of HEIs' selection methodology. There may well be lessons to be learned from other fields such as in Business Schools' comprehensive use of GMAT methodology as the inter-HEI comparative part of their selection process.

The way that social work courses of all types are delivered is crucial to their successful outcome.

The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, not least that of service users and carers, greatly contributes to the quality of the education provided for students. There is considerable evidence of good practice from which we can learn

and continue to develop social work education both during qualification and through the career-long involvement of professional practitioners with continuing professional development, whilst at the same time ensuring that the appropriate lessons learnt from other professions are applied to social work.

SECTION

7.1

SERVICE USER AND CARER INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

HEIs involve service users and carers (although more often it is the service user) in the delivery of lectures and case study discussions, usually in association with a staff member, in jointly-led sessions. This was more often used in specific areas such as in the teaching about mental health and in the 30-day *Developing Skills for Practice* module. Undoubtedly, this involvement of service users and their carers is something which HEIs greatly value as being an essential part of the student experience and knowledge content they deliver, and have of course been funded to do so, although that funding is relatively small and largely goes to support that which HEIs would have chosen to do in any event. The involvement of service users and carers in the educational process in social work education compares very favourably with that of the clinical professions, and should be given much greater recognition. It is worthy of note that the HCPC has accorded due recognition

to this good practice and has enhanced its regulatory requirements to reflect this.

Many HEIs submitted impressive evidence of their involvement of service users and carers, and I have included in APPENDIX 3 an individual example which provides a particularly informative written exposition. This comes directly from the HEI's own Service User/Carer Group in response to this question of the breadth and depth of involvement in the educational process, which I feel is helpful to include in full as an indication of the level of involvement which can be achieved.

At a national level, the Social Work Education Partnership (SWEP) provides an information hub for service users, carers, social workers, educators and social work students, which makes available information about good practice concerning service user and carer participation (www.socialworkeducation.org.uk). This source

of information could be more widely used by HEIs to the benefit of informing and delivering social work education. An example of this is that HEIs find it difficult to recruit service users who are

representative of hard-to-reach groups, and such a pan-sector issue is one for which a pan-sector organisation such as SWEP is well placed to contribute.

SECTION 7.2

OTHER STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The involvement of other stakeholders in the educational process is clearly present in the involvement of employers in the 70 and 100 day practice placements which they provide, and also in the 30 day *Developing Skills for Practice* module. There is strong evidence that HEIs wish more closely to involve employers and experienced social workers in the delivery of their courses, although less so it would seem in their design. One of the main reasons for the lack of greater involvement of experienced social workers currently in employment in that role is the difficulty for social work professionals to straddle the division between being an HEI educator and a practising social worker. In part this is because to pursue a successful academic career requires the accumulation of a significant research output, which is currently not easy to achieve in many employment situations. Indeed there is some evidence of at best a lack of interest amongst some employers towards the engagement of their staff in personally-directed research, and at worst an anti-intellectualism about the value of practitioners engaging in research. Also although a great many academics in HEI social work departments themselves are qualified social workers, very few can or choose to remain in active practice. There are a few excellent examples of HEIs addressing this situation by offering their suitably qualified academic staff the opportunity to be seconded into practice

during part of the summer recess, and this practice should be strongly encouraged. Another factor limiting involvement in both practice and education is that the pursuit of a successful career in practice is not seen by employers to be advantaged by a period spent in academia. There is a partial exception, and indeed an opportunity, to overcome at least in part this unhelpful dualism in the profession, in the roles concerning practice supervision and practice education, which are addressed in detail later. Nor at present are the use of honorary positions in the HEIs, such as honorary lectureships, much in evidence, and in seeking closer and more enduring relationships between employers and HEIs more consideration should be given to such honorary attachments, as are prevalent in the clinical and legal professions where they are valued as part of a career practitioner's CPD.

Unlike the clinical professions, where most educators remain in some form of practice, this is not the case in social work education. Nor is this seen as necessary, although it is viewed as important to keep abreast of developments in practice. Indeed it was felt that some distance from day-to-day practice can be beneficial in critical reflection. Social work has a poor track record of dual careers in academia and practice as there are not many pathways or dualities of positions as mentioned earlier, which is a deficiency which can and should be remedied.

In their commissioning rather than their delivery of service role, one might consider the involvement of local authority employers as evidence of an involvement of commissioners, but the presence of information about the subject of commissioning was not prevalent in the curricula of the qualifying degree. This is a subject that would benefit from more attention in the delineation of the learning outcomes in appropriate practice placements and indeed in the curriculum itself, as the process of commissioning and particularly its impact in terms of commissioning decisions is something that is becoming increasingly important in social workers' future roles.

I found the involvement of social work students and recently qualified social workers from their *alma mater* HEIs as stakeholders in the educational design and delivery process was not extensive. In assessment of placements and of educational modules, an opportunity exists to take this to a much greater level of involvement of students, such as one sees for example in medical school education. The involvement of students and former students in teaching during the qualifying course is not at all well developed, and although I saw some very good examples of this in terms of assignments being written up in poster form and presented to fellow students, the educational outcome of the social worker as an educator and teacher of social work was not greatly in evidence. I have commented elsewhere upon the need for the education and training of more doctoral students in social work, and they would provide a very appropriate, differently-informed perspective in the teaching of qualifying education. I have also commented on the importance I ascribe to this in developing social work as a profession in terms of "the social worker

as a professional". Also, where HEIs are participants in Partnership Consultative Boards, there is an opportunity and a ready route for the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders in most strategic aspects of social work education, currently an under-exploited opportunity.

The process for the involvement of stakeholders such as practice educators and others associated with the organisation and delivery of practice education and supervision is less clear, other than in their direct delivery roles. There is strong evidence that HEIs consider such colleagues as valuable contributors to the quality of the educational experience of students, and would look to their further contribution being made in an individual capacity rather than in any group representation. I think this is entirely reasonable approach to take, as they are not deliberately chosen as a homogeneous group and already they are seen to have ready access to make additional input to the course design and delivery if they so choose. But I would view them as a resource of which more use could be made to mutual advantage. I comment elsewhere in the Review as to their own educational needs.

As referred to elsewhere, transformational moves in the provision of care and support, such as the closer integration of healthcare and social care, could be aided to a much greater extent in the future by social workers, who already shape and inform their practice from a multifaceted perspective. Much more could be made of this, and the profession should make an early move to secure more involvement of the perspectives of other, related professions in terms of inter-professional learning in the qualifying education of social workers, which would give a strong signal of this direction of travel of the profession.

The issue of cohort size elicited a range of views, with a majority view that 30 to 60 was ideal, but there was a consensus that it was relatively unimportant and should not be prescribed, rather it should be a matter of determination by individual HEIs, and what mattered was the quality of the educational experience. Nevertheless, there was doubt expressed by those academics who had smaller cohorts, typically 30-45 in size, as to the ability of academic staff of the larger cohorts, described as 100-plus, to have the same relationship with their larger numbers of students. Such differences in view are to some extent reflective of the different perspectives often ascribed to pre- and post-1992 HEIs.

It was felt that rather than there being too many courses, the numbers on individual courses should be limited. However, as stated, this was a second order concern, subordinate to the need to ensure and assure quality in the educational experience. In this experience, there was a very high level of consensus that the most important consideration in both the number of courses and the size of the student cohort on each course was the availability of high quality practice placements with high quality practice educators. It was generally the view that student numbers in an HEI's annual cohort should be strictly limited to the availability of such high quality placements, although exactly how the HEIs expected to manage this process was unclear. The importance of having sufficient availability of tutors was also felt important.

Student application numbers remain high, and whilst it was acknowledged that a small minority of students applied in order to get a financially affordable postgraduate degree, this was not prevalent because inappropriate applicants were largely weeded out at the time of selection.

Concerns were expressed in terms of the geographical areas in which disproportionate numbers of students were qualified. This brings into consideration the important question from a workforce planning perspective of the extent to which it is relevant to select students who will choose to practise in the geographical area in which they qualified, and the extent to which social work is a national activity and the workforce can be expected to practise in a variety of geographical areas following their initial qualification. Debate of this issue is not unique to social work education; it applies to most of the clinical professions. Unfortunately, the current workforce planning systems do not greatly inform this debate, and this needs to be rectified, recommendations for which are given earlier in the Review.

Consequently, there was no strong consensus of the appropriateness of the current number of HEIs offering social work qualifying education, currently some 82, providing that the essential legal standards of the HCPC were met, and also a strong preference that TCSW endorsement was sought and met. This is considered in further detail later.

However closely an HEI follows its approved curriculum, the delivery of that curriculum clearly varies with the individuals concerned in its delivery and their own professional background. This invites a debate around whether all or the majority of the qualifying education should be delivered by qualified social workers, and if so whether they need to be still in practice, and if not whether there are advantages of having a broader base of background expertise.

The general view was that whilst most of the qualifying education should be delivered by academic staff who are themselves qualified social workers, there were many specialised subjects for which such a qualification had little or no relevance. Examples were those teaching subjects such as mental health, psychology, medicine, drug and alcohol dependence, people with learning disabilities and others. Also, as mentioned earlier, although a formal qualification in social work clearly has relevance, this lessens as the academic practitioner develops their own particular area of expertise, usually evidenced by peer-reviewed publications in their own research field. However, whatever the academic subject, all educators need to be trained in how to educate students.

The need to understand multi-professional capabilities and the contributions that can be made by professionals from other disciplines was highlighted: clinical - such as community nurses; and non-clinical - such as lawyers. Students needed to be made aware of the ability of other professionals to play a constructive role in multi-disciplinary approaches to resolve social care and social work issues

encountered in social workers' caseloads. Inter-professional learning is considered to be extremely important as the future roles of social workers will increasingly involve working as part of multi-disciplinary teams. Serious Case Reviews almost always comment on the lack of inter-professional working and sharing of information amongst agencies. In qualifying education, a good example is the increasing involvement of health professionals in informing the life course from their clinical perspective.

The involvement of representatives of other, relevant professions in the design and delivery of professional qualifying courses has proved difficult for all professions. For example, medical education has made strenuous efforts to remedy this deficiency and indeed has stipulated this as one of the teaching and learning requirements in the *"Design and Delivery of the Curriculum"*, Domain 5 in the GMC's *Tomorrow's Doctors: Outcomes and Standards for Undergraduate Medical Education* (GMC 2009), but its achievement has proved difficult. Inter-professional education is more than just communication and shared learning experiences with other professions, it is much more about understanding the contributions of other professionals to problems with which social workers will be engaged, and in reciprocation the contribution made by social workers to the problems encountered in the practice of other professionals.

At a time when the social care and healthcare landscape is being reformed indeed transformed, policymakers are looking for innovative strategies that can help them develop policy and programmes to equip the workforce to deliver to the

new requirements. On a global scale, the World Health Organisation has devised a *Framework for Action on Inter-professional Education and Collaborative Practice* (WHO 2010) which describes the current status of inter-professional collaboration around the world, identifies the mechanisms that shape successful collaborative teamwork and outlines a series of action items that policy-makers can apply within their local health and care systems. The goal of this framework is to provide strategies and ideas that will help health and social care policy-makers implement the elements of inter-professional education and collaborative practice that will be most beneficial in their own jurisdiction. In my view, social work has a huge contribution to make in the interpretation and conversion of a framework such as this into multi-professional intervention strategies and practices, and I would be keen to see social work qualifying and CPD education reflect this opportunity and assert its own contribution and leadership to this subject.

Social work is a discipline in which an openness of mind and a willing eclecticism has been influential in its formation, and as such it has a major contribution to make in the provision of services in a more holistic way than has been the practice in the past. Social workers already shape and inform their practice from a multifaceted perspective. I would wish to see much more made of this unique position, and an early move to secure more involvement of the perspectives of other, related professions in the qualifying education of social workers would be a strong signal of the direction of travel of the profession. There is currently some evidence of this in the stakeholder groups, but I would suggest that this could be strengthened to the great advantage of the profession.

For this reason I will be recommending that the curriculum of the qualifying degree and particularly of the future CPD framework should pay particular attention to: (1) inculcating an awareness of the capabilities that other professionals bring to creating successful social work interventions, and (2) making social workers aware of the contribution they and their practice can bring to the issues faced by other professionals.

Conclusion 22: That more use could be made of SWEP in assisting in advising on the involvement of service users and carers in the design of the qualifying courses.

Conclusion 23: That where employers are providing practice placements there is an opportunity and ready route to contribute to practice educators' CPD by giving them greater involvement in HEI's activities, and for HEIs to offer the opportunity for their own qualified social worker academic staff to engage in practice by short secondments at appropriate points in the academic year.

Conclusion 24: That the subject of commissioning of services is one that would benefit from more attention in the delineation of the learning outcomes in appropriate practice placements and indeed in the curriculum itself, in terms of both the process of commissioning and the impact in terms of commissioning decisions.

Conclusion 25: That there is an opportunity for a greater involvement of students and former students in teaching during the qualifying course, to contribute to the educational outcome of the social worker as an educator and teacher of social work, and in developing social work as a profession in terms of the research capability of “the social worker as a professional” In particular the profession needs to encourage many more doctoral students.

Conclusion 26: That where HEIs are participants in Partnership Consultative Boards, there is an opportunity and a ready route for the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders in most strategic aspects of social work education.

Conclusion 27: That whatever the academic subject, all educators need to be trained in how to educate students.

Conclusion 28: That those engaged in the design of social work education should consider how established inter-professional frameworks can be used to enhance inter-professional collaboration. Inter-professional learning will be increasingly important in the professional practice of qualified social workers, and this presents an opportunity for the profession to assert its own contribution and leadership to this subject.

Conclusion 29: That the curriculum of the qualifying degree and particularly of the future CPD framework should pay particular attention to: (1) inculcating an awareness of the capabilities that other professionals bring to creating successful social work interventions, and (2) making social workers aware of the contribution they and their practice can bring to the issues faced by other professionals.

In a social work qualifying degree, as with a number of clinical disciplines, some half of the student's time (more in the case of *Frontline*) is spent in a supervised workplace environment. In the *Social Work Task Force Report* (SWTF 2009), there was a recommendation that this time be more limited, indeed 130 days rather than 200 days was suggested. However, this suggestion was not taken forward by the Social Work Reform Board, and I have sought the views of stakeholders on this and found the following. There is widespread support for the final 100 day placement, which is seen as a very valuable preparation for practice; much support for the earlier 70 day placement; and mixed but generally positive views about the 30 day *Developing Skills for Practice* module, which makes up the current 200 day aggregate. Some HEIs and employers would prefer more flexibility in the first 70 day placement period, such as being able to divide it to provide wider experience, and indeed some HEIs are doing so. The content and approach to the 30 day *Developing Skills for Practice* course varied amongst employers and HEIs who interpreted its purpose in somewhat different ways, but the overwhelming view was that the current 30:70:100 day placement architecture was appropriate, and should be retained until it has time to be evaluated. I would conclude that this configuration should be retained and subjected to future evaluation as to its effectiveness before any changes are made.

There is a very strongly and widely held view, with which I would concur, that of much greater importance than the length,

setting and user-group involved in the placement, is the quality of the experience in the placement itself, and the quality of practice education and supervision for the student. It is the quality of the placement and the supervision received that is most frequently cited both by students and recently qualified social workers as key in the initial formation of their own professional practice – it is that important!

This aspect of social work education offers very great potential for further quality improvement and the achievement of higher consistency. There is a widely-held view that the greatest problem in qualifying education lies in the provision of sufficient practice placements of the necessary quality. Currently, there is a requirement that a student should have the opportunity to experience practice placements in both statutory and non-statutory settings and with adults and with children and families. I have found that this is not widely implemented for reasons given later.

Many of the HEIs are experiencing significant and increasing challenge in securing the practice placements they would like to have. There has grown up a widespread belief amongst social work students that they need to secure their final placement with an employer, or at least in a type of service, in which they wish to take up employment after graduation and qualification. This puts pressure on the HEIs to try to meet this demand. An additional factor is the need to have a placement in a statutory setting, either with a local authority or an organisation with statutory

powers. This leads to a problem in fulfilling the wishes of many students to have a statutory placement in children's services as their final placement, and it is the provision of this which causes most difficulty to a number of HEIs who are essentially in competition with other HEIs for these particular placements.

However the HEIs were strongly of the view that what was really important was

to give time for the current new practice placement system to stabilise and have a trial period with a high degree of stability before any more changes were made to it. This would allow evidence to emerge as to the effectiveness of the current practice placement arrangement, and that evidence rather than other factors would inform the need for any further change and suggest the direction of any such change, as mentioned earlier.

SECTION 8.1

ELIGIBILITY TO PROVIDE PLACEMENTS

In terms of eligibility to provide placements, employers and HEIs frequently alluded to the practice in nursing education, emphasising that it should be an expectation of all statutory bodies such as local authorities, NHS providers and other statutory social work providers that they provide supervised placements unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so. However, there is a difference in that in the majority of the clinical professions there is a general understanding that student supervision and education is an intrinsic part of any professional's career progression. I have referred earlier to this in terms of "the social worker as a professional". Whilst I believe that gaining acceptance of this in social work is a very important constituent in the transformation of the profession itself (as in the teaching and learning requirements in the *"Design and Delivery of the Curriculum"*, Domain 5 in the GMC's *Tomorrow's Doctors, Outcomes and Standards for Undergraduate Medical Education* referred to earlier (GMC 2009)).

Unfortunately there is not as yet a general acceptance of this principle within the social work profession, so we have to deal with the situation as it presents itself today.

Whilst it is a usual practice for HEIs to use placement providers who themselves employ social workers, there are high quality and innovative placements in which this is not the case and where the practice educator is arranged from outside of the provider organisation, with the host providing a practice supervisor on site.

There is little support for clustering placements in particular type of provider or in a smaller number of providers. For example in terms of placement setting, CAF/CASS, private fostering agencies, drug and alcohol services and mental health units all offer valuable placement experiences, and purposive clustering of placements in a limited number of providers is likely to exclude many such valuable placements, often with smaller, local providers, which can offer rich and diverse experience.

SECTION
8.2

STUDENT UNITS

A number of employers and HEIs use student units as part of the placement provision in various settings. In such units, students work on group-based assignments and cases, as part of which each member also receives individual supervision by a practice educator who is a qualified social worker. When working effectively it is an arrangement which can act as a mechanism to reinforce partnership working between employers and HEIs.

Where student units exist, the preferred form is to limit the number of students in each unit to 6 or fewer in order to facilitate group learning and to experience peer support in practice which will be important in shaping their own future practice. It was felt important that the group supervision must not be at the cost of the opportunity for individual supervision, and that the student must have the opportunity to work in this way with more than a single practice educator in order that they observe and experience different supervisory and intervention styles.

However, student units are a particular way of delivering the educational content in relation to practice, and their creation and utilisation should be a matter for individual

HEIs to consider along with the employers who provide their placement opportunities. They might, for example, be particularly relevant to the enhancement of inter-professional working if located in shared learning units covering health/housing/education. But care must be taken in over-reliance on any particular experiential setting, particularly when the form differs from that which will be experienced in future practice. Student units have been evaluated in some depth over time, with a significant assessment carried out by Ainsworth and Fulcher as long ago as 1984, so their strengths and weaknesses are well evidenced.

There is no appetite amongst employers or HEIs for a move in the direction of more use of student units, since the current situation is that any individual HEI who believes that in their particular circumstances this will provide higher quality placements and a better educational experience for the student can follow this route. There are differing views as to whether within any one placement provider, individual placements should be clustered or separated, although clustering is not synonymous with the creation of student units.

SECTION
8.3

PARTNERSHIPS AND PRACTICE CONSORTIA

One of the recommendations of the SWRB was that partnership arrangements should be set up to increase the efficiency in securing suitable practice placements. In the negotiations

to secure an adequate number of practice placements a majority, but not all, of HEIs work through a local or sub-regional practice consortium such as social work education and training networks. Such

arrangements are generally underpinned by memoranda of understanding (MOU) rather than service level agreements (SLAs), and include reference to placement expectations, payment arrangements and explain the duty of care to the student required of providers. They are often further supported by seeking written undertakings with individual providers at a senior management as well as at an operational level. These agreements are not legally enforceable, and rely on the strength of the partnership working to ensure their compliance and efficacy.

Some HEIs prefer to select and organise their own placement resource amongst employers, using posts such as Director of Practice Learning (DPL) or Practice Learning Coordinator (PLC) to achieve this. The reasons for this difference would appear to be driven by the degree to which individual HEIs are in a competitive situation with other HEIs over securing placements from a limited number of providers. This also depends on the existing strength of relationship between the HEIs and the local placement providers and whether more general inter-HEI working at an institutional level is prevalent. Whilst the multi-member partnership arrangements suggested by the SWRB are clearly an effective form of working in many cases, they are not required in a significant minority of cases where an HEI already has a well-established network of suitable placement providers, and therefore should not be imposed.

Where such partnership arrangements are working well, it is felt by HEIs and employers to result in a relatively fair and transparent allocation of practice placements amongst the constituent HEIs, and some partnerships are underpinned by formal practice learning agreements (PLA) between the HEI and the employer. Such formal practice learning agreements are

highly desirable in educational as well as practical terms, but are not yet widespread. What is also desirable is to find a way of encouraging an extension of the period for which these placements are provided from just the year-by-year basis which is currently prevalent.

Where practice placement consortia (PPC) have been established, a prime driver has been to avoid inter-HEI competition for placements, and to provide standardisation of procedures and documentation. Such consortia operate mainly in the local authority sector, and most include some voluntary and independent sector agencies and others. A difficulty that is encountered concerns the plethora of voluntary and other, non-local authority providers, which are not generally included in such consortia, and HEIs tend to secure such placements from those providers through direct individual contact. Indeed as previously mentioned, some HEIs prefer to organise all their own placements rather than work through collective partnership arrangements.

Given the transformational move to a closer integration of healthcare and social care, there is an opportunity for social work to take a significant role in this transformation. Therefore HEIs should look at the possibility of providing suitable placements in such situations where, for example, local organisations are instrumental in creating integrated care pathways that draw on wider community services and resources. Examples are the creation of multidisciplinary teams providing patient-centred support for older people, an initiative by Age UK, and where clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are commissioning innovative intervention services. In such ways, practice placements can reflect the rapidly changing provision of services thereby giving students a

very contemporary and forward-looking experience.

Whilst there is strong support for all employers being able to offer placements should they wish to do so, it is essential that all such placements must provide the appropriate learning opportunities and learning outcomes, they must accord fully with the professional requirements of the Professional Capabilities Framework, and must be able to provide suitably qualified practice educators and supervisors.

Whilst all placements are audited against the standards in the PCF, the quality assurance processes of the HEIs vary considerably. Methods used include the following elements:

- * Practice Placement Assessment Panels for each student cohort are held at the end of each of the 70 and 100 day placements:
- * Student portfolios maintained during the placements are informally commented upon for completeness, consistency and insight.
- * Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) responses are completed for all placements and analysed to provide feedback to students and practice educators, (but there was some criticism of the form used for this purpose in that it was felt to distort the data).
- * Students are requested to provide their own written feedback and evaluation of the placement experience to the Director of Practice Learning, or to those in an equivalent role.

But it is unclear whether QAPL (SfC and TCSW 2012) impacts upon the quality of placements, or merely monitors them, and the processes should be further improved in their rigour and usefulness.

Whilst some individual practice placements may be visited by the Director of Practice Learning or equivalent, the assessment methodologies and the visit frequencies vary considerably. The schedules for visits include both triggered visits where feedback shows problems are present, and planned cyclical visits. Most HEIs endeavour to get their practice educators and practice supervisors together as a group on occasions throughout the year at which their feedback is given to the HEI. As mentioned earlier, the audit process takes place against the Professional Capabilities Framework.

However, there was not strong evidence of an approach to validate the findings from different sources through utilisation of a systematic methodology of triangulation of evidence, and this is necessary if the quality assurance process is to have validity.

As mentioned previously, practice placement provision is in something of a crisis and consideration should be given to more fundamental change to their provision. For example, social work education could adopt a more formal commissioning approach such as is used in parts of healthcare, or build placement provision into the regulatory system as with teacher training. I am not making a recommendation for the adoption of such particular approaches, but I am recommending a more strategic look be undertaken at this subject, whilst improvements are made to the current situation.

There was strong support for the use of specific, measurable criteria for the quality of educational supervision during placements and for the quality of the placement itself. The term “approved teaching organisation” (ATO) has some currency, but the term itself is open to many interpretations across HEIs, employers and practitioners. Some have taken it to be an analogous concept to that of “teaching hospitals”, but the analogy is unhelpful as the analogous reference – the teaching hospital – is not itself subject to a single definition or understanding, nor indeed has the exclusivity of teaching quality sometimes ascribed to it. Others use the term to describe an organisation that teaches through the use of student units, which have featured in the past in social work education and feature in the *Frontline* programme. For the purposes of clarity in the Review I have defined an approved teaching organisation as: *an employer which provides practice placements for the education and training of social workers in a workplace setting, and which is independently assessed as providing the highest quality of teaching, training and educational experience.*

The benefits over and above an enhanced level of practice education that would follow from certain organisations being awarded some form of enhanced teaching recognition, if it carried both status and reward, might be the possibility of such organisations providing more placements in statutory settings if such organisations as local authorities were such providers. But if it were to be meaningful, the holders of the award may need to take on a larger duty of care role similar to that of an employer, for example, providing early intervention support for students in difficulties, managing their health and welfare issues,

taking on personnel responsibilities and other HR procedures which may lead to disputes, appeals and litigation, a role currently fulfilled by the HEI. Any such a move would need carefully specifying and consultation before moving towards such a change (albeit one that has been considered in the past).

Another issue arises as to whether this form of clustering of in-practice placements is desirable from a learning perspective, or whether it would limit the opportunities for students seeing in operation a range of practitioners with different personal practice styles and methods in a range of settings, as mentioned earlier. A move to approved teaching organisations runs a risk that this will narrow the range of provision and cut out smaller providers. It is straightforward to see how this could operate for local authorities, but less easy to see it as benefitting providers in the voluntary and private sectors where an increasing proportion of social work education takes place.

If it were introduced, the question arises as whether such approved teaching organisation status is available to all organisations irrespective of sector, or limited to employers in particular sectors, and if so, which sectors? It would seem somewhat irrational to pursue a route to try and achieve higher quality outcomes for students as a result of better education, teaching and supervision during their placement, yet restrict this only to certain types of provider, for example local authorities. There is an argument that says that such a provider would need to be able to provide placements in statutory settings as part of their provision, but were this to be a requirement then it would strictly limit the

range and type of provider organisation that would be eligible for the award.

There is also a wariness that the creation of such a tier of placement provider would act as a strong disincentive to many organisations to continue providing placements when they were technically excluded from such an award. Concern was also expressed that a higher concentration of placements in a lower number of providers was a move in the wrong direction, as the practice knowledge gained by the student would be disproportionately influenced by the practice methodology of a limited number of large providers to the detriment of the student's experience of diversity of approaches.

I have concluded that as yet there is insufficient evidence that moving towards some tiered form of placement provider categorisation, such as that of an approved teaching organisation, would be beneficial given the forgoing arguments. If it is to be pursued, this should only occur when there has been a rigorous analysis of the consequences of moving in such a direction, (and at present no such analysis has been carried out), and when the practicality of doing so is properly worked through as to its feasibility and cost. Care would need to be taken to avoid any form of kite-marking unless it carries strong evidence as to its robustness and capability for independent audit.

Conclusion 30: That the current placement architecture of the 30 day *Developing Skills* for Practice module and the substantive 70 day and 100 day practice placement remain unaltered for a period of time during which any evidence for benefits occurring from changes can be evaluated, and any proposals for change piloted, before any further changes are made.

Conclusion 31: That it is the quality of the placement and the supervision received that is most cited by students and recently qualified social workers as key in their initial formation of their own professional practice.

Conclusion 32: That the current criteria for eligibility amongst placement providers should remain unchanged, which means that a wide range and size of employer can offer such placements provided they themselves employ qualified social workers. (However it should be noted that in Recommendation 17 there is a proposal to adopt a very much more stringent quality assessment and assurance of practice placements.)

Conclusion 33: That there is no compelling evidence to suggest that student units provide a preferable form of in-practice placement learning, so HEIs should continue to decide upon their adoption or otherwise as they determine best enhances the quality of the educational experience in the placement.

Conclusion 34: That formal practice learning agreements between the HEI and the employer should be put in place and be available for audit, to cover all aspects of the education provided in the practice environment.

Conclusion 35: That whilst multi-member partnership arrangements suggested by the SWRB can be an effective form of working, they are not required in all cases and therefore should not be imposed.

Conclusion 36: That HEIs should look at the possibility of providing suitable placements in situations where there are integrated care pathways that draw on wider community services and resources.

Conclusion 37: That the quality assurance processes of the HEIs be more consistent in the methodology employed, and that where different sources of information are utilised, a systematic methodology of triangulation of evidence should be pursued in order to have reliable quality assurance processes.

Conclusion 38: That a strategic investigation be undertaken to see if a more formal commissioning system for practice placements would deliver higher quality and more continuity in placement provision.

Conclusion 39: That at present there should be no move towards a tiered form of placement provider, such as the introduction of approved teaching organisations. If such a move is contemplated, it should only take place after a thorough analysis of the advantages and consequences has been undertaken.

The % distribution of types of employer providing placements varies greatly within the range of:

<u>Type of provider</u>	<u>%</u>
Local Authority	15-60
Voluntary Sector	35-65
Private Sector	5-15
Mental Health/other NHS	0-8
Schools	0-5
HEI-based student units	0-2
Other	0-6

The most significant recent and continuing trend is the reduction in local authority placements and the increase in voluntary sector placements.

There is a widespread concern amongst employers and educationalists over the quality and availability of appropriate practice placements. The preferred arrangement for the placements was one which gives experience of practice in both statutory and non-statutory settings with two different service user groups, namely with children and families, and with adults. In practice for several reasons, many HEIs are finding this combination difficult to achieve. As mentioned earlier, placements in statutory settings are mainly but not at all exclusively in local authority settings, and the service delivery demands on social services is such that the number of such placements continues to diminish. Also, increasingly students are pressuring HEIs to ensure them at least one placement in a statutory setting, in order to enhance their job prospects on graduation. The result is

that some HEIs find it difficult to achieve consistently the quality of placements they wish to see, and there are differences in the quality of placements amongst HEIs, which is concerning since all placements must reach the relevant PCF standards. This situation is becoming more widespread and needs to be addressed as a matter of priority, and poor quality placements eliminated.

Currently during the inspection by the regulator HCPC and by TCSW, placements are not routinely visited and inspected, the verification of their quality being sufficient is made by consideration of the quality assurance process. Given the difficulty in sourcing placements of a sufficiently high quality and the suggested need to increase the level of the financial support for the placements providers, such support must be dependent upon a much more rigorous inspection methodology by the regulator, HCPC, and where endorsement is sought, by TCSW.

As mentioned, experience of a placement in a statutory setting is regarded as almost essential for graduating students to be able to secure employment as social workers. Most such placements are with local authorities, but an increasing number of provided by other organisations, such as CAF/CASS, which carry out statutory duties. There may be occasions where a placement in an independent sector organisation might include a shadowing opportunity elsewhere within a statutory setting. In the past the provision of placements was a formal performance indicator for which local authorities were held accountable, but

this is no longer the case. If the availability and the quality of the supervision and education in such placements are to be maintained and preferably increased, then it will be necessary financially to incentivise placement providers to a greater degree than is the current practice. There are also concerns that the initiatives for

fast track entry, *Step Up to Social Work* and *Frontline* will “cream off” the best practice placements and supervision. The present situation concerning the availability and quality of practice placements is unsatisfactory for HEIs and for social work students, and ultimately for employers and service users.

SECTION 9.1

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PLACEMENTS: THE EDUCATION SUPPORT GRANT

Placement provision is a common factor in most professional education, especially in clinical work. It is a situation which has given rise to problems for many professions at various times, and I have concluded that only two routes lead to the required situation of stability. Either the provision of placements needs to be made mandatory for organisations employing social workers, or providers have to be adequately recompensed for the cost to them of the service they provide in the provision and supervision of placements. I will not be pursuing the first of these at this time as I regard it unnecessary as yet when the second alternative is possible and preferable.

Pursuing then the second of the above routes, in terms of how this situation can be remedied, there is a strong wish for the Education Support Grant (ESG) to be retained with the amount per placement increased. More use is being made of placements in statutory settings in other than local authorities, and this is to be encouraged as generally these are felt by HEIs to deliver a quality experience. Were the grant to be reduced or phased out, employers and HEIs believe that their ability, either directly or through local/sub-regional partnerships, even to retain the current number of placements would be

very seriously compromised.

The ESG payment rates have remained constant since their inception in 2003 and are felt by all to merit increase. If the rates were increased significantly, the attraction to practice placement providers of all types would be increased, and the quality of the practice placements themselves would be significantly increased through the motivation it would give to the individuals involved in delivering the education and supervision in the placements. There was a very strong consensus amongst employers and HEIs that proper financial support for the staff involved in practice placement education was essential if the quality of practice placements were to be improved. Such support also extended to the related elements of funding for the involvement of practitioners in the 30 day *Developing Skills for Practice* module, in the support given to the involvement of service users and carers in their educational provision, and in support of the training of practice educators and practice supervisors.

So I am recommending that the ESG as a mechanism for supporting placement provision is continued, and that the level of financial support (currently at two levels £18 and £28 per day) be very significantly increased as a matter of priority. However,

irrespective of such an increase I also recommend that the assessment of the quality of the placements be carried out very much more rigorously.

I also recommend a review of the differentials in the payment levels which currently exist between local authorities and other placement providers, and this should include the examination of whether different types of placement, for example whether differentiated by statutory/non-statutory, individual/student unit, appropriately qualified supervision/other, sector, size of organisation/number of placements etc., should attract different rates in order that the provision of placements can be driven by demand and not restricted by supply.

At present the ESG funding is allocated by individual HEIs to placement providers, and although it is stated that this funding goes directly to the individuals providing the practice education and supervision, often it is used as a more general training fund or to support a practice coordination role in the provider organisation. This destination for the funds needs to be clearly stipulated, and I suggest it should be paid in the form of an honorarium to those professionals personally involved in providing the support in the workplace. Whilst there should be a standard, national mechanism for channelling the funding flow, the detail of the rates necessary to achieve the reward and incentive required should be properly assessed, taking into account the required number of placements which will be necessary if student numbers decrease.

It is important to be able to detect early any problems with individual placements, and for HEIs to be able to respond quickly

in a way in which the disruption to the individual student is minimised. The practice supervisor and practice educator need to be able to intervene and remedy the situation. In practice it is very difficult to provide immediate alternative placements in such a situation, so it is remedial action that is necessary unless the situation is very serious in which case the student must be removed from that practice placement immediately, with a review of the situation taking place after the conclusion of the placement in which sanctions may be applied by the HEI.

There is strong support for the use of TCSW's *Placement Audit Forms* which give clarity to the expectations about placements prior to the student starting a placement. I recommend that all placements are evaluated using the *Quality Assurance in Practice Learning, QAPL*, methodology (SfC and TCSW 2012). However, currently it is considered that the rigour of the QAPL process could be enhanced.

I have concluded that despite often heroic attempts to sort out a robust mechanism for putting in place the necessary practice placement experience for students, this has not been achieved across the piece. With the increasing problems of the shortage of high quality placements, particularly but not only in statutory settings, it is a situation which requires resolution as a priority. There is a fundamental problem in there being insufficient availability of high quality placements, so it is appropriate to incentivise such provision, but in doing so to demand a much more rigorous audit of placement quality be instigated as a requirement of receiving this payment.

Work-based education and training such as practice placements require practice educators in order to manage and deliver the quality of the in-practice educational experience. Practice educators need to have relevant experience and undertake formal training for this role which is pivotal to the quality of qualifying education. Practice educators have a vital role in that they carry out the formal assessment of students on placement, and hence must be fully equipped to execute this role as part of the assessment of students. Yet there is a great deal of variation in the way that they are identified, selected and trained, depending upon whether or not the HEI and the placement provider have made this an attractive and sustainable role.

There is a need to strengthen this role as it is relied upon to quality manage the educational value delivered by the placement, and to ensure that the experience is one in which a list of pre-determined learning outcomes is achieved. In some HEIs the role involves a close involvement of practice educators in the social work degree course, but in others the relationship is a more distant one. There is little merit in such variation, and I am recommending that the role of the practice educator receives much more support and profile, and is more closely involved in the totality of the educational provision of the HEI.

A key problem is the unwillingness of some employers to provide practice educators with a degree of workload relief from their day-to-day practice. Sometimes arguments are put forward by employers that students, particularly in their final placement, provide extra service resource, but there

is no evidence from practice educators themselves that in carrying out their educational role, the students reduce the workload of the practice educators.

The current standards for practice educators were agreed by the SWRB. The Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) are applicable to all practice placements from the 2013/14 academic year onwards, so that from that date:

- A registered social worker who has met the standards for PEPS Stage 2 can take full responsibility for assessing, supervising and teaching students up to and including the last placement.
- A practice educator meeting the standards for PEPS Stage 1 can be responsible for assessing, teaching and supervising students up to the last placement (there are a number who are not Registered Social Workers)
- From October 2015 all PEPS Stage 1 are to be Registered Social Workers.
- Where it is necessary to have an 'off site' practice educator then a practice supervisor, who does not necessarily have to be a social worker for the first placement, will also be in place in the placement setting. Students must work alongside a social worker in a post requiring social work registration to undertake statutory tasks in the last placement.

Enforcement of the PEPS standards is through the endorsement of qualifying programmes by The College of Social

Work.

This should also be seen in the context of the *Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework* in which the SWRB set out responsibilities to be exercised towards all social workers, including students whilst on placement. The four key elements of professional supervision were:

- * the quality of decision-making and interventions;
- * line management and organisational accountability;
- * caseload and workload management; and
- * the identification of further personal learning, career and development opportunities.

Because of the educational content of a practice educator's role, it is essential that they have up-to-date knowledge and competence in that role. Whilst it is a requirement that they meet the minimum standards as defined by TCSW for this role, these are basic standards and it is generally accepted that these are in need of enhancement as soon as adequate training provision is made available. In particular, it is an essential part of the whole quality management process by the HEI that practice educators who carry out the final placement assessment of students do so with the expertise to meet the equivalent quality management standards applied by the individual HEI to its other activities. This can only be achieved by ensuring that practice educators seek and receive adequate training for the role. Such training needs to be sited in a continuing professional development (CPD) framework which must be available to both the

practice educator and the employer, which is where responsibility for such CPD lies. Again, looking to the health professions, the equivalent roles to that of the practice educator have much more significance within those professions, and this is something which I conclude is essential in the social work profession and have included in my definition of both "the social worker as a professional" and "the social worker as a social scientist".

The question arises as to whether the current PEPS programmes at Stages 1 and 2, adequately provide the training necessary for practice educators to deliver high quality practice education. This is complex, as amongst employers, HEIs and practice educators themselves there is a variety of views about the precise role of the practice educator. Some HEIs see the prime focus of the role in terms of overseeing the placement and supervising the student's experience including administrative matters, pastoral care, monitoring the educational provision during the placement, and carrying out assessments both formative and summative. Others place much more emphasis on the direct teaching element of the practice educator's role including the identification of the appropriate intervention strategies, teaching skills, recognising the need to access research and apply its findings, seeking to identify the evidence base the student is attempting to secure, and acting as a critical friend to the student. As this forms a spectrum of activities, the pivotal importance of the role needs to be much more closely prescribed - and that prescription appropriately monitored - if it is to have authority as a validated part of the educational process. It isn't just a matter of "doing well what you do" but rather of "doing well what the role requires you to do".

Whilst on-going learning opportunities are

generally available to practice educators, this is less so for practice supervisors, and this is to be regretted and needs to be remedied in the commissioning of placements by HEIs with their placement provider organisations.

I have concluded that the quality of practice education would benefit greatly by practice educators having an even more focussed, explicit and prescribed training and with subjects such as formal assessment, giving feedback, relationship-building and the applicability and limitations of different approaches to, and models of, adult learning having more prominence. I recommend that an evaluation is carried out more adequately to determine the capabilities required of a practice educator, with the view of enhancing the PEPS standards and guidance accordingly.

Another issue in ensuring the success of the practice educator role is to ensure it is adequately rewarded in terms of the professional recognition accorded to its crucial role in the whole qualifying educational provision, and also in terms of financial acknowledgment of the time it takes to properly fulfil the role.

Practice supervisors and practice educators have distinct roles. However, it is my view that practice supervisors do need a properly informed understanding of practice education in order to work successfully with students in the work-based situation. Whilst some practice supervisors are qualified social workers, some currently are not, such as is often the case with voluntary/independent sector providers.

Whilst the PEPS standards and guidance forms a clear framework, nevertheless it has certain shortcomings. There is also an

increasing reliance on placements which are in the voluntary and independent sectors, and many of these currently cannot provide practice supervisors who are working towards or holding Stage 1 PEPS qualifications. This is often the case in settings such as substance misuse services, prisons and schools which provide valuable opportunities for students to develop advocacy and communication skills in institutional settings. Practice supervisors are required to supervise staff in the workplace, and need knowledge of practice education, but the HEIs are divided on whether formal PEPS qualifications should be mandatory for practice supervisors. My own view is that they should be mandatory, as without a demonstrable understanding of practice education, it is difficult to see how performance in their role can be subject to appropriate quality assurance. But if the qualifications are to be made mandatory it will be necessary to encourage HEIs to assist in the training of such supervisors employed in organisations in which the HEI wishes to have placements, otherwise some valuable current placements and types of placement will not be available in the future.

Conclusion 40: That in order to maintain and further enhance the quality of the supervision and education in practice placements, then it will be necessary financially to incentivise practice providers to a greater degree than is current.

Conclusion 41: That the inspection of the placements be made much more rigorous. Such inspection needs to include visits to the placements, as well as inspection of the quality assurance processes.

Conclusion 42: That the ESG should be retained, with the amount per placement significantly increased. Such support should also be extended to include the related elements of funding for the involvement of practitioners in the 30 day *Developing Skills for Practice* module, in the support given to the involvement of service users and carers in their educational provision, and in support of the training of practice educators and practice supervisors.

Conclusion 43: That ESG funds should go directly from the HEI to individual practice educators and practice supervisors in the form of an honorarium, rather than being pooled into an individual employer's training support fund.

Conclusion 44: That a much more rigorous audit of placement quality be instigated as a requirement of eligibility for receipt of future ESG payment. This should use the Quality Assurance in Practice Learning, QAPL, methodology, and the QAPL processes themselves should be made more rigorous.

Conclusion 45: That a review is conducted to assess whether any differentials amongst types of placement provider in the payment rate of the ESG is necessary. Such a review should include the examination of whether different types of placement (i.e. whether differentiated by statutory/non-statutory, individual/student unit, appropriately qualified supervision/other, sector, size of organisation/number of placements etc.), should attract different rates in order that the provision of placements is driven by demand and not restricted by supply.

Conclusion 46: That there should be a standard channel of funding flow for the ESG payment to HEIs for onward distribution to those providing the practice placements, but the precise form of the standard should be decided by seeking agreement across the HEI/provider community to ensure its appropriateness.

Conclusion 47: That the role of the practice educator receives more clarity, support and profile; is more closely involved in the totality of the educational provision of the HEI, and that the compliance and performance of practice educators is formally monitored and assessed by the responsible HEI.

Conclusion 48: That the minimum standards for the role of practice educator should be enhanced from the current basic standards, and in particular to ensure that they have the requisite expertise to carry out the formal summative final placement assessment of students. To do this, practice educators must undertake appropriate training for the role, with such training sited in a continuing professional development (CPD) framework. To do this, an evaluation should be carried out to update the capabilities required of a practice educator, in order to inform the enhancing of the PEPS qualification accordingly.

Conclusion 49: That practice supervisors should be appropriately formally qualified to at least PEPS Stage 1, and that HEIs assume a responsibility to ensure provision of such training to practice supervisors when their own employer is unable to offer such support.

There is much debate at present about whether the generic qualifying degree which enables qualified social workers to practise in all the contexts (adults, children, transition, families, frail elderly, mental health and learning disabilities etc.) should be supplemented, not replaced, by specialist qualifying degrees which would only allow the practitioner to work with certain categories of client. This is an issue of great strategic significance for the shape of future social work education, but within the social work profession itself and amongst social work educationalists such early specialisation has very little support. Amongst a minority of employers it has support, but not amongst receivers of social work services. As yet I have seen little or no evidence as to the educational benefits to support such early and exclusive specialisation.

This is not to say that there is not a very good argument for augmentation of experience with particular service-user groups, such as children or those with the need for mental health interventions, or in terms of more specialist situations applicable to a range of service user categories, such as bereavement counselling, but this should not be at the expense of a thorough understanding of the wider context which a social worker is expected to understand and in which to be professionally competent. Such specialised experience is offered by the fast track courses, and can also be achieved through curricula options such as the introduction of Student-Selected Components (SSCs) into the degree courses.

An absolutely key issue in social work education is whether or not we should continue to qualify students to be practice-ready in both children and families social work and in adult social work on graduation with all forms of qualifying degree, or should there be the opportunity to qualify students as qualified in some part of the spectrum, for example, adults only, children only, mental health, etc.?

For many years there has been a strongly and widely held view in social work education that there must be a generic social work qualification, and that all social workers should have the capability to work with all individuals, groups and communities do so in all settings and situations. The Seebohm Report of 1968 signalled this, and the various reviews and reports since then, including much more recently the Social Work Task Force and the Social Work Reform Board have unequivocally supported the generic nature of professional qualification.

However, most recently this has been challenged by proposals that HEIs should be encouraged to develop social work qualifying degrees for those intending to work in children's social work: the suggestion being that such degrees would build on a first year common to all social workers, with a second and third year focussing exclusively on children and related areas. The protagonists for this claim that this would not be a split in the social work profession, for having specialised after one general year into either children, adults or some other specific area such as learning

disability or mental health, qualified social workers would be able to embark upon a conversion course if at a later date they wished to change specialism and work with another user group. Whilst this may not technically be a split in the profession, it would amount to such as it would mean that some students would qualify with their capabilities very largely in a single field, and it would be difficult to argue that their capabilities in fields in which they had only an element in a first year of the qualifying degree were present in any real sense. Also, although such specialist degrees would no doubt start off on a limited scale, presumably it is felt that many employers might find the deeper but narrower field of knowledge attractive in terms of apparent higher work-readiness, and if this were so the siren voice of further specialisation and on a larger scale would be heard.

A frequently expressed view concerned the apparent lack of a commitment on the part of some policy makers to social work with older people, especially puzzling at a time when much of the political discourse is concerned with the challenges associated with an ageing society. Intrinsic to this lack of a visible commitment to the importance of social work with older people, is the notion that older people can make do with 'less qualified or even unqualified' social care. Yet it is accepted by the same people that older people, often with very complex needs, will continue to require skilled and effective help and support in the form of social care, but the difference is that this seems not to include social work.

Specifically, I would suggest that social workers offer an important alternative or constructive complementarity to medical-focussed approaches in the treatment of older people, and frequently are able to offer informed professional advice to counter attempts to prevent older people

from taking appropriate risks which are part and parcel maintaining a life of quality. Further, there is frequent expression that professional social work with older people should mean that social workers seek to uphold the human rights of older people and their rights to make decisions and choices about their lives. In the context of adult safeguarding, professional social workers offer skill and expertise in working in an inter-disciplinary safeguarding context.

Social workers possess considerable skills in working with groups as well as with individuals and in a variety of systems and so should be able to offer skilled intervention with, for example, families who often have different opinions and views about what should happen to their older relative. We are well aware of the infringements that older people suffer in respect of dignified treatment, rights to participation, discriminatory attitudes and treatment and abusive practice. I believe that effectively trained, committed gerontological social workers offer a vitally important challenge to poor practice. For example: actively participating in reviews of care homes and identifying poor and abusive practice; shaping commissioning of services; demonstrating leadership in challenging inappropriate and ageist assumptions from other professionals; promoting inclusive practice; and supporting older people to articulate their wishes and aspirations, are all skills which social workers can and should be encouraged to demonstrate to the benefit of society and to the other, related professions.

Even more important in such a debate is to address the question of how capable social workers need to be with all groups and individuals who form the context, such as the family, in which any potential recipient of a social work service is located. The almost unanimous view amongst

social work education professionals in England, in the devolved administrations and internationally, is that knowledge of this wider contextual situation is not just helpful but absolutely essential to good practice for all social workers including those working in safeguarding and mental health. In particular, social work has always had as an underlying principle that it requires a thorough understanding of all stages in the life course. The *Standards of Proficiency* (HCPC 2012a) were widely consulted upon, and resulted in establishing the standards across generic social work, so it would seem that the driver for any move towards early (pre-qualification) specialism is driven either by shortage of practitioners in a particular field of specialism or by a view that qualification could be achieved by more concentration on training for practice-readiness, rather than education for a career.

Whilst there has been some criticism of the preparedness for practice of some NQSWs, this is not a particularly widely experienced situation, and it can be persuasively argued that such a problem is more likely to have arisen due to factors such as injudicious initial selection for training for the profession, inability by the student to cope with the subject matter, failure to remedy any failings identified during the qualifying course either in the HEI or practice placement situations, inadequate supervision as an NQSW, lack of application in the workplace, qualifying a student who should have been failed, and so on. To make the leap to a solution which seeks to respond to any such factors by assuming that early specialisation will obviate such problems is not based on any significant research evidence, nor is it particularly logically sound.

I quote a recent comment I received which summarises the issue well.

“The newly qualified social worker needs a thorough understanding of all aspects of the human condition, not just to focus on those factors which are ostensibly ‘adult’. Students need a thorough grounding in the principles and research related to child development and human growth and behaviour in order to understand the factors which might or might not, for example, predispose a person to mental health problems in adulthood; or in addressing issues of loss and bereavement which affect many adults, including older people in later life, and people with disabilities.

It is also the case that ‘adult’ social workers (whether in ‘community care’ or mental health teams) will be dealing with people who have children, some of whom will be in receipt of child care services, including ‘child in need’ and ‘safeguarding’; so there is no single ‘cut-off point’ where a student can disregard knowledge, skills and values related to ‘children/young people’ or ‘adults’. Any specialism can (and often does) come in the post-qualifying/continuous professional development stage of the social worker’s career”.

(University of East Anglia)

There is also concern that an undue concentration on statutory training and procedural training will be at the expense of other equally important components of a social worker’s education.

Evaluation of the NQSW Pilot Programmes 2008 – 2011 (Carpenter et al 2012) concluded that NQSWs entering into children’s social work without previous experience in children’s services performed as well as those with such experience, when assessed at the end of their first year in practice.

If one accepts that social work is a complex and intellectually challenging profession, then its nearest comparators are arguably the clinical professions and the legal profession. In all such professions, it has been argued that the route to high professional capability is through a progressive and incremental move from the general to the specialised, with a professional licence to practise coming at the end of either the qualifying degree or after a subsequent period of work-based education and training, such as the probation year in the teaching profession. If, as can be evidenced by inspection of a social work degree curriculum, social work is complex for reasons I have argued elsewhere in this Review, it is not clear to me what evidence there is for the benefits of any significant move away from an initial qualifying degree which aims to equip students to understand the complexities of their subject in the wider societal contexts in which all people live.

Therefore I conclude that the qualification as a social worker should remain based on the current situation in which there is a requirement in the regulation of the qualification that all social workers should have the capability to work with all individuals, groups and communities and to do so in all settings and situations. In fact both the HCPC standards and the criteria for TCSW endorsement require programmes to meet them in full, further supporting the generic scope of the degree. This implies that each student should have the opportunity to experience practice placements which reflect the major types of placement, and these are currently statutory/non-statutory and in children's/adults settings. If the validity of the generic degree is to be maintained, then this needs to be reflected in the disposition of practice placements, so I will not be suggesting any change in this.

SECTION 10.1

SPECIALISATION WITHIN THE CURRENT GENERIC DEGREE

At present there is a limited degree of opportunity to obtain aspects of specialisation in the generic qualifying degree through some HEIs offering some element of choice and specialisation such as electives in the final year, and for postgraduate students in the subject of their dissertation. However this does not amount to the formality of the student selected components (SSCs) seen in the clinical professions' qualifying education or in legal education. Of course the practice placements which form such a major component of the qualifying social work degree directly offer choice and a varying degree of specialism by nature of their settings and service user groups encountered.

The purpose of formal student selected components in clinical education is not one of training for specialised practice, but serving the primary purpose of facilitating *“the intellectual development of students through exploring in depth a subject of their choice”* (for example: *Tomorrow's Doctors*, GMC 2009, 50-51). Such SSCs would need to be mapped against the learning outcomes of the qualifying degree and contained within the assessment blueprint of the curriculum.

There was very little interest amongst HEIs for changing their curricula to include any more varied informal components, nor moving to create a formal SSC addition to the curriculum and learning outcomes,

with a widely and strongly held view that specialism is much more appropriately undertaken following qualification. Indeed the ASYE is primarily seen by social work educationalists as the beginning of the NQSW's continuing professional development in practice. The need for an agreed CPD framework for the profession was seen as a subject of high priority, and concern was expressed by employers, educators and practitioners at the time this was taking to be developed. Its lack was seen by many as directly fuelling the pressure for pre-qualification specialisation instead of the post-qualification specialisation that a comprehensive new CPD framework and programme would offer.

Conclusion 50: That all curricula in the qualifying degrees should provide for the capability of the NQSW to work successfully, after an initial period of supported and supervised practice, in any context and with any user group.

Conclusion 51: That as social work has as an underlying principle the requirement for a thorough understanding of all stages in the life course, it is essential that the qualifying degree in whatever course delivers it, should qualify students with such an understanding. There are always drivers for a move towards pre-qualification specialism in order more quickly to achieve additional practitioner numbers in particular fields, for example mental health or child protection. However, great care must be taken to ensure this is not achieved at the expense of sacrificing education for a career in social work for some arguable short term gain in practice readiness. In all comparable professions to social work, the route to high professional capability is through a progressive and incremental move from the general to the specialised. Therefore I recommend that the qualification as a social worker remains based on the current situation where there is a requirement in the regulation of the qualification that all social workers should have the capability to work with all individuals, groups and communities and to do so in all settings and situations likely to be encountered.

Conclusion 52: That there is a pressing need for a comprehensive new CPD framework for the profession, to enable the delivery of specialisation upon which the NQSW would embark in some form of supported practice such as the ASYE as the beginning of their continuing professional development in practice.

CHAPTER 11 | READINESS TO ENTER PRACTICE

There is extensive debate about whether the current social work education process (in its various forms) results in social workers who, at the point of qualification, are equipped and ready to enter social work as practitioners. In my view, and that in the evidence I have received, qualification as a social worker is properly regarded as the start, and only the start, of a professional career.

Whilst I heard quite a degree of reported disillusionment on the part of employers in relation to the quality of newly qualified social workers, particularly in terms of work-readiness, in the evidence provided to me by employers there was relatively little mention of this, and indeed a more frequently occurring comment related to their being much less of a problem than some of the much more experienced social workers whose practice quality was in need of improvement. Then again, it is clear that some experienced social workers are not encouraged to engage in CPD. The work-readiness issue is one I have discussed in more detail elsewhere in the Review, but in essence there is a widespread recognition by employers that whilst the level of work readiness experienced by some employers with those qualifying on “grow your own” programmes was excellent, this was not matched, nor indeed expected, from other current programmes.

There was a complete consensus in the evidence I received from all the stakeholder groups that social workers require intellectual and emotional intelligence as well as self-awareness, self-confidence

and the ability to carry out self-reflective practice, and these attributes feature prominently in the social work curriculum and in the capabilities that HEIs aim to inculcate. This is consistent with the many responses I received from international social work academics as set out later in this Review

The prevalent view of the HEIs is that their role is to provide an education in social work at the culmination of which the student is properly equipped to work in a professional manner. It is their view that the NQSW’s entry into practice should be with adequate support from the employer, currently through the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), and reported criticism from some employers as to the capability of the NQSWs was hotly contested. HEIs conceded that there were occasions where students were qualified who should not have been allowed to qualify, and expressed concerns that some HEIs were too reluctant to fail students due to pressures from their corporate management and fear of student appeals. There was a unanimous view from HEIs that where students were being qualified who should not have been qualified, that this has a hugely negative impact on the profession as a whole rather than just on the negligent individual HEI and they wanted such practices to cease immediately.

HEIs felt that their role was to prepare students for a career in social work practice through the education and training in the qualifying course, but as with any professional completing their HEI course,

initial qualification was very much the entry point to a profession, whereafter learning would continue throughout the professional life of the individual. They were concerned to point out what they saw as a great danger, namely that of focussing on what is current at the particular time at which qualification takes place, as undoubtedly current immediate priorities will change and fluctuate as they have in the past and increasingly so in the recent past. This is why training in core skills was a fundamental part of ensuring the nation was receiving a steady supply of suitably qualified social workers, rather than cohorts whose training had been focussed on a contextual situation that would rapidly change. I refer here to a written quote from an experienced social work educator:

“(Our students) ... are ready to enter the ASYE - and I think this is different to entering practice. Part of the difficulty is that it is one thing to develop the skills to assess families; another to understand the bureaucratic processes which LAs and other providers use to structure and record this. Social work education should be for a full career and not focused upon what is ‘current’ at the point of qualification. The use of specific tools can be developed as in house training, provided the prior ‘education’ has given the student the skills to learn this. At present this is where I think social work is and where I think it should stay. For example I am a qualified social worker who, prior to entering the HEI, had 20 years’ experience in child protection social work at various levels – including senior management. I know that I could undertake a risk assessment in relation to child maltreatment/ protection. I am equally certain that without additional training I could not utilise all of the current tools to complete and record this – but I could acquire these fairly quickly. Thus, it is the core skills

which are important for the whole career.”
(University of Wolverhampton).

For employers to expect NQSWs to be able to take on an immediate caseload similar to that of an experienced social worker because of service pressures is illogical, highly undesirable and unsafe. Employers need to provide good induction programmes, and it is felt that the ASYE offers some degree of protection to NQSWs in terms of workload relief, support and supervision. This should also apply to NQSWs where they are employed by recruitment agencies, who have a professional responsibility for ensuring that they receive the opportunity for the assessed and supported year in employment, and would need to arrange this with the employer to whom the NQSW was assigned.

Currently, there is a widely-held view that the HCPC regulatory standards (HCPC 2012a) are somewhat generic statements about safe practice, which was not the recommendation of SWTF in its first Report where they recommended a post-registration/qualification year of assessed practice, success at which would lead to a formal licence to practise:

“Under this system, practitioners would first acquire and then maintain their status as social workers (and their ability to be employed as such). This would be achieved through demonstrating that they have kept to high standards of continuing competency and professional development.

A licence to practise would replace current requirements for re-registration with a system that is more rigorous and transparent about tangible improvements in knowledge and skills. It would reflect the change brought about through the assessed year in employment which would

have to be completed successfully prior to the first award of a full licence.”

(SWTF 2009, 6.5 & 6.6).

Whilst TCSW has developed its endorsement criteria, at present these are not mandatory and therefore the profession has no powers of compliance beyond those of the HCPC's minimum standards. In my view this is not at all a satisfactory situation and one which should be changed.

Conclusion 53: That the role of the HEI in qualifying education is to provide an education in social work at the culmination of which the student is properly equipped to undertake social work in a professional manner in a supported and supervised role. The initial qualification is the entry point to a profession in which learning should continue throughout the professional life of the individual.

The HCPC regulates social work education in England, a responsibility it was assigned after the demise of the GSCC. Its methodology is enshrined in its *Standards of Proficiency* (SOPs HCPC 2012a) which relate to standards of safety and practice as a social worker, and its prime regulatory objective is the protection of the public. The standards are expressed in terms of outcomes of knowledge and abilities in exercising their role. However, despite the considerable number of such standards (76 in all) they do not amount to the knowledge and abilities a social worker needs to know and be capable of applying in practice. The *Standards of Proficiency* do not stand alone in the HCPC's repertoire of governing documents, as both its *Standards of Education and Training and its Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics* (HCPC 2009 and 2012c) are also applicable, but are set at a low level of quite generic expectation that would be covered by any HEI's own governance regime. So in its totality of standards, there is very little which is focussed on, or particularly salient to, social work education.

TCSW has attempted to remedy this shortfall in standards setting by following the SWRB's recommendations concerning professional standards, in adopting the SWRB's Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) which has the laudable aims of setting out an expectation of what a social worker needs to demonstrate throughout their career and at particular points in that career, through proposing a national framework which intends to set out social workers' professional development

and link it to career structure. Its formal manifestation, the Professional Capabilities Framework, mirrors the structure of some of the clinical professions in having domains (nine in the case of the PCF) rather than the competencies base which is also exemplified in some clinical professions, particularly for CPD. The complexity of the current situation is further compounded by the need to adhere to the standards set by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education which sets its own benchmark statements about social work (QAA 2008) which seem to lack direct applicability to situations of complex conflict of interest which is very much an area in which social workers operate.

It is clear that the confusion about this plethora of standards, guidance and requirements causes concern to employers and academics, and raises profound doubts about whether it provides a clear guide to what a newly qualified social worker needs to know, understand and be able to do. In recent years, the authors of various reports on social work have all raised concerns and drawn attention to the shortcomings in this area.

It might be argued that a plethora of standards ensures that all bases are covered, albeit with some overlap, but this is not the case. Despite the multitude of standards, over a hundred in number, there are significant gaps in the topics covered by the standards. The international community in its deliberations about what social workers should know, understand and be able to apply have published standards of

professional qualification to which social work education should subscribe, as indeed do the three devolved nations in the UK, and these form sensible measures which can inform what is needed in England.

Whilst the various sets of standards have been mapped to one-another, this is a substitute for the setting of a single set of standards whereby regulation can take place professionally, and in which standards can be updated as practice patterns and methodologies change. Indeed there is general agreement amongst employers and HEIs that a single set of standards, rather than the current dual system of HCPC qualifying standards and TCSW endorsement criteria would be strongly preferable to the present duality. Whilst it might be claimed that the curriculum mapping system already does this, the suggested amalgamation of set standards and endorsement criteria and the resultant coherence and focus would allow the baseline quality thresholds to be raised, which is the direction of travel most stakeholder groups wish to see.

A single, overall approval process including extensive desk analysis of information, followed by written questions arising from that analysis, followed by visits in which triangulation of evidence should be sought would also be welcomed, which should include a very much more rigorous assessment process overall and particularly with practice placements. In the move towards a more effective regulatory system, means should be sought to try to ensure that as many HEI providers as possible apply for TCSW endorsement. The problem in taking this further and making it mandatory at present is one of practicality and enforceability, and it also may deflect attention from the need to have a single coherent regime of regulation as recommended earlier.

Again, this point about triangulation really matters, for it strengthens the validation of the information through cross verification from different sources, and is the appropriate discipline upon which any qualitative analysis, such as is the methodology employed in visits, depends for its credibility. Using it, educational visitors conducting the inspection process can overcome the weakness, intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single-method, single-observer and single-theory approaches. It examines any situation from more than one standpoint, and through cross-checking of information and data from multiple sources, allows the investigator to discover otherwise hidden patterns and thereby validate findings.

There is little support for TCSW taking on a regulatory role itself, as this is seen as a direct and undesirable conflict with its role in articulating the interests of the social work profession. The preferred way forward would be to see the basic standards of the HCPC enhanced by the standards of the endorsement given by TCSW, and then the former regulating the profession to these enhanced standards. Were the HCPC not prepared to do this, then an alternative way forward would have to be found because what matters most is that we ensure good quality, effective and efficient regulation of social work education.

Conclusion 54: That a direction of travel towards the integration of the standards and the regulatory regimes of the HCPC and TCSW be agreed and a scoping exercise undertaken to establish how this might best be achieved. Should it not be possible then another way in which such harmonisation can be reached should be found. In either case the overall objective is to create a more effective way of regulating social work education, and one with a more rigorous level of scrutiny.

Conclusion 55: That in the compilation of evidence in the regulation and the endorsement of social work education, great attention is paid to ensure that triangulation of findings is sought wherever possible before conclusions are drawn.

CHAPTER 13 | CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING THE ASYE

The issue was raised in the Social Work Reform Board as to whether this first year of practice should be akin to that of the probation year in teaching, which must be formally passed before a licence to practise is awarded. It has strong attractions, as with the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme, in that it assesses capability in an entirely real social work environment and under the conditions of practice. However, it has not been pursued due to the decision to make it subject to the regulator's current process with its other professions, and that according to the Professional Standards Section in DH it would require primary legislation to evoke a formal probation period following graduation before a licence to practise was awarded. However, I believe that the best solution for the profession is to move to such a licence to practise, and this should be pursued, so that any changes made concerning the ASYE should be in line with possible requirements of a future probationary structure thereby keeping open the option.

In its present form the ASYE is a process valued by newly qualified social workers and their employers, and I would support making its assessment more rigorous and it becoming a generally recognised quality assurance endorsement by and for employers in making their recruitment and retention decisions. At present, a majority of newly qualified social workers enter their first employment in a post supported by the current (ASYE) programme, which offers support and supervision for a period of 1 year. Such an initial entry route to

practice is not currently mandatory. The ASYE is subject to progressive assessment in a formative process holistic in nature and based on the PCF, and then subject to a final overall summative assessment to decide on the pass/fail. It is sometimes loosely described as a "probationary year in practice", but this is incorrect as it does not offer the already-qualified former student the right to any additional enabling activity, nor does it form what might otherwise be a requirement for professional practice.

Amongst almost all HEIs and a majority of employers, but not all, there is strong support for their newly qualified students taking up professional practice in a supported environment, and the ASYE is seen as offering this, albeit not as fully developed as they would wish. I firmly believe the ASYE should be continued, and there are enhancements which would be beneficial. HEIs expressed reservations about the variety in the type and level of support given to NQSWs as reported to them through their previous cohorts of graduates, and suggested that the requirements asked of employers engaged in the ASYE programme should be more explicit, and should be subject to a much more rigorous and auditable process than is presently the case.

It is noted that many employers are moving towards making success at the end of the ASYE year in practice a requirement for continuing in post, and changing their HR practices accordingly in order to align this change with the strictures of employment law requirements.

ASYE programmes have a lower take up in the voluntary and private sectors and amongst smaller organisations that often lack the infrastructure to run an ASYE programme, although examination of the current registrations indicate that take-up is increasing. It is generally agreed that there should be a compliance mechanism within the ASYE, the question is the form it should take and which organisation should undertake to assess that compliance, for example CQC, OFSTED, HCPC etc.? It must be recognised that the assessment of the NQSW after a year in practice already forms an additional layer of assessment, and were that assessment to become compulsory then it would imply that extra layer of assessment becoming an extra layer of regulation. It is noted that Northern Ireland has a compliance mechanism in its ASYE scheme, and each of the devolved nations offer a continuum of training under a single regulator.

There is an issue about whether, if it were to be expanded and made mandatory, the management of standards should remain with employers or move from employers to those qualified to accredit learning such as HEIs. However, as employers become more involved in assessment of ongoing CPD against the PCF, it may be possible to stay with employer-led assessment, but this would need to be formally consulted upon in moving forward.

Currently the situation is a complex one. On graduation, social work students are entitled to register with the HCPC thereby achieving

formal professional status and reserved title as a social worker. If they then choose to work as a social worker, they may or may not receive support in their NQSW role, and may or may not be in a post which is part of an ASYE programme, although currently most will be in such a programme. Most academics feel that it is not beneficial to the NQSW to go from the student role straight into practice without appropriate support and supervision. This, they feel, would be detrimental to the new entrant, and also puts an unrealistic and inappropriate burden on to social work qualifying education to create fully ready-for-practice NQSWs. This is an unrealistic demand at variance with all comparable professions, where immediate post qualification work places the emergent practitioner in a supported environment in which their personal professional education and training continues as the first stage of continuing professional development (CPD). Without such support and when faced with an unrealistic workload for which they are unsupported, as well as the personal cost to the wellbeing of the NQSW, it is quite likely that the quality of their practice will suffer to the detriment of the service user.

There is widespread support for moving towards making a successful first year in practice mandatory to attain a licence to practise, for reasons including the protection of the public. Any such move has considerable legislative implications which cannot be ignored, but it is a very important strategic issue in determining the future architecture of the profession.

SECTION
13.1

SOCIAL WORK MANAGERS

Social work managers have a crucial role to play in regard to the quality of the supervision available to NQSWs, and also have their own professional development needs. In multi-professional services it is often the case that social workers are managed by members of another profession, or indeed that social workers who are managers are responsible for members of other professions. This adds further to the professional development needs of these key individuals, as well as the requirements often also added by their employers in relation to ‘managerial skills’ and the performance requirements set generically by those organisations. Many employers had concerns about the detachment of some of their managers from professional involvement in social work due to the other management requirements of their job roles. First line managers

in particular are critical to the on-going supervision, assessment of capability and identification of the CPD needs of social workers as well as in many cases being responsible for the supervision and assessment of NQSWs. The needs of this group were clearly identified within the Social Work Task Force report (SWTF 2009) and that assessment remains valid. A programme of specific work in this area was commissioned by DH through Skills for Care working in partnership with the National Skills Academy for Social Care and in its early stages also the CWDC. More recently, partnership with TCSW has ensured that the development of this work has been in alignment with the PCF. The resources created by this are now held within a ‘social work leadership toolkit’ (SfC, 2012).

SECTION
13.2

REGISTRATION AND RE-REGISTRATION.

Initial registration with the HCPC follows the completion of an approved UK qualifying programme – the exceptions being those returning to practice or, registration with a qualification from outside the UK. HCPC have a standard procedure for both registration and re-registration applicable to all the professions they regulate.

To register initially, the HCPC require information or simply declarations on the following four attributes:

1. Character - This is to make sure that applicants will be able to practise

safely and effectively within their profession

2. Health - a declaration to confirm that they do not have a health condition that would affect their ability to practise their profession.
3. Standards of conduct, performance and ethics - the ethical framework within which HCPC registrants work.
4. Standards of Proficiency - professional standards which every registrant must meet in order to become registered, and must continue to meet in order to

maintain their registration.

Re-registration is subsequently required every 2 years. This is based on a self-declaration by the registrant confirming that the registrant has:

1. continued to practise in the profession since the last registration; or
2. not practised the profession since last registration but have met the HCPC's return-to-practice requirements.

At re-registration registrants are also asked to confirm that:

1. they continue to meet the HCPC's standards of proficiency for the safe and effective practice of the profession;
2. there have been no changes in health or relating to good character which have not been advised to the HCPC and which would affect the registrant's ability for safe and effective practice of the profession; and
3. they continue to meet the HCPC's standards for continuing professional development.

Two and a half per cent of registrants' CPD records are sampled at each re-registration. The standards for the CPD requirement are:

1. maintain a continuous, up-to-date and accurate record of their CPD activities;
2. demonstrate that their CPD activities are a mixture of learning activities relevant to current or future practice;
3. seek to ensure that their CPD has contributed to the quality of their practice and service delivery;
4. seek to ensure that their CPD benefits the service user;
5. upon request, present a written profile (which must be their own work and supported by evidence) explaining how they have met the standards for CPD.

These then are the current registration and re-registration processes of the regulator, the HCPC.

The generally held view amongst employers and social work practitioners was that neither the registration nor the re-registration procedures are stringent. Both are the methodology of the HCPC which they apply to the professions they regulate. The issue is that if the social work profession is truly to seek for excellence in practice, then it needs to have a methodology whereby the professionalism of those in practice is quality assured to both protect the public but also to assure all stakeholders of that continuing quality of practice

SECTION 13.3 RE-VALIDATION

Revalidation is a process by which a regulated professional periodically has to demonstrate that he or she remains fit to practise. The HCPC

already has systems in place to ensure the continuing fitness to practise of registrants through its registration renewals process, continuing professional development

standards and fitness-to-practice processes. The HCPC is currently undertaking general work across other professions to address the question I have raised which is whether additional measures are needed to ensure the continuing fitness to practice of registrants. But irrespective of their conclusions for other professions, it is with the profession of social work that we are concerned. The extensive programme of work being undertaken by the HCPC with funding from the Department of Health is detailed in APPENDIX 4. However, having sought opinion and evidence on this matter of revalidation, I have concluded that a much more stringent regulatory regime including formal revalidation would greatly benefit the profession, and should be pursued.

Conclusion 56: That whilst moving in the direction of making the first year in practice being subject to independent scrutiny and formal assessment as a requirement for a licence to practise as a social worker, it is appreciated that this is a major step which will require careful planning and considerable financial and personnel resources, and primary legislation. Such a programme of work will take time to set up, however it is the ideal direction in which the profession should travel, and therefore work should be begun to scope it. Meanwhile, any changes in the regulatory and endorsement processes should be undertaken in a way that is consistent with such a direction of travel.

Conclusion 57: That whilst the licence to practise is being pursued, the current ASYE programme should be extended in scope to become normal practice for all NQSWs entering practice. The requirements asked of employers engaged in the ASYE programme should be more explicit, and should be subject to a much more exacting and auditable process than is presently the case. This will require additional financial resources to support some employers whose investment in providing this for a very few NQSWs might otherwise be prohibitive. Its assessment methodology should be strengthened and made more open to independent validation.

Conclusion 58: Once the recommended licence to practise has been introduced, then there should be a process of revalidation by which licensed social workers are required to demonstrate that they are fit to practise. Revalidation aims to give confidence to service users that their social worker is being regularly checked by their employer or manager, and by the professional organisation responsible for awarding the license.

Conclusion 59: Licensed social workers should have to revalidate at least every five years, by having comprehensive formal appraisals that are based on the social worker as a practitioner, the social worker as a professional, and the social worker as a social scientist, and the PCF as the core guidance for social workers

The regulatory system for social work education and individual accreditation or licensing of social workers varies greatly across the world, and the variability has increased. This was recognised, and the Bologna Accord (EU 1999) sought to harmonise some of the educational practice. It is clear from the responses that I have received from many of the world's leading social work researchers that social work education and social work research in the UK are seen as of good quality, but no longer necessarily quite world leading. This is evidenced in the respect accorded for the initial creation of the academic canon and for the body of research into social work education and social work practice in the UK, and in the election of UK academics to international opinion-forming and leadership positions in the European and International Associations of Schools of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Workers. Their influence was particularly pronounced in the Commonwealth countries which frequently adopted a form of social service delivery and social work education derived from an understanding of the UK model. This early and continuing relationship contributed to the global reputation for leadership in social work education which has been accorded to the UK, where our research is particularly strong in making links between practice and theory, whereas surprisingly some countries seem to maintain a firm distinction between academic learning and practice leadership.

Whilst most, but not all, countries include practice learning in their curriculum of

qualifying education, this is usually shorter in duration than that in the UK and is not always formally accredited with the same equivalence as learning in an academic setting that is accorded to it in the UK. Indeed in some countries it is possible to get the academic social work qualification without the necessity to demonstrate practice competence. In the UK the profession has a track record of establishing and maintaining partnerships between employers and HEIs, indeed it could well be argued that we are leaders both in developing these partnerships and giving focussed attention to practice competence as a core outcome of professional education.

Yet until the decision in 2003 to raise the academic standard of the social work qualification to degree status, the UK had lower minimum academic levels for newly qualified social workers than most other developed countries, reflected in the qualifications of some UK social workers not being recognised in some countries which required undergraduate or postgraduate level qualifications. The majority of currently practicing social workers have qualified before the new degree was established and it will take some years for the prevalence of the degree-based qualification to work through the profession. It is encouraging to see the current government policy moving to secure the degree underpinning for qualification, and indeed moving to open up additional routes at postgraduate level, a far cry from the infamous call by a former Secretary of State for Health following the Staffordshire Pindown inquiry (Levy

& Kahan 1991) for a force of “streetwise grannies” to undertake social work. I think this approach comes from the English emphasis on pragmatic and practical responses to problems and suspicion of structured, academic or over-intellectualised analysis, especially when this relates to emotional and personal problems and child care. This is also mirrored occasionally but not often in a somewhat anti-intellectual tradition within social work management, exemplified in some of the initial opposition to making it a graduate and postgraduate profession: a largely defunct aberration overtaken by a widely-held determination to raise educational achievement across the economy.

In political and media discourse this suspicion of the social work profession adopting an analytical approach rather than a “common sense approach” has served to minimise understanding and appreciation of the complexity of the problems tackled by social workers, and given the impression that there are quick and obvious answers to complex social problems. This is not a view prevalent in other countries. The issue with summarily dismissing complexity by attributing a higher level judgement to common sense was elegantly expressed by Descartes in the opening line of his *Discourse on the Method*, where he stated that whilst “*everyone has a similar and sufficient amount of common sense, (the problem is that) it does not get used properly*” (Bennett 2007), in other words common sense should not be overly relied upon, particularly as a surrogate for evidence derived from factual analysis.

In the UK, education in clinical subjects that involve a significant practical element and one-to-one supervision of practice competence, such as nursing and therapies, receive a higher level of funding in order to reflect the additional resources required.

Social work in the UK is not seen in quite the same light.

In comparison to other countries, the predominant discourse in the UK media about social workers majors on repeated references to service failures and crises in the profession and on searching out individuals associated with any failure in order to subject them to blame, rather than on the wish to suspend judgement in favour of delivering or receiving a more informed view. This type of facile scapegoating and criticism is not proportionate, it lacks an evidence base and is undermining to social work professionals, their employers and most of all to those receiving social work services. As mentioned elsewhere in the Review, this is something which those in leadership positions in the profession must endeavour to address and reverse, or make way for those who can do so.

Social work education in the UK has been and continues to be very innovative by international standards of comparison. Distance learning in social work was pioneered in the UK through the Open University, a delivery methodology since adopted by some universities in the US and elsewhere. Some UK universities offer doctorates in social work by research and also professional doctorates, again a feature underpinned by the subject’s good academic standing, and aligning it with comparable clinical educational practice.

Many countries look to the UK for high standards in a number of areas of social work education, notably the involvement of service users and carers (also becoming more common in Scandinavian countries) and inter-professional working and learning, and for the emphasis we have put on addressing diversity and anti-oppressive practice. We are also often admired for having strong procedures

on 'suitability/fitness to practise' during qualifying training. On the other hand in some countries there is a stronger emphasis put on substantive intervention methods (sometimes called 'clinical skills'). In many countries this includes much more emphasis on community development, which recently has received more attention in England particularly in relation to adults' services. In some countries there is also a much stronger emphasis on the policy context and preparing students for working with 'policy practice', for example in the USA, and indeed it is difficult to understand why one would wish to educate social workers without contextualising the learning in an understanding of and appreciation of the impact of policy. These are all areas that could be taken up and extended in order to enhance the quality of social work education in England.

In many countries there is some form of influence of government on social work education, but in most countries this is not as extensive as it is in England. Again using the USA as an example, there the standards for qualifying social work education are set by the academic community and there is effective self-regulation.

A number of HEIs already provide practice placements in countries outside the UK, the purpose of which is clearly not one of trying to provide a replica of likely practice situations on qualification, but rather to create for students a richness in their learning experience through observing a wide range of practice approaches. Across the world a recognisable trans-national approach to social work is emerging and receiving support. This has as an underpinning belief that through understanding how social work has been most effectively applied in terms of measured outcomes, this thereby provides a valuable source of evidence which

selectively and with due attention to cultural factors can be adopted or adapted for use in other countries. One strand of this approach to social work is that of social work education. For example, such an approach has been used to support and add momentum to the general international direction of travel in social work education towards longer periods for initial qualification in order to cover the increasing breadth of involvement required as society changes and complexity increases, and in the move to a higher proportion of qualifying education being at postgraduate level.

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) approved Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession (IASSW/IFSW 2004), which set out the constituent elements of qualification training, both in terms of curriculum and institutional arrangements. The standards have proved useful and resilient and are to be reviewed later this year (2014).

As is mentioned earlier in regard to other evidence received, there is a clear consensus in the views received from international sources that social workers require intellectual and emotional intelligence as well as self-awareness, self-confidence and self-reflection. But even with such capabilities, it is internationally, indeed almost universally recognised that a newly-qualified social worker needs support and supervision on entering practice. Qualification as a social worker is the start, and only the start, of a professional career.

In analysing the evidence of the many academics who submitted evidence to me for the Review, they drew strong parallels with related clinical professions in the approach taken towards standards,

funding and contractual arrangements. They also generally advocated the benefits of designing social work education in alignment with the Bologna Accord (EU 1999) which harmonised qualifications across Europe, and which the fast-track programmes may well not satisfy. Their reasoning for this is that there is nothing about the situation in which social work is necessary in England that differs from that of other countries to such a degree that we need to be fundamentally different.

I received informative comment from social work academics and practitioners in a number of countries in relation to the new degree implementation which has come about in countries such as Spain as a consequence of the Bologna Accord over the last 10 or more years, looking to update and further enhance social work education with new thinking beyond the dominant paradigms. In particular such research approaches seek to find ways to directly approach emergent problems with which social work is faced, as a result of current contextual factors such as austerity and migration, by adopting a way of tackling social problems in a much more trans-disciplinary way. The field of Disaster Recovery is an example of this. There would be value in adopting such an approach so that the learning experiences in other countries are not ignored in policy-making in England.

Concern was also expressed at any moves which increased the differences in social work education amongst the four home nations, as this would lead to potential employment and labour force flexibility problems in the future. This was not to suggest that the structural situation in other home nations, such as the amalgamation of responsibilities as an independent voice for the profession and the regulatory function should be combined in one organisation, is the right configuration for England. But rather that in making any further changes to social work education in England proper account should be taken of the practice and direction of travel in other countries in which social workers educated in England might practice, particularly in the devolved administrations. As mentioned earlier, a matrix of the variation in requirements for the qualifying social work degree for the four UK countries is shown in APPENDIX 1, and the variation in requirements for post-registration and post-qualifying education and training for the four UK countries is shown in APPENDIX 2.

Conclusion 60: That as social work is an international profession, any moves made to develop or change social work educational practice in England should be required to identify and take account of the differences of such moves in relation to the direction of educational practice internationally, and in particular to that being followed in the devolved nations of the UK.

In a world in which there are stringent limits to the funding available, the challenge is to identify which subjects for financial support are most likely to show the highest value for money for the funds available. My conclusions about the need for, and the efficacy of, support funding has been developed through the text of the Review, and can be summarised as follows:

Strategic Workforce Development planning - employers and HEIs need a much more salient and informative, evidence-based approach to workforce planning so that we can understand what we are trying to achieve in terms of types and numbers of social workers and develop a robust demand model. **Increase recommended.**

Education Support Grant - (to support practice placements through specifically-qualified practice educators and supervisors) offers the greatest opportunity to increase the quality of the educational provision. **Increase recommended.**

ASYE - It is strongly recommended that a Licence to Practise be made mandatory as a condition of practice, as soon as the necessary legislation can be passed. In preparation for this the ASYE should be

made more available and an automatic first role in practice for all NQSWs. It should be recognised as the first step of CPD. **Increase recommended.**

CPD - There is an urgent need to complete a comprehensive new CPD Framework and populate it with material from a variety of sources such as from those HEIs already providing extensive CPD programmes, TCSW, BASW and others. CPD must become a normal part of a social worker's career. It will require a business case for its financial support probably from several sources. **Increase recommended.**

Student Bursaries - Should be specifically targeted to support quality. Postgraduate bursaries should be given priority and supported but made subject to a means test. Due to other, higher priorities, undergraduate bursaries may need to be reduced and if necessary phased out in order to allow the other priorities to be funded. **Decrease recommended.**

The net result of implementing these changes should be to greatly increase the quality of social work education by targeting the funding where it will have the maximum effect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The scope to which these recommendations apply is to the complete spectrum of social work education, from selection of students for qualifying courses and their education in an HEI and in work-based practice placements during the course, leading to their formal qualification and protected title as a social worker. This continues into their education as a newly qualified social worker in the assessed and supported year of employment, and my proposal that we move towards creating a Licence to Practise without which they would not be authorised to work professionally as a social worker.

Throughout their professional career, social workers will be expected to undertake their own continuing professional development for which a comprehensive new national CPD framework must be developed. Practice as a professional social worker will then be subject to the rigorous revalidation of their Licence to Practise every 5 years, taking the place of the current 2-year re-registration process.

Social work education has a responsibility to seek to engage the best students and provide them with the best possible education and for their career as a social work professional: to create great social workers whose capabilities will impact upon the quality of our society.

To do this, I have used as my reference my own 3-fold perspective of the **social worker as a practitioner, the social worker as a professional, and the social worker as a social scientist**.

During the course of the Review and this report which follows from it, there are many instances where current practice is questioned or assessed but where my conclusion is that it should remain in its current form, or suggestions are made which I hope will be followed up and implemented. These have been identified through the textual narrative of the Review as Conclusions, and highlighted appropriately.

However, where there are recommendations for major change, it is these that comprise the formal Recommendations of my Review into social work education.

I have made the following 22 formal recommendations:

Recommendation 1: We are educating and qualifying too many social workers for the social worker roles available. So we need to devise a new strategic workforce planning system which takes account of major strategic drivers in the system of social work, social care and healthcare based on the information from sources such as the National Minimum Data Set-Social Care (NMDS-SC), to determine the future demand for social workers.

Recommendation 2: The selection of students for qualifying courses needs to be more consistent nationally, using methodologies similar to the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) used in selecting entry to Business Schools, which measure attributes such as analytic ability, critical reasoning and quantitative skills.

Recommendation 3: Individual HEI's entry selection processes need to be more rigorous and based on assessing candidates' qualities in relation to a new framework of the social worker as a practitioner, the social worker as a professional, and the social worker as a social scientist, and to the domains in the PCF. Attributes such as values, resilience, dealing with uncertainty and conflict should also be assessed for selection for entry. Validated instruments and assessment centres should be used, and I recommend that JUCSWEC, APSW and TCSW should work in partnership to produce a working methodology to deliver this rigorous selection procedure blueprint.

Recommendation 4: Excellent social work demands high quality social workers, so entry standards to the profession should be raised significantly. Minimum entry level at undergraduate level should be 300 UCAS points and at Masters level at least a 2:1 should be mandatory.

Recommendation 5: Student numbers should be rebalanced towards postgraduate entry, in line with the evidence from international comparisons as well as in recognition of the challenging nature of both qualification and practice.

Recommendation 6: The greatest opportunity to improve the quality of qualifying education lies in having a sufficient number of practice placements of the highest quality and the educational supervision necessary to ensure their potential is delivered. Practice placements settings should be with a wide range of user groups including where there are integrated care pathways that draw on wider community services and resources.

Recommendation 7: Stakeholders such as employers providing placements, service-users and carers, practice educators and representatives of newly-emerging organisations key to the future landscape to which social workers will contribute, such as Clinical Commissioning Groups and Health and Wellbeing Boards, should be encouraged to play a greater part in the selection of students and the design and delivery of education, and I recommend an increase in funding to HEIs to achieve this engagement.

Recommendation 8: Social work qualifying education and CPD should equip social workers to play a much greater role in major transformational developments such as the closer integration of healthcare and social care, so knowledge about the capabilities and perspectives of other, related professions should be introduced into both curricula as a clear signal of this direction of travel of the profession in utilising the skills of other professions in social work and contributing social work skills to working in inter-professional partnerships.

Recommendation 9: All educational routes to qualification must demonstrate authentic pedagogical evidence that they will provide an in-depth knowledge of the fundamental conceptual frameworks for social work, to ensure that they equip students with the basis for a career in social work with all service user groups and in whatever settings they choose to work.

Recommendation 10: All qualifying education should equip newly qualified social workers with the capability to engage in research throughout their career, inculcating an understanding that the ability to carry out research is an essential component in their future professional capability in practice.

Recommendation 11: The current Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) should be strengthened, and all practice educators and practice supervisors should have formal qualifications as educators, and in the case of practice educators as formal assessors: the formal training for which should be sited in the proposed new comprehensive continuing professional development (CPD) framework.

Recommendation 12: That the regulation of social work education is made more coherent, seamless and rigorous in terms both of standards and processes by bringing together the standards of the HCPC and the endorsement criteria of TCSW into a new, single regulatory regime in which both the rigour of the regulatory process and the stringency of the levels assessed in regulation must be substantially strengthened. HCPC should continue to regulate social work education to these new standards.

Recommendation 13: Encouragement should be given to provide innovative routes to social work qualification, such as the fast track routes, and high expectations should be set so that they will enhance the overall quality of students at the point of qualification. Any such initiatives should be subject to a rigorous evaluation process in which action standards are set before such alternative routes are given approval and funding. As an underlying principle, social work education requires a thorough understanding of all stages in the life course, so this should be mandatory for all courses without exception. It is imperative that the opportunity that innovative course structures and content can provide are not invalidated by providing, and being seen to provide, a stripped-down form of social work education – a sort of “social work lite”, but seek to achieve higher learning outcomes than other routes. Their focus should be as a quality-enhancer, not a faster-provider.

Recommendation 14: A key condition of the regulation of all courses leading to the professional qualification as a social worker is that all social workers should have the capability to work with all individuals, families, groups and communities and to do so in all settings and situations likely to be encountered, so that generic capability is not sacrificed on the altar of early specialism. There are always beguiling arguments for a move towards pre-qualification specialism, in order more quickly to provide additional practitioner numbers in particular fields, for example currently in mental health and child protection. Great care must be taken to ensure this is not achieved at the expense of sacrificing education for a career in social work for some arguable short term gain in practice readiness. In all comparable professions to social work, the route to high quality professional capability is through a progressive and incremental move from the general to the specialised.

Recommendation 15: The first year of post-qualifying work should form a probationary year, at the end of which a Licence to Practise will be awarded to those who pass as a result of a process of independent scrutiny and formal assessment of their capability to practise in the workplace. Such a licence should be mandatory for a social worker to practise in that role. It is appreciated that this is a major step which will require careful planning and considerable financial and personnel resources, and primary legislation. Work to scope it should begin. Meanwhile, any changes in the regulatory and endorsement processes should be undertaken in a way that is consistent with such a direction of travel.

Recommendation 16: Whilst the profession moves towards embracing a Licence to Practise, the current ASYE programme should be extended in scope to include all NQSWs entering practice. The requirements asked of employers engaged in the ASYE programme should be subject to a much more exacting and auditable process than is presently the case. Its assessment methodology should be strengthened and made more open to independent validation.

Recommendation 17: The overall quality of the educational experience in practice placements must be improved, through the imposition of a much more rigorous audit as a requirement of eligibility for receipt of future ESG payment. Whilst this should use the Quality Assurance in Practice Learning, QAPL, methodology, the QAPL processes should be made more rigorous.

Recommendation 18: The quality assurance processes of the HEIs should be more consistent, and where different sources of information are utilised, a systematic methodology of triangulation of evidence should be pursued in order to have reliable Quality Assurance processes throughout social work education.

Recommendation 19: Priority should be given to increase significantly the ESG funding support to employers to ensure the provision of high quality placements. This funding should include support for the 30 day *Developing Skills for Practice* module; the involvement of service users and carers in all aspects of educational provision; and the training of practice educators and practice supervisors. As a condition of this financial support, inspection of placements must be much more comprehensive and rigorous than at present, including inspection visits to placements, as well as inspection of the quality assurance processes.

Recommendation 20: There is a pressing need for a new comprehensive continuing professional development, CPD, framework for the profession. CPD should be based on the social worker as a practitioner, the social worker as a professional, and the social worker as a social scientist, and related to the domains in the PCF. I recommend that the profession bases its approach on that of the GMC's *Continuing professional development: guidance for all doctors* (GMC 2012) and also utilises some of the high quality social work CPD programme materials of individual HEIs. The development of the profession's CPD programme should involve all the representative organisations of stakeholder groups, including SWEP, JUCSWEC, APSW, SfC, Learn to Care, BASW, ADASS, ADCS and other employers' organisations with the coordination of TCSW. The ASYE should form the initial entry point for the CPD which will be undertaken throughout the career of a social worker in professional practice.

Recommendation 21: Once the recommended Licence to Practise has been introduced, then there should be a process of revalidation by which licensed social workers are required to demonstrate that they are fit to practise. Revalidation aims to give confidence to service users that their social worker is being regularly checked by their employer and the professional organisation responsible for awarding the license. Licensed social workers should have to revalidate at least every five years, by having comprehensive formal appraisals that are based on the social worker as a practitioner, the social worker as a professional, and the social worker as a social scientist, and the PCF as the core guidance for social workers.

Recommendation 22: Investment should be increased in Strategic Workforce Development, the Education Support Grant, the ASYE programme (to prepare for instigating a Licence to Practise), and in Continuing Professional Development. The Student Bursary funding for postgraduates should be maintained but made subject to a means test, and undergraduate bursaries should be reduced in numbers and amount, or gradually phased out.

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Matrix showing the variations of requirements for the qualifying social work degree for the four UK countries

Originally prepared by SWAP (Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work), with assistance from the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC), Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), Care Council for Wales (CCW) and the General Social Care Council (GSCC).

Updated in 2013 by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) with assistance from NISCC, SSSC, CCW, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and the College of Social Work (TCSW).

	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Regulator	From August 2012 the regulator for social work education in England is the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The College of Social Work (TCSW) offers voluntary endorsement of qualifying programmes using social work reform criteria	Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC)	Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)	Care Council for Wales (CCW)
Admissions	<p>HCPC standards of education and training (SETS) require for programme admissions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 information to support informed choice for applicant and education provider 2.2 selection criteria to include reading, writing and spoken English 2.3 criminal conviction checks 2.4 compliance with health requirements 2.5 appropriate academic and professional standards 2.6 APE(L) procedures 2.7 equality and diversity procedures <p>For TCSW endorsement, evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • systems to review fitness of purpose of admissions process 	<p>Entrants must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet higher education institution (HEI) admission requirements for the degree • are suitable to be registered as a student social worker with NISCC • have the potential to meet the required learning outcomes as set out in the Northern Ireland Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work 	<p>Entrants must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet HEI's admission requirements • be registered on the student part of the SSSC register. This process will include an enhanced disclosure check • have language and literacy skills they need to understand and use the written materials that are used to teach the degree 	<p>Entrants must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have potential to reach the required standard of proficiency • have achieved at least key skills (essential skills) level 2 or higher in communication and application of number skills • must demonstrate the values and basic skills expected of social workers • show they can understand

England

- planning with agency partners about workforce needs and placement provision
 - undergraduate level: minimum 240 UCAS points or equivalent
 - Masters level: normally minimum 2.1 classification of first or previous degree
 - all applicants must have minimum GCSE grade C in English and Maths or certificated equivalences
 - all applicants must confirm they have the ability to use basic IT facilities, including word processing, internet browsing and use of email
 - International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) at level 7
 - all candidates to complete a written test
 - individual interview to test communication skills, motivation and commitment, understanding of social work and evaluation of life and work experience
 - strongly recommended that HEIs use observed group activities/exercises
 - involvement of practitioners and people who use services and carers in selection processes
 - compliance with health checks and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks
 - potential qualities, skills, knowledge and values which are measured through entry level of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)
- [http://www.collegeofsocialwork.org/uploadedFiles/TheCollege_CollegeLibrary/Reform_resources/RecommendationsSelectionStudents\(edref2\).pdf](http://www.collegeofsocialwork.org/uploadedFiles/TheCollege_CollegeLibrary/Reform_resources/RecommendationsSelectionStudents(edref2).pdf)

Northern Ireland

- have basic numeracy and literacy skills equivalent to GCSE grade C in Maths and English
- have effective oral and written communication skills
- be interviewed

Scotland

- and communicate clearly and accurately in spoken and written English
- have numeracy skills normally equivalent to Standard Grade 2 in Maths or the ability and opportunity to learn and to demonstrate these skills while studying for the degree
- have the potential and willingness to learn the basic IT technology and communication skills they need to get the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), or its equivalent, by the end of the first year of study

Wales

- and communicate effectively in spoken and written English or Welsh
- have read and understood the code of practice
- be interviewed with the interviewee present
- must be medically fit and suitable for social work
- be registered on the student part of the SSSC register. This process will include an enhanced disclosure check

AP(E)L

Under HCPC SETs, accreditation of prior (experiential) learning AP(E)L is allowable. HEIs make their own arrangements for assessing the appropriateness of allowing students to use AP(E)L. HCPC requires the education provider to give a rationale for AP(E)L decisions, which might, for example, include how standards of proficiency (SOPs) are demonstrated.

Assessment arrangements should include accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL). Students are eligible for APEL at Level 1 (25 days max) and Level 2 (85 days max).

HEIs have their own arrangements in place for

Up to 60 days of the supervised direct practice element can be subject to credit from prior experiential learning

HEIs have their own arrangements in place for accreditation of prior learning (APL) for academic units

AP(E)L permitted for level 1 only (both practice learning and academic credits). APL arrangements must be in accordance with the All-Wales Framework for Assessment.

Curriculum

HCPC requirements of curriculum:

- 4.1 Must enable students to meet HCPC SOPs for Social Workers (SWs)
- 4.2 programme must reflect philosophy, values, skills and knowledge as articulated in relevant guidance (for example, professional body and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA))
- 4.3 theory and practice must be integrated
- 4.4 relevant to current practice
- 4.5 understanding of HCPC codes of conduct, performance and ethics
- 4.6 support autonomous and reflective thinking
- 4.7 encourage evidence-based practice
- 4.8 range of teaching and learning approaches
- 4.9 social work must be addressed in any inter-professional learning

TCSW requires for endorsement:

- use of Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)

<http://www.tcsw.org.uk/professional-capabilities-framework/>

- ensure learning covers all ages and service user groups
- include employers and people who use services in design, delivery, assessment, monitoring and review of the programme
- active learning, critical reflection, transfer of theory, knowledge and skills, current knowledge, values and ethics, evidence informed practice
- engagement in scholarship and research to enhance the student experience

Also:

- QAA benchmark statement for social work (February 2008)

accreditation of prior learning (APL) for academic units.

Northern Ireland Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work (March 2003)

which includes:

- benchmarking statement
- National Occupational Standards (NOS)
- essential knowledge areas specific to NI
- statement of expectations from users and carers
- NISCC codes of practice

- (NB: this framework

specification will be updated to reflect the NOS, November 2011)

Based on *Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE)* which were developed to

incorporate the NOS and benchmark statement for

Social Work

From September 2007

courses must have embedded the *Key Capabilities for Child Care and Protection* at the appropriate SCQF level in all four years of the degree

The Framework for the Degree in Social Work in Wales requires students completing the degree to demonstrate they have:

- met the benchmark statements and the NOS for Social Work
- proceeded through the degree in accordance with the assessment framework
- would be able to integrate Welsh, UK and European legislation, knowledge and research evidence into her/his social work practice
- can integrate the requirements of the Welsh Language Act 1993 and Welsh Language Measure 2011 in her/his practice
- has demonstrated through the degree compliance with the code of practice
- through practice learning opportunities must demonstrate:
 - understanding of the professional safeguarding role
 - the skills to contribute appropriately to safeguarding

Practice learning

- HCPC requirements: placements must be
- 5.1 integral to programme
 - 5.2 appropriate in number, duration and range
 - 5.3 provide a safe and supportive environment
- And there must be
- 5.4 systems for approving and monitoring placements
 - 5.5 equality and diversity policies for placement providers
 - 5.6 adequate numbers of qualified and experienced staff in the placement setting
 - 5.7 practice educators with relevant knowledge, skills and experience, and
 - 5.8 must undertake appropriate training, and
 - 5.9 must be registered with HCPC (unless otherwise agreed)
 - 5.10 regular collaboration between placement and HEI
 - 5.11 full preparation of students, practice educators and providers
- Learning and teaching should
- 5.12 encourage safe and effective professional conduct
 - 5.13 include a range of methods that respect rights of people who use services
- TCSW requires for endorsement:
- 200 days of assessed practice made up of 100 days final placement and 70 days first placement supplemented by 30 days for development of practice skills
 - agreed thresholds for progression using the PCF for the assessment of readiness for direct practice and the end of each placement
 - the first and last placement to meet the relevant guidance
 - practice learning and assessment meets the quality standards of the benchmark statement (Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL)) as a minimum
 - students are assessed for readiness prior to the first

225 days, of which at least 185 must be in direct supervised practice, 25 days in preparation for practice and 15 practice development days.

All students' readiness to undertake direct supervised practice must be assessed. Students expected to gain experience of:

- statutory social work tasks
- at least two different service delivery settings
- work with at least two service user groups
- group care
- working with at least two other professions
- contested nature of social work in a diverse society
- participation in formal decision-making forums
- presenting evidence in courts, tribunals or other formal hearings
- applying community development approaches in social work

Student will be subject to a criminal records check prior to commencing direct supervised practice.

At least 200 days, of which at least 160 days must be spent in supervised direct practice in service delivery settings.

Practice learning must be assessed and allow students to gain experience of:

- statutory social work tasks involving legal interventions
- working in at least two contrasting service delivery settings (for work-based routes, at least one should be out-with their employing agency)
- providing services to at least two user groups providing services in a way that takes account of and values diversity

Students must also undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to ensure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting. This preparation must include the opportunity to develop a greater understanding the experience of service users and the role of social workers.

Local authority host a student for the duration of their learning and agree to organise (but not necessarily provide) all Practice Learning Opportunities (PLO). PLO funding is therefore paid to the local authority.

At least 200 days.

Level 1: 20 days to assess the student's suitability and safeness to proceed to the next level of the degree. This judgement to be based upon evidence of:

- demonstrating the interpersonal skills required to be suitable and safe to work with service users and carers

• acquisition of understanding directly from service users and carers of the impact of Social Work practice

At level 2 and 3 each PLO:

- direct observation must be assessed on four occasions at level 2 and five occasions at level 3. All direct observations must be undertaken by a registered social worker
- at least one must be in a Local Authority (LA) dept providing social services
- must be in contrasting settings
- experience is gained of

placement, involving employers and people who use services.

[http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege_Co_legalLibrary/Reform_resources/Practice-Learning\(edref7\).pdf](http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege_Co_legalLibrary/Reform_resources/Practice-Learning(edref7).pdf)

working with other professions in the delivery of social work

- for employment based students at least one PLO at Level 2/3 should be out- with the employing agency

Assessment

HCPC has 11 requirements for assessment including:

- graduates must be assessed to meet standards of proficiency (SOPs) for registration and ensure fitness for practice
- assessment must be rigorous and assess learning outcomes
- award titles should identify which graduates are eligible for registration and which are not (TCSW requires this aspect for endorsement):
- students on placement are supported and assessed by people who meet practice educator professional standards (PEPs)

[http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege_Co_legalLibrary/Reform_resources/Practice-EducatorProfessional\(edref1\).pdf](http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege_Co_legalLibrary/Reform_resources/Practice-EducatorProfessional(edref1).pdf)

- people who use services and carers contribute to assessment of students on placement
- external examiners (EEs) should be encouraged to comment on all areas of the programme relevant to professional development, including the Social Work Reform Board reforms
- provision of 'exit routes' for students unable to meet professional requirements

In addition to the assessments by course providers, students must:

- be registered with NISCC
- meet the learning outcomes specified in the NI Framework Specification
- be assessed for their understanding, analysis and application of the NISCC code of practice
- a minimum of three direct observations of practice at both Level 2 and 3 practice learning
- formal written assessment of understanding and application of legislation. relating to social work in Northern Ireland
- assessed in ability to present evidence in decision-making forums
- user and carer feedback is obtained on agreed aspects of student performance
- show that they are suitable and fit for practice as a social worker

In addition to the assessments devised by the course provider, students must have

gained the ECDL, or its equivalent, by the end of their first year of study. All students must be enabled to meet the SiSWE.

All-Wales Framework for Assessment at each level.

- Also:
- at final assessment, student must have attained required standard of proficiency
 - exam board must include representatives of employers and users of social services
 - provision for students to be assessed in Welsh
 - required practice assessment panel
 - all practice to be assessed by a registered, qualified and experienced social worker who is, or is training to be, a qualified assessor
 - four direct observations of direct work with service users in PLO at Level 2 and five at level 3
 - Information Technology skills as required by benchmark statements

End of course

HCPC needs the education provider to make a judgement about whether an individual is 'fit to

Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to record student's practice

Students' continuing learning requirements to be recorded

Programmes to complete a transcript at the end of

recording

practise'.
learning needs and achievements. Based on this a summary/transcript of learning accompanies student through training into the assessed year in employment and future career.

training to include practice and academic learning profile and future learning needs. Belongs to the student.

External examiners

Appointed by the HEI – HCPC require at least one EE to be appropriately registered (except when other arrangements are agreed.)

Appointed by the HEI – must be able to report on both academic and practice learning components. EE's report sent to NISCC by HEIs. NISCC supplemental guidance on the report content for EEs also included.

Appointed by the HEI, who must ensure that at least one EE holds a recognised SW academic and practice experience is reflected; efforts are made to ensure a mix of gender and ethnicity.

At least two to be appointed by the HEI. The annual EE's report and the programme response are sent to the Care Council for Wales by the HEI.

Regional partnership

HCPC requires sufficient number and range of placements and regular and effective collaboration between education and placement provider

Regional partnership across Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership) to plan and coordinate agreed regional approaches to course provision (e.g. a regional admissions procedure and regional allocation of practice learning opportunities).

No formal arrangements

One All-Wales National Strategic Partnership exists to plan social work training. The group is made up of employers, programmes, Assembly and Care Council.

TCSW requires for endorsement:
Practice placements are managed in line with TCSW guidance on partnerships, which states that partnerships should:

- agree joint aims and outcomes, be clear about the responsibilities and contributions of all those involved
- record agreement in memorandum of co-operation and keep under review
- be strongly led at a strategic level, informed by workforce planning and key policy drivers
- based around flexible and diverse partnerships, ensuring participation of voluntary and independent sector and people who use services and carers

Regional groups exist to coordinate and plan PLO provision.

Postgraduate entry

Postgraduate (PG) programmes have the same outcome requirements as for undergraduate (UG) degree courses, but students will have achieved a postgraduate academic level qualification.

Threshold level for qualifying training in NI is at honours degree level. There is a fast-track two-year route to the

Postgraduate courses are approved against the same criteria as for the undergraduate honours
Courses at PG level (Masters) must meet the same requirements as for the degree.

honours degree for relevant graduates.

degree and students are required to meet the same learning outcomes.

Funding

Bursaries paid by Department of Health, through NHS Business Service Authority

A SW Bursary is a non-repayable grant that is not dependent on household income for eligible students.

Arrangements for students who entered programmes prior to 2013 are at <https://www.gov.uk/social-work-bursaries/what-youll-get>

Currently students receive a bursary for each year of their programme, whether BA or Masters level.

Revised arrangements for the 2013 entry include significant changes. Undergraduate students will only receive a bursary for their second and third years of study (when they have their long practice placements) and there is a cap on numbers, set centrally by the Department of Health (DH). Each programme has been set a capped number of bursaries, and will set out procedures for decisions re prioritisation of these to applicants. Details are at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reforming-social-work-bursary-information-packs>

Postgraduate students from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will not qualify for a bursary if moving to England to study on a postgraduate course

Registration of students with the regulator

No registration by the HCPC for students. However there is a new suitability scheme for student social workers. Details at: <http://www.hpc-uk.org/education/studentsuitability/>

Upon qualification social workers must register with the HCPC to practice in England

Student bursaries available from the DHSSPS for social work students domiciled and studying for the Degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland. Students can also apply for fee and maintenance loans.

Undergraduate students may apply to the Student Awards Agency for Scotland for a student grant. Postgraduate students may be nominated by the course on which they have been accepted for a postgraduate bursary awarded by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

Student bursaries and payment of fees for students resident in Wales (not those on employment based routes, sponsored by employers)

Funding of Practice Learning is made by Care Council to employers who host students for the duration of their learning.

Grants to promote service users and carers involvement are made to programmes based on the size of the programme and evidence of specific standards being met.

Students must register with the NISCC prior to the commencement of course.

Students must register with the SSSC prior to the commencement of the course. They must continue to be registered in order to remain on the course.

Registration with the Care Council is mandatory for all Social Work students from the start of their training.

User

Following consultation, HCPC has proposed a new

Service users and carers must

Service users and carers must

Service users and carers to be

involvement

SET from 2014 (subject to approval by council in 2013) requiring the involvement of service users and carers in programmes. The SET will be non-prescriptive with regard to types of involvement.

<http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/1000402Benc05-serviceuserandcarerinvolvementineducation.pdf>

TCSW requires for endorsement the involvement of people who use services and carers in all aspects including recruitment and selection, design, delivery, assessment, monitoring and review

be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of course provision, including the selection process.

be involved in all aspects of planning, implementation and monitoring of the new degree. They must also be involved in the selection process.

involved in all aspects of planning, implementing and monitoring of the degree, including selection processes.

Websites

HCPC

<http://www.hcpc-uk.org>

See especially

<http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003B08Standardsofproficiency-SocialworkersinEngland.pdf>

[http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10002C0EHPCStandardsofeducation\(A5\)\(final\).pdf](http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10002C0EHPCStandardsofeducation(A5)(final).pdf)

TCSW

<http://www.collegeofsocialwork.org/>

See especially

<http://www.tcsw.org.uk/professional-development/educators/>

<http://www.tcsw.org.uk/professional-development/endorsement/#qual>

Former GSCC approved programmes have transitional approval while HCPC rolls out an approval visit programme over three academic years (from February 2013.) Successful HCPC approval will be open-ended, subject to annual monitoring through declaration or audit on alternating basis (see <http://www.hpc-uk.org>)

NI Govt

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss/swtr

NI SCC

www.niscc.info/

SSSC

<http://www.sssc.uk.com>

http://www.sssc.uk.com/SSSC_Web/index.aspx?group=education&itemID=4

Scottish Govt

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/social/ffsw-00.asp>

CCW

<http://www.ccwales.org.uk>

Other comments

First intake to the degree occurred in 2004, target number of 300 - now reduced to 260 places regionally. Graduates of the Degree in Social Work are required to complete an Assessed Year in

Scottish Degree is a four-year undergraduate Honours degree course, or equivalent postgraduate degree course.

Specific requirements relating to bilingual provision within the new degree. Eight programmes have been approved by the Care Council to operate in Wales.

uk.org/Assets/documents/1000310CHPCAAnnualmonitoring-supplementaryinformationforeducationproviders.pdf).

Education programmes for qualifying training at UG and PG levels must be approved.

The College of Social Work (TCSW) holds the professional standards, the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and some of the Social Work Reform Board recommendations. Endorsement by TCSW is a voluntary arrangement for HEIs and started in February 2013. It covers a period of five years and annual monitoring takes place through external examiner reports.

Joint approval visits can be arranged with HCPC and TCSW. NMC must also be involved in joint nursing degrees

A non-mandatory assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) is available for newly qualified social workers (NQSWs)

Equivalence

A memorandum of understanding sets out a framework for the working relationship between the Care Council for Wales (the Care Council), the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) (collectively the Four Councils) in relation to the regulation of social workers and the approval of social work education across the UK. The Four Councils recognise:-

- that an honours degree in social work or its equivalent is the contemporary level of threshold qualification required for entry to a register across the UK for social workers qualified in the UK;
 - social work training programmes which are approved by each of the other councils in its respective country.
- This recognition allows social workers who have trained in any country in the UK to seek reciprocal entry to a register in a different UK country to that in which they received their training.

<http://www.hpc-uk.org/Assets/documents/10003BCDSocial-work-Memorandum-of-Understanding.pdf>
For further information go to <http://www.hpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/regulators/socialwork/>

Programmes must be provided through a partnership of local authority partner and HEI.



Matrix showing the variations of requirements for the post-qualifying (PQ) and post-registration education and training in social work for the four UK countries

Originally prepared by SWAP (Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work), with assistance from the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC), the Northern Ireland Social Services Council (SSSC), Care Council for Wales (CCW) and the General Social Care Council (GSCC).

Updated in 2013 by the HEA in 2013 with assistance from NISCC, SSSC, CCW, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and the College of Social Work (TCSW).

	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Equivalence of initial qualification and eligibility for the respective registers of social workers	<p>A memorandum of understanding sets out a framework for the working relationship between the Care Council for Wales (CCW), the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) (collectively the Four Councils) in relation to the regulation of social workers and the approval of social work education across the UK. The Four Councils recognise:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> that an honours degree in social work or its equivalent is the contemporary level of threshold qualification required for entry to a Register across the UK for social workers qualified in the UK; and social work training programmes which are approved by each of the other Councils in its respective country. <p>This recognition allows social workers who have trained in any country in the UK to seek reciprocal entry to a Register in a different UK country to that in which they received their training.</p> <p>http://www.hpc-uk.org/Assets/documents/10003BCDSocial-work-Memorandum-of-Understanding.pdf For further information go to http://www.hpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/regulators/socialwork/</p>	<p>Health and Personal Social Services (NI) Act 2001</p> <p>Rules: <i>Rules for the Approval of Post Qualifying Education and Training in Social Work in NI 2012</i> (in final draft)</p> <p>Standards/Guidance:</p>	<p>Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001</p> <p>Rules/Guidance: Specific approved course fall under <i>Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service workers in Scotland 2005</i></p>	<p>Care Standards Act 2000</p> <p>Rules: approved by the National Assembly for Wales 2012</p> <p>Programmes forming part of the approved framework of</p>
Governance	<p>Since the General Social Care Council (GSCC) closed on 31 July 2013, post-qualifying social work education and training is no longer regulated.</p> <p>The only variation to this is Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) training</p>			

<p>What is the new</p>	<p>which must be approved by the HCPC as post-registration training. AMHP courses approved under GSCC have been transferred to the HCPC and there will be a rolling programme of HCPC approvals. HCPC have consulted and will publish criteria for approval for AMHP programmes in September 2013. See: http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/1000402Denc07-outcomesoftheconsultationoncriteriaforapprovingAMHPprogrammes.pdf</p> <p>HCPC and TCSW will carry out separate or joint approval/endorsement at the request of the university. AMHP programmes may require Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) approval.</p> <p>Endorsement for any continuing professional development (CPD) course from the College of Social Work (TCSW) can be sought voluntarily by HEIs, other education and training organisations, individual education and training practitioners and for specific programmes. HEIs may apply for endorsement for specific courses or as a CPD training provider. See: http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/CollegeLibrary/Ref orm_resources/BriefingOverarchin gCriteriaEndorsement.pdf</p>	<p>NISCC Arrangements for Candidate Enrolment, Progression and Awards January 2012</p> <p>NISCC Requirements and Guidance for Approval within the NI PQ Framework January 2012</p> <p>NISCC Standards and Guidance for Assessment in the Individual Assessment Route January 2012</p> <p>Quality Assurance Framework for Education and Training Regulated by NISCC – Approval, Monitoring, Re-Approval and Inspection Arrangements for Post Qualifying Education and Training Programmes January 2012</p>	<p>The SSSC has developed rules for specialist training course. Courses approved include: the Practice Learning Qualification (Social Services) and the MHOA (Mental Health Officer Award)</p>	<p>Continuing Professional Education and Learning or the wider approved post-qualification (PQ) framework must meet the requirements contained in the rules.</p> <p>The rules contain general requirements but also make provision for specific programme where the CCW wishes to be more prescriptive about level, volume, learning outcomes or assessment methods. 'specified named course requirements' can be set. These include the programmes forming part of the Continuing Professional Education and Learning framework and the Approved Mental Health Professional Programme.</p>
<p>What is the new</p>	<p>None apart from AMHP regulated</p>	<p>Northern Ireland Post Qualifying</p>	<p>SSSC launched the Continuous</p>	<p>The PQ rules provide a</p>

provision for PQ social work training?

by HCPC.
Former post-qualification (PQ) courses may continue unregulated as part of general CPD provision (subject to internal and periodic reviews and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) oversight).
The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) provides a CPD structure for social workers, and education and training provision may be linked to relevant levels in this. See: <http://www.tcsw.org.uk/professionals-capabilities-framework/>

Education and Training Framework in Social Work (2006)
The NI PQ Framework was reviewed in 2012: *Review of NI Post Qualifying Education and Training Framework June 2012*. It made a number of recommendations for further development of the framework.
Programme of reform of the NI PQ Framework 2013-14 is being implemented that will see closer links between CPD and PQ recognition.

Learning Framework (CLF) in December 2008. This model is a continuum of professional development for the entire social services workforce, including formal and informal post-qualifying learning.

general framework for approval of courses designed for qualified social workers.
The Continuing Professional Education and Learning framework supports the national career pathway for social workers in Wales and defines courses for:

- newly qualified social workers
- experienced practitioners
- senior social work practitioners
- consultant social work practitioners

Links to post-registration training and learning? (PRTL)

At the point of renewing registration with HCPC, individual Social Work registrants are required to produce evidence of continuous professional development. See: <http://www.hpc-uk.org/registrants/cpd/>
Learning gained through HEI awards provides positive evidence of CPD but is not a specific requirement for re-registration.

All achievement within the NI PQ Framework is considered relevant to PRTL. Those who have achieved two or more PQ requirements within the three-year cycle will automatically be exempt from PRTL audit.
NISCC registration rules 2011 require:
Social workers in the first three-year period post AYE to complete minimum of two requirements of the NI Specific Award within the registration period.
The rules further require:

- newly appointed first line managers to undertake training in professional

All post-qualification learning and development is relevant to PRTL. Registered social workers are required to complete a minimum of 15 days over the three-year registration period, of which five days must focus on working effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk to vulnerable people.
All newly qualified social workers must complete a minimum of 24 days or 144 hours of PRTL within the first 12 months from date of registration of which five days must focus on working effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk

All social workers are required to demonstrate 15 days or 90 hours of PRTL. Guidance on this is available from the CCW website. PQ provides one way of demonstrating this, but it is not a requirement at present.
Consideration is being given to linking components of Continuing Professional Education and Learning to social worker re-registration.

TCSW provides for its members an electronic portfolio in the required HCPC format.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supervision and appraisal managers to undertake training that includes professional leadership and management <p>The NISCC database system will be able to report on achievement against these requirements.</p> <p>The PSS Development and Training Strategy 2006-16 (Annex 1) has also set the following targets that supports and enhances the NISCC PRTL requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all newly qualified social workers post AYE will have achieved the NI Specific Award all senior practitioners will have minimum of a third of NI Specialist Award all principal practitioners will have NI Specialist or Strategic Leadership Award 	<p>to vulnerable people. A further ten days of PRTL must be completed during the remainder of the three-year registration period.</p>	
<p>How will training be commissioned?</p>	<p>On an individual, local authority or sub-regional basis. Individual social workers may also choose to pay for their own training and education course to gain further awards for career progression.</p>	<p>PSS training is commissioned by Health and Social Care Board. Commissioner sits on NISCC's PQ Partnership (employers and providers) to oversee the implementation of the NI PQ Framework and agree gaps and priorities for development within the framework.</p> <p>All commissioned professional training can be recognised within the NI PQ Framework.</p> <p>Registrations stopped on 31 March</p>	<p>Any future training will be placed within the rules and requirements. Any commissioning process would be agreed in consultation with the Scottish Government.</p> <p>The Sector Skills Agreement and the process re skills gaps should enhance the potential for employers to commission what they feel are the gaps out-with those courses that the SSSC might approve.</p> <p>March 2008</p>	<p>Many PQ programmes can be commissioned by employers or preferably developed in partnership with a training provider.</p> <p>Aspects of the framework of Continuing Professional Education and Learning are commissioned by the Care Council.</p> <p>Programmes approved</p>
<p>What closing date</p>	<p>Closed</p>			

has been set for closure of existing arrangements?		2007, except for PQI which continued for another year. The final date for awards is 30 September 2010. The UK PQ Framework closed in NI in September 2010. The NI PQ Framework has been operational from April 2006 and will continue as the professional framework for social work.		under the 1997 requirements are now closed. Programmes under the 2007 rules continue to be approved under the 2012 rules.
Will PQ consortia continue to operate after this date?	No	Yes	No	No
What form do the new arrangements take?	As above	NISCC delivers the PQ Framework through a formal partnership with social work commissioner, employers from all sectors and settings, and education providers. The PQ Partnership is a committee of council, chaired by a member of council.	Employer-led continuum of professional development.	The CCW approves programmes under the general rules and any specified named course requirements that may apply.
What academic level has been set?	No mandatory level apart from AMHP which must be at PG Dip level or above.	The entire Framework is at M level. There are opportunities for both academic and professional awards.	Specialist training will be available from SCQF 7 – SCQF 11 (M Level). PLQ (SS) is based on these levels and the new MHOA award is set at Level 11.	All programmes will consist of or comprise modules capable of being built into qualifications at level 6 or level 7. The academic level of the different parts of the Continuing Professional Education and Learning framework is set by the Care Council.
Is there a module that provides for consolidation of practice?	No, although many HEIs will continue to provide similar CPD courses. Graduates are eligible to register with HCPC having qualified and	No. This is covered during the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) before candidates enter the NI PQ Framework. On completion of AYE social workers are then	There is a range of programmes for this purpose including child and adult protection.	Guidance has been produced on “Making the most of the first year in practice” for both social workers and employers (the

prior to practising. A voluntary assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) has replaced the NQSW programme, and includes key features, such as links to an appropriate level on the PCF, specified levels of support and workload. Some HEIs continue to offer an ASYE 'consolidation module' linked to the ASYE, and this may be the first stage of a higher post-registration award. The ASYE is not compulsory but was endorsed by the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) and is supported by the Government, Skills for Care and TCSW.

See:

<http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/socialwork/ASYE/WhatistheASYE/WhatisASYE.aspx>

and

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childreanandyoungpeople/social/developing/b00211051/asye>.

TCSW is proposing a quality assurance scheme for the ASYE.

There is no direct link between registration, regulation and the ASYE. Social workers are not required to complete the ASYE to register as a social worker. However, the learning undertaken during an ASYE can count towards a social worker's CPD requirements.

required to enrol in PQ and undertake the NI Specific Award, either via an approved programme (e.g. the Initial Professional Development programme) or via the individual assessment route.

latter produced by the Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales). The Care Council guidance is available at: <http://www.ccwales.org.uk/post-qualifying-training/> The employers' guide is: <http://wales.gov.uk/cssiwswebsite/newcssiw/publications/ourfindings/allwales/2008/1styear/?lang=en>

The Continuing Professional Education and Learning framework has a consolidation programme, (minimum 30 credits at level 6) to be completed within the first period of registration (three years). The programme has three elements with defined learning outcomes.

Further details are available at:

<http://www.ccwales.org.uk/consolidation-programme-for-newly-qualified-social-workers/>

<p>Can other social service/care and professional groups access post-registration provision?</p>	<p>AMHP courses are open to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • registered social workers • nurses whose field of practice is mental health or learning disabilities • occupational therapists • chartered psychologists <p>Many HE programmes and/or modules are open to other professions.</p>	<p>Enrolment for a PQ award is restricted to registered social workers. A wide range of multi-disciplinary programmes are approved within the PQ Framework thereby offering professional recognition to the social workers alongside academic recognition.</p>	<p>The Continuous Learning Framework applies to the entire social services workforce. New specialist courses (e.g. MHOA) will allow modular access for those not pursuing the full award. In the Practice Learning Qualifications the rules allow for access by other professionals although the award they receive will have a different title. This is due to legislation only allowing SSSC to approve courses for social services workers who are either registered or for whom the register is open.</p>	<p>Yes, in some instances but potential candidates will need to check the selection criteria with the individual HEI. Generally, wide access is encouraged, but only social workers can be awarded a post-qualifying award in Social Work.</p> <p>Some programmes such as AMHP will specifically target a wider range of professional groups.</p>
<p>AP(E)L Accreditation of prior (experience) Learning</p>	<p>Will be considered under higher education institution (HEI) standard procedures (not regulated).</p>	<p>Arrangements are in place to offer recognition of both experiential learning (AP(E)L) and certificated learning (AP(C)L) within the NI PQ Framework.</p>	<p>Any new developments under the rules will need to fit within SCQF and to include Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Recognition of Prior (Informal) Learning and credit transfer.</p>	<p>AP(E)L arrangements are required by the rules for approval. All modules must have a statement of level and credit value as defined by the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales. A system of mutual recognition is being encouraged.</p>
<p>What standards will awards be based on?</p>	<p>Evidence of CPD will be necessary for re-registration; the HCPC will randomly sample CPD portfolios from 2014. Standards for re-registration with the HCPC are at: http://www.hpc-uk.org/registrants/cpd/standards/. HE providers, social workers and their employers may also make reference to the different levels of the PCF to enable career progression.</p> <p>http://www.tcsw.org.uk/professiona</p>	<p>Awards are based on the standards of the NI PQ Framework. Standards for approval of programmes and for assessment on an individual basis have been set by NISCC.</p>	<p>For SSSC approved awards, specialist standards are developed. The CLF includes a set of personal capabilities that are described across four stages of progression, enabling the monitoring of improvements in standards of practice.</p>	<p>All modules must reflect current research and evidence, the service user and carer perspective, current legislation and policy, the Welsh context of Social Work and the inter-professional context. Modules must indicate the relevant NOS.</p> <p>Additionally, modules must reflect the social care codes of practice, provide the ability to learn and be</p>

	<p>I-capabilities-framework//</p>			<p>assessed in Welsh, and the quality assurance requirements. Certain courses including Continuing Professional Education and Learning have defined learning outcomes.</p>
<p>How will UK agreed national occupational standards be used?</p>	<p>The PCF at qualifying level has been accepted as broadly equivalent to the National Occupational Standards (NOS for social workers. AMHP is based upon National Occupational Standards for Mental Health (NOSMH) approved by Health Sector Skills Council. Courses designed for particular groups of mental health social workers, for example forensic social workers or those who work in children's and adolescents' mental health services (CAMHS), will need to ensure they have fully embedded all relevant occupational standards in their programmes. See also Mental Health Act 2007 and the Mental Health (Approval of Persons to be Approved Mental Health Professionals) (England) Regulations 2007.</p>	<p>The revised NOS have been mapped to the NI PQ Framework and the three PQ Awards. The revised NOS are compatible with the Framework. All programmes seeking approval are required to demonstrate that the provision meets any relevant policy, requirements, rules and standards. This would include relevant NOS.</p>	<p>Standards in Social Work Education (SISWE) based on the NOS form the basis of the SW degree and are integrated fully in the CLF. References to NOS are made where appropriate when approving new specialist training courses.</p>	<p>The rules require an indication of which NOS are relevant at unit level.</p>
<p>Arrangements for practice assessment?</p>	<p>N/A apart from AMHP practice which requires supervision by an experienced AMHP.</p>	<p>Practice assessors are trained to assess at M Level.</p>	<p>This will be dependent on the course. We expect all provision to have a strong emphasis on the assessment of practice.</p>	<p>This will be dependent on the course being undertaken but the rules require a statement showing how assessment in practice is relevant to particular modules.</p>

<p>Practice education</p>	<p>The Practice Educator (PE) Professional Standards set out requirements for PE education and training and a timescale for implementation.</p> <p>https://www.tcswh.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/CollegeLibrary/Ref orm_resources/Practice-EducatorProfessional(edref11).pdf</p>	<p>Completion of the NI Practice Teacher Training Programme is required for all practice teachers. The programme provides the NI Specialist Award.</p>	<p>The Practice Learning Qualification (Social Services) – PLQ (SS) – has four stages equivalent to SCQF levels 7, 9, 10 and 11.</p>	<p>Programmes should have a focus on practice development.</p> <p>The Continuing Professional Education and Learning programme for experienced practitioners includes a mandatory module on enabling others. This can contribute to a practice assessor qualification.</p> <p>Specified named course requirements for practice assessment and learning have been developed.</p>
<p>External examiners</p>	<p>Appointed by the HEI.</p>	<p>An external member is appointed to the NISCC PQ Partnership to oversee the standards of the NI PQ Framework. External assessors are also appointed to the PQ Approval Panel and the PQ Assessment Panel. Each of the PQ approved programmes has an external examiner. All externals contribute to the quality assurance process.</p>	<p>As in the rules, examiners acceptable to the SSSC will be professionally qualified and have expertise and experience relevant to the course provision.</p>	<p>Programme providers must appoint an external examiner (EE) to evaluate or appraise the programme. The EE is required to produce an annual report on the results of their evaluation.</p>
<p>Making PQ courses relevant – user involvement</p>	<p>Following consultation, HCPC has proposed a new SET from 2014 (subject to approval by council in 2013) requiring the involvement of service users and carers in programmes. The SET will be non-prescriptive with regard to types of involvement.</p> <p>http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/1000402Benc05-serviceuserandcarerinvolvementineducation.pdf</p>	<p>NISCC's participation partnership is represented on the steering group for the Programme of Reform of the NI PQ Framework. Capacity building is being undertaken with the participation partnership to enable contribution to the PQ Approval Panel.</p> <p>The standards for approval within the NI PQ Framework require providers to demonstrate that a range of stakeholders, including</p>	<p>All relevant stakeholders will be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of the course provision and in approvals. The role of service users is particularly important and this is evidenced in the design of the PLQ, which is structured to enable access and achievement by users and carers. The CLF assists individuals and employers to ensure that users and carers are fully involved in the planning and delivery of services and in the evaluation of the quality</p>	<p>Service users and carers must be involved in the development and delivery of the programme. It must also be shown how they will receive induction and ongoing training to enable their contribution. The CCW is also piloting service user and carer involvement in the quality assurance of programmes.</p>

	<p>TCSW endorsement for CPD providers requires that 'Appropriate stakeholders are involved in the design, delivery and assessment of the learning provision.'</p>	<p>service user, carers, candidates, employers and academic institutions, are actively involved in the appropriate stage I design, delivery and evaluation of the programme.</p>	<p>of the service they receive.</p>	
<p>End of course recording – transcripts</p>	<p>Follows HEI standard.</p>	<p>NISCC transcripts of achievement within the NI PQ Framework are issued on an annual basis to all social workers who have PQ achievement within the previous year. NISCC certificates for each of the three PQ Awards are issued on an annual basis and presented at a formal award ceremony.</p>	<p>In respect of PLQ this is supplied by the provider, including HEI standard where applicable. The MHOA follows HEI standard.</p>	<p>Students must be provided with a transcript of learning outcomes at the end of a module.</p>
<p>International recognition of social work qualifications and PQ</p>	<p>Prospective registrants from other countries should apply to the HCPC using their International Application Procedure. http://www.hcpc-uk.org/apply/international/</p>	<p>International Recognition Service (IRS) equivalency issues will have been considered at the registration stage. Any post-qualifying qualifications can be considered via an accreditation of prior learning (APL) process for recognition within the NI PQ Framework.</p>	<p>Needs to recognise the statutory differences while taking this into account. For example, for the MHOA – IRS equivalency issues will have been considered at the registration stage. Anyone registering for a course approved by SSSC either needs to be registered or currently eligible for registration in terms of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, section 44.</p>	<p>A process for assessing equivalence of qualifying programmes is in place for purposes of registration.</p>
<p>Review and redefinition of social work</p>	<p>Social Work Reform Board recommendations have gone forward to the College of Social Work.</p>	<p>The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Services (DHSSPS) published: Improving and Safeguarding Social Wellbeing, A Strategy for Social Work in Northern Ireland 2012-2022. The Strategy has identified ten strategic priorities under three areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthening the capacity of the workforce • improving social work 	<p>SSSC launched the <i>Continuous Learning Framework (CLF)</i> in December 2008. This model is a continuum of professional development for the entire social services workforce, including formal and informal post-qualifying learning.</p>	<p>Welsh Assembly Government document: http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/socialcare/guidance/services/?lang=en defines the overall direction, including a strong focus on the workforce.</p>

		<p>services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• building leadership and trust		
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AN EXAMPLE OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF A SERVICE USER AND CARER GROUP IN THE PROVISION OF QUALIFYING EDUCATION

The following written evidence was provided by a service user and carer group of the University of Hull:

“The University of Hull Department of Social Work recognises the value of involving and including those who receive social work interventions and their carers within the whole operation of social work training. This involvement has been developed over many years to the present position where Service Users and Carers are active in the interviewing of students, teaching, the review of student placements, programme development and representation on key departmental committees and panels. To be more explicit, the nature and involvement of the Service User and Carer Group covers the following activities and to assure that no potential member of the group is disadvantaged, through the costs associated with providing their support, a series of payment rates are made available to those participating.

Members of the SUCG are recruited by existing members through service user and carer networks, or through contacts introduced by the university or through responses resulting from publicity of SUCG activity. The SUCG can vary in size, over time, of between 20 and 40 members.

The SUCG looks to maintain a vibrant and diverse group of representatives from all areas reflecting those who receive social work interventions and their carers. The department allocates a member of academic staff, with administrative support, to link SUCG with department and to act as a key point of reference and guidance. Appropriate training is provided to SUCG members by both the department and existing experienced and trained SUCG members. Shadowing of activities is used extensively as a training tool.

Communications between the department and the SUCG is maintained through designated administrators within the department working in conjunction with a coordination from the SUCG.

In addition, SUCG operates its own internal communication network, via the department’s administration system, to keep all members aware of the diverse activities undertaken by members of the group. This is supplemented by a ‘SUCG Newsletter’, facilitated by the department, which is distributed to all members and made available to staff within the department.

The SUCG has a Steering Group of members able to represent the wider body in joint working with the department and on other SUCG matters. This group meets on an ad hoc basis, together with the department’s nominated link person, administration support and any relevant academic members of staff.

The whole body of the SUCG meets twice a year to exchange ideas with each other and departmental staff; to promote new and existing joint working in departmental initiatives; to invite participation from similar groups from neighbouring universities and to invite the participation of relevant local groups who have a significant interest in social work education as stakeholders of services. ... the department supported SUCG in holding a national conference ... the conference attracted approximately 200 delegates from across the country to hear nationally renowned speakers and to participate in workshops from universities and social work related organisations.

The department consults with the SUCG regarding new initiatives and most recently held extensive consultation regarding the 30 day Practice Skills module. A SUCG member is represented on every panel of three people that interviews all would be BA and MA students.

SUCG members provide life reflecting scenarios which, together with others drawn from within the department, forming the basis of the written papers undertaken as part of the interview process.

SUCG members have an input session with students as part of the induction process. SUCG members provide teaching input on academic modules and the Practice Skills module.

Recent initiatives from within the department have raised the awareness, within SUCG, of the potential for their involvement in research and the development of a resource bank. SUCG is now working with the department in both these areas of activity. SUCG members have been developed to become members of the Reading Panels that review student practice competence documents and have been represented on Practice Quality Assurance panels.

SUCG is represented on the department's Professional Studies Committee with a permanent agenda item for Service User and Carer input. The SUCG communication system facilitates the transfer of information from these meetings to all SUCG members and in turn receives information from members to bring to the committee.

The SUCG is represented at all the key departmental panel and boards. Specifically this includes the Support and Suitability Panel; the Social Work Progression Board; the Social Work Programme Board; Module Boards; Practice Sub Committee; Social Work Staff Committee; Module Review, Practice capability Portfolio Reading Panels."

(University of Hull)

REVALIDATION – THE CURRENT SITUATION WITH THE HCPC

The HCPC have given a situation report on their website in relation to their whole regulatory regime, and it appears along with my comments in relation to social work as follows:

As the 2007 Government White Paper ‘Trust, Assurance and Safety: The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century’ stated in regard to revalidation: *‘Revalidation is necessary for all health professionals, but its intensity and frequency needs to be proportionate to the risks of the work in which each practitioner is involved.’* This of course was concerned with the clinical professions which the then Health Professions Council regulated, prior to their taking responsibility for social work under their expanded remit covering social work as one of the health and care professions.

In 2008, the HCPC published the report of the Continuing Fitness to Practise Professional Liaison Group (PLG) – *‘Continuing Fitness to Practise – Towards an evidence based approach to revalidation’*. That report concluded that revalidation for the professions regulated by the HCPC was not necessary. However, a number of further pieces of work were identified as necessary in order to build the evidence base in this area further and this forms the basis of the work we are currently undertaking. In 2008, the Department of Health also published the *‘Principles for Revalidation – Report of the Working Group for Non-Medical Revalidation’*. This report established twelve principles for any revalidation model, including requirements that any revalidation model should be risk-based and effective in confirming fitness to practise. The HCPC revalidation work can be found at:

<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/revalidation/work/>

This work is being undertaken in three phases.

Phase One (current) - The first phase is focusing on whether additional measures are needed to ensure the continuing fitness to practise of our registrants. They are undertaking nine projects in the first phase of revalidation, which will look at:

- the current level of risk posed to the public by registrants;

- the systems already in place to identify any possible gaps where fitness to practise concerns may not be picked up; and

- the feasibility and cost of different revalidation approaches that are already in use across the UK and internationally.

Phases Two and Three (future) - following completion of phase one, there will be a consideration of whether to move forward to develop a system of revalidation. If they decide to do so, phase two would involve developing the approach including consulting with registrants and piloting. Phase three would involve operational implementation.

A list of completed projects in this work is available, which so far are:

1. Professionalism and conscientiousness

Durham University have been commissioned to carry out two pieces of research looking at how professionalism develops during pre-registration education and training, how professionalism might be measured and the link between conduct whilst training and subsequent fitness to practise action. The first research project has now been completed and explores student and educator perceptions of what might constitute professional and unprofessional behaviour. This study involved focus groups and interviews with staff from education providers and students / trainees in three professions. The second study looks at developing an approach to measuring and assessing professionalism, using such tools as the Conscientiousness Index. This study involves collecting data using these tools relating to students / trainees on two programmes and ‘tracking’ students after graduation.

2. International revalidation

This work involved exploring the ‘quality assurance programmes’ run by the regulatory Colleges in Ontario, Canada. These arrangements are similar in many respects to the models suggested in the ongoing debate about revalidation and are particularly interesting because they are focused on supporting registrants to improve the quality of their practise rather than on poorly performing practitioners. HCPC undertook a fact-finding visit to Ontario in 2010 to gain an in-depth understanding of the ‘quality assurance programmes’ in place in each of the Colleges, including the design of those programmes, the Colleges’ experience of administering their programmes, the costs involved, and any evaluations of the benefits of the programmes.

3. Current approaches to revalidation amongst UK health professional regulators

This work involved exploring the current status of the UK health professional regulators’ different approaches to revalidation. The report looked at the research each regulator has commissioned to support their approach to revalidation and at any processes being introduced to support revalidation.

4. Service user feedback tools

The Picker Institute Europe were commissioned to undertake a literature review looking at the use and impact of service user feedback tools in healthcare and their potential use in our processes. The review and Delphi consultation exercise are completed.

Related Documents

“Professionalism and conscientiousness in healthcare professionals”: Progress report for study 2 – *“Development of quantitative approaches to professionalism”* Adobe PDF Document274kb

“An exploration of quality assurance programmes in professional regulators in Ontario”, Canada Adobe PDF Document185kb

“Current approaches to revalidation amongst UK health professional regulators” Adobe PDF Document176kb

GLOSSARY

ADASS -	Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
ADCS -	Association of Directors of Children's Services
AHP -	Allied Health Professionals
AMHP -	Approved Mental Health Professional
APSW -	Association of Professors of Social Work
ASYE -	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
BASW -	British Association of Social Workers
CAFCASS -	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CiN -	Children in Need
CfWI -	Centre for Workforce Intelligence
CCG -	Clinical Commissioning Group
COSW -	The Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work
CPD -	Continuing Professional Development
CWDC -	Children's Workforce Development Council
DH -	Department of Health
DfE -	Department for Education
DipSW -	Diploma in Social Work
DPL -	Director of Practice Learning
EASSW -	European Association of Schools of Social Work
EEA -	European Economic Area
ESG -	Education Support Grant
FTE -	Full Time Equivalent
GMAT -	Graduate Management Admissions Test
GMC -	General Medical Council
GSCC -	General Social Care Council
HC -	Headcount
HCPC -	Health and Care Professions Council
HESA -	Higher Education Statistics Authority
HSCIC -	Health and Social Care Information Centre

HWB -	Health and Wellbeing Boards
IASSW -	International Association of Schools of Social Work
ICSW -	The International Council on Social Welfare
IFSW -	International Federation of Social Workers
JUC SWEC -	Joint University Council Social Work Education Committee
LA -	Local Authority
LETB -	Local Education and Training Board
LtC -	Learn to Care
MAC -	Migration Advisory Committee
MOU -	Memorandum Of Understanding
NICE	National Institute of Care Excellence
NMDS-SC -	National Minimum Data Set for Social Care
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NQSW -	Newly Qualified Social Worker
PA -	Personal Assistants
PCF -	Professional Capabilities Framework
PEPS -	Practice Educator Professional Standards
PG -	Postgraduate
PLA -	Practice Learning Agreement
PLC -	Practice Learning Coordinator
PPC -	Practice Placement Consortia
PVI -	Private, Voluntary and Independent
QAA -	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QAPL -	Quality Assurance in Practice Learning
RAP -	referrals, assessments and packages of care
SfC -	Skills for Care
SLA -	Service Level Agreement
SOP -	Standards Of Proficiency
SSC -	Student Selected Components
SWEP -	Social Work Education Partnership
SWRB -	Social Work Reform Board
SWTF -	Social Work Task Force
TCSW -	The College of Social Work
UCAS-	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

In *Re-visioning social work education: an independent review*,

Professor David Croisdale-Appleby considers whether social work education is ideally structured to best serve the changing nature of the profession. This thoroughgoing review comes to 60 conclusions, leading to 22 recommendations.

David was invited in 2013 to undertake this review in his personal capacity by Norman Lamb MP, the Minister of State for Care and Support at the Department of Health. This was in the context of the changes to social work practice brought about by the Social Work Task Force and Social Work Reform Board, and their own recommendations for social work education.

The review is based on evidence invited from as wide a field as possible, from the UK and Internationally, of all those who have a stake in the education of social workers, including service users and carers, employers, educationalists, social work practitioners, students and others.

In his preface, David comments, *“I have found a very great deal that is good about social work education, indeed some of it is world-leading and, whilst identifying shortcomings, I have suggested how these can be remedied. What I felt was important was to try and set out a vision for the future of social work education which builds upon everything that has been achieved so far.”*

*“That is why I have entitled my review a **re-visioning**, for that is what is needed if we are to equip the profession of social work to realise its potential to impact upon our society in the early 21st century.”*

Professor David Croisdale-Appleby

OBE, JP, SBStJ, PhD, HonDSc, HonDBA, HonDCL, FRSA, FIoD, FRSPH

David Croisdale-Appleby is a professor at the Wolfson Research Institute, at the School of Medicine and Health at Durham University and at the Durham Business School, and is Chair of Skills for Care, Skills for Care and Development, Hft and Dementia UK. David is actively involved in policy formulation in health and social care. At NICE David has chaired the creation of national guidance on Long-term Sickness and Incapacity, and Care of People with Dementia. He is also a long-standing GMC Visitor for Medical Education. David is the Honorary Ambassador for the United Kingdom to the Nelson Mandela Legacy Project, the creation of the first specialist children’s hospital for the 15-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC).

David was awarded the OBE for his work for social justice, and holds honorary degrees from a number of universities for his work in health and social policy. He writes here in a personal capacity.

