

Social Work Reform Board

Building a Safe and Confident Future: One Year On Feedback from professionals and students

1. Background

1.1 The Social Work Reform Board published *Building a Safe and Confident Future: One Year On* in December 2010. This set out detailed proposals for reform in five key areas, on which, the Board sought feedback. Over 1200 people provided responses to the proposals, confirming the sector's commitment to improving social work and getting the reforms right. The consultation closed on 31 March 2011.

1.2. The proposals covered five key areas. These were

- A draft Professional Capabilities Framework
- Proposals for the development of a new Continuing Professional Development framework
- Standards for Employers and a Supervision Framework
- Proposed changes to the social work degree
- Proposals for effective partnership working between employers and higher education institutions.

1.3. This report looks at the feedback received from organisations, professionals and students and should be read alongside the report covering responses from service users and carers.

1.4. The feedback received was submitted in a range of formats but most of this feedback answered the questions as set out by the Social Work Reform Board (Appendix A) within the *One Year On* proposal documents. The Joint Social work Unit also devised a number of forms for feedback from specific groups and test sites, (Appendix B).

1.5. Individuals, organisations and groups accessed the proposals on the Social Work Reform Board website and a number of Board members distributed communications with a link to the material. Members of the Joint Social Work Unit also worked alongside partner agencies to run workshops with social work students, service users and carers.

Respondents

1.6. This report highlights the main themes from the feedback. The consultation set out to collate qualitative data. Where possible the report will highlight where differences have been expressed within groups. However, it has not always been possible to indicate whether feedback from groups represents a unanimous or majority view. More detailed information has been shared with working group leads.

1.7. 118 submissions of feedback were received. This breaks down by group as:

Who	Number of Responses	Group Responses	Individual Responses	Estimated no. of people responding*
Local Authority	25	10	15	278
Practice partners	12	7	5	354
Social workers	25	13	12	409
HEI's	17	5	12	62**
Agency Social workers	20	0	20	20
Students	8	5	3	58
Practice educators	5	2	3	133
Miscellaneous	5	0	5	5
Total	118	43	75	1249

* numbers estimated as not all responses included numbers.

**The Majority of HEI responses came from an individual representing their own HEIs views

For this report practice partners is used to refer to those agencies that work alongside the Social Work Reform Board or with Social Work as a profession, eg social work professional bodies.

1.8. A number of the organisations that sit on the Social Work Reform Board did not submit views. It is acknowledge that this may be due to the fact that their membership on the Board enables them to influence work in this way and they therefore decided not to submit feedback. Most responses did not indicate a client group or service setting and responses have not been broken down between adult or children's services.

1.9 Although there were submissions from both groups and individuals, the main themes and concerns raised within each category of response were very similar.

2. General themes

2.1 A small number of responses did not specifically address the questions posed by the SWRB but commented more broadly. A few responses from Practice partners (3) gave very specific feedback to the make up of their organisation and to how they felt they could influence the proposals. This feedback has been reflected in responses to questions where appropriate.

2.2. The majority of submissions expressed concern about the current financial climate and the sector's capacity to carry forward new ideas into practice.

2.3 Proposed Professional Capabilities Framework for Social workers in England

Who	Number of Responses	Group Responses	Individual Responses	Estimated no. of people responding
Local Authority	15	13	2	242
Practice partners	6	3	3	324
Social workers	13	9	4	326
HEI's	13	5	8	59
Agency Social workers	20	0	20	20
Students	6	5	1	41
Practice educators	4	2	0	130
Miscellaneous	2	0	2	2
Total	65	30	36	1142

Question 1. What are the strengths of the Professional Capabilities Framework?

2.4. The consensus across all groups was that the PCF was a positive development and that it would give clear direction and guidance to students and social workers throughout their careers.

2.5. There were a number of positive comments across the sector in relation to the impact on retention of staff, the shaping of education and links to CPD. People also stated that they felt it would help put social work on an equal footing with other professions, such as teachers and doctors and help raise the profile of social work.

2.6. Responses from Local Authority representatives and Social Work Practitioners recommended the addition of the Advanced Practitioner and Practice Educator roles and the benefit that this would bring in retaining experienced social workers in practice whilst recognising their skills and expertise.

2.7. Three groups out of the eight responses from students expressed concern that current social workers do not necessarily demonstrate these skills and up to date knowledge and welcomed the prospect of a 'shake up' of social workers already in practice. Student responses requested that critical reflection and analysis, supervision and context and organisations be added to the PCF fan.

Question 2. What challenges and barriers need to be addressed in further developing this framework?

2.8. The consensus across all respondents was that the main barrier was a lack of funding, job uncertainty and lack of capacity due to pressures on services and people's time.

2.9. There was also consensus across all groups that this should be made mandatory, be part of regulations and have sanctions attached. Many responses said that the framework 'needed teeth' while avoiding tuning the PCF into a 'box ticking' performance management tool.

2.10 HEIs, Local authorities and practice partners all commented that they felt that the PCF should be linked to a pay structure, promotion and progression.

2.11. All categories of respondent said that it would be hard to apply the framework in multi-agency settings such as the NHS and smaller voluntary organisations, either due to funding constraints or because social workers are a small part of the service.

2.12. HEIs and practice partners commented that, with the changing face of social work and social care, the framework must be flexible enough to accommodate new job roles and skills.

There are implications for how the unqualified workforce within teams may expand their roles.

Q3. What do you think of the term ‘Professional Capabilities’ as a working title for the Framework?

2.13. Not all respondents answered Q3.

Who	For	Against	Mixed
Local Authority	2	5	6
Practice partners	1	1	2
Social workers	3	4	1
HEI’s	4	3	4
Agency Social workers	11	6	3
Students	2	0	1
Practice educators	1	1	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	0
Total	24	20	17

2.14. The mixed views were predominantly from group responses where no consensus was reached. It is not possible to be specific about numbers of people as this data was not supplied.

2.15. Many felt that the word ‘capability’ had connections to HR processes, with connotations of underperformance and disciplinary proceedings.

2.16. A number of alternative titles were submitted. The most common across all groups were:

- Competencies
- Professional Development Framework,
- Social Work Professional Framework,
- Professional responsibilities, Professional Standards, abilities, Knowledge and Skills

Question 4. Have we identified the right capabilities and are they suitable for all social workers?

2.17. The consensus was that the capabilities were right. It was felt however that more detail was needed.

2.18. People also highlighted a large number of additional capabilities for inclusion. The most common were:

- Safeguarding
- Senior management capabilities
- Inter professional/inter agency working
- Research methods and application
- Media and wider society
- Emotional resilience
- Brokerage and support planning

2.19. HEI’s, social workers and agency workers also felt that there was overlap between Diversity and Rights and Values and Ethnics and that these could be subsumed into one capability.

2.20. There was concern expressed by the Social Work group that the capabilities seemed to be focused on knowledge rather than skills. Practice partners expressed concern as to how these would be applied to those not in front line practice or who had qualified under a different framework.

Question 5. Should the framework contain any other career levels or specific roles and if so, what are they?

2.21. All categories of respondent submitted suggestions for other career levels or specific roles that need to be contained in the framework.

2.22. The most commonly identified were:

- Senior managers
- Specialised skills, e.g. child protection, hospital social workers, IRO
- AMHP
- Research, academic and educators
- Private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector workers
- Therapeutic roles
- Return to practice
- Overseas workers

2.23. Practice educators, social workers, and local authorities raised concerns about practice educators being placed at Advanced Practitioner level. Respondents indicated that this was too high and may lead to recruitment problems. Local authorities were also concerned about increasing the numbers of people at management level, as this had budgetary implications for them.

2.24. Summary of main themes and issues to be taken forward by SWRB

- Link to regulation
- Time and financial constraints
- Name of the PCF
- Additional capabilities
- Additional roles and carer levels

3. Proposed Standards for Employers of Social workers in England and proposed Supervision Framework

Who	Number of Responses	Group Responses	Individual Responses	Estimated no. of people responding
Local Authority	21	10	11	314
Practice partners	6	0	6	6
Social workers	15	10	5	348
HEI's	8	3	5	54
Agency Social workers	1	1	0	1
Students	0	0	0	0
Practice educators	1	1	0	107
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0
Total	52	25	27	830

3.1. This section looks at the responses to the One Year On consultation and looks at the information supplied by test sites.

Question 1. Will these Proposals improve the ability of social workers to work effectively?

3.2. The general consensus across the sector was that they would and that they would help social workers become more confident and competent professionals. However people also felt that these would need to be carried out in their entirety for them to be successful.

3.3. People welcomed the idea of a strategic lead social worker who had the authority to change systems and take organisational responsibility and therefore ensure implementation.

- **Standards for Employers**

3.4. Social workers and local authorities welcomed the Health Check as long as there was national take up and it was sufficiently objective. They expressed concern that the Health Check was not currently being widely undertaken.

3.5. Local authorities, practice educators and social workers welcomed the idea of caseload management but questioned how this would be done in practice. One local authority stated that they had tried to do this a number of times but without success. Others stating that this was not, and could not be, an exact science and was an issue of quality not quantity. One Social Worker group thought the tool needed to be national and suggested a points system.

3.6. All sectors felt that the proposals needed to be mandatory and inspected for them to work. Social workers and HEI's both felt that if local authority performance was inspected against standards then this would impact positively on recruitment and retention and it could be used to enable social workers to choose an employer.

3.7. HEI's and Practice partners welcomed the idea of the supply and demand model. Although Local authorities expressed concern about this due to the perceived lack of joint working with HEI's and the impact that the supply and demand model may have on placement provision and job applicants.

3.8. Practice partners, Local authorities and HEI's felt that there was an added complexity to this as the workforce is changing and so anticipating a skill mix is difficult.

3.9. There was support for the proposal for administrative staff, enabling social workers to be freed from routine admin tasks. However respondents found it was difficult to see it happening in the current financial situation.

3.10. Practice partners hoped that performance would be measured rigorously against identified standards, with a link to registration as in health.

- **Supervision**

3.11. Local authorities, agency workers and social workers were concerned about resource implications. There were concerns about the capacity of managers to take on more and it would be hard to fit everything into a working week. Local authorities felt that the supervision framework was vulnerable to staff shortages and crisis and that a system need to be established to protect supervision.

3.12. There was a consensus in all groups that there needed to be mandatory supervision training available for managers and senior staff, as this was seen as a weakness to date. It was felt important that management accountability and clinical supervision were differentiated.

Question 2. Will the proposals be effective in all settings?

3.13. The general consensus across the sector was that the standards would be hard to

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implement in smaller organisations and across directorates where structures and policies were different.

Local authorities and Practice partners felt that they would have to work harder in private, voluntary, and independent sector organisations (PVI's) to meet the standards and that the resource implications would impact on their ability to achieve them.

3.14. There was a consensus that the supervision of people who work outside Local authorities or who do not have a social work manager needed to be looked at. Concerns that having essentially two managers, one in direct practice and one for professional supervision, could lead to tension and issues around accountability.

Question 3. What measures would help to ensure a consistent approach?

3.15. Across the sector it was felt that this required regulation and monitoring and that sanctions should be applied for all those not meeting the standards. Groups suggested this could be done through the updating of the inspection process, or by the College of Social Work exploring other systems of monitoring compliance.

3.16. There was also consensus that this required appropriate levels of resource and funding, with consistent and ring fenced money available.

3.17. Social workers and Local authorities thought it would be helpful to get guidance notes and support from ADASS, ADCS, government departments and LGA.

3.18. HEI's felt that management and supervision requirements could be added to performance indicators.

Question 4. How will we achieve the improvements at a time of funding constraints?

3.19. Across the sector a number of creative, practical ideas were submitted for how improvements could be achieved. The consensus however that it would be difficult without funding or being mandatory.

3.20. Social workers, Local authorities and HEI's all thought existing resources could be used, such as having lunchtime seminars, peer/group supervision, e learning and more flexibility in grow your own schemes.

3.21. There was also consensus that all those currently making recommendations, the Munro review, the College of Social Work, and the SWRB work together to agreed statements so as not to end up with a confused and overstretched workforce.

Test Sites

3.22. A number of regions were identified to become early adopters. Local authority children's and adults departments as well as the NSPCC were asked to early adopt the Standards for Employers and Supervision framework, as part of this they were asked to provide specific feedback on a number of areas. Feedback included what could be done to maximise adoption and implementation of the standards and supervision framework, what were the local challenges and opportunities in implementation, what measures would help to ensure consistent implementation across all social work settings as well what difference the proposals would make for the organisations. Detailed feedback was provided by the early adopters, further detail of the test sites and a breakdown of their feedback can be found in Appendix C.

Summary of main themes and issues to be taken forward by SWRB

- Regulation and monitoring
- Financial implications and impact on workloads
- Explore possibility of mandatory supervision training

- Consideration of the development of a workload monitoring tool

4. Developing a coherent and effective framework for the CPD of social workers

Who	Number of Responses	Group Responses	Individual Responses	Estimated no. of people responding
Local Authority	16	10	6	226
Practice partners	5	5	0	54
Social workers	14	10	4	301
HEI's	9	3	6	55
Agency Social workers	19	1	18	19
Students	5	4	1	31
Practice educators	1	1		107
Miscellaneous	2	0	2	2
Total	71	34	37	793

Q1. Will the proposals improve the ability of social workers to work effectively?

4.1. The consensus across the sector was that these proposals would improve the ability of social workers to be competent practitioners. However all pointed out that this needed to be done consistently. Local authorities, practice educators and practice partners felt that it was important that this was employer led, but HEIs pointed out the importance of ensuring that CPD was developed in partnership with them. Agency social worker responses particularly welcomed the proposals as they felt it was difficult for agency staff to access CPD. The idea of supporting agency staff was also picked up on by HEIs.

4.2. The idea that CPD would be modular was welcomed across the sector, particularly in relation the development of a Masters level award. The Masters was felt to be a good development by the vast majority of the sector. However, one LA felt that they should only be funding modules that were linked to their business operations. Research and dissertations should be self funded by social workers if they do not fit with the current needs of their organisation.

4.3. Social workers and Local authorities felt that it was important that HEIs made the accreditation of training easier and the ability for the Accreditation for Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) cross over to HEI courses and between HEIs.

4.4. Students and social workers wanted it to be easier to transfer training between organisations and to have a learning account or passport that moved with them.

4.5. Concern was expressed by HEI's and practice partners that with HE funding changes, HE staff may be at risk of losing their jobs and courses closing. Concern was expressed that with social workers self funding training in future, payment for training would be a barrier. HEI's and social workers suggested a stronger statement needed to be made from the SWRB about the importance of CPD if they are to argue a clear and sustainable market, particularly if CPD is not compulsory.

4.6. HEI's, practice partners and Local authorities all thought that making social workers accountable for their own CPD was a good idea. Students also supported this but did not like the principle of self funding it.

4.7. HEI's and practice partners both noted the absence of plans to develop future social work academics and researchers.

4.8. Local authorities and social workers felt that CPD needed to be linked to the career profession framework and attached to a learning pathway with prescribed/recommended development activities, based on identification of individual needs.

Question 2. Will the proposals be effective in all social work settings?

4.9. Questions were raised in this area as to how support would be offered for social workers in PVI's and small organisations or for independent social workers without an employer

4.10. It was felt across the sector that these concerns would be addressed if CPD were standardised and made mandatory.

4.11. Local authorities were concerned about the differing objectives that were developing between children and adult services and the differing funding streams for training. It was felt this could continue to be a barrier especially with CWDC becoming part of DfE and Skills for Care being more closely related to Skills for Health.

4.12. Students, local authorities, practice partners and social workers all felt protected time should be given for CPD and structured supervision and research should be recognised.

4.13. Students, HEIs and social workers thought linking CPD to pay and rewards would be useful.

4.14. Students were also concerned that CPD should not just focus on NQSWs should also include more experienced staff as this was often where poor practice was picked up and learnt.

4.15. Local authorities and social workers were concerned that this may disadvantage unqualified staff doing similar roles and that it needed to be flexible enough to accommodate other workers in different settings such as residential, Youth Offending and Fostering and Adoption.

4.16. HEIs felt that those who had completed the DipSw could be disadvantaged by the arrangements.

Question 3. Will the proposals support social workers at each stage of their career?

4.17. There was a consensus that there should be a passport or learning log that was transferable between jobs and organisations so as not to waste resources by requiring retraining.

4.18. There was also consensus that there should be a range of delivery formats including distance learning and blended learning. This would assist social workers with special needs and meet organisational objectives.

4.19. Social workers wanted to ensure that learning opportunities were available for experienced social workers who did not want to be managers.

4.20. HEIs commented that employers should support Masters and PHD students to enable the development of the next generation of social work educators and researchers as well as undertaking evidence based practice.

Question 4. How can we achieve these at a time of funding constraints?

4.21. A number of opportunities were provided from across the sector in how to address this issue. However, there were a number of areas where there was cross sector agreement and concern.

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4.22. People felt that the shift in responsibility from employer sponsored CPD to individual responsibility would take time.

4.23. There was consensus that this would cost money and there needed to be additional funding and regulation to ensure that this happened.

4.24. HEIs were very concerned about the implications for their income. They felt that they would be threatened if there wasn't a clear market for CPD. This was compounded by the current financial climate with the fear that employers will only fund necessary training and that the increase in fee levels would result in less people training.

4.25. HEIs agreed with social workers that they needed to find more ways to be flexible about accreditation but wanted employers to recognise that there is a financial cost to agencies associated with the accreditation of in house training.

4.26. Social workers thought there were opportunities for employers to offer more traineeships and training on the job.

4.27. There was concern that CPD at Masters level would be at risk if it was not subsidised, and HEIs felt they would need guaranteed numbers from employers to run modules, with sanctions to be applied if numbers not met. It was suggested that bursaries should be made available.

4.28. There was also consensus that CPD should be linked to re-registration and local authorities felt organisations and individuals should be held accountable and have a 'penalty' linked to failure.

4.29. Local authorities also felt it would help to take the emphasis away from HE learning.

Summary of main themes and issues to be taken forward by SWRB

- Accreditation of training
- link CPD to the local authority career progression frameworks
- Take forward the suggestion to develop social work academics and researchers
- Access to CPD for social workers in PVI's and other agencies
- Funding and development of the Masters

5. Improving the quality and consistency of the social work degree

Who	Number of Responses	Group Responses	Individual Responses	Estimated no. of people responding
Local Authority	13	8	5	195
Practice partners	5	5	0	64
Social workers	10	7	3	250
HEIs	13	4	9	59
Agency Social workers	1	1	0	1
Students	6	5	1	55
Practice educators	4	1	3	110
Miscellaneous	1	0	1	1
Total	44	28	17	766

5.1. This area seemed to receive the most concern across all the groups. Respondents consistently identified concerns in relation to proposals on placements, calibre of entrants, the curriculum and the standards for practice educators.

Question 1. Will these proposals improve the quality and consistency of students learning experiences and result in better trained social workers?

5.2. There was consensus across the groups that the threshold and calibre of entrants should be raised. However, there was a strong note of caution that this should not be at the cost to those who may not have the traditional qualifications but have the skills that are needed to progress. The consensus was that educational results do not necessarily equate to becoming a good social worker and that people need to have the right underpinning values and drivers. This was seen as particularly important when thinking about those from disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students and those coming into 'Grow Your Own' schemes. Local authorities also felt it was important that relevant experience should be a requirement.

5.3. All supported the written, group and individual tests, although one practice Partner raised concern about the written test, and suggested one test should cover all the applications a student makes to save on resources and also to ensure consistency, therefore cannot fail in one HEI and pass in another.

5.4. There was consensus across the groups that service user and carer involvement was essential, however, concern was expressed in relation to the funding of this and most felt it was not sustainable without funding.

5.5. Social workers and Local authorities felt it was essential that university staff went back to practice regularly to ensure that they were up to date with current practice.

5.6. There was consensus across the groups that the proposals in relation to practice educators were too rigid and would result in a shortage of placements being available and have a huge impact on PVIs and multi disciplinary teams. All commented that that the deadline of October 2013 was too tight. There was also concern expressed about the cost of training a large number of new practice educators and the loss of knowledge and experience of those who would be unable to carry on as practice educators as they were not social workers.

5.7. HEI's commented that they felt it was unlikely in the timescale that this would be achieved. They indicated that it was unlikely that local authorities would release experienced social workers for training and therefore this should become a requirement upon them.

5.8. One Local Authority suggested that these proposals should be reconsidered and that existing practice educators should remain to prevent a crisis in placements.

5.9. There was concern expressed by HEIs and local authorities in relation to the availability of placements. HEIs were concerned the rigid block placements would be difficult for HEI's to timetable. HEIs were also concerned of the initial cost of staff time that the changes to curriculum would entail.

5.10. There was also concern from HEIs, Practice partners and social workers that the reduction in placements would mean the loss of smaller agencies and service user led groups and they would face a reduction in payment. One practice partner felt 100 days was too onerous on students at a time when they were completing dissertations.

5.11. Social workers and local authorities expressed concern that HEIs were failing to ensure students received statutory placement experience and social workers felt if HEIs were not able to meet the requirements of placements then they should reduce intake numbers.

Question 2. How can we ensure that these changes are adopted?

5.12. The general consensus across the groups was that partnership working had to move forward and all stakeholders should be involved in the new curriculum development. Local authorities and HEI's thought that there should be some form of regulation and inspection

linked to the changes. One practice partner felt that local authorities should receive sanctions if they failed to deliver the agreed placement numbers.

5.13. HEIs felt that there needed to be more common goals between HEIs and practice assessors in relation to failing students, but noted that students needed to be treated fairly even if deemed to be failing.

5.14. There was consensus amongst local authorities, HEIs, and practice partners in relation to daily placement fees and the importance of this investment, particularly for smaller organisations who rely on this money to provide placements.

Question 3. How can these improvements be achieved at a time of funding constraints?

5.15. Many felt there needed to be more consensus between HEI's and employers about intake numbers. There was consensus that social work should be linked to the professions that are government funded in the same way as health.

5.16. Most felt funding for all the changes proposed was a real issue and there should be a phased approach to their introduction.

5.17. Local authorities felt that there could be a benefit in sharing staff with practice staff delivering some of the curriculum and being paid in kind to assist employers to access CPD.

Specific question asked to The London Professional Seminar on practice education and workforce planning

Question 1. What do you think the expectations for ASYE level of PCF should be?

5.18. There was consensus that this needs to be a pass and fail system with clear consequences. However, this led to questions to how this would be measured and by whom. There was also agreement that there need to be professional training for anyone assessing ASYE .

Question 2. What are the challenges for supporting employers effectively?

5.19. Financially resourcing the assessment was believed to be the main challenge and ASYE needed to be mandatory. There was also concern expressed that the ASYE may have an impact on the availability of placements and the ability for employers to provide these. It was felt very clear guidelines needed to be developed to support this work with support from the College.

Question 3 What are the challenges for supporting NQSW effectively?

5.20. The consensus within the group was that the employment status of the role needed to be clear and questioned if this would be affected if joining a PVI or statutory sector. It was also felt that there needed to be a time limit to complete the training with a clear appeals process. However there were questions raised as to what would happen to a person's career if they failed.

Question 4. How can the ASYE assessment be carried out?

5.21. The overall view was that this needed to be an employer based process with a national assessment framework. For assessment most also felt that this needed to be an employer led panel, with HEIs and service users represented on it.

5.22. People felt it should be practice based with observations and split into six month stages to allow people to receive feedback. It was also felt essential that the scheme should not require as much paperwork as the NQSW programme.

Specific feedback to questions asked of student groups

5.23. Six consultation groups were held with student groups that addressed specific questions in relation to curriculum, practice placements and assessment.

5.24. Of all the student groups that responded to the education proposals, 100% agreed that assessment of English language, basic skills and continued involvement of people who use services and employers was essential. Of those that addressed the area of selection, 100% agreed with the written and individual interview. However not all agreed with the group exercise approach with some groups feeding back that there were really useful areas to debate, whereas some expressed concern that some could be overshadowed by dominating people and that it could become too competitive. There was a mixed response from students as to higher minimum qualifications for entry. Some agreed it should be harder to get onto the social work courses. However it was also expressed in one group that it is not always the case that qualified students are good students and experience should be considered. Concern was also expressed in relation to the impact on mature students.

Practice Placements

5.25. Students felt that they should have a choice in placements, but that all students must have one statutory placement. Students believed that as placements varied considerably they should be assessed before getting students and training to know what the role of a student should be.

5.26. Students were in favour of the 30 day skills development and all felt that this should be practice based rather than HEI based, possibly involving shadowing, learning in a situation, gaining knowledge of the work environment and practical information about the placement.

5.27. Anxiety was expressed about the loss of the third placement, particularly if the 70 day placement was poor and there was no option to change.

Assessment

5.28. Students felt that it was essential they practice educators were able to make the link between theory and practice. There was a mixed response to experiences of practice educators with some have very good experiences and some very poor.

5.29. Students felt that it was important that practice educators were social workers and there was concern about off site tutors, particularly when there was no social worker in the team.

5.30. Students also felt strongly that practice educators should not be able to make the decision about if they pass or fail alone and should be a joint decision shared with the university and service users.

Curriculum

5.31. Students commented that they felt that the course were often too crammed with not enough focus on practice, commenting that the teaching was too academic with not enough applied to practice. The general consensus was that delivery from service users and carers was the most valuable and they would like more opportunity to learn from them and current practitioners.

5.32. Students also expressed concern that there was an inconsistency in how courses were run in different HEIs. Smaller classes and groups were felt to be beneficial. There was also a consensus that all university staff should have current, ongoing and very recent experience of practice and on going training.

5.33. Students commented on a number of curriculum gaps they were concerned about and these included:

- Legislation
- Safeguarding,
- Substance misuse and mental health,
- Over 5's,
- Young people,
- Old age,
- Social work methodology and,
- Psychology

Summary of main themes and issues to be taken forward by SWRB

- Explore further the area of personal values and drivers alongside academic achievements for student entry
- Undertake further work for the proposal in relation to practice educators
- Undertake further work on the availability of quality placements
- Take forward the work on the 30 days skills training
- Take forward the work on raising the calibre of entrants and how this can be cost and resource effective

6. Partnerships

Who	Number of Responses	Group Responses	Individual Responses	Estimated no. of people responding
Local Authority	15	7	8	251
Practice partners	4	2	2	63
Social workers	9	7	2	245
HEI's	8	6	3	44
Agency Social workers	1	0	1	1
Students	0	0	0	0
Practice educators	1	1	0	107
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0
Total	38	23	16	711

6.1. This section looks at the responses to the One Year On consultation and looks at the information supplied by test sites.

Question 1. Does the proposed partnership framework address the need of all types of employers and HEIs, and will it create effective partnership arrangements for social work education in the future?

6.2. The consensus of all groups was that this was too local authority focused and partnership agreements should also involve PVLs and service users and carer groups. There were concerns that if large organisations find it difficult to participate properly in partnerships, it will be harder for both smaller, voluntary sector organisations and service user and carers. Concern was also expressed that the framework would force organisations to enter multiple, perhaps complex agreements, including HEI/HEI and employer/employer partnerships and that these might become unmanageable.

6.3. HEI's and local authorities questioned how this would work for larger authorities where they may need to be a member of more than one partnership and if this would even be

possible. Concerns were expressed that if the partnership framework was too prescriptive then it would fail. However organisations such as the Open University are national and this may create difficulties in competing demands with those studying with local HEIs and the needs of those studying with the Open University. Local authorities indicated that as they often use HEI's to meet differing needs, this may not be possible with only one partnership.

6.4. All groups felt that there needed to be much more support at a senior level within organisations for the partnerships to be successful. However, the size of the partnership would dictate the ability for senior manager involvement.

6.5. There were concerns raised across the sector about the use of formal written agreements and that these would not work if sanctions were not imposed. They were felt to be useful as guiding principles to good practice. Varying organisational structures would make this more beneficial to a prescriptive approach.

6.6. There were tensions raised between HEI's and local authorities in relation to placement availability and HEI's intake being too high. HEI's felt that employers should be obliged to provide enough placements and that sanctions should be in place if placement numbers were not met. However, local authorities felt HEI's were often unrealistic about the numbers of placements that could be made available and that this then had a detrimental effect on placements that were offered.

6.7. Local authorities and practice partners felt that it would be difficult in the current context with the changing face of social work and budgetary constraints to be able to carry out workforce planning and be able to agree the number of placements, resources and finances so far ahead, particularly if working with a number of HEI's

6.8. The continuation of partnerships at regional as well as sub-regional levels was thought to be important.

Question 2. What aspects will contribute to the successful development of a partnership arrangement?

6.9. The consensus was that there was a need for clarification of decision-making processes, incentives and accountability in the reform process.

6.10. There was clear consensus that greater involvement of senior managers was essential. These included: specifying their roles e.g. to chair stakeholder groups, the need for regional planning to take place with all HEI's and local employers at a senior level, Terms of Reference for partnerships could be specified by HPC (or the College?), and written agreements should have directorate support and be promoted throughout the service.

6.11. Further examples for joint working were also submitted including;

- more involvement of employers in accreditation of courses,
- joint appointments between HEI's and local authorities.
- greater access for social workers to university libraries, and
- policies for recruiting and supporting practice educators

6.12. Practice partners also felt it that if guidance was supplied including examples of good practice this would be helpful.

Question 3. What possible barriers have to be considered?

6.14. The general consensus across the sector was that resourcing, both in terms of time and finances was essential. There was particular concern that in the current context this would prove difficult particularly for smaller PVIs. But also that at this time it was not seen by Local authorities as a priority issue.

6.15. There was significant concern from across the sector that partnership was not a priority

to senior managers. Partnerships are often based on personal relationships, rather than formal agreements. Written agreements need senior support and regular reviewing, but this may not be possible in the present climate. The need for multiple agreements, and the risk that they could become over-bureaucratic was also perceived as a barrier.

6.16. All categories of respondent made comments relating to power issues including:

- giving employers a stronger voice during accreditation of PQ,
- reducing power of HEI's and listening to operational managers.

6.17. At the same time, fear was expressed that partnerships would be used to control HEI's and that when agencies were under pressure or underperforming then partnerships with HEI's would slip. Competing priorities could mean that establishing joint goals for numbers of placements might be difficult.

Test Sites

6.18. Five test sites were invited to give detailed feedback on the proposed framework – a summary of the test sites and a breakdown of the full feedback can be found in Appendix D. They were asked to either implement the framework or evaluate how they could improve their existing partnership arrangements in the light of the framework. All the sites provided specific feedback on each of the components, as well as general feedback on the proposals.

Summary of main themes and issues to be taken forward by the SWRB

- Take forward suggestions to make partnerships relevant to all organisations, especially the voluntary and independent sector
- Take forward suggestions to ensure senior managers engage with partnership and provide a strategic direction
- Undertake further work to develop partnerships that are flexible, the right size and not too complex to manage
- Undertake further work on helping partnerships develop joint goals and aims, including ones that focus on the outcomes for service users
- Undertake further work on written agreements to ensure they strike the right balance between formality and meaningful collaboration
- Address the reality of time and financial constraints and how this may impact on partnerships.

Appendix A

Social Work Reform Board

Building a safe and confident future: One Year On Progress report from the Social Work Reform Board

In 2009 the Social Work Task Force published its final report making 15 recommendations for fundamental and long term reform of the system that educates, supports and employs social workers. The Task Force recognised that translating its 15 recommendations into action to create a safe and confident future for social work would require a sustained effort from many people and organisations. The Social Work Reform Board, with representation from all parts of the social work sector, was established to take forward the Task Force’s recommendations and published its first report on 14 October 2010.

The report provides an update on progress made to date and seeks views, **until 31st March 2011**, on five key areas of reform:

- An Overarching Professional Standards Framework (*‘The Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers in England’*);
- Standards for Employers and a Supervision Framework ;
- Principles that should underpin a Continuing Professional Development Framework;
- Proposed requirements for social work education; and
- Proposals for effective partnership working.

The report provides an overview of these reforms and is accompanied by another document, ***Building a safe and confident future: One year on, Detailed proposals from the Social Work Reform Board***, which contains more information on each area.

Date of meeting/conversation	
Number of attendees	

Background/professional area of attendees	
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1. Proposed professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers in England
<p>The Reform Board is proposing nine capabilities that it believes are relevant and appropriate for all social workers, no matter their level of experience or the setting in which they work. The level at which social workers demonstrate these capabilities will build over time as they become more experienced. The Reform Board will refine them in line with the feedback they receive. The nine capabilities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PROFESSIONALISM: Identify and behave as a professional social worker and behave in a professional manner, committed to professional development • VALUES AND ETHICS: Apply social work ethical principles and values to guide your decisions and the way you work with service users. • 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 well-being. • 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.

Questions	Response
Q1. What are the strengths of the Professional Capabilities Framework?	<p><i>Please identify in this space</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>General consensus of group</i> • <i>Approximate % agreeing or not agreeing</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key areas of dissent <p><i>Use separate sheets for more detailed comment</i></p>
<p>Q2. What challenges and barriers need to be addressed in further developing this framework?</p>	
<p>Q3. What do you think of the term 'Professional Capabilities' as a working title for the framework? Is 'capabilities' a word that you are comfortable with in this context or do you think that a more appropriate term should be used?</p>	
<p>Q4. Have we identified the right capabilities and are they suitable for all social workers, no matter where they work or how experienced they are?</p>	
<p>Q5. The framework covers levels from entry onto the social work degree to advanced practice and frontline management roles, following the National Career Structure for social work that was recommended by the Social Work Task Force. Should the framework contain any other career levels or specific roles and, if so, what are they?</p>	

2. Proposed Standards for Employers of Social Workers in England and Proposed Supervision Framework

The **Standards for Employers** proposed by the Reform Board are underpinned by good practice and the requirements of legislation, guidance and codes. In summary all Employers of social workers in England should:

- Have in place a social work accountability framework informed by knowledge of good social work practice and the experience and expertise of service users, carers and practitioners.
- Use effective workforce planning systems to make sure that the right number of social workers with the right level of skills and experience are available to meet current and future service demands.
- Implement transparent systems to manage workload and case allocation in order to protect service users and practitioners.
- Make sure that social workers can do their job safely and have the practical tools and resources they need to do it effectively. Employers should assess risks and take action to minimise and prevent them.
- Ensure that social workers have regular and appropriate social work supervision.
- Provide opportunities for continuing professional development, as well as access to research and practice guidance.
- Ensure social workers can maintain their professional registration.
- Establish effective partnerships with higher education institutions and other organisations to support the delivery of social work education and CPD.

The Standards are supported by a **Supervision Framework** which sets out the four key elements of effective supervision. In summary, supervision should:

- i. Improve the quality of decision making and interventions
- ii. Enable effective line management and organisational accountability
- iii. Identify and address issues related to caseloads and workload management
- iv. Help to identify and achieve personal learning, career and development opportunities.

Questions	Response
<p>Q1. Will these proposals improve the ability of social workers to work effectively with the children, adults and families who use services, and help them to become more confident, competent practitioners?</p>	<p><i>Please identify in this space</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>General consensus of group</i> • <i>Approximate % agreeing or not agreeing</i> • <i>Key areas of dissent</i> <p><i>Use separate sheets for more detailed comment</i></p>

Q2. Will the proposals be effective in all social work settings?	
Q3. What measures would help to ensure consistent implementation across all social work settings?	
Q4. How can we achieve the improvements at a time of funding constraints on local authorities, delivery organisations and higher education?	

3. Developing a coherent and effective framework for the continuing professional development (CPD) of social workers

The Reform Board is proposing that CPD be based on a new **Professional Capabilities Framework**, the principles of which should:

- i. Support social workers to maintain and develop minimum standards for re-registration set by the regulatory body, and further develop their professional skills in relation to the Professional Capabilities Framework.
- ii. Encourage and motivate social workers to improve their practice through a wide range of learning opportunities which are supported by employers and valued locally and nationally. CPD should be based on an analysis of each social worker's individual needs, ambitions, career stage and personal learning style.
- iii. Be underpinned by annual appraisal cycles in which learning and development needs can be identified and achievement recorded.
- iv. Be simple to access and represent value for money. There should be appropriate opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications and accreditation of a range of learning outcomes.

The Reform Board is also recommending retaining a hybrid model of CPD, which supports social workers to access a wide variety of learning and development opportunities, dependent on individual learning needs and styles, throughout their careers, with national recognition and portability.

Questions	Response
<p>Q1. Will these proposals improve the ability of social workers to work effectively with the children, adults and families who use services and become more confident, competent practitioners?</p>	
<p>Q2. Will the proposals be effective in all social work settings?</p>	
<p>Q3. Will the proposals support all social workers' individual needs, ambitions and learning styles at each stage in their careers?</p>	

Q4. How can we achieve these changes at a time of funding constraints on local authorities, other delivery organisations and higher education?	

4. Improving the quality and consistency of the social work degree in England

The proposed requirements for social work education aim to improve the quality and consistency of the social work degrees that lead to registration as a social worker. These include more rigorous selection criteria, standards for practice educators, an integrated curriculum framework based on the overarching professional standards framework, the consistent and substantive involvement of service users and carers in the design and delivery of courses, and transparent, targeted and effective regulation.

Questions	Response
Q1. Will these proposals improve the quality and consistency of students' learning experiences and result in better trained social workers?	<p><i>Please identify in this space</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>General consensus of group</i> • <i>Approximate % agreeing or not agreeing</i> • <i>Key areas of dissent</i> <p><i>Use separate sheets for more detailed comment</i></p>
Q2. How can we ensure that these changes are adopted?	
Q3. How can these improvements be achieved at a time of funding constraints?	

5. Proposals for partnerships between employers and educators

The proposals for effective partnership working will help to ensure strong partnerships and good collaboration between employers and higher education institutions (HEIs) which is essential for a more strategic approach to workforce needs, as well as the provision of high quality placements and CPD for social workers. Examples of good partnerships between employers and HEIs in relation to social work education and CPD are:

- Driven by a shared understanding of the mutual benefits of partnership
- Based on a formal written agreement, supported by the regulatory framework, sector standards and good practice
- Based around local, flexible and diverse arrangements
- Structured to operate at strategic and operational levels, and informed by workforce planning arrangements
- Structured to operate across the whole spectrum of education and professional development and able to respond flexibly to new initiatives and policy developments

Questions	Response
Q1. Does the proposed partnership framework address the need of all types of employers and HEIs, and will it create effective partnership arrangements for social work education in the future?	<i>Please identify in this space</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>General consensus of group</i> • <i>Approximate % agreeing or not agreeing</i> • <i>Key areas of dissent</i> <i>Use separate sheets for more detailed comment</i>
Q2. What aspects will contribute to the successful development of a partnership framework?	
Q3. What possible barriers have to be overcome?	

Appendix B.

Social Work Reform Board

Seeking the views of social work practitioners

This questionnaire seeks your views as a social worker currently registered with Badenoch and Clark to work in a number of different settings on important reforms which are being proposed for social work.

What will it mean for you ?

These reforms will affect social workers, service users and carers, educators and employers. It is important that the Reform Board hears from all these groups but particularly social work practitioners working in a range of settings in order to shape the future direction of social work reform.

See link for short introduction and information about the proposals

<http://media.education.gov.uk/MediaFiles/9/E/2/%7B9E2BBA66-90E0-4A3A-95B8-D78887739599%7Dsummary%20consultation.doc>

This questionnaire focuses on just two of these areas of reform, the proposed Professional Capabilities Framework and CPD.

If you are interested in commenting on further areas; or in seeing fuller reports please click on:

www.education.gov.uk/swrb.

1. Proposed professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers in England

The Reform Board is proposing nine capabilities that it believes are relevant and appropriate for all social workers, no matter what their level of experience or the setting in which they work. The level at which social workers demonstrate these capabilities will build over time as they become more experienced. The Reform Board will refine them in line with the feedback they receive. The nine capabilities 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 your decisions and the way you work with service users.
- **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 well-being.
- **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.

Click here for the fan diagram of the PCF <http://www.education.gov.uk/swrb/a0074240/professional-standards-for-social-workers-in-england> .

Questions	Response
<p>Q1. What are the strengths of the Professional Capabilities Framework?</p>	

<p>Q2. What challenges and barriers need to be addressed in further developing this framework?</p>	
<p>Q3. What do you think of the term 'Professional Capabilities' as a working title for the framework? Is 'capabilities' a word that you are comfortable with in this context or do you think that a more appropriate term should be used?</p>	
<p>Q4. Have we identified the right capabilities and are they suitable for all social workers, no matter where they work or how experienced they are?</p>	
<p>Q5. The framework covers levels from entry onto the social work degree to advanced practice and frontline management roles, following the National Career Structure for social work that was recommended by the Social Work Task Force. Should the framework contain any other career levels or specific roles and, if so, what are they?</p>	

Developing a coherent and effective framework for the continuing professional development of social workers (CPD)

In December the SWRB published its One Year On report, including a paper about further development of a new CPD framework. This can be found at www.education.gov.uk/swrb. Comments on these proposals are currently being sought with a view to publishing a new model for consultation in the autumn. During this period ownership of a new framework may pass to a College of Social Work.

The new framework for CPD will encourage social workers to take responsibility for improving their practice and help to create workplaces in which they will be supported and encouraged to do so. The principles underpinning the framework seek to ensure that opportunities for learning are meaningful, plentiful and suited to the needs of the social worker and local delivery context whilst being consistently recognised across the country.

With the closure of GSCC, the PQ framework will cease to exist in its current form. However, this does not mean that the provision will end, and it is expected that some aspects of current PQ will continue, although they may be differently badged and presented.

Before taking this work further, the Reform Board wants to test the principles it has developed for putting in place a CPD framework.

These are to:

- Support social workers to maintain and develop minimum standards for re-registration set by the regulatory body (HPC) and further develop their professional capabilities and skills in relation to levels of the proposed national Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) see above.
- Encourage and motivate social workers to improve their practice through a wide range of learning opportunities which are supported by employers and valued locally and nationally. This would include a wide range of professional development opportunities, i.e. in house training , reflective case discussion, shadowing and enable social workers to gain higher level qualifications through a Masters level pathway within a simple, modular structure.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPD should be underpinned by annual appraisal cycles in which learning and development needs can be identified and achievement recorded. • Be simple to access and represent value for money. There should be appropriate opportunities for nationally recognised qualifications and accreditation of a range of learning outcomes. 	
Q1 What difference do you think the new framework would make for you	
Q2. Will these proposals improve the ability of social workers to work effectively with the children, adults and families who use services and become more confident, competent practitioners?	
Q3. Will the proposals be effective in all social work settings?	
Q4. Will the proposals support all social workers' individual needs, ambitions and learning styles at different stage in their careers?	
Q5 What do you see as the benefit of enabling social workers to achieve a Master Level award alongside other forms of learning, e.g. in house training; practice discussions, shadowing?	
Q6. What are the challenges/opportunities to implementing these changes	
Q7 What do you think should be the role of a	

national framework, in the context of individual and local service needs?	
Q8 Which aspects of the current PQ courses do you particularly value and would not want to see lost in the new system?	

Appendix C. Test Site Feedback on Employer Standards and the Supervision Framework

Summary of Test Sites

Region	Test Site	Work undertaken
North East	All local authorities within the North East region	Work undertaken with all local authorities on the organisational health check mapped against standards for employers and supervision framework. Work coordinated and support provided by the North East Social Work Consortium (NESWOC)
West Midlands	A number of children’s and adults departments from the region	Early adoption by local authorities of standards for employers and supervision framework. Work coordinated and support provided by the West Midlands Regional Improvement agency (RIEPM). Authorities in the regional worked in partnership to implement standards and share good practice example and findings
London	All local authorities from the West London alliance	West London alliance feedback on the standards for employers and supervision framework. Work coordinated and support provided by the West London Alliance.
NSPCC		Early adoption by NSPCC of standards for employers and supervision framework. Detailed work also done on the organisational health check.

C1.0 The feedback received from the test sites on each component of the Employer Standards and Supervision Framework , proposed in the One Year On report, was as follows:

Q1. What should be amended?

C1.1.. It was felt this was a simplified framework tool with guidance and RAG rating audit. It was felt to be balanced and realistic in terms of expectations in relation to the delivery of statutory service s and legislative requirements.

C1.2. It was felt that the links between the health check and employer standards were not very clear. Inferred standards would supersede the Health Check but that they were a helpful guidance as suggested. It was felt that CQC should modify inspections to align with the standards.

C1.3.Test sites felt that a some standards were more aspirational and one felt more applicable to national development through The College, such as the promotion of Social Work to the Public.

Q2. Will the Proposals be effective in your organisation?

C1.4.In responses to this all Test Sites were supportive of the development and felt that the impact in terms of improving standards on people who use services and their carers would be most important. However there were questions raised in relation to how these would be ‘inspected’ to ensure take up. Some felt SWRB should but mechanisms in place to ensure this others felt that should be part of the inspectorates role.

Test Sites also felt that it needed to be ensured that there was sign up across the whole of organisations, senior management and at a political level.

C1.5. It was also felt it may be useful for employers to develop a strong partnership statement with HEI's to include the requirement to develop shared responsibility for social work education and CPD.

Q3. What difference will they make?

C1.6 Test sites felt one of the benefits was the framework mapped existing strategies and policies and enables more workforce planning to address gaps. Creating collective responsibility for the development of a local and regional social work workforce. It was also felt important as it provided evidence, accountability and persuasive arguments for social work reform.

C1.7. Some test sites stated that it helped to drive up quality by focusing on consistency within a team, such as within the Hackney model and allowing more time for reflection, training and predictable workloads.

C1.8. It was felt that opportunities to challenge and implement change was a good thing. It would also allow for effective workload allocation and standardised kits for professionals, which in turn enhance commitment around decision making.

C1.9. It was also felt it gave a real opportunity to develop confidence within the profession whilst externally raising the profile of social work.

Q4. What are the challenges?

C1.10. The test sites felt that finding an effective workload system that was intelligent enough to match cases to workers would be a challenge but that this should be based on both qualification and experience levels.

C1.11. Resources, both financially and in terms of commitment were also thought to be a challenge, Especially when balancing local need with the resources available, in particular in terms of IT where significant investment was felt to be necessary.

C1.12. It was also felt that there needed to be time to develop and implement changes locally. Although it was accepted that this would depend on the national context, in particular the continued strong representation of the importance of social work and its development as a profession.

Q5. What Would help with Consistent Implementation

C1.13. Test Sites felt it was essential that SWRB work closely with Munro to ensure that there is a consistent message to the profession.

C1.14. They also felt that there needs to be clarity around expectations, with SWRB looking at benchmarking frameworks and standards. It was felt if these were not prescribed then it would be difficult to see how they would be implemented nationally.

C1.15. Test Sites also felt a culture of access to GCSS/HPC should be encouraged in cases where employers fail to meet standards or show poor practice.

C1.16. There was consensus that there needed to be buy in from the top with standardised training for senior managers and lead practitioners in terms of supervision. However it was also recognised that senior practitioners should have the choice not to be involved in higher management tasks if they choose not to be.

C1.17. Test Sites also noted that manageable workloads would differ in organisations for a number of reasons including,

- Structure of the service,
- Demand, and
- Delivery- what is seen as best practice , including processes, IT and bureaucratic.

Q6. What costs if any have been incurred?

C1.18. Most test sites felt it was too early to say on this matter, Some had met in existing resources and primarily for employee costs. Many felt that significant costs will be incurred for staffing management capacity, IT, staffing and CPD and support.

Q7. How can you maximise adoption?

C1.19. Test sites gave a variety of answers in respect to this question including,

- The College and HPC to take the lead,
- ADASS and DCS to lead the profession,
- Standardised a, uniformed and consistent approaches across children's and adult services,
- Working sub regionally, and
- Identifying key partners to share existing skills ad resources to save reinventing the wheel.

Q8. How have savings been made?

C1.20. All sites thought it was too early to comment on this. Although could see how savings could be made through sub regional and work and the joint commissioning of programmes.

Appendix D. Test Sites for Effective Partnerships

Effective partnership working – Summary of test sites

Region	Partnership	Comments
East Midlands	Regional planning network	This is a regional partnership. Partners mapped their present arrangements against the partnership framework.
London	West London Alliance	This is a partnership formed between 2009-11 of eight local authorities and twelve HEIs, with an overarching Project Board made up of senior managers from the local authorities. Individual work streams which reported to the Board included practice learning and CPD. Partners mapped their present arrangements against the partnership framework.
	University of East London/Tavistock	This is an existing partnership between an HEI and a health trust, with written agreements in place. Partners mapped their present arrangements against the partnership framework.
West Midlands	Herefordshire and partners	Herefordshire is in partnership with three HEIs seeking placements in the county. Written agreements are in place – and samples are available for wider distribution. Partners mapped their present arrangements against the partnership framework.
South East	Surrey and Sussex sub-regional partnership	This is a well established sub-regional partnership. Partners mapped their present arrangements against the partnership framework.

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D1.0. The feedback received from the test sites on each component of the partnership framework, proposed in the One Year On report, was as follows:

D1.1. All test sites endorsed the importance of joint goals, whether or not joint goals were recorded in a written agreement, but there were a range of interpretations of what a joint goal should be.

D1.2. For one test site, this was recognition that ‘employers and jointly share responsibility for the quality of social workers through the recruitment, curriculum content and delivery, practice learning, ASYE, and CPD’. The original objectives of the another test site was focussed on developing a similar range of activities, while the part of another’s joint goals were to offer ‘excellent training to social workers..... and develop a full range of CPD opportunities.’ However, none directly mentioned the outcomes for service users.

D1.3. Two other issues arose from test site responses to this question. One encountered difficulties in implementing the original, very ambitious goals across eight local authorities and twelve universities, although working together on the ‘Step up’ programme eventually gave the focus needed for joint working – this is linked to question of the optimum size for a partnership discussed below.

D1.4. Secondly, joint goals were sometimes discussed in terms of ‘expectations of working together’ or specific joint activities. While both joint goals and joint activities (with each having expectations of the other) are essential, it may be that there is some confusion between the two and partnerships may be working with agreements that do not fully address both aspects.

- **Based on a formal written agreement, reinforced by the regulatory framework, sector standards and good practice**

D1.5. This will become the key indicator of a formal arrangement. It will also serve as a means of clarifying expectations of partners, and the boundaries of the partnership.

D1.6. Test sites were asked to focus particularly on producing written agreements to support their work or to evaluate any existing written agreements using Appendix 1 (p.71 of the One Year On report – detailed proposals). Sites were also asked to provide samples of written agreements if possible.

D1.17. Two test sites had written agreements in place which have been used for a number of years and are considered to be working well. Anonymised copies of these agreements have been provided, although they quite different from each other in terms of format, style and length. The agreement used by one is relatively short and focuses on the expectations partners have of each other, another has a Memorandum of Co-operation, which is longer and covers quality assurance of courses, management of assessment, compliance with sector-wide academic frameworks and mechanisms for teaching staff to review their practice. West London Alliance also had written agreements with its partners, but no examples were provided.

D1.18. Three test sites expressed reservations about written agreements. Another commented that it would be impossible for ‘one size to fit all and that smaller/multiple agreements, signed by senior managers would be needed. Concern was expressed about the risk of making written agreements too complicated or over-prescriptive (Appendix 1 in the OYO was thought to be too detailed) and the dangers of agreements being seen as legalistic, thus making organisations reluctant to sign. This was echoed by others which had concerns about entering into agreements to provide a specific number of placements, when teams may not always be able to honour the commitments made. One test site thought development of trust was essential to partnership and that this would be enabled, but not guaranteed by a formal agreement.

D1.19. The time-consuming nature of developing multiple written agreements was acknowledged by one test site, despite the benefits. As partnerships expand into CPD, more agreements with different partners are likely to be needed.

• **Based around local, flexible and diverse partnerships, building on existing arrangements, where possible**

D1.20. This framework will be a trigger for partnerships to review their arrangements and choose how to move forward. The intention is that the framework should support a wide range of models and arrangements.

D1.21. Test sites were asked to explain how far their existing arrangements fitted with the proposed framework and what changes they may need to make. Views were also sought on whether there is an optimum size for an effective partnership.

D1.22. There was consensus across the test sites that generally, partnerships should not be too big: ‘...(they) need to be manageable, workable and appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the area.’, ‘...our current employers’ partnership of eight boroughs across a small area and with about 1000 social work staff in all, feels about right – achieving the benefits of scale without being over cumbersome.’

D1.23. The importance of flexibility and developing models of partnership to suit individual and local circumstances was supported by all the test sites. Feedback from the test sites considered the option of partners having different statuses e.g. although one test site has partnerships with a number of local authorities, it has ‘in-depth’ meetings with its largest partner. Another, considered a ‘minor’ partner, has had to invest in developing partnerships with three universities. One also raised the question of different balances in numbers between HEIs and employers, and whether the ‘hub’ of a partnership should be either a small group of HEIs or a small group of employers who use a commissioning model to find partners to deliver the range of programmes they need.

• **Structured to operate at strategic and operational levels, and informed by workforce planning, supply and demand**

D1.24. Senior managers (employers and HEI) must endorse the formal partnership arrangements and set the strategic direction, including numbers of placements and priorities for PQ/CPD. Other groups of staff, under the umbrella of the partnership should be responsible for the operational delivery of agreed goals.

D1.25. Test sites were asked to describe their success or otherwise in engaging senior managers and how they have organised their partnership to manage the strategic and operational levels, submitting diagrams were possible.

D1.26. Four out of five test sites reported difficulties in engaging senior managers in partnerships. The key member of staff was most likely to be the senior workforce lead, including as signatory to the written agreement where they exist. One test site reported more success in engaging senior managers at PQ level, possibly due to a greater commitment to developing skills at that level. Another has developed a range of strategies to engage employers, including senior managers.

D1.27. There was one exception where the involvement of senior managers has been a key feature, both in developing the joint, strategic goals of the eight local authorities involved, and in leading the specific work streams agreed. Another success factor of the project was seen as the involvement of operational managers at all levels of the project, although more will need to be done in the future to involve middle managers.

- **Structured to operate across the whole spectrum of education, professional development and development of practice and research, and be able to respond flexibly to new initiatives and policy developments**

D1.28. Initially, the prime focus of partnerships is likely to be practice learning and CPD but they must be flexible enough to incorporate new developments. It will be essential for partnerships to keep their arrangements and written agreements under regular review.

D1.29. Test sites were asked to describe what mechanisms they have built into their partnership to enable it to evolve to meet future demands.

D1.30. There was consensus in all the test sites about the need for flexibility and the importance of building on existing arrangements to move forward. Some partnerships only focus on practice learning at present but have the potential to expand. Other partnerships offering a wide range of qualifying and post-qualifying courses are regularly considering ways of expanding into new areas and developments.

D1.31. Mechanisms to ensure this flexibility should be built into partnerships, one test site suggested, could include reviewing agreements on an annual basis and using sub-groups to undertake specific developments within the partnership.

Additional questions to test sites about partnership costs and savings

- **What costs, if any, would you anticipate incurring in using the framework? Please be specific about level of costs and the element they relate to.**

D1.32. The main costs identified were staff time spent in:

- Activities to maintain the commitments to the partnership e.g. all day interviewing of students
- Travel to meetings, especially when partners are not close geographically
- Developing and implementing agreements
- Developing and implementing shared delivery of e.g. CPD programmes
- Administration of meetings

- **What savings, if any, would you anticipate making in using the standards? Please be specific about level of savings and element they relate to.**

D1.33. The main savings identified were:

- Contribution of university staff to agency work e.g. providing specialist input to practice educator group
- Research undertaken by university for the agency
- Effective work facilitated by investment in developing agreement with partners
- Savings efficiencies in joint commissioning of programmes
- Staff savings through increased retention/reduced need to recruit following success of partnerships in producing good quality learning programmes