

Social Work Reform Board

Building a Safe and Confident Future: One Year On Feedback from service users and carers

1. Background

1.1 The Social Work Reform Board published *Building a safe and Confident Future: One Year On* in December 2010. This sets out, and sought feedback on, proposals for reform in five key areas.

1.2 The Social Work Reform Board was keen to seek the views of service users and carers as an essential part of the feedback exercise. The Joint Social Work Unit (JSWU) and partner agencies held a number of different workshops and events with groups of service users and carers so that as many people as possible had an opportunity to respond. They also worked closely with existing networks to send out information and request responses. Other feedback from service users and carers chose was provided via the SWRB mailbox.

1.3 Responses came in a number of formats. These included the generic forms included with the OYO proposals (appendix A), forms developed by the Joint Social Work Unit specifically for service user and carer groups (appendix B), those developed by Cafcass to seek young people's views (appendix C) and responses by email.

1.4 Although the responses were from both groups and individuals, the main themes and concerns raised were very similar.

1.5 The report highlights the main themes from the feedback. The consultation set out to collate qualitative data. Where possible, the report highlights where differences have been expressed between 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.

2. Respondents

2.1 The majority of responses from service users and carers came from groups. 21 groups met, involving more than 180 people. Three individuals submitted personal responses.

2.2 66% of responses were from groups or individuals that identified themselves as adult service users or carers, 33% of responses were from those that identified themselves as young people.

2.3 Many people chose not to identify themselves further than saying that they were a carer or service user. Those who did identify further characteristics included carers, mental health service users, those with experience of child care services, older people, people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and visual impairment, wheelchair users and children and young people.

2.4 The responses came from a wide range of geographical areas across England, although not all identified their home area.

3. Key messages

3.1 The overriding message from the responses was that service user and carer input must be viewed by all as an essential part of any developments and ongoing work. It was stressed that it is important that this is seen as an integral part of social work training and development and not an add-on.

3.2 Many groups expressed concerns about the implications of the current financial climate on the sector's capacity to carry forward new ideas in practice.

3.3 One response from two people expressed surprise that these proposals for the Professional Capabilities Framework, Standards for Employers and CPD did not already exist for Social Workers (SUC13). They considered that this may be a reason why it was difficult to get the service they needed.

3.4 A group of young people, (SUC 11, approximately 20), feeding back their opinions through Cafcass, chose to do this by outlining the characteristics they wanted social workers to have. They then looked at how having the right tools and support would impact on the relationships with social workers. The characteristics that came across most strongly were the importance of social workers being honest, professional, approachable, respectful, aware of different cultures and religions and trustworthy. It was also important that social workers were not autonomous or lacking in support and that they should not give false hope or make decisions for the young person without consultation and not to be patronising.

3.5 This feedback also noted the importance of social workers being equipped to spend more time with young people and families. This would allow them to know more about the individual and be able to make more informed decisions. They felt training was essential and should be in line with other professions, such as lawyers who have a one year pupillage. They considered that the more social workers know, the better able they are to articulate questions to young people and their families. However, it is important that this knowledge is up to date and it does depend on what knowledge is acquired and how, textbook vs. experience.

3.6 Another group of young people (SUC20, approximately 12yp) was asked to give examples of a positive and negative experience with a social worker. Some examples of these included:

'I would class my experiences as positive, if I have been listened to, my views have been respected and gathered in a comfortable manner, showing qualities such as understanding, commitment to getting the outcome which was appropriate for me' (YP3)

'They didn't explain what they were doing or what was going to happen or why I was there or anything. They just asked endless questions and told me I was doing things wrong' (YP4)

'Negative experience was when a social worker interviewed me and gave me a promise and cast iron assurance that if I spoke openly then there was no need to fear anything and that whatever happened there would be no care proceedings. She lied to me and then began care proceedings...' (YP5)

'M was a great social worker because he was down to earth, I preferred that he didn't wear formal attire as it made me feel comfortable, my foster dad complained but it made me feel better about talking' (YP6)

'They've all been ok' (YP7)

4. Professional Capabilities Framework

4.1 The general themes coming through from service users and carers in relation to the Professional Capabilities Framework were supportive of its development.

4.2 The three responses received from young people's groups (numbers in groups not recorded), responding through CWDC and CAF/CASS rated the 9 standards within the framework in order of importance. Although there were some differences in the overall ratings, Professionalism, Diversity, and Values and Ethics were rated as the most important capabilities, but there was no one capability that across the three groups came across as the least important. Two out of the three groups felt Professional Leadership being the least important whilst the other felt Critical reflection and Analysis to be the least.

4.3 In the six responses (numbers in groups unknown) that used the feedback form developed by the Joint Unit there was 100% agreement that people's experiences would have been different if social workers had had the framework to help them. Example of reasons for this included:

'...guidance in place before we began to 'work' together to achieve the best and most appropriate outcomes for me...' (SUC19),

'help empower and arm them (SW) with a solid foundation and background, making work more enjoyable' (SUC2),

'People might have been treated properly and [the social workers might have] been friendly and listened to people and understand you, what[you are] saying, and [the social workers might have had] the skills to do the job' (SUC7).

4.4 These groups made suggestions of areas that could be developed. Very specific feedback was given by some in relation to inclusion, linked to their own personal circumstances. Most responses indicated that the detail under the headings was important. Examples of this included:

'there needs to be more emphasis on self- analysis and assertiveness in recognition of the need for SW's to demand challenging supervision' (SUC11).

'...hoped professionalism and values and ethics included respect, courtesy and consideration for others feelings which they felt were lacking. Older people felt they were often talked down to and patronised by SW [talked at not with]...' (SUC10).

4.5 All those commenting on the general template were complimentary about the framework and again commented that it was the detail that was important. These responses had a theme of accountability and responsibility. The importance of setting up a system that ensured both individual professional responsibility and accountability, 'staff that say to clients – my manager says so' (SUC17), but also ensuring employers are accountable for the framework.

4.6 One group thought that there was not enough emphasis on skills. Others pointed to the lack of management/leadership capabilities, noting that the framework did not 'define whether managers should have management skills- 'these are important'. (SUC4), this same group also pointed to NQSWs working in multi-disciplinary teams and potentially leading care workers. A full overview of suggestions for additional recommendations for inclusion have been forwarded to work stream leads.

4.7 Four groups expressed a view on the term 'capability'. One group was split with some members liking the term and others not. Responses included, 'connotations in current practice', 'not showing a vision of excellence', 'it's not the name it's what it means' (SUC17). Another group (SUC 9), of approximately 4 people, expressed concern that it could lead to subjective judgements about occupational competence. However, the other two groups were supportive of the term.

4.8 All those who responded to the Professional Capabilities framework addressed the issue of barriers or difficulties in developing the framework. There was a mixture of responses to this. However, 80% of the responses highlighted the concerns around cost of the process in the current economic climate on staff time, especially where staff are already overstretched.

4.9 A number of barriers were identified and can be broadly incorporated under four headings:

- concern in relation to staff resilience and acceptance of change,
- leadership, support from organisations and managers to assist with peoples' development,
- better coordination and cooperation between services/teams, and
- assessment of capabilities i.e. who will be doing it? How will it be done? Some are difficult to teach and measure such as creativity.

4.10 More details have been shared with the work stream lead.

5. Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework

5.1 Eight responses were received, all from groups, seven representing adults and one from young people. It is not possible to know how many people this represented as not all groups stated the number of members.

5.2 100% of respondents said that social workers did not have good working conditions and support. Respondents cited reasons such as battling for resources, heavy workloads, lack of support or challenges to that support, not being adequately supervised, 'it takes ages for things to happen' (SUC18)

5.3 The group of young people (10 people) were asked if they felt that social workers should spend more time with service users and 100% of members agreed. They saw the benefits as enabling social workers to get to know the YP, being able to make more informed decisions, being able to move away from their own agenda and listen.

5.4 All those who were asked if the eight standards would have helped their experiences (six groups) agreed that this would have been the case. The general reason for this being that people would be more accountable, people could work together, 'if they [social workers] have the right support they may concentrate on their job properly' (SUC7). One young person however stated 'no matter to what degree you train an individual, the most important qualities of a social worker are those which cannot be taught' (YP5 SUC 20). Another stated 'it would greatly help service users as it could operate like a check system so that the social worker would have a clear idea as to how they should behave and operate.' (YP8 SUC20). Feedback from SUC 2 also suggested that service users and carers could be used as a critical friend, working within local authorities to look at standards. They also felt there needed to be a more appropriate way for social workers to 'whistle blow'.

5.5 The young people (SUC20) generally felt that with the right tools and support social workers would work more effectively with service users. However, one felt sometimes things were beyond social workers control, feeling that there was a clash between professionals all wanting to help people but struggling to co-operate. Others felt that the right tools enabled them to give more time to service users, have different conversations, 'having extra support enables them to do their job better and therefore helps services users in many ways' (YP8 SUC20)

5.6 Four groups looked at the supervision framework and whether this would have improved their experiences. All groups agreed that it would, but felt it needed to be appropriately funded and resourced.

5.7 The group that responded on the generic form (SUC14), stated that they knew of an organisation that had completed a Health check 'and it was now feeling lets get on with real social work, with less bureaucracy'. Consistent implementation would need organisations to make money available, to have a project manager supporting groups, such as practice teachers.

6. Continuing Professional Development

6.1 Twelve responses were received on CPD. Eleven of these from groups (9 adults, 2 YP, numbers for these groups were not recorded on all forms but it represented over 88 peoples views) and one individual.

6.2 Four out of the five groups thought that the proposals would improve the quality and consistency of learning. However, one group expressed some concern, particularly in relation to how social workers will be monitored to ensure they are fit to practice, questioning HPC developing proficiency standards, and the lack of standardisation or benchmarks.

6.3 These groups felt the difficulties associated with this would predominantly be down to resources and funding. Two groups also felt that there needed to be legislation or the standards needed to be mandatory to ensure that they happened, particularly in a time when resources and staff are being cut. People felt that social workers should be allowed the time to do what is needed. However, some don't want to continue to learn 'actually believe that once they are qualified they do not need to bother keeping abreast of new practice and legislation...' (SUC 19)

6.4 The four responses from the Young Person and Young People groups all supported the idea social workers needed to continue to improve their skills and learn, therefore providing a better service. However, concern was expressed by some young people that this shouldn't happen to the detriment of spending time with the young people and their families.

6.5 All felt that this could be achieved by attending training, research and using relevant resources. They also supported regular team learning and leadership, 'this is a matter of good planning on behalf of management and the social worker being receptive to change to new ideas' (YP6 SUC20).

6.6 Five groups responded to whether service users and carers could help with learning and development. All thought that this should happen, 'We can train them' (SUC 7). People felt that they had a lot to offer from experience and this should be recognised 'older people can pass on pearls of wisdom' (SUC10). There was a strong view expressed that appropriately trained service users should be involved in social work programmes as practice educators (SUC2). Others felt that social workers could shadow service users and attend Q&A meetings. One group (11 people) expressed a lack of trust in the government, and had therefore little confidence in things being taken forward (SUC 2).

6.7 The response received on the generic form (SUC 14 representing 11 people) expressed concern about the future of adult social workers, concerns that numbers were shrinking and that they were often 'less protected [in multi-disciplinary teams or isolated in teams where very few of them]'. They questioned if the CPD framework would be strong enough to support them. They also questioned who would make it happen, as with the other groups, they linked this to the lack of available funding and it was recorded that 50% of the group wanted it to be mandatory or that Employment Standards should be enforceable.

6.8 This group expressed concern about the end of the current PQ framework, but also pointed to what PQ had offered social workers 'was an opportunity to future proof themselves, to be ready for new roles/responsibilities'.

6.9 In the general comments received in this area, many also suggested the involvement of service users and carers was essential in this and that support needs to be in place to allow this to happen. One comment received stated 'any framework, use of appraisals and identification of development needs are only of use if they are carried out by competent management or supervisory staff' (SUC13).

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

7.1 Fifteen responses were received relating to questions on improving the social work degree. Fourteen of these were from groups (11 adults and 3 young people) and one individual. The approximate number of people in total that responded through group situations was in excess of 85 people but exact numbers are not known as not all groups stipulated numbers.

7.2 All expressed their commitment to and the importance of service users and carers continuing to be involved in the social work degree. They also expressed concern that this involvement may be lost with current restrictions on resourcing if money is not ring fenced.

7.3 Three of the responses gave general feedback to the ideas, five groups responded to questions from the JSWU, two responded to the generic form and two answered specific questions in relation to key ideas of the proposals. The three young people's responses looked at the issues that were important to them.

7.4 There were mixed views across all those that responded (9 groups) to the idea of the new criteria for selection proposed by the Reform Board. Many in the groups felt that it was essential that basic English and numeracy skills should be tested 'SU need SW who can write clear and accurate records' (SUC3) and a written test was a good idea. However, some felt other qualities were more important, such as life experience. They suggested that a matrix to assess these qualities should be used, so those that are weak in writing could pick up in other ways. People also expressed concern about widening access to social work and how consistency would be ensured in this area across HEIs.

'Good English language skills are essential and even then social workers may not understand colloquial expressions. If the user/carer is afraid to ask a social worker to repeat what they are saying and the social worker does not ask for clarity in what the user means there is considerable possibility of mis-communication and that could have serious consequences' (SUC15)

7.5 This was also the case for the group exercise with some in groups feeling it was a good way to assess communications in groups and observe behaviours. However, it was also noted that dominant people in groups can make it difficult for others and therefore hard to make a judgement on people if the composition of the group is difficult. Again, people questioned the standardisation of this across the country to ensure it was fair. It was also questioned how easy this would be to resource at a time of financial pressure.

7.6 The proposal in relation to people having higher educational qualifications also brought about mixed responses. Some felt that this was a good idea, whilst others were concerned that it would prevent people from training who had other necessary skills, empathy and values and life experience but who were not necessarily academic. Two groups also highlighted the use of ACCESS courses with some programmes having more students from Access course than A level entrants.

7.7 People strongly felt that it needed to attract well rounded people to train and this should look at life experience and relevant work experience as well as academic ability, 'we don't want to exclude people in the beginning when we are going to teach them for 3 years' (SUC4).

7.8 Those who commented on the challenges (3 groups, exact number unknown) to introducing these changes particularly focused on the time and cost for tutors and HEI's . However they did not feel that these barriers were insurmountable and that good practice would bring demonstrable benefits, 'better trained social workers, happier clients' (SCU11).

7.9 Practice Learning was addressed by six groups. Five of the groups stated that they were in favour of the 200 days with 30 days skills learning being used flexibly. Suggestions for the use of this 30 days included contact with service users and carers, placement experience prior to first placement and shadowing. Some felt the 30 days needed to be structured and to be clear about what the skills are and where help can be found to develop them. One group expressed concern that the loss of the 30 days placement funding would reduce the opportunities for placements to be provided by service user led organisations as they don't always have the capacity to offer longer placements (SUC9). Another group (SUC6) expressed concern that local authorities and voluntary organisations were losing resources, which may impact on placements, this concern was shared by SUC5. There was also concern that some organisations do not give the right experience on placements or are not relevant to social work.

7.10 There were mixed views in groups about statutory placements. Five groups responded to this issue, four felt it was essential that students had at least one statutory placement, but this did not necessarily have to be the final placement. However one group stated only 'it is essential students understand their statutory roles and have confidence to carry them out' (SUC6).

7.11 Two groups felt that standards in placements needed to be improved with front line practitioners and managers improving so students get a more positive experience 'students are introduced to poor practice by previously poorly trained managers (SUC3), 'appropriate time/respect needs to be given to the placement' (SUC1), 'there needs to be criteria for placements. What the placement needs to provide needs to be clearly identified' (SUC4)

7.12 Four groups responded to the new curriculum. Suggestions were made about increasing the amount of content in different areas such as mental health, more on health services to enable better working together, and child protection. 'This is the area that brings social workers the most bad press - so it's important for children, but also for confidence in the profession' (SUC6). Another group felt that it should be based on the PCF.

7.13 Three groups responded to the question in relation to lecturers being up to date. Most felt this should be a standard expectation. One group expanded on this, suggesting different ways to ensure this happened, including part time practitioners and part time lecturers being used. However, not all agreed, with some thinking the disciplines should be separate, but with need for dialogue between the two. In this group, it was stated that 'it was not ethical and not fair on service users if lecturers cannot demonstrate that they are keeping up to date'.

7.14 SUC 1 responded to the question on practice educators. They felt that the profession may lose out on restricting this to only social workers, 'assessment needs to be done by someone qualified to do the job of practice assessing'. They said that there was a risk that the experience of other professionals, including service users, who are trained to be practice educators would be lost.

7.15 Again groups raised concerns about the resourcing of the proposals and said that it was essential that standards of good practice were achieved and maintained.

7.16 Three groups responded on ASYE and questioned how this would be assessed. They identified an opportunity for service users and carers to be involved in this.

7.17 The three responses from young people's groups and the individual young person all supported the idea of children and young people being involved in training social workers and in the recruitment of social workers. Out of the responses received which represented in excess of 15 young people, only 5 had been involved in some way in the selection and training of social workers. However, the majority of them said that they would be interested in being involved in this in some way.

7.18 The young people were asked what they felt was important for social workers to learn. Many examples were given. Common areas were: how to communicate with children, economic wellbeing, safeguarding, diversity, showing respect, 'personal skills so they can learn to communicate and express themselves (YP8 SUC20), not talking down (SUC12),

7.19 A full list will be made available to the work stream leads.

8. Partnerships

8.1 Four responses were received in relation to partnerships between employers and educators. All responses came from adult groups, representing over 44 people. Two groups fed back through the generic form, one on the Joint Unit form and one gave general comments.

8.2 One group commented 'we can never go forward if we are not prepared to work together' (SUC19)

8.3 One group felt that to be successful there needed to be guaranteed good placements and good students from HEIs. This could be achieved by senior personnel getting on board with the agreements. Examples they gave of how this was done included courses for managers, directors' dinners, and PQ and qualifying partnership forums

9. Conclusion

9.1 The clear message from service users and carers is that they should be at the heart of all developments in social work, from the selection and training of new students to the continued professional development of social workers throughout their careers. Respondents felt strongly that reforms should not be implemented without the involvement of service users and carers.

9.2 Some saw the current financial situation hindering development, but others saw this as an opportunity to do things differently and that committed people would drive the change.

We would like to thank all those who responded to the consultation for their time and thoughts including

GSCC Visitors and SWEPSG

Shaping Our Lives Network

Mind

University of Bedfordshire Experts by Experience

University of West Of England

London Metropolitan University Service User and Carer Network

Oxford Brookes University and Ruskin College Voices of Experience group]

Shaping Our Lives

Northumbria University

Greenwich University

Young People supported through CAF/CASS

Young People supported through CWDC

Kingston University & Members of SPQ partnership Form

Thurrock Users and Carers

SUCCESS

PWUSC – West Yorkshire

- Hull and East Riding

- South Yorkshire

Yorkshire and Humberside

Kingston University Service User and Care Group

Advocacy Plus Westminster

Skills for Care

All the young people who were supported to share their views through the Children's Rights Director, Dr

Roger Morgan

All those who submitted individual responses

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	

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

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

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.

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Questions	Response
<p>Q1. Will these proposals improve the quality and consistency of students' learning experiences and result in better trained social workers?</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>
<p>Q2. How can we ensure that these changes are adopted?</p>	
<p>Q3. How can these improvements be achieved at a time of funding constraints?</p>	

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
<p>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?</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>
<p>Q2. What aspects will contribute to the successful development of a partnership framework?</p>	
<p>Q3. What possible barriers have to be overcome?</p>	

Social Work Reform Board

Building a safe and confident future: One Year On Progress report from the Social Work Reform Board Service User/Carer Questionnaire

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 Social Work Reform Board, which has representatives from all parts of the social work sector, was established to put the Task Force’s recommendations in place. It published its first report on 14th December 2010.

The report provides an update on progress made to date and seeks views, **until 31st March 2011**, on five key areas of reform. These are explained in more detail in: *Building a safe and confident future: One year on, Detailed proposals from the Social Work Reform Board*. This document and a summary of it can be found on the Social Work Reform Board’s website: www.education.gov.uk/swrb

The Reform Board would like to hear from you about your experiences of working with social workers, and whether the proposals they have made will help to make things better. In your experience, how did social workers behave? Did they behave professionally? Did their values and beliefs help support you? Did they show good knowledge and judgement, especially in situations where they may have needed to intervene? If your experiences have not been good, do you think the changes that have been proposed will help to bring about improvements?
Please make use of your experiences in your replies to the questions that follow.

Date of meeting/feedback	
Do you have experience of social workers?	
Have you been involved social work education?	

1. Proposed professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers in England

The Reform Board has proposed 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 nine capabilities proposed by the Reform Board are;

- **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.

Question	Answers
<p>1. Do you think your experiences would have been different if your social worker(s) had had this framework to help them?</p>	<p>If yes, how?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>
<p>2. Do you think there is anything else that needs to be added?</p>	<p>If yes, what?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>
<p>3. Do you think there might be the difficulties in developing the framework?</p>	<p>If yes, what?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>

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

The Reform Board believes it is important that social workers are properly supported by their employers, to ensure that service users and carers receive a good quality service. This means that employers should make sure that social workers have good, safe working conditions. It also means that social workers should be offered time for supervision and appraisal to support their work and continued development in the profession.

The Reform Board has proposed eight standards for employers that they believe will improve the working conditions and support given to social workers by their employers. It has also proposed four standards for supervision.

The eight standards for employers proposed by the Reform Board are:

- 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:

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

Questions	Answers
<p>1. Based on your experience of social workers, do you think they have good working conditions and support?</p>	<p>If yes, why?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>
<p>2. Do you think that the eight standards for employers would</p>	

<p>have helped with your experiences?</p>	<p>If yes, why?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>
<p>3. Do you think that a framework for supervision and professional development for social workers would have helped with your experiences?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>If yes, why?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>
<p>3. Developing a coherent and effective framework for the continuing professional development (CPD) of social workers</p>	
<p>The Reform Board believes that CPD is very important for social workers, because it is the way they improve their skills at all stages of their career. It has proposed at all CPD should be based on the Professional Capabilities Framework, which is explained in Section 1 of this questionnaire. The Reform Board wants to improve the way social workers do CPD in the future and has proposed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Social workers should have support for regular learning, so that they can always meet the minimum standards for re-registration of their professional qualification. ii. Social workers should have the chance to improve their practice through a wide range of learning and development opportunities, depending on their individual needs, ambitions, career stage and personal learning style. iii. Social workers should have annual appraisals where their learning and development needs are identified and achievements recorded. iv. The CPD system should be simple to access and represent value for money. It should give social workers the chance to gain nationally recognised qualifications and should enable all their learning, however it is done, to be recognised. 	
<p>Questions</p>	<p>Answers</p>

<p>1. Do you think what the Reform Board has proposed will improve the quality and consistency of learning and result in better trained social workers?</p>	<p>If yes, why?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>
<p>2. Do you think there might be the difficulties in giving social workers better opportunities for learning and development?</p>	<p>If yes, what?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>
<p>3. Do you think service users and carers can help with the learning and development of social workers?</p>	<p>If yes, how?</p>

	If no, why not?
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4. Improving the quality and consistency of the social work degree in England
<p>The Social Work Reform Board believes that the quality and consistency of social work training should be improved to increase the skills and competence of new social workers. Its proposals include new criteria for the selection of students, new arrangements for practice learning and the comprehensive involvement of service users and carers in the design and delivery of courses.</p>
<p>The Reform Board has proposed that when applicants are selected for social work courses there should be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A written test for all, regardless of their educational background 2. Individual interview for all 3. Group exercises 4. Higher educational qualifications for entry 5. Assessment of English language at the same level as that for other professions 6. Basic skills; English, Maths and IT 7. Continuing involvement of employers and people who use services in selection processes
<p>The Reform Board has also proposed improvements to the practice placements for students:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two placements; one of 70 days and one of 100 days 2. 30 days training for skills development, e.g. communication, report writing, understanding service user needs 3. New criteria of what is expected of students at the end of their placements 4. All students should be assessed by a qualified and experienced social worker who has been assessed against new practice educator requirements

Questions	Answers
<p>1. Do you think that new criteria for the selection of students listed above will result in better trained social workers?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>If yes, why?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>
<p>2. Do you think there might be difficulties introducing these changes in the selection of students?</p>	<p>Yes/ No</p> <p>If yes, what?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>

<p>3. Do you think the new proposals for practice placements listed above will result in better trained social workers?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>If yes, why?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>
<p>4. Do you think there might be difficulties introducing these changes in practice placements?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>If yes, what?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>
<p>5. Do you think the involvement of service users and carers in the design and delivery of courses improves the training of social work students?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>If yes, why?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>

5. Proposals for partnerships between employers and educators	
<p>The Reform Board believes that strong partnerships between employers and the universities that train social workers are important. This is because employers have to provide practice learning opportunities for students and universities have to provide the academic study needed by students. Working together on this helps to make sure that training for social workers results in practitioners that are best equipped to meet the expectations of both employers and service users and carers.</p> <p>The Reform Board has proposed a framework for effective partnerships between employers and educators, to ensure that all partnerships are working together in the best way.</p>	
<p>The Reform Board’s framework for effective partnership proposes that partnerships should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	Answers
<p>1. Do you think what the Reform Board has proposed will improve the way employers and universities work together to train social workers?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>If yes, why?</p> <p>If no, why not?</p>

2. Do you think there might be the difficulties in using the framework?	Yes/No If yes, what? If no, why not?
3. Do you think service users and carers can help with partnerships between employers and universities?	Yes/No If yes, how? If no, why not?

Dear Young Representatives,

We have been asked by the Social Work Reform Board to consult with young people about their experience and knowledge about the role of Social Workers. They are looking at improving the way Social Workers carry out their work and professional development.

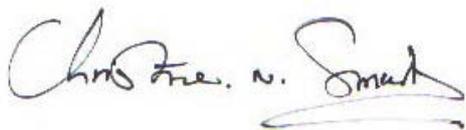
This is quite an important consultation, and although you may not be able to answer the questions with your own experience, your perspective will be helpful.

As you need time to prepare before the meeting of Tuesday 22nd February I thought it would be helpful for you to look at this and respond by 16th February at 4pm (sending to Becca Andrew via email or in the post).

Due to the importance, a fully completed response will warrant half a day's remuneration (£20).

Really appreciate your help as always.

All good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Smart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Christine Smart

1. Standards for Social Workers in England

The Reform Board believes that social workers should have a clearer idea of what is expected of them from service users (children, adults and families) and the public. They are developing a framework of professional 9 standards that they think all social workers should have or show when working:

PROFESSIONALISM: See yourself as a professional social worker and behave in a professional manner, and be committed to learning and continued 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. For example, this means that social workers should treat all service users equally and not discriminate against any individual because of their gender, race, religion, sexuality or for any other reason.

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.

What are the individual qualities that you would like social workers to have or show?

How would you rate the following 9 standards in order of importance to you (with 1 representing the most important and 9 the least important)?

- PROFESSIONALISM**
- VALUES AND ETHICS**
- DIVERSITY**
- RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING**
- KNOWLEDGE**
- CRITICAL REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS**
- INTERVENTION AND SKILLS**
- CONTEXTS AND ORGANISATIONS**
- PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP**

2. Standards for Employers

The Reform Board believes that it is important for social workers to have enough time to spend working directly with service users (children, adults and families) and that their employers should help to make that happen. The Reform Board also believes that all social workers should be well supported by their employers.

Should social workers spend more time directly working with service users?

Do you agree that if social workers have the right tools and support they can work more effectively with service users? Please explain why/why not.

If all employers followed the 9 standards, do you think it would help social workers improve the service they provide and feel better supported? Please explain why/why not.

3. Continuing Professional Development of Social Workers

Social workers have a responsibility to continuously develop and improve their skills and keep their knowledge up to date to make sure that the service they provide to children, adults and families remains of a high quality.

What skills and knowledge do you think are important for social workers to keep up to date?

How can social workers keep their knowledge up to date?

Do you agree that by improving their skills and knowledge, social workers will be able to provide a better service to children, young people and adults? Please explain why/why not.

4. Social Work Education

The Reform Board has made proposals for improving the standard of individuals selected to train as social workers, as well as ways of improving the education and training qualified social workers receive. The Reform Board believes that children, adults and families have an important role in the selection and education process, for example by sharing taking part in interview panel and sharing their experiences during training sessions.

How do you think children and young people can help in the training of social workers?

Can you give an example of when you have been involved in the selection or training of social workers?

What topics do you think are important for social workers to learn and why?

If possible, can you describe a positive and a negative experience you have had with a social worker. What qualities do you think they showed on these occasions?

Thank you for completing this consultation

Please return your completed questionnaire to:
Rebecca Andrew (Children's Rights Participation Worker)

rebecca.andrew@cafass.gsi.gov.uk

Children's Rights Team
Cafcass Leeds

SWRB 12 02

1 Park Cross Mews
Park Cross Street
Leeds
LS1 2QH

Tel: 0113 3947492 for any queries regarding the questionnaire

Deadline for submission is Wednesday 16 February at 4pm