Social Work Reform Board

Building a safe and confident future:
One year on

Detailed proposals from the Social Work Reform Board

December 2010

Introduction

Our progress report, *Building a Safe and Confident Future: One Year On*, gives an overview of Social Work Reform Board activity over the past year in developing and implementing the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force. These detailed proposals are the companion to that report and comprise a series of papers which provide greater detail on the five key areas of reform. These are:

- **An overarching professional standards framework** – which will set out, for the first time, consistent expectations of social workers at every point of their career and will be used to inform the design and implementation of education and training and the national career structure (Social Work Task Force Recommendation 10);

- **Standards for employers** and a **supervision framework** – which set out the responsibilities of employers in respect of their social work workforce (Recommendations 6 and 7);

- **Principles that should underpin a continuing professional development framework** – aligned to the overarching professional standards, to help social workers develop specialist knowledge, improve their practice and progress in their careers (Recommendation 9);

- **Proposed requirements for social work education** – so that student social workers receive high quality preparation for joining the profession (Recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 5); and

- **Proposals for effective partnership working** – between employers and higher education institutions in providing practice placements for degree students, and continuing professional development (CPD) for social workers.

What can you do?

If you are a social worker, a service user or carer, or you work in an organisation that employs, trains or educates social workers, some or all of the five proposals we are making may affect you. People from all parts of the sector have been involved in the development of these proposals. Now it's time to test how practical, effective and sustainable they are.

We are seeking views and feedback **until 31st March 2011**. There will be further opportunities to get involved in shaping the direction of social work reform and we will provide regular updates in our reports, website and newsletter.

You can:

Read about the context for social work reform and how the proposals in this report fit together in *Building a Safe and Confident Future: One Year On, Progress Report from the Social Work Reform Board*.

Think about how the proposals would work in practice in your area or organisation.

Test the proposals to see what works and what doesn't work in your area.

Tell us about your views and experiences of testing the proposals.

Keep in touch with the latest social work reform developments through visiting our website (**www.education.gov.uk/swrb**) and signing up to our newsletter.

We want to understand whether these proposals will work as intended and are particularly interested in hearing from you about:

- Challenges and opportunities in implementing the proposals in this report;
- How well the proposals fit together;
- Cost implications;
- Implications for social workers and organisations in different settings, including those working in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors as well as for independent social workers and those employed by agencies; and
- Any UK-wide issues.

You can let us know about your experiences of testing the proposals by:

- Emailing us at **information.swrb@education.gsi.gov.uk**;
- Contributing to national and regional meetings, workshops and conferences, details of which will be posted on our website and in our newsletter; and
- Sending your comments to your representative organisations and asking them to submit this feedback to the Reform Board.

Social Work Reform Board

Building a safe and confident future:
One year on

Overarching professional standards for social workers in England

December 2010

Overarching professional standards for social Workers in England

Summary

In its final report ***Building a safe, confident future,*** the Social Work Task Force recommended the creation of a single, nationally recognised career structure for social work which would:

● classify the main stages of a career in social work (from first year student onwards)

● make clear the expectations that should apply to social workers at each of these stages in a single overarching framework

● link eventually to the national framework for CPD

● be used by employers and unions to agree pay and grading structures which properly reward social workers in line with their skills, experience and responsibilities – including those social workers who stay in frontline practice.

(Social Work Task Force Recommendation 10)

1.1 The Social Work Task Force was concerned that there were too many sets of standards and outcome statements governing different dimensions of social work. The plethora of standards means that the social work profession in England does not currently have a single, comprehensive set of expectations of what should be required of social workers at each stage of their career – including expectations of students, new graduates and those in advanced roles. This has an impact on the profession's identity, professional development, workforce planning and recruitment to the profession. Service users and the public should also have more clarity about what they can expect of social workers. The national social work career structure recommended by the Task Force will bring greater coherence to what it means to be a social worker.

1.2 Over the past few months, the Social Work Reform Board has developed an overarching standards framework, which is called the *Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers in England,* which will support and inform the national career structure, and we are now seeking feedback on the progress we have made. The term 'capabilities' is used in many other professions and in social work internationally[1], and conveys to students, practitioners and employers that professional learning is not just about becoming competent in different areas, but about continuing learning and development throughout the whole career. We recognise that the term 'capability' may be problematic because it is used by some employers to refer to procedures instituted where there is a concern over an employee's performance. We would welcome views on the use of this terminology. Further development of the content of the framework is required and this paper also provides information on future phases of work in this area.

1.3 We are proposing nine capabilities that we believe 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. We are seeking feedback on these proposed

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[1] Including *The Capable Mental Health Practitioner 2001, Key Capabilities in Child Care, Interprofessional Capability Framework (Scotland 2007), Community Health Nursing, Higher Education Capabilities in Britain and Australia,* and *American Association of Social Workers Capabilities Framework*

capabilities and will refine them in line with the views we get back. When they are finalised, these capabilities will express what it means to be a member of the social work profession. The framework is expected to relate to, and influence:

- **Education and training:** by providing a foundation for developing the curriculum for the social work degree.

- **Continuing professional development:** by providing the foundation for post-qualifying training and by helping social workers and their managers plan development appropriate to their experience, needs and career aspirations.

- **Employment organisation and structure:** by helping employers to have a consistent understanding of what can be expected of social workers at different levels of experience. This will help employers organise their workforce to support progression, and help them to achieve the right mix of expertise within frontline teams and management. There should be progression routes available to high quality, specialist social workers which do not remove them from the frontline.

- **Performance management and appraisal:** by providing outcome statements and expectations for performance at different levels. It should also be a useful tool for employers' appraisal systems.

- **Regulation and registration requirements:** by aligning the framework with the minimum standards that social workers must meet to join and remain in the profession. At present these minimum standards are held by the General Social Care Council but from 2012 social workers are due to be registered by the Health Professions Council.

1.4 It is therefore extremely important that social workers, service users and carers, educators, managers and employers get involved in the design of this framework.

1.5 We, as the Reform Board, believe that the Professional Capabilities Framework should be owned by social workers, and we are exploring with the College of Social Work the potential for it to take on this role on behalf of the profession.

What can you do?

We would like to know what you think about the Professional Capabilities Framework:

Q1. What are the strengths of the Professional Capabilities Framework?
Q2. What challenges and barriers need to be addressed in further developing this framework?
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?
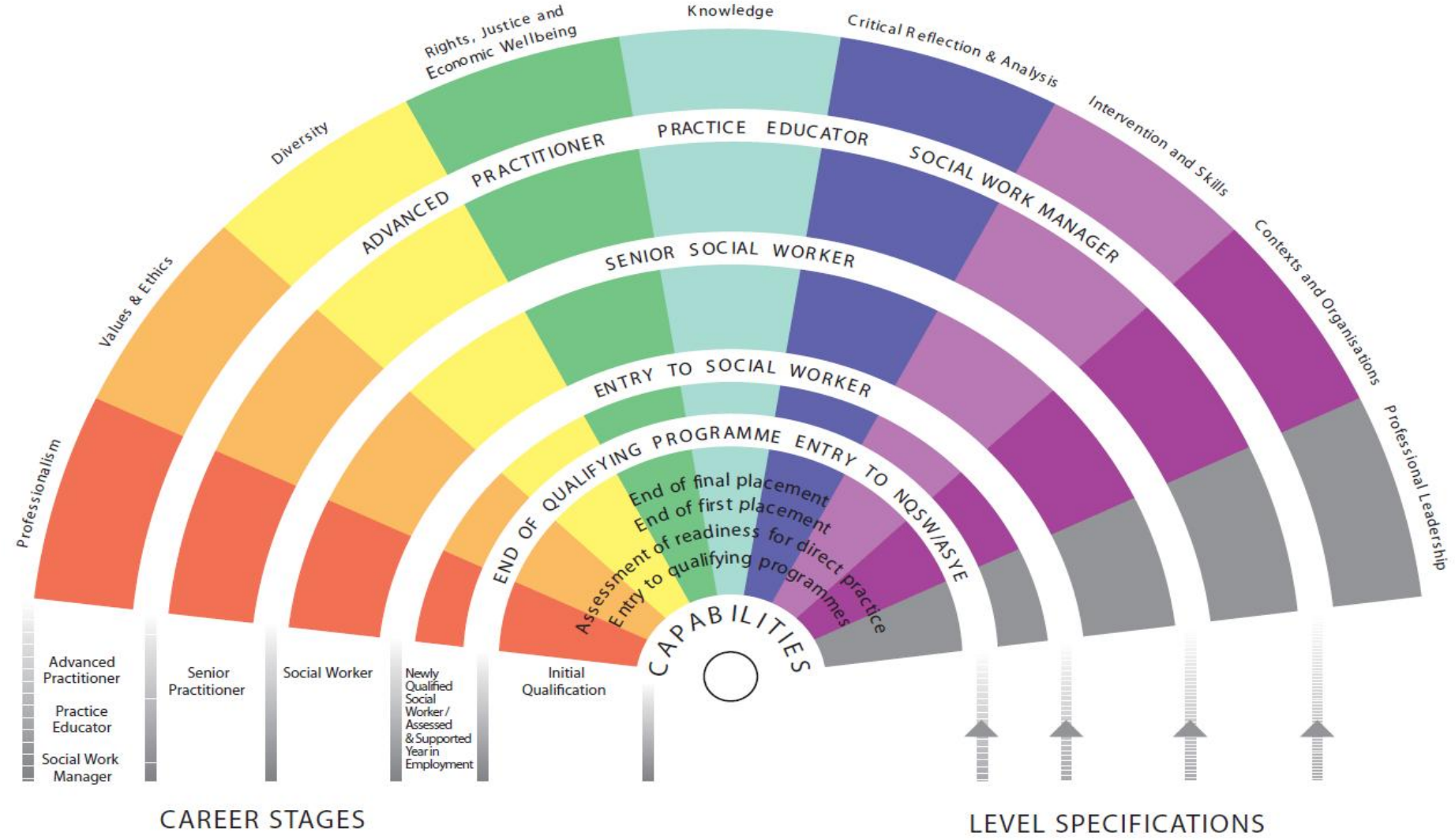**Q4.** Have we identified the right capabilities and are they suitable for all social workers, no matter where they work or how experienced they are?
Q5. The framework covers levels from entry onto the social work degree to advanced practice and frontline management roles, following the National Career 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?

You can express your views on the proposals within this report by:

- Emailing the Social Work Reform Board at **information.swrb@education.gsi.gov.uk**
- Contributing to national and regional meetings, workshops and conferences, details of which will be posted on our website (**www.education.gov.uk/swrb**) and in our newsletter
- Sending your comments to your representative organisations and asking them to submit this feedback to the Reform Board.

Proposed Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers

Rights, Justice and Economic Wellbeing

Knowledge

Critical Reflection & Analysis

ADVANCED PRACTITIONER

PRACTICE EDUCATOR

SOCIAL WORK MANAGER

Diversity

Intervention and Skills

Values & Ethics

SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER

Contexts and Organisations

ENTRY TO SOCIAL WORKER

Professionalism

END OF QUALIFYING PROGRAMME ENTRY TO NQSW/ASYE

Professional Leadership

End of final placement
End of first placement
Assessment of readiness for direct practice
Entry to qualifying programmes

CAPABILITIES

Career stages:
- Advanced Practitioner
- Practice Educator
- Social Work Manager
- Senior Practitioner
- Social Worker
- Newly Qualified Social Worker / Assessed & Supported Year in Employment
- Initial Qualification

CAREER STAGES
as recommended by the Social Work Task Force

LEVEL SPECIFICATIONS

Proposed Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers in England

Introduction

2.1 The Social Work Reform Board is developing the Professional Capabilities Framework which, when it is finished, will clearly set out how a social worker's knowledge, skills and capacity build over time as they move through their careers. As a first step in developing this framework, the Reform Board proposes that there are nine core social work capabilities which should be relevant, to a greater or lesser degree, to all social workers and social work students no matter their level of experience or the setting they work in.

2.2 The proposed capabilities are:

PROFESSIONALISM - Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development
Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession, a title protected in UK law. Social workers demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for their conduct, practice and learning, with support through supervision. As representatives of the social work profession they safeguard its reputation and are accountable to the professional regulator.

VALUES AND ETHICS - Apply social work ethical principles and values to guide professional practice
Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making, including through partnership with people who use their services. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of their profession, its ethical standards and relevant law.

DIVERSITY - Recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice
Social workers understand that diversity characterises and shapes human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. Diversity is multi-dimensional and includes race, disability, class, economic status, age, sexuality, gender and transgender, faith and belief. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experience may include oppression, marginalisation and alienation as well as privilege, power and acclaim, and are able to challenge appropriately.

RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING - Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic wellbeing
Social workers recognise the fundamental principles of human rights and equality, and that these are protected in national and international law, conventions and policies. They ensure these principles underpin their practice. Social workers understand the importance of using and contributing to case law and applying these rights in their own practice. They understand the effects of oppression, discrimination and poverty.

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

Social workers understand psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and physical influences on people; human development throughout the life span and the legal framework for practice. They apply this knowledge in their work with individuals, families and communities. They know and use theories and methods of social work practice.

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

Social workers are knowledgeable about and apply the principles of critical thinking and reasoned discernment. They identify, distinguish, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence. These include practice evidence, their own practice experience, service user and carer experience together with research-based, organisational, policy and legal knowledge. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity.

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

Social workers engage with individuals, families, groups and communities, working alongside people to assess and intervene. They enable effective relationships and are effective communicators, using appropriate skills. Using their professional judgement, they employ a range of interventions: promoting independence, providing support and protection, taking preventative action and ensuring safety whilst balancing rights and risks**.** They understand and take account of differentials in power, and are able to use authority appropriately. They evaluate their own practice and the outcomes for those they work with.

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

Social workers are informed about and pro-actively responsive to the challenges and opportunities that come with changing social contexts and constructs. They fulfil this responsibility in accordance with their professional values and ethics, both as individual professionals and as members of the organisation in which they work. They collaborate, inform and are informed by their work with others, inter-professionally and with communities.

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

The social work profession evolves through the contribution of its members in activities such as practice research, supervision, assessment of practice, teaching and management. An individual's contribution will gain influence when undertaken as part of a learning, practice-focused organisation. Learning may be facilitated with a wide range of people including social work colleagues, service users and carers, volunteers, foster carers and other professionals.

2.3 We have developed and tested these proposed capabilities with a wide range of people from the social work sector, including social workers, social work managers, practice educators, academics and workforce development managers. They remain work in progress and will be further refined over the coming months in line with the feedback we receive. These proposed capabilities draw on models used in other professions and in social work internationally, and, in particular, a model developed over a four year consultation period in the United States. We are grateful to colleagues in the US for sharing their expertise[2].

2.4 Running through this framework are a number of cross-cutting themes which are so fundamental to social work that they will eventually be embedded within several or all of the capabilities, including:

- partnership working with service users and carers;
- communication skills;
- knowledge and application of the law; and
- use of evidence and research.

2.5 We intend to develop these cross-cutting themes, as well as the outcome statements that will describe each capability at each level of the framework, in consultation with the profession, service users and carers, employers, educators and with other professions. An illustrative example of how capability builds over time is attached in **Appendix 1**.

2.6 In our next phase of work on this framework we intend to:

- Work with the College of Social Work to explore whether and when it will take on the lead role for developing and maintaining this framework;
- Populate the draft framework at each level and for every capability;
- Consider whether the framework requires other levels, such as for consultant level social workers, case conference panel and review chairs, and senior managers and other social work decision-makers (who may not be social workers themselves);
- Consider the relationship between this overarching framework and other standards in the system;
- Consider how the framework links with other professions;
- Explore the potential uses of the framework as well as cross-UK issues; and
- Understand the potential impact on social workers employed in different types of organisations in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors as well as on independent social workers.

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[2] http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=40200

The Principles behind the Professional Capabilities Framework

2.7 The principles upon which the Professional Capabilities Framework is based are that it should:

- Be owned, maintained and used by the profession, and applicable to higher education and employers;
- Be cost effective, feasible and sustainable;
- Support progression and the national career structure recommended by the Social Work Task Force;
- Fit with and influence the development of the other Social Work Task Force recommendations;
- Be straightforward;
- Be informed by current practice and developments, including from social work internationally and from other professions; and
- Be a professional rather than occupational framework.

How the Professional Capabilities Framework was developed

2.8 In summer 2010 we set up a small Standards Task Group to develop the Professional Capabilities Framework. The development process included:

- Consideration of evidence received by the Social Work Task Force during their review of social work in 2009;
- Reviewing and mapping professional standards used by other professions and in social work in other countries;
- Monthly meetings with regular progress reports to the Social Work Reform Board; and
- Two workshops with over 60 participants including social workers, student social workers, academics and workforce development managers.

What is meant by capabilities?

2.9 The use of the term 'capabilities' is intended to convey to students, practitioners and employers that professional development is not just about becoming competent in different areas, but about continuing learning and development throughout the whole career. A capability has been defined[3] as: *'an integration of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding used appropriately and effectively – not just in familiar and highly focused specialist contexts but in response to new and changing circumstances'* and can include:

- A **performance** component which identifies what people need to possess and what they need to achieve in the workplace;
- An **ethical** component that integrates knowledge of culture, values and social awareness into professional practice;

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[3] Price, J *Educating the healthcare professional for capability*, in Kernick, D (ed.) *Complexity and Healthcare Organization: A View from the Street.* Oxford Radcliffe (p227-243) (2004)

- A component that emphasises **reflective** practice in action;
- A component that encompasses effective implementation of **evidence-based interventions**; and
- A commitment to working with new models of professional education and responsibility for **lifelong learning**. [4]

2.10 We recognise that some social workers will dislike the term 'capability', which is used by some employers to refer to procedures instituted where there is a concern over an employee's performance. Nonetheless, after much development work and debate, we have concluded that that the term 'capability' is the right one to use in relation to this framework. We are now seeking views on the impact of using this terminology.

Relationship with other standards

2.11 The proposed overarching framework is intended to act as a focal point for all other social work standards. The development of the framework has taken into account standards already existing in the system. It will not automatically replace all existing standards, but it is expected that, over time, all other standards will be reviewed to ensure good alignment with the framework. The Reform Board will work closely with the organisations which own standards that relate to social work, including those that apply across the whole of the UK, to ensure that there is better coherence and clarity about social work standards in the future.

Relationship with professional registration

2.12 The Professional Capabilities Framework will not replace the minimum standards for public safety set by the professional regulator. These minimum standards are used as the benchmark against which social workers are able to join and remain on the social work register.

2.13 Currently these minimum standards are set out in the *Code of Practice for Social Care Workers*, which is owned by the General Social Care Council (GSCC) with whom all social workers must be registered. From 2012, the responsibility for registering social workers and regulating social work education will move to the Health Professions Council (HPC), which will be renamed to reflect its new responsibilities. When this happens, the HPC's *Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers* will be the new minimum standards for the profession and will be used to judge whether someone is fit to practise as a social worker. Until this transfer is completed, social workers and social work degree courses will continue to be regulated by the GSCC.

2.14 Although minimum standards are necessary to ensure that only people who are appropriately trained and are fit to practise are social workers, they should not define the profession. We believe that social work is much more than minimum practice,

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[4] The Capable Practitioner (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health 2001) report,
http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/pdfs/the_capable_practitioner.pdf

and that this new framework will enable the profession to articulate its purpose and practise in a more sophisticated and coherent way. This is key to improving social work practice but also to improving the standing of the profession.

2.15 It is extremely important that the Professional Capabilities Framework complements the regulator's minimum standards if expectations of social workers are to be clear. We have mapped our Capabilities Framework against the GSCC's *Code of Practice for Social Care Workers* and examples of the Standards of Proficiency of other professions already regulated by the HPC, and have concluded that there are no conflicts.

2.16 The HPC is planning to develop and consult upon its Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers over the next few months so that it is ready to take on the social work register in 2012. The HPC has established a Professional Liasion Group made up of representatives of the social work sector to help them do this and the Reform Board and the HPC are working together to make sure that their respective standards fit well together.

Career grades and pay

2.17 During its review, the Social Work Task Force heard compelling evidence that suggested that social work skills, knowledge and responsibilities had been underrated in some job evaluation exercises, and this affected social workers' pay. The Task Force recommended that employers should review their job evaluations to ensure that social workers are fairly rewarded.

2.18 The Local Government Employers and the Trade Unions are taking forward this work in local government. They will report and consult on their work on pay and progression of social workers in their sectors over the coming months. We are working with them to make sure that the right links are made to support the implementation of the national career structure. Initial analysis as part of this work indicates that the Professional Capabilities Framework will fit usefully with the benchmark role profiles that they are developing.

Future ownership of the Professional Capabilities Framework

2.19 The Social Work Reform Board believes that the profession itself must own and lead this work. We are exploring with the College of Social Work whether they might take a leading role in developing and maintaining the Professional Capabilities Framework from Spring 2011.

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Appendix 1

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Progression through the proposed Professional Capabilities Framework - illustrative example of one element as it progresses through the levels of the framework

1. The Professional Capabilities Framework will need to describe the appropriate outcomes for each capability at each level of the framework. The table below demonstrates how outcomes for one capability might develop over time as a social worker becomes more experienced.

> **PROFESSIONALISM - Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development**
>
> Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession, a title protected in UK law. Social workers demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for their conduct, practice and learning, with support through supervision. As representatives of the social work profession they safeguard its reputation.

Each capability will eventually be made up of a number of constituent parts. For the professionalism capability, these could include:

- Professional demeanour (behaviour, appearance and communication)
- Managing personal/professional boundaries in working with children, adults and families
- Use of supervision
- Planning own continuing education and training
- Use of self/emotional resilience
- Being an effective social worker while also promoting and protecting personal well-being
- Promoting and safeguarding the reputation of the profession.

2. The table below illustrates how outcomes for one element from the list above – **managing personal/professional boundaries** – might become more challenging and complex as a social worker progresses in their career. The comments and examples provided in the table are not an exhaustive list; there will be a range of ways in which social workers can demonstrate a capability at a specific level. As work develops on the framework, there will inevitably be some cross-referencing between capabilities.

Career Level	Outcome Statement	Comments/examples
Entry Level	Demonstrate awareness of the need to operate within professional boundaries.	Question at interview: e.g. What would you do if sent to assess someone and discover them to be a close friend or a relative?
Qualifying Level	Demonstrate the application of appropriate professional boundaries.	Understanding appropriate levels of self-disclosure about personal information. Links to direct observation for assessment.
Newly Qualified Social Worker/Assessed & Supported Year in Employment (NQSW/ASYE)	Consistently manage own professional boundaries, identifying and responding to circumstances that may significantly challenge those boundaries with support through supervision.	Positive use of self-disclosure where appropriate, and proactivity in bringing these issues to supervision/team discussion.
Social Worker	Critically reflect and analyse use of self in a wide range of contexts. Confident integration of self and professional behaviours across all working situations.	Would be demonstrated in more than one setting, e.g. court work, complex one-to-one work with service user or carer, multi-professional meetings.
Senior Practitioner – or Social Worker	Maintain professional boundaries and relationships consistently through sustained interventions with complex and challenging factors/situations.	Evident at least two cases, both of which include multi-agency/multi-professional situations.
	Model and articulate appropriate 'use of self' both within own agency and in multi-agency settings.	
Advanced Practitioner or Social Worker Team Manager Practice Educator	*Optimum practice for this capability should have been reached at the senior practitioner level, but the capability is then applied in supporting others through* **Capability 9 - Professional Leadership**	Suggested outcome **for Capability 9** in relation to professional boundaries: recognises 'use of self' and personal/professional boundary issues through professional development for which the practitioner is accountable.

Social Work Reform Board

Building a safe and confident future:
One year on

Proposed standards for employers of social workers in England and proposed supervision framework

December 2010

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

Summary

In its final report, *Building a safe, confident future*, the Social Work Task Force recommended that:

● A clear national standard should be developed for the support social workers should expect from their employers in order to do their jobs effectively. **(Recommendation 6)**

● The new standard should be supported by clear national requirements for the supervision of social workers. **(Recommendation 7)**

1.1 Evidence submitted to the Social Work Task Force demonstrated that the nature and demands of social work mean that it is essential for a number of key working conditions to be in place. These were enough time to spend working directly with children, adults and families, the right working environment, appropriate ICT systems and equipment, meaningful professional support and access to learning and evidence. The Task Force was clear that it should be the responsibility of all employers to put in place the conditions in which well trained social work professionals can work confidently and competently to help children, adults and families.

Proposals

1.2 The proposed Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework embody shared principles about how good quality social work practice should be established and maintained. Employers should meet these standards, which are underpinned by principles of good practice and the requirements of legislation, guidance and codes. We recommend that employers carry out the Task Force's health check as a way of preparing to implement the Standards for Employers.

All employers should:

1. **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.**

2. **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.**

3. **Implement transparent systems to manage workload and case allocation in order to protect service users and practitioners.**

4. **Make sure that social workers can do their jobs safely and have the practical tools and resources they need to practise effectively. Employers should assess risks and take action to minimise and prevent them.**

5. **Ensure that social workers have regular and appropriate social work supervision.**

6. **Provide opportunities for continuing professional development, as well as access to research and practice guidance.**

7. **Ensure social workers can maintain their professional registration.**

8. **Establish effective partnerships with higher education institutions and other organisations to support the delivery of social work education and continuing professional development.**

1.3 The Standards for Employers are supported by a Supervision Framework which sets out the four key elements of effective social work supervision. The framework also provides guidance for undertaking supervision of social workers in different settings.

Supervision should:

1. **Improve the quality of decision making and interventions**

2. **Enable effective line management and organisational accountability**

3. **Identify and address issues related to caseloads and workload management**

4. **Help to identify and achieve personal learning, career and development opportunities.**

Underpinning principles

1.4 There are two key principles which have underpinned the development of the Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework. These principles are:

- That it is the responsibility of all employers to provide social workers with a suitable working environment, manageable workloads, regular high quality supervision, access to continuous learning and supportive management systems.

- That children, adults and families are best supported and protected when employers provide social workers with the conditions above.

1.5 The Standards for Employers are ready to be tested across all social work employment settings. We want to build a picture of the practical aspects of implementation in all local delivery contexts. We want to know how social workers, managers, leaders of organisations, service users and carers respond to the core expectations set out in the Standards. We also want to know how, in practice, the Standards enable social workers to help children, adults and families and keep them safe.

1.6 Feedback will help us to refine these proposals where necessary, and allow us to determine where they would be most appropriately owned. Following the transfer of ownership, the role of the Reform Board will be to monitor uptake, identify regional inconsistencies and establish learning points from areas in which the proposals have been successfully implemented. In her first interim report, Professor Eileen Munro indicated that supervision and reflective practice would be a key area of focus for her review into frontline child protection, and the Supervision Framework will be developed further following the publication of the findings and conclusions of Professor Munro in 2011.

1.7 We have no doubt that many employers are facing acute funding challenges and we know that the priority for employers at this time is protecting the people who use services. We believe that a willingness to improve the frontline reality for social workers, and a commitment to creating the conditions that allow for good social work practice, will be vital in maintaining and improving services now and in the future.

What can you do?

We would like to know what you think about the proposed Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework:

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?

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?

You can express your views on the proposals within this report by:

- Emailing the Social Work Reform Board at **information.swrb@education.gsi.gov.uk**

- Contributing to national and regional meetings, workshops and conferences, details of which will be posted on our website and in our newsletter

- Sending your comments to your representative organisations and asking them to submit them to the Reform Board.

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

Introduction

Good social work can transform people's lives and protect them from harm. In order to achieve consistently high outcomes for service users, social workers must have the skills and knowledge to establish effective relationships with children, adults and families, professionals in a range of agencies and settings and members of the public. Social workers need to be confident, articulate and professional with highly developed listening, oral and written skills. They also need stamina, emotional resilience and determination.

Evidence submitted to the Social Work Task Force highlighted the need for a set of standards and supervision framework for all employers of social workers. These proposals set out the shared core expectations of employers which will enable social workers in all employment settings to work effectively. Good supervision has been shown to provide more consistent outcomes for children, adults and families.

These proposals have been developed by the Employers' Standards Working Group which was set up by the Social Work Reform Board. The group has included 20 representatives from a range of organisations and groups with an interest in social work. Members have communicated and consulted regularly with their networks about the proposals, and their work has been informed by evidence from research and discussions. The Standards for Employers will be tested across different employment settings and supporting reference material will be developed for employers should they require further information. This will be available on the Reform Board's website.

The Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework build on existing guidelines for employers of social workers, and it is envisaged that these expectations will be incorporated within the emerging self regulation and improvement framework for public services. The Standards should then inform the revised inspection frameworks that will be aligned to this developing approach to public service regulation.

The Standards apply to all employers and relate to all registered social workers that they employ, including managers and student social workers within the organisation. However, the landscape in which social work is delivered is changing. Social workers may be sourced through an employment agency, may provide their services as independent social workers on a locum or consultancy basis, and may be employed in the statutory, private, voluntary or independent sector, as well as in other organisations such as higher education institutions. Employment arrangements and responsibilities have become more complex but it is expected that these Standards will be relevant to and adopted in all settings in which social workers are employed.

Employers should ensure that their systems, structures and processes promote equality and do not discriminate against any employee.

All employers providing a social work service should establish a monitoring system by which they can assess their organisational performance against this framework, set a process for review and, where necessary, outline their plans for improvement.

Standards for Employers of Social Workers in England

1. 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.

To achieve the best possible outcomes for the children, adults and families who use their services, it is essential that employers have a sound understanding of what constitutes good social work practice, the theories, research and evidence that underpin it and the ways in which their organisation can achieve it. They should establish how this drives the planning and delivery of specific services. All employers should:

- Develop a strategy to monitor the effectiveness of their social work service delivery.

- Ensure that processes are in place to seek and collate the views of service users, carers and practitioners.

- Implement a system to analyse and act upon the views of service users, carers and practitioners so that continuous feedback informs and supports the delivery of quality services.

- Establish clear lines of accountability within the organisation for social work service delivery.

- Identify a strategic lead social worker who will be responsible for implementing the Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework.

- Complete, review and publish an annual 'health check' to assess the practice conditions and working environment of the organisation's social work workforce.

- Promote social work practice awareness amongst service directors and strategic managers, local politicians, community leaders, voluntary sector stakeholders and professionals in universal services such as schools, health and the police.

- Establish and maintain strategic partnerships with partner agencies, higher education institutions and other organisations.

- Explain and promote the role of social work to the public.

- Meet the career needs of social workers.

- Work with the College of Social Work and allow all social workers to be engaged in the work of the College.

2. 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.

All employers should be able to show that they have appropriate workforce planning systems in place in order to meet the needs of local service users now and in the future. Effective workforce planning systems should both determine immediate staffing requirements and help to ensure that sufficient numbers of social workers are trained to meet future demand. These should be based on an understanding of the factors that influence need and demand, including the size and specific circumstances of the local population. Workforce planning procedures should be regularly monitored and reviewed. All employers should:

- Undertake an assessment of current and future need and feed this into local, regional and national supply and demand systems.

- Ensure that workforce planning systems involve strategic partnerships with higher education institutions and other agencies.

- Provide good quality practice placements, other types of practice learning, and effective workplace assessment to help ensure that the right numbers of new social workers of the right calibre are trained.

- Engage with the social work education sector in order to facilitate exchanges of personnel and expertise.

- Facilitate further learning and development across partner agencies.

3. Implement transparent systems to manage workload and case allocation in order to protect service users and practitioners.

In order to deliver consistently high quality services and outcomes for children, adults, and families, employers should manage workflow effectively and respond quickly to changing demand. Workload management and case allocation processes should prevent work overload and safeguard staff and service users from the risks associated with high caseloads and unallocated cases. All employers should:

- Put in place transparent systems to allocate work and a means to collect information about workload within teams.

- Use this information to assess and review the workload of each social worker, taking account of their capacity and allowing sufficient time for supervision and CPD activity.

25

- Have contingency plans in place for resolving situations where workload demand exceeds the staffing capacity.

- Have a system in place which generates relevant information to be used as part of regular reporting to strategic leaders and feeds into supply and demand models, and the social work accountability framework.

4. Make sure that social workers can do their jobs safely and have the practical tools and resources they need to practise effectively. Assess risks and take action to minimise and prevent them.

A social worker's working environment, resources and access to practical tools and support should be designed to deliver safe and effective professional practice. Employers should meet the safety and welfare needs of social workers. All employers should:

- Make a quiet space available for formal supervision, informal confidential professional discussions between colleagues, and team meetings. There should also be a suitable space for confidential interviews with adequate safety measures to protect practitioners.

- Foster a culture of openness and equality in the organisation that empowers social workers to make appropriate professional judgements within a supportive environment.

- Enable social workers and managers to raise concerns about inadequate resources, operational difficulties, workload issues or their own skills and capacity for work without fear of recrimination.

- Have in place effective systems for reporting and responding to concerns raised by social workers and managers so that risks are assessed and preventative and protective measures are taken.

- Ensure that the risks of violence, harassment and bullying are assessed, minimised and prevented. Where such instances do occur, there should be clear procedures in place to address, monitor and review the situation.

- Make employee welfare services available for all social workers.

- Provide social workers with appropriate practical tools to do their job including effective case recording and other IT systems, access to the internet and mobile communications. They should have safe means of transport for visiting service users and for field work.

- Provide social workers with access to fellow professionals including legal advisors, translators and interpreters.

- Provide skilled administrative staff to support social workers and help to maximise the time social workers are able to spend working directly with the children, adults and families who use services.

5. Ensure that social workers have regular and appropriate social work supervision.

Reflective practice is key to effective social work and high quality, regular supervision should be an integral part of social work practice. All organisations employing social workers should make a positive, unambiguous commitment to a strong culture of supervision, reflective practice and adaptive learning. Supervision should be based on a rigorous understanding of the key elements of effective social work supervision, as well as the research and evidence which underpins good social work practice. Supervision should challenge practitioners to reflect critically on their cases and should foster an inquisitive approach to social work. All employers should:

- Ensure that social work supervision is not treated as an isolated activity by incorporating it into the organisation's social work accountability framework.

- Promote continuous learning and knowledge sharing through which social workers are encouraged to draw out learning points by reflecting on their own cases in light of the experiences of peers.

- Provide regular supervision training for social work supervisors.

- Assign explicit responsibility for the oversight of appropriate supervision and for issues that arise during supervision.

- Provide additional professional supervision by a registered social worker for practitioners whose line manager is not a social worker.

- Ensure that supervision takes place regularly and consistently.

- Make sure that supervision takes place at least weekly for the first six weeks of employment of a newly qualified social worker, at least fortnightly for the duration of the first six months, and a minimum of monthly supervision thereafter.

- Ensure that supervision sessions last at least an hour and a half of uninterrupted time.

- Monitor actual frequency and quality of supervision against clear statements about what is expected.

6. Provide opportunities for continuing professional development, as well as access to research and practice guidance.

It is essential for social workers to be able to build a robust and up to date knowledge base through ongoing continuing professional development (CPD) and access to research, evidence and best practice guidance. Employers should facilitate career-long learning and knowledge of best practice in order to empower social workers to work confidently and competently with the children, adults and families they have been trained to support. All employers should:

- Provide time, resources and support for CPD.

- Have fair and transparent systems to enable social workers to develop their professional skills and knowledge throughout their careers through an entitlement to formal and informal CPD.

- Provide appropriate support to social workers to progress through the national career structure.

- Have effective induction systems and put in place tailored support programmes for social workers in their first year in practice, including protected development time, a managed workload, tailored supervision and personal development plans.

- Support their social workers to make decisions and pursue actions that are informed by robust and rigorous evidence so that service users can have confidence in the service they receive.

- Enable social workers to work with others engaged in research and practice development activities in universities, professional bodies, and the College of Social Work to develop the evidence base for good practice.

- Ensure that practice educators are able to contribute to the learning, support, supervision and assessment of students on qualifying and CPD programmes.

7. Ensure social workers can maintain their professional registration.

Designated social work posts should only be filled by suitably qualified and registered social workers. Existing guidelines for employers and social workers demonstrate their mutual responsibilities for maintaining professional registration, re-registration, and regulation of the profession. All employers should:

- Support social workers in maintaining their professional registration and accountability as well as their competence, credibility, and currency.

- Support staff in continuing to meet the requirements of the regulator.

- Work closely with the regulator to maintain professional standards and investigate professional conduct issues.

- Take appropriate steps to inform the regulator, co-operate with investigations and hearings carried out by the regulator, and respond appropriately to its findings and decisions if there are concerns that an employee's fitness to practise is impaired.

8. Establish effective partnerships with higher education institutions and other organisations to support the delivery of social work education and continuing professional development.

Strong partnerships and good collaboration between employers and higher education institutions will lead to a more strategic approach to meeting workforce needs, providing high quality placements and designing and delivering good quality training and development for social workers. Partnerships should be effective joint decision-making forums that enable communication, joint planning and shared activities to produce high quality social workers. All employers should:

- Implement formal partnership arrangements that promote and contribute to shared outcomes in the delivery of social work education and CPD.

- Ensure that the strategic lead social worker manages these partnerships for the organisation.

- Have a clear policy for recruiting, training and supporting practice educators.

- Support staff to access qualifying social work education.

- Provide support for social work students on placements.

- Contribute to efforts to recruit social work students.

- Work collaboratively with partner organisations to develop the skills and knowledge required to deliver high quality social work education.

Proposed supervision framework

Supervision is vital to effective social work and the Reform Board is continuing to develop its thinking around how elements of supervision can best be delivered and integrated into the working practices of social workers. In her first interim report, Professor Eileen Munro indicated that supervision and reflective practice would be a key area of focus for her review into frontline child protection. This framework should be read as a draft document and will be developed further following the publication of the findings and conclusions of Professor Munro in 2011.

Supervision provides a safe environment for critical reflection, challenge and professional support that operates alongside an organisation's appraisal process. It includes time for reflection on practice issues that arise in the course of everyday work, and can help social workers and their managers to do their jobs more effectively. It enables social workers to develop their capacity to use their experiences to review practice, receive feedback on their performance, build emotional resilience and think reflectively about the relationships they have formed with children, adults and families.

The key elements of effective supervision encompass:

1. Quality of decision making and interventions

This aspect of supervision provides the opportunity to focus on the challenges faced by social workers in carrying out their work. It includes reflection on what work has been done, plans for future interventions and actions, and discussions on improvements in practice. There should be a focus on protecting the public and delivering effective services, with time spent reflecting on the relationships that have been formed with children, adults and families, and the mental and physical health of the social worker. Barriers to effective working on particular cases, including levels of stress experienced by the social worker, should be identified and addressed. The supervisor should be an experienced and registered social worker, usually with expertise in the same area of practice, and should encourage shared professional decision making.

2. Line management and organisational accountability

This element of supervision provides mutual organisational accountability between the employer and the employee on behalf of the public. It is a tool for monitoring the quantity and the quality of the work being done. It involves the evaluation of the job and the organisational effectiveness of the employee, and includes appraisal. This aspect of supervision is essential for all staff in the organisation, and is carried out by the line manager.

3. Caseload and workload management

Supervision should include an analysis of caseload and workload management, and address any issues relating to the extent to the time available to work directly with children, adults and families as well as meeting other demands. There should be a focus on protecting the public, delivering effective services and identifying barriers to effective practice. This may be included in the line manager's role.

4. Identification of further personal learning, career and development opportunities

Supervision in this context is about monitoring and promoting continuing professional development, including maintaining social work registration. This could include career development advice and time to explore professional development opportunities such as further qualifications. This can be included in the line manager's or professional supervisor's role.

Guidance for providing supervision in different settings:

Supervision for child protection and adult safeguarding teams

Where social workers have safeguarding and protection work as a core role then lines of accountability should be clearly identified, and elements 1 - 3 of individual supervision should normally be undertaken by the line manager who would be a registered social worker.

Supervision in multi-professional teams

Where social workers are located in multi-professional teams or project groups, with a manager from another experience background, the various elements of supervision identified above may be split amongst several people. Models of shared supervisory and managerial responsibilities are well tried and tested with social work students and newly qualified social workers, and can be managed effectively via a written supervision statement clarifying respective roles and responsibilities.

Supervision and peer learning

To see supervision as only an arrangement between an individual and their manager (or a group of supervisors) is to miss rich learning opportunities provided through formal and informal peer networks. This is an important and often underplayed part of the supervisory process. Where social workers are situated within co-located teams this is a normal part of work interaction, e.g. in case discussions and debriefings. Trends towards more home working, dispersed teams, sole social workers in multi-professional teams, and other models of working, mean that this important peer network interaction may have to be explicitly created. This should be promoted by managers, but also by trade unions, professional associations, and increasingly by the College of Social Work. Employers should support these networks which make a significant contribution to effective service delivery and the morale of social workers. The richer this experience is for employees, the less pressure it puts on an organisation's supervisory systems to provide professional challenge and updates on professional practice.

The combination of effective supervision arrangements, together with a suitable working environment, manageable workloads, supportive management systems and access to continuous learning, will help to ensure that social workers are able to provide good and responsive services for children, adults and families. By creating these conditions, employers will help to provide a setting in which social workers choose to work and remain. The Social Work Reform Board believes that all social workers should be able to expect that the Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework will form the basis for everyday social work practice in any setting in which they choose to work.

Social Work Reform Board

Building a safe and confident future:
One year on

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

December 2010

Developing a coherent and effective national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers

Summary

In its final report, **Building a safe, confident future**, the Social Work Task Force recommended:

A more coherent and effective national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers, along with mechanisms to encourage a shift in culture which raises expectations of an entitlement to on-going learning and development **(Recommendation 9)**

1.1 Social workers, as professionals, have a responsibility to continuously develop their practice. The ultimate purpose of professional development is to contribute to high quality support for children, adults and families; it is also shown to reduce burn-out and improve retention.

1.2 In order to raise standards in the profession, it is vital that we develop the capacity and improve the skills of existing social workers, alongside making longer term changes to the social work degree.   Continuing professional development (CPD) is one of the primary means of achieving this. The new framework 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 framework seeks to ensure that opportunities for learning are meaningful, plentiful and suited to the needs of the social worker and their area of work, whilst being consistently recognised across the country.

1.3 CPD should be based on the new **Professional Capabilities Framework** and should support social workers to:

- Demonstrate that they are maintaining and improving their skills
- Extend and deepen specialist skills and knowledge
- Acquire knowledge and understanding of, and contribute to, research which informs evidence-based practice
- Develop as leaders and managers both within their own organisations and within the social work profession;
- Become more confident, emotionally resilient and adaptable to the changing demands of social work
- Play an effective role in developing other social workers, (e.g. as practice educators, mentors for NQSW)
- Become the next generation of social work academics and researchers where appropriate.

1.4 We welcome your views on the guiding principles set out below and will take these on board in developing detailed proposals on the CPD Framework over the

course of the coming year.

1.5 In producing the principles we have drawn on:

- a review of relevant CPD literature and research, (including other professions and other countries)[5];
- an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of current CPD arrangements; and
- the expertise of a range of employers (local authority, private, voluntary and independent), BASW and the Unions, higher education providers, social workers, social work students and the views of service users.

Papers have been circulated amongst networks and presented and discussed at seminars, conferences and workshops. Details are available on request.

The key principles of a new CPD framework

1.6 A new CPD framework should:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Be underpinned by annual appraisal cycles in which learning and development needs can be identified and achievement recorded.
4. 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.

Proposed changes to CPD

1.7 We are 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. The model will:

- value and strengthen the range of professional development opportunities that exist outside academic qualifications, e.g. through short courses and informal learning; and
- enable social workers to gain specialist higher level qualifications through a Masters level pathway within a simple, modular structure.

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[5] *Overview of existing good practice/resources in CPD,* **www.education.gov.uk/swrb/cpd.shtml**

What can you do?

We would like to know what you think about our proposals on CPD:

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?
Q2. Will the proposals be effective in all social work settings?
Q3. Will the proposals support all social workers' individual needs, ambitions and learning styles at each stage in their careers?
Q4. How can we achieve these changes at a time of funding constraints on local authorities, other delivery organisations and higher education?

You can express your views on the proposals within this report by:

- Emailing the Social Work Reform Board at
   information.swrb@education.gsi.gov.uk
- Contributing to national and regional meetings, workshops and conferences, details of which will be posted on our website and in our newsletter
- Sending your comments to your representative organisations and asking them to submit this feedback to the Reform Board.

Developing a coherent and effective national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers

Introduction

2.1 These proposals have been developed by the Careers Working Group which was set up by the Social Work Reform Board. The group has included representatives from a range of organisations and groups with an interest in social work. Members have communicated and consulted regularly with their networks about the proposals, and their work has been informed by evidence from research and discussions.

Background and present situation

2.2 All social workers need to maintain and improve their own practice as well as take account of changes to the law, the evidence base on practice and changing societal needs. They will need to build on their initial qualifying courses to develop expertise and specialist skills appropriate to the settings in which they work now and throughout their careers.

2.3 Recent years have seen considerable work on developing and promoting post qualifying learning and skills development. The framework of Post Qualification (PQ) awards introduced in 2005, offered a valuable route to keeping knowledge and skills up to date through formal learning. However, take-up of PQ courses nationally has been patchy and many social workers have cited lack of time and support from employers as barriers to learning.

2.4 Despite these initiatives and significant funding for CPD, the Social Work Task Force said in its report in 2009 that '*CPD is not yet properly valued and supported in all places and organisations and the existing framework is not sufficiently coherent, effective, or widely understood, with weaknesses in choice, flexibility and relevance*'.

2.5 The first interim report by Professor Munro on child protection highlighted the need for a system that constantly looks to do things better. In practice, the current registration arrangements require a relatively low level of engagement with professional development through demonstration of a minimum time commitment.

2.6 There are already many good examples of professional development on which to build, including the recently introduced Newly Qualified Social Worker programme (NQSW), early professional development (EPD) scheme and Advanced Social Work Professional (ASWP) scheme. Groups of local authorities, working with local HEIs, such as the West London and West Midlands partnerships, have worked together to develop and deliver training, some of which is linked to academic awards, and the current PQ framework.

Principles for developing CPD

2.7 This paper proposes a number of principles which should underpin the development of a new CPD framework in England.

Principle One - Support social workers to maintain and develop minimum standards for re-registration set by the regulatory body, and to further develop their skills in relation to the Professional Capabilities Framework

2.8 The development of a new, coherent and effective CPD framework is inextricably linked to other proposals for reform. By setting out national expectations of social workers throughout their careers and enabling social workers to plan their progression at each career level, **the Professional Capabilities Framework** will inform the shape of CPD. Once agreed, it will help social workers and managers to identify particular learning needs based on improving skills and expertise in their area of practice.

2.9 CPD will be supported by the proposed **Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework** where the responsibilities of employers to provide resources, time and access to learning are clear. The design and delivery of CPD locally will be supported by proposed **partnership arrangements** between groups of organisations and HEIs.

Principle Two -   Encourage and motivate social workers to learn 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

2.10 A hybrid model of CPD will provide flexibility and choice, based on individual need, circumstances, learning preferences and career stage. It will enable social workers to learn and develop through a range of learning opportunities that will strengthen their evidence base, expertise and practice.

2.11 The new model will recognise the value of strengthening the range of professional development activity outside academic routes through in-house and short courses, as well as through both structured and informal practice learning. It will also provide opportunities for social workers to gain higher level academic qualifications.

Strengthening the opportunities for learning outside the academic framework

2.12 Much of the current CPD framework is built around PQ qualifications. Many potentially valuable in-house, locally provided courses or specialist courses that support improved practice are not nationally recognised. A new framework would assume a learning culture that values a much wider range of learning activities and

provides for supervision within a safe environment for critical reflection and challenge.

2.13 We know that for many employers and social workers their first priority is to improve a social worker's range of skills so that they can identify and apply in practice the most appropriate interventions. This may be through on-the-job learning, including regular high quality supervision, rather than the acquisition of academic qualifications. Employers have told us that CPD should be delivered and accessed in diverse and creative ways with an emphasis on shared learning amongst peers and developing reflective practice.

2.14 Moving towards an integrated, learner-led CPD framework opens up significant new opportunities for CPD activities. The recently introduced NQSW and EPD programmes, based on agreed national learning outcomes, are demonstrating the value of on-the-job and practice learning. Some local authorities have developed a menu of support and learning opportunities, including existing PQ modules or training courses which can be externally verified or moderated.

Examples of learning activity include learning from:
- the views of children, adults and families
- critical reflection and challenge through supervision
- critical incident analysis, analysing mistakes
- coaching and mentoring
- dialogue and discussion
- open and distance learning
- reflective learning
- empirical evidence and research
- observing and listening
- reading
- other professionals
- shadowing
- secondments
- workshops, training and development events and conferences

Academic learning

2.15 The Social Work Task Force wanted to enable and encourage those social workers who wish to do so, to achieve PQ awards at higher degree levels and to support the next generation of social work academics and researchers. Over 2,600 social workers have completed a PQ award since 2006 and over 6,000 social workers are currently studying towards one. Advanced study provides opportunities to engage in higher level critical reflection and to undertake research in practice which can directly improve services.

2.16 A single, modular Masters-Level PQ award in specialist practice will be an integral part of the hybrid model. This Masters Level award would:

- be based on curricula and standards agreed by employers, educators and the

profession, shaped by the Professional Capabilities Framework;

- be achievable through a range of learning methodologies, delivery arrangements and time-scales;

- make provision for accreditation of prior learning and in-house learning opportunities;

- build on and align to existing approved PQ courses;

- be capable of being studied by social workers with different educational backgrounds and at different stages of their social work careers;

- provide opportunities for practice-based research;

and may be:

- recognised and 'badged' by the College of Social Work.

2.17 The different stages of a Master's award would lend themselves to gradual attainment. It will also be important for social workers to be able to access and progress through the stages of the Masters award as suits their personal circumstances, preferences, learning needs and the demands of their job.

2.18 Some staff interested in specialist Masters level qualifications may need additional study and support. This could include through '*Return to Formal Learning'* modules. The increasing numbers of social workers entering the profession with a Masters level degree will also need support and incentives to undertake more specialist courses. Some social workers would also value the opportunity to undertake a Doctorate and should be enabled to do so.

2.19 Employers and social workers have told us that enabling continuing academic development would help to raise the status of the profession and mirror opportunities available for other professions. Opportunities for inter-professional learning, development and qualifications are also valuable for integrated practice contexts. Education and training for the roles of Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP), practice educator and on safeguarding are particularly valued by social workers and employers.

2.20 In meeting these aspirations we will need to consider the opportunities already available and the range of roles social workers perform, as well as the capacity of employers, HEIs and others to provide the desirable breadth of options.

Principle Three - Be underpinned by yearly appraisal cycles in which learning and development needs can be identified and achievement recorded.

2.21 CPD should become a continuous process, developed and reviewed as part of ongoing arrangements for managing performance and planning development. A social worker's aspirations should be discussed alongside organisational and local

service needs and should be recorded in a development plan. There should be an annual planning cycle which considers CPD as well as the process of setting, implementing and evaluating objectives.

2.22 Social workers should record their CPD formally, but with minimum bureaucracy, in an agreed format. This could be built up over an individual's career and be nationally recognised. One option would be to use a career-long Personal Development Record /passport, building on those started through initial training and education and NQSW, to record achievements and CPD. This could be used regularly in supervision and performance appraisal.

Principle 4 - 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

2.23 For the new framework to be effective, it will be important for social workers and their employers to understand the range of learning and development opportunities available, and to know how to access these.

2.24 Employers and social workers have told us that the CPD framework should have consistent but relevant learning outcomes that are accepted across England, and that informal and non-accredited learning and academic learning should be equally valid and valuable. Once the Professional Capabilities Framework is in place, social workers and their employers can decide the best way for each individual to achieve these outcomes.

> Using the Professional Capabilities Framework as the basis for assessing learning outcomes for CPD, no matter how these are achieved, will provide national consistency, whilst retaining the flexibility of local arrangements.

Content of CPD

2.25 A key aim of CPD is that social workers can improve their practice and adapt to the changing demands of the complex task of social work. Training and education has always needed to respond to new policy requirements and emerging local delivery arrangements. The basis for the content of CPD will also be shaped by the outcome statements and thresholds in the Professional Capabilities Framework. A social worker's priorities for development will usually relate to the specialist area in which they work and should be based on an assessment of current needs. Partnerships between employers and HEIs can play a key role in planning, commissioning and delivering training in an area, and provide a more strategic approach to developing and updating practice.

Accreditation

2.26 Accreditation is a mechanism for recognising a wide range of development activities, so that the achieved outcomes are valued and portable. Not every form of learning will be capable of formal accreditation, but there are various ways that learning could be documented and validated against the learning outcomes of the Professional Capabilities Framework:

- A 'light touch' learner-led verification of learning e.g. the social worker recording their own reflective learning.
- Verification that agreed learning objectives have been achieved e.g. by a line-manager, mentor or training provider.
- External assessment/moderation of in-house or other learning.
- Formal accreditation of in-house learning and other CPD activities.
- Accreditation of learning by an HEI to accumulate credits towards an academic award.
- Accreditation of learning/HEI programmes by e.g. the College of Social Work.

2.27 Some HEIs already offer accreditation which enables appropriate learning credits to be awarded through assessment of reflective portfolios or other assessment activities (e.g. NQSW). It may be possible for other bodies such as the National Skills Academy or the College of Social Work to accredit or badge training. Such options would ensure some level of consistency and standardisation and allow recognition of a range of CPD.

2.28 It is recognised that systems that accredit all types of CPD may not be viable or affordable. We need to avoid imposing recording and "accreditation" mechanisms which place additional burdens on social workers, employers and providers of CPD.

Funding

2.29 The development of cost-effective courses will be important. Where employers fund training they will expect to see learning linked to practice needs, showing clear benefits to the organisation from the investment.

2.30 The hybrid model, which includes a range of ways of learning, could provide cost effective ways to achieve CPD. As part of some initiatives, such as those in the West Midlands and West London, social service departments are collaborating across authorities to commission tailored programmes to meet their needs; in some cases university educators, employer trainers and in-house social workers work together to deliver courses within the workplace or accredit in house provision. We aim to establish a partnership framework to support and facilitate arrangements for qualifying training and CPD.

2.31 Currently employers can claim funding from the Children's Workforce Development Council or Skills for Care to support their NQSW programmes and the EPD and ASWP schemes. Targeted funding from CWDC and Skills for Care has also supported collaborative regional developments. These projects have been successful, and have been helped by the additional funding. It is important that these

projects can be built on, with funding distributed more equitably across the country.

2.32 Current HE funding arrangements mean HEFCE is not funded by Government to support students studying qualifications at an equivalent or lower level to their existing qualification, which affects those with a Masters or PQ award. It is not yet clear how proposed changes to funding for university courses will affect future take up of PQ courses.

Next steps - implementation and ownership

2.33 We have heard that at times of stress and pressure it is even more difficult for social workers and employers to do more than the minimum CPD required for re-registration. This is because the long term benefits of CPD may take second place to delivering essential front line services with decreasing resources. We therefore sought the views of a wide range of employers and social workers about what would make a successful CPD framework in a climate of structural change and funding pressures.

2.34 We were told that the framework should be simple and flexible with protected time to learn and reflect within social work practice, as emphasised by the first Munro report.

2.35 The proposals for a new CPD framework will need to be refined and developed to take account of changes. These will include any recommendations made by the Munro Review and the Family Justice Review in 2011.

2.36 The College of Social Work intends to help social workers to meet the regulator's standards for CPD, and will wish to ensure CPD is available to develop and support high professional standards. The College will work with the profession, employers and educators to confirm the Professional Capabilities Framework outcomes and thresholds that will determine the content of CPD and may wish to take the CPD framework forward. The College may choose to promote training on priority topics arising from policy and practice imperatives, and may also consider that it has a role in approving/badging some of the formal learning available to social workers.

2.37 Further work is needed to transform the principles set out in this document into a workable operational framework. Lessons learnt from strengthening learning through social work practice, and other initiatives, will inform the future framework.

Social Work Reform Board

Building a safe and confident future:
One Year On

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

December 2010

Improving the Quality and Consistency of the Social Work Degree in England

Summary

This paper brings together proposals for implementing four of the Social Work Task Force recommendations to improve the quality and consistency of the social work degree by:

- Improving the calibre of those selected for social work degrees
- Reviewing the curriculum and its delivery
- Establishing new arrangements to provide sufficient high quality placements which are properly supervised and assessed
- Introducing more transparent and effective regulation

Social Work Task Force Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5

Ongoing work is being undertaken on developing a model to forecast workforce supply and demand **(Task Force recommendation 14)** which is closely linked with these proposals.

Proposals

1.1 Over the course of the past year, we have developed a number of proposals in response to the Task Force's recommendations on the social work degree. There is further work to do in these areas but we are currently seeking feedback on progress to date. Our proposals fall in 3 key areas:

Improving the calibre of entrants to social work degrees

- More rigorous selection criteria including a written test, interview and group activity

- Thresholds for entry including minimum UCAS point thresholds for undergraduates, a 2.1 normally required for Masters-level study, basic skills requirements and competence in written and spoken English

- Involvement of employers, service users and carers in selection processes

Practice learning

- Retention of the requirement for 200 days practice learning, with two defined placements of 70 and 100 days, the remaining 30 days to be used for skills development

- Development of a practice learning curriculum to inform placements and the permeation of teaching and learning within the HEI

- Arrangements for supervision and assessment of students on practice placements

- Quality and quantity of practice placements

Curriculum development, delivery & regulation

- Development of a curriculum framework based on the Professional Capabilities Framework

Underpinning principles

1.2 The principles which underpin our proposals are:

- That social work education and training should be a shared responsibility between employers and HEIs; and

- That employers, service users and carers should be consistently and substantially involved in the design and delivery of courses.

What can you do?

We would like to know what you think about our proposals on the social work degree:

Q1. Will these proposals improve the quality and consistency of students' learning experiences and result in better trained social workers?

Q2. How can we ensure that these changes are adopted?

Q3. How can these improvements be achieved at a time of funding constraints?

You can express your views on the proposals within this report by:

- Emailing the Social Work Reform Board at information.swrb@education.gsi.gov.uk
- Contributing to national and regional meetings, workshops and conferences, details of which will be posted on our website and in our newsletter
- Sending your comments to your representative organisations and asking them to submit them to the Reform Board
- Responding to the Department of Health consultation in 2011 on the review of student bursaries
- Responding to the Health Professions Council (HPC) consultation on minimum standards for registration in 2011

Improving the Quality and Consistency of the Social Work Degree in England

Introduction

2.1 This report brings together proposals for implementation of four Social Work Task Force recommendations which will together improve the quality and consistency of degree courses leading to registration as a social worker.

The four recommendations are to:

- Strengthen the calibre of entrants accepted to study on social work degree courses (Recommendation 1)

- Review the content and delivery of the curriculum (Recommendation 2)

- Establish new arrangements for providing sufficient high quality placements which are properly supervised and assessed (Recommendation 3)

- Put in place more transparent and effective regulation of social work education and training (Recommendation 5)

2.2 The aspiration is that together these reforms will improve the learning experiences of students and result in graduates who are suitable and better prepared to undertake the demanding and complex challenge of social work today. The development of a model to forecast workforce supply and demand (Recommendation 14) will also be essential in determining student numbers and provision of placements and we will report on developments in this area in the course of the coming months.

2.3 The proposals presented here have been developed by the Education Working Group which was set up by the Social Work Reform Board. The group has included 25 representatives from a range of organisations and groups with an interest in social work education and training. This has included, employers, social work academics, students, practitioners, practice educators, training officers, service users and carers and national organisations. Members have communicated and consulted regularly with their networks about the proposals, and their work has been informed by evidence from research and discussions. A list of sources of evidence and development activities are contained in Appendix 1.

2.4 These proposals have evolved and have been refined by the very people who will be most affected by them and those who will need to implement them on the ground.

Context

2.5 Social work degree courses are offered at both Honours degree (currently the route for 75% of students) and Masters degree level (25% of students). The courses are approved by the General Social Care Council (GSCC) as enabling students to attain the standard of proficiency to become a social worker defined in the Care

Standards Act 2000[6].

2.6 From April 2012 the regulatory function for social work will transfer from the GSCC to the Health Professions Council (HPC) which will be renamed to reflect this new responsibility. Until this time, the GSCC will continue to regulate social workers and social work degree courses. The HPC is developing its own statutory standards of proficiency for social work and consultation with the sector will follow. These minimum standards will allow HPC to determine thresholds for safe and effective practice which must be met for registration and re-registration. The standards of proficiency will be embedded in standards of education and training which will ensure that anyone successfully completing an approved programme will meet the standards required for safe and effective practice. The HPC will regulate the social work degree against these standards. We anticipate that the College of Social Work will wish to develop the learning and curriculum framework for social work in the future.

2.7 The Munro Review of Child Protection which will report in January and again in April 2011 may well make further recommendations for social work degrees and CPD. These will need to be taken into account when refining the proposals in this paper

Links with other recommendations of the Social Work Task Force

2.8 Whilst this paper focuses on the four recommendations listed in the introduction, all the Task Force recommendations will ultimately need to be considered together. Reference is made throughout this paper to some of the interdependencies between our current proposals and other developments which are crucial to the successful reform of social work education.

2.9 The Professional Capabilities Framework will inform the education proposals as follows:

- Criteria for admission to the social work degree will reflect the beginning stage of the nine capabilities;
- The 'curriculum' for practice placements will be set out in terms of the nine capabilities, staged to reflect levels of learning appropriate to first and second/'final' placement; and
- The curriculum framework for qualifying level will be set out as statements of learning outcomes for each of the nine capabilities, agreed by all partners. It is envisaged that other existing requirements will be referenced within this structure and adapted over time to be compatible.

2.10 We believe that this will lead to more consistent outcomes and clarify the purpose and shared responsibilities for the quality of degree courses.
Partnerships

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[6] Sections 63(5) and 63(6)

2.11 HEIs and employer partnerships must agree how they together ensure up to date and professionally relevant delivery of social work degree courses in their area. Partnerships determine how employers and practitioners will be involved in student selection, design and delivery of the degree and provision of high quality placements. These will also provide a forum for ensuring quality assurance compliant with statutory requirements to be set by HPC. Future guidance may be held by the College of Social Work. Our proposals for effective **partnerships** outline good practice expectations for the degree, provision of practice placements and CPD, which will include the development of Practice Educators.

Common issues

2.12 There are a number of factors which we recognise may have implications for the proposals in this paper:

- Public sector funding constraints mean that Local Authorities and other agencies may have less capacity in future to provide placements and be involved in the design and delivery of education and training.

- Changes to higher education (HE) funding and student finance may present a challenge to the aspirations for improvements to social work education. Work is underway to understand the implications of these funding changes for the social work degree and the future supply of social workers.

- The Department of Health is reviewing the student bursary and formal consultation will take place in the New Year.

Aims and objectives in improving the social work degree

2.13 The proposals in this paper will:

- Improve the skills and expertise of social work graduates

- Achieve greater consistency in content, quality and outcomes of degree courses

- Better link theory and research to practice

- Ensure that courses are based on shared expectations between employers, practitioners, HEIs, the profession and government

- Ensure sufficient high quality placements are available for students

- Reinforce the degree as the start of a continuous process of learning and development throughout a career in social work

The involvement of service users and carers in the social work degree

2.14 Since the social work degree was introduced in 2003 service users and carers must be involved in all aspects of the design and delivery of courses including selecting students. The government currently supports this involvement through a grant to HEIs. Although the degree of service user participation has varied across courses it has been a successful element of the degree, much valued by students. Service user and carer 'visitors' also work with the GSCC in regulating courses This has been positively evaluated.

2.15 We and the Task Force have recognised the benefit of this participation and recommend that service users and carers should be consistently and substantially involved in the design and delivery of courses.

Proposals for improving the quality and consistency of the social work degree

2.16 The following sections of this paper cover a number of specific proposed changes to the social work degree.

2.17 There are a variety of views on the social work degree and how it is best developed, many of these strongly held. Throughout the following sections of the report you will see notes which summarise the nature of the discussions by the Education Working Group and how this led to the set of proposals they have made.

Section 1: Improving the calibre of entrants to social work degrees

3.1 The Task Force emphasised the importance of strengthening the calibre of entrants to social work degree courses in raising the standards and status of the profession. Selection to the social work degree implies selection for the social work profession- a profession with a register and protected title. The Task Force concluded that not all HEIs were assessing candidates rigorously enough to make sure that they had the right mix of intellectual and personal qualities to succeed. Some courses were accepting people who were felt to be unsuitable for professional training at degree level. HEIs are responsible for their own admissions policies, within the requirements set by professional bodies, regulators and in some cases government. Currently the requirements for entry to social work courses are set by the Department of Health.

3.2 There is strong consensus that change is needed because:

- Some HEIs do not have sufficiently rigorous selection procedures

- Social work is a complex and demanding job which requires a particular mix of intellectual capacity, analytical skills, and personal qualities such as emotional resilience, empathy and use of authority

- We need students who can successfully complete the course and enter the workforce as competent and confident professionals

The proposals for improving the calibre of entrants to social work degrees

3.3 The overall theme of our proposals is for a holistic approach to selection. Candidates should be assessed against agreed criteria, based on the first level of the Professional Capabilities Framework, using a range of methods to ascertain the extent to which they meet the complex mix of intellectual and personal qualities identified as essential.

3.4 HEIs will have their own preferences and capacity for different processes. We have proposed what we consider to be essential requirements but, in doing so, are mindful that current strengths of the degree, including the diverse profile of graduates, must not be lost. Once agreed these requirements will be published alongside a sector-led good practice guide to assist HEIs.

PROPOSAL 1A: Clearer information for applicants

3.5 HEIs should clearly indicate that the social work degree is a professional course leading to registration as a social worker, list their criteria for admission, state what selection processes will be used and the need for enhanced Criminal Records Bureau and health checks.

PROPOSAL 1B: Written Test

3.6 ALL candidates who meet screening requirements should complete a written test, regardless of previous qualification or educational background. This should measure the applicant's ability to write clearly and coherently in the English language, and the capacity to develop reflective, analytical and conceptual thinking. HEI procedures should verify authorship of the written piece.

> **Notes:** *There was strong support for these* proposals *from all representatives including students, employers, service user and carers and academics.*

PROPOSAL 1C: Interviews and group activities / exercises

3.7 Individual interviews- ALL candidates who are finally selected for the social work degree should have performed well in an individual interview to evaluate their communication skills, commitment, understanding of social work, and life and work experience. This includes international applicants using methods such as web cams or other video link facilities.

> **Notes:** *There is mixed research evidence of the effectiveness of interviews as a selection method and some HEIs have stopped undertaking interviews for reasons of cost and time. However, except for a small proportion of academics, there is a strong intuitive view, that all applicants should be interviewed due to the importance of good communication and relationship building skills for effective social work practice. This aligns with procedures for other professions[7], but is not currently required by the HPC for other courses they regulate.*

3.8 Group activities/exercises- ALL candidates should participate successfully in a group activity/exercise prior to acceptance onto the course. The value of these is recognised but in the current funding environment it is proposed that the method should be left to the discretion of each HEI based on resource and capacity issues.

PROPOSAL 1D: Thresholds for entry

3.9 Social work initial qualifying courses are offered at both Masters Degree and Undergraduate BA/BSc Hons level. Almost 30% of students entering social work qualifying courses have a first degree. We are proposing that, in future, applicants to Masters level qualifying courses should normally have achieved a 2.1 in their first degree.

3.10 Of those entering undergraduate social work degree programmes the majority have level 3 qualifications such as 'A' levels, BTECs or ACCESS diplomas and we would expect this proportion to increase. Currently there is great variety in the grades required according to the reputation and popularity of the HEI. We are proposing that, in future, these applicants will usually be expected to have achieved

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[7] Including teachers, nurses and many medical schools

a minimum of 240 UCAS points or equivalents (based on the 2009 average across social work degree courses) to be offered a place on the social work degree. Proposals to deviate from this will need to be explored during approval and re-approval processes.

3.11 For those entering via ACCESS routes (24% of undergraduate intake) HEIs are encouraged to work with local colleges and take account of the new grading of ACCESS courses to determine equivalence with UCAS points or grades required for A-level candidates.

Notes: There is strong support for these proposals to ensure that those entering social work courses have the intellectual capacity for complex decision making, managing risk, producing high quality reports and communicating with a range of senior professionals., The prior academic achievement of students is one of the best indicators of success at degree and post graduate level [8]. Raising the academic thresholds is likely to raise the profile of HEIs offering social work degree courses and the status of social work as a discipline. [9]

The continuation of ACCESS courses as an alternative route is accepted and in line with Government policy for ensuring mature students and those from less traditional education backgrounds can access higher education.[10]

PROPOSAL 1E: Basic skills requirements

3.12 ALL applicants must have GCSE grade C or above in English and maths or certificated equivalents. HEIs should no longer run their own equivalence tests for those who cannot provide this evidence.

3.13 ALL applicants must show an ability to use basic IT facilities, including word processing, internet browsing and use of email.

Notes: There is strong support for all these proposals. We should expect social work students to commence their studies with adequate English, numeracy and IT skills which are achieved prior to application.

PROPOSAL 1F: Competence in written and spoken English

3.14 Social work courses should raise requirements for communicating and comprehension skills to International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) to level 7. [11] This is already required for lawyers, teachers, nurses, and other health staff and would standardise criteria across the country.

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[8] (UUK 2003) l (Pelech et al, 1999, Munro and Bridges 1995, Holmstrom and Taylor 2008)
[9] How the world's best performing schools systems come out top. (McKinsey 2007)
[10] In line with government ambitions set out in *Unleashing Aspirations* and *Higher Ambitions, the future of universities in a knowledge economy,* BIS, 2009.
[11] www.ielts.org.uk

Notes: A significant proportion of external examiners and employers comment that some students and social workers cannot write clearly in English. Many service users are concerned that their social workers do not speak good English. It is important to recognise the advanced communication skills required of social workers in order to practise effectively. There is strong support for this proposal.

PROPOSAL 1G: Involvement of employers, service users and carers in selection processes

3.15 We strongly support the involvement of employers and service users in selection and interview processes and we believe that the current financial support for this should be maintained.

Costs

3.16 Involving service users, carers and employers in selecting students is more expensive than selection procedures for courses which are purely academic. Costs vary considerably amongst HEI depending on who is involved and the number of applicants.

3.17 We recognise the current financial context but believe that more rigorous selection will:

- Ensure that students have the intellectual capacity and personal qualities to learn and develop through their courses to the standard required and reduce the risk of unsuitable graduates entering social work.

- Reduce the levels of withdrawal.

- Reduce the disproportionate time and public money spent supporting unsuitable students or those who are having difficulties and provide more equitable support for all students.

3.18 It is also recommended that HEIs should have in place 'Exit routes' to enable such students to transfer to other courses or receive other awards where appropriate or possible.

Section 2: Practice learning

4.1 The Social Work Task Force considered that high quality practice placements were vital to help students develop the capacity, skills and values to practise effectively and become social workers at the end of their degree. There was universal concern that many student placements do not allow them to learn what they need and sometimes lack high quality supervision and guidance. There were also concerns that students were sometimes taught and assessed by non-social workers and that some were passed who were not suitable or competent for social work practice. The Task Force recommended that new practice learning arrangements should be in place for the 2013 intake. In developing new arrangements the following issues have been considered:

- Whether to retain the current 200 days of assessed practice
- How to make sure that students have enough experience of statutory work to prepare them to work as newly qualified social workers
- Criteria and standards for those supervising, teaching and assessing students on placement
- How HEIs and employers share responsibility for allocating and auditing placements and for driving up their quality
- How to achieve a sufficient supply of good quality placements

The practice learning proposals

PROPOSAL 2A: Placement arrangements

4.2 We propose a national framework specifying the number and length of placements, with flexibility in local/regional delivery arrangements, including:

- keeping the current requirement for 200 days for practice learning

- requiring two practice placements, the first of 70 and the second of 100 days

- allocating 30 days of practice learning time to focus on skills development and integration between theory and practice, to be delivered collaboratively by HEIs and employers

- developing a practice curriculum based on the agreed Professional Capabilities Framework

> **Notes:** *The weight of opinion supported retention of 200 days for practice learning[12]. The proposal takes into account the valid arguments for ensuring more time on skills development and preparation for placement whilst maintaining two substantial placements including a final placement of not less than 100 days.*

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[12] Some parties wanted to reduce the 200 days, particularly with respect to Master programmes

> *The proposal should ease the problems of placement availability, as some HEIs move from offering three placements to two and the first placement is shorter.*
>
> *There is broad support for national consistency in the number and length of placements.*

PROPOSAL 2B: Practice learning curriculum

4.3 It is proposed that a practice curriculum is developed to specify the components of statutory social work tasks and legal interventions that students must experience during placement. This will build on the definition of practice placements developed and tested by the Social Work Development Partnership in 09/10[13] and will address the concerns raised in the notes box below.

> *Notes: There is concern that a tight definition of a statutory placement would:*
> *- Exclude voluntary sector placements which offer highly complex and high risk work.*
> *- Create confusion as to which local authority placements would meet the definition*
> *- Exclude placements within the private, voluntary and independent sector which equip students well for future employment.*
> *- Have a negative impact on supply in the current context of restructuring of services, e.g. Social Work Practices and the personalisation agenda*
>
> *These concerns notwithstanding, there is broad support for the development of a practice learning curriculum due to the importance of high quality placement experiences in preparing students for becoming effective social workers.*

PROPOSAL 2C: Supervision and assessment of students

4.4 All students must be taught and assessed by qualified and experienced social workers. Non social work professionals can continue to contribute to teaching and assessing students but cannot undertake the final assessment themselves. From October 2013 all practice educators of social work students should be registered social workers and demonstrate that they have met the new practice education benchmark standards[14]. The standards set out requirements at two stages, recognising the different levels of complexity and responsibility in teaching, assessing and supervising students.

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[13]http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/socialwork/practiceplacements/sw_statutory_practice_placements.aspx

[14] Quality Standards for Practice Learning,
http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/socialwork/practiceplacements/sw_quality_standards_for_practice_placements.aspx

Assessors of first placements

4.5 Practice educators must have at least two years of social work experience and have demonstrated the required competences of Stage 1 of the benchmark standards.

Assessors of final placements

4.6 Practice educators must have at least two years of social work experience and have demonstrated competence at Stage 2 of the benchmark statements to supervise, teach and assess social work degree students up to and including the final placement. They will be competent to recommend that the student is fit to practise at the point of qualification.

Notes: The proposed practice educator framework based on the national benchmark statement has been well received, subjected to consultation and successfully piloted with over 300 candidates during the last year.

There is broad agreement that the learning outcomes and the essential elements of the proposed framework have been found to be effective in supporting practice educators to develop the key knowledge, skills and values to teach and assess social work students.

Serious consideration has been given to proposals to allow existing practice teachers who are not registered social workers to continue as practice educators for all students. This option was not supported by the Education Working Group or accepted by the Social Work Reform Board.

PROPOSAL 2D: Improving the quality and quantity of practice placements

4.7 Regulatory levers need to be in place to monitor and assure the quality of practice learning. The HPC have clear standards for practice placements[15]. A tool to measure quality against national benchmarks (the Quality Assurance of Practice Learning[16]) is also available and could be held by the College of Social Work in the future. Proposals have been made that the provision of practice learning funding should be conditional on the quality of placements.

4.8 We need to make sure there are enough placements as well as assure their quality. It may be difficult to achieve these improvements because of;

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[15] http://www.hpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/standards/sets/
[16] Quality Standards for Practice Learning,
http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/socialwork/practiceplacements/sw_quality_standards_for_practice_placements.aspx

- Pressures on frontline services can restrict the availability of placements.

- Specific funding has yet to be identified to ensure that sufficient numbers of practice educators who are registered social workers are trained by 2013.

- Current placement provision is often secured on an ad hoc basis rather than as part of a workforce planning approach which is supported at the highest level.

4.9 Working in closer and more formal partnerships should allow Local Authorities and other organisations to have a clearer 'gate-keeping' role in relation to placement applications but ensure that those placements that are offered are of a high quality. It should also allow social workers to demonstrate advancing skills through supervising practice placements.

4.10 An effective supply and demand model is needed to underpin strategies to ensure there are sufficient placements for all students. Once this is in place, university intakes may be determined by the availability of practice learning resources and demand for social workers.

4.11 Further work is taking place to support transitional arrangements for ensuring that there is a sufficient number of placements. This includes analysis and modelling of the projected availability of appropriately qualified and experienced social workers who will be in a position to take on supervision and assessment by 2013, and the proposed effective **partnerships** framework for employers and HE.

Section 3: Curriculum development, delivery & regulation

5.1 The Social Work Task Force recommended an overhaul of the content and delivery of social work degree courses, including:

- A curriculum based on shared and agreed expectations of the outcomes, skills, knowledge, values and qualities expected of social work graduates with standards explicitly tied to robust assessment processes;
- Systems for ensuring that courses are up to date with current knowledge, policy and practice;
- Engagement of employers and service users are engaged in design and delivery; and
- A more robust regulatory approach to ensure agreed requirements are met.

Background

5.2 The curriculum for the social work degree is currently determined through a combination of the QAA benchmark standards for social work[17], the DH requirements for social work training[18] and the National Occupational Standards[19]. The Task Force was concerned that the plethora of standards set by different bodies is confusing, lacks transparency and provides weak levers for driving up the quality of social work education and training.

5.3 The Education Working Group has been working to consider how to:

- improve the employability of graduates
- make sure that students learn key knowledge, concepts, values, skills and social work approaches
- make sure that students know how to learn, think critically, analyse information, access and contribute to practice relevant research and continually improve their practice throughout their careers.

5.4 From 2012, the Health Professions Council will regulate social work education. The curriculum framework and good practice standards for educators may be held by the College of Social Work.

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[17] QAA subject benchmark for Social Work (QAA 2008)
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/statements/socialwork08.pdf
[18] Requirements for social work training (DH 2002)
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4007803
[19]http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/developing_skills/National_Occupational_Standards/social_work_NOS.aspx

PROPOSAL 3: Developing the curriculum framework

5.5 In our next phase of work we will consider how to strengthen the social work curriculum framework, and believe that this should include:

- Use of the Professional Capabilities Framework to agree outcomes at different stages of the course. This should improve consistency across HEIs, and ensure shared expectations of outcomes, a comprehensive and up to date curriculum, and a clear link between the degree and standards of practice beyond qualification.

- Design and delivery of curriculum content in partnership by HEIs, employers, the profession and service users and carers.

- Better integration of theory and practice, linking academic and practice learning and identifying clear learning outcomes, including those for assessing readiness to undertake their first and second placements.

- Good balance between core requirements and flexibility which enables educators to drive up the quality and relevance of their courses.

- Future-proofing so that social work programmes can be responsive to the changing practice and research evidence

- A focus on the 'process' of learning, recognising that 'how' the curriculum is taught and learnt is significant.

Timescales

5.6 It is currently expected that the new curriculum framework and guidance could be ready for consultation by September 2011, for publication by April 2012.

The regulation of social work education

5.7 The Social Work Task Force identified regulation as one of the most important levers for improving the quality of the social work degree. Their recommendations with respect to ensuring greater consistency and quality across all programmes were based on a robust role for the regulator.

5.8 Until the transfer of functions from the GSCC to the HPC, the GSCC will continue to regulate social work education. GSCC has already improved the transparency and effectiveness of regulation by publishing monitoring and inspection reports and introducing a new risk-based framework[20] for regulation.

5.9 The HPC has begun to develop its Standards of Proficiency for social workers which will inform the standards for education and training against which courses will

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[20] http://www.gscc.org.uk/page/111/Social+work+education+publications.html

be regulated. These standards will apply to social work and social work education from 2012 and are designed to ensure public safety, accountability and provide clear requirements relating to admissions, the curriculum and practice placements.

The role of the College of Social Work

5.10 The College of Social Work intends to hold the learning and development frameworks for the social work profession to promote high quality education and training. This might include standards for entry to professional training, criteria for placements, the practice educator standards, and the curriculum framework. Such an arrangement would enable the improvements in social work education and training we have proposed to be driven by the profession and ensure national consistency.

Further work and next steps

5.11 In our next phase of work on the improving the quality and consistency of the social work degree, we will also consider:

- Robust HEI assessment mechanisms so that only those who are suitable to practise as social workers pass their course. HEIs should:
  - o ensure fair and robust assessment of practice, with consideration of grading of practice;
  - o ensure suitability of students to continue professional training; and
  - o provide guidance on use of exit routes.

- Development of the practice curriculum.

- Exploration of different models for delivering the curriculum such as alternative routes and regional collaboration.

- How to ensure that academics are up to date with research, policy and practice, building on existing examples of secondments, joint appointments, research opportunities and the new CPD framework.

Sources which have informed this paper

- EWG meetings of 4 February, 8 March, April, July 13 September 2010, 28 October
- Meetings of:
    - o the calibre of entrants work stream
    - o Practice learning work stream
    - o Professional standards work streams
    - o Curriculum develop work stream
    - o Partnership work stream
- Circulation of draft papers through relevant networks for feedback
- Consideration of the approaches of other professions and other UK and international countries to the provision and organisation of all aspects of social work education and training (applies to all areas)
- A commissioned review of the literature and research on recruitment and selection: Holstrom, C. (2010) Selection and admission of students for social work education: key issues and debates in relation to practice and policy in England, Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work (in press) **http://www.swap.ac.uk/docs/projects/admissions_rpt.pdf**
- JUCSWEC /SWAP forums on 1 February 2010 and 4/5 2010
- Social Work Education Standing Conference 22 March 2010
- Learn to Care Conference, May 2010 and regional network meetings
- Skills for Care networks, conferences and work shops – practitioners, employers and the national conference (Oct 2010)
- Individual interviews with employers
- Joint social work education and research conference 30 June to 2 July 2010
- Focus groups/views of service users and carers from three HEIs
- Discussion at Key Deliveries Organisation meetings
- SCIE seminar on NQSW (16/04/2010), (how students learn/degree outcomes)
- SWTF Call for Evidence
- Report of the Children and Families Select Committee on social work education and training. (2009)
- Summit on education and training of social workers, 23 Sept 2009
- Moira Gibb discussions with professors of social work: 22 & 27 April 2009
- Evaluations of 15 pilot projects to test a proposed practice educator
- standards framework
- Consultations undertaken by the Social Work Development Partnership in 09/10 (statutory definition) (Department of Health, 2002)
- Current research and literature on the curriculum e.g. SCIE knowledge reviews; DH evaluation of SWD; NQSW research; research from DH/DfE policy

Social Work Reform Board

Building a safe and confident future:
One Year On

Proposals for partnerships between employers and educators

December 2010

Proposals for Partnerships between Employers and Educators

Summary

The Social Work Task Force emphasised the importance of partnerships between employers and HEIs in the design and delivery of good quality training and development for social workers.

1.1 Social workers, their employers and educators must work with a wide range of partners, including service users, carers and other professionals. This paper proposes a partnership framework between employers and educators across the whole spectrum of education and professional development. The prime partnership addressed is that between employers and higher education institutions (HEIs), but the principles can also be extended to partnerships between several HEIs, groups of employers and small clusters of organisations, as these can have a significant contribution to make to the effectiveness of local arrangements for education, professional development and the supply of social workers.[21]

1.2 The theme of partnership crosses many aspects of the social work reform programme. The proposals in this paper have close links with a number of other areas of work, including practice placements, Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), Continuing Professional Development (CPD),Standards for Employers, Supervision Framework and Social Worker Supply & Demand Model.

1.3 As it has an impact on so many areas, the partnership framework proposed in this paper aims to build on existing partnerships in order to address current needs (e.g. practice learning and CPD), whilst remaining flexible enough to accommodate future developments as they become clearer (e.g. Assessed and Supported Year in Employment).

1.4 The proposals in this paper present a balanced way forward, reflecting current best practice and evidence from research and stakeholder views on the areas of improvement needed. They take account of current policy drivers, regulatory frameworks and the overall direction of the reform programme.

1.5 A wide range of examples of existing partnerships have been provided to the Social Work Task Force and Reform Board, reflecting the diversity of arrangements already in place to meet local need. These show that 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**
  A good partnership is a joint planning and decision-making forum. Partners will need to establish joint goals and ensure a relevant shared agenda is established.

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[21]   This framework excludes any practice-based, project-based or inter-professional partnerships which may have clear and valued shared objectives, but are outside the scope of this work.

- **Based on a formal written agreement, supported by the regulatory framework, sector standards and good practice**
  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.
  There is a description of the key elements that you may wish to include in a written agreement in **Appendix 1**.

- **Based around local, flexible and diverse arrangements**
  This framework will be a trigger for existing 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.

- **Structured to operate at strategic and operational levels, and informed by workforce planning arrangements**
  Senior managers (employers and HEIs) 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.

- **Structured to operate across the whole spectrum of education and professional development and able to respond flexibly to new initiatives and policy developments**
  Initially, the prime focus of partnerships is likely to be practice learning and CPD but they must be flexible enough to incorporate new developments as they emerge. It will be essential for partnerships to keep their arrangements and written agreements under regular review.

What can you do?

We would like to know what you think about our proposals on partnerships between employers and HEIs:

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?

Q2. What aspects will contribute to the successful development of a partnership framework?

Q3. What possible barriers have to be overcome?

You can express your views on the proposals within this report by:

- Emailing the Social Work Reform Board at
  information.swrb@education.gsi.gov.uk
- Contributing to national and regional meetings, workshops and conferences, details of which will be posted on our website and in our newsletter.
- Sending your comments to your representative organisations and asking them to submit them to the Reform Board.

Proposals for Partnerships between Employers and Educators

Introduction

2.1 Effective partnerships are characterised by people working together for a common goal, based on mutual respect and value for each other's contribution. In the context of partnerships between employers and educators on social work education and CPD, they should:

- Promote and contribute to shared outcomes in the delivery of social work education.
- Develop a strategic approach to workforce planning and social work education.
- Foster relationships between key people that are based on feedback, communication, understanding and respecting each other's values.
- Provide clarity of roles and expectations as a basis for sharing the workload.

The benefits of partnerships

2.2 The social work reform programme provides an opportunity to emphasise the value of partnerships. The partnership framework proposed in this paper is based on the premise that strong partnerships and good collaboration between employers and HEIs will lead to a more strategic approach to meeting the needs of the workforce and providing high quality placements for students.

2.3 Effective partnership working will be critical in achieving the goals of the reform programme, including:

- Improving the quality of service users' experiences by developing a stronger social work profession.
- Improving recruitment and retention of high quality social workers, through collaboration between HEIs and employers in initial training and CPD.
- Maximising cost effectiveness and economies of scale at a time of financial constraint and uncertainty.
- Improving the quality and quantity of practice placements for social work students.

Current practice

2.4 There is a huge variety of partnership arrangements/networks across the country for initial education and CPD, which range from excellent in some areas to very weak or non-existent in others. We are clear that we want to learn from the best existing partnerships and we intend to make examples of good practice available on our website in due course.

2.5 We know that there are some key factors that can hinder the development of good partnerships, such as:

- Poor engagement
- Over-reliance on key individual staff or relationships between specific individuals.
- Lack of commitment from senior staff.
- Lack of clear drivers and objectives.

2.6 There is also a significant weight of evidence and examples of good practice that illustrate the factors that support effective partnership arrangements and we have included a list of sources and activities that we have used in developing this work in **Appendix 2**. Engagement with stakeholders tells us:

- Partnership arrangements should be formal, and linked to incentives and sanctions wherever possible.
- Existing partnership activities are at different stages of development. The new framework must be able to meet existing priorities and have the potential to adapt to new ones as they emerge.
- Partnership arrangements should encompass a range of activities at strategic, specialist and local levels, with some aspects of partnership needing to be organised differently to others.
- The new framework should be flexible, but must also facilitate strategic planning and engagement across the whole continuum of qualifying and post-qualifying education.

Key issues and policy context

2.7 A common concern was that partnerships were ineffective or problematic because they lacked formal arrangements. It is notable, though, that many partnerships, including some of the very best, currently operate without any written agreements. However, people with experience of practice learning partnerships were particularly concerned that tensions sometimes arise over sudden increases in student numbers by HEIs and/or sudden reductions in numbers of placements by employers. Both sides felt helpless as there seemed to be no sanctions or ways of preventing partners making unilateral changes to previous agreements or understandings.

2.8 The proposals for a partnership framework have addressed the strong stakeholder view in favour of formalising arrangements, but must take into account the current policy context. The framework must be consistent with the options for accountability that will be part of the planned future context for social work. This is likely to include:

Regulation:
As the GSCC's functions are transferred to the Health Professions Council (HPC), we anticipate that the latter will regulate partnerships in line with its Standards of Education and Training (SETs). This includes promoting/monitoring formal arrangements (SET 5.1) and regular and effective collaboration (SET 5.10) between

HEIs and placement providers.

College of Social Work:
As the College of Social Work establishes itself it may wish to take on a role in promoting partnership. This might include setting national partnership expectations, collating good practice examples, providing national workforce planning data, and guidance.

Sector standards:
Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework: The draft Standards for Employers state that employers should ensure there are appropriate partnerships to support the delivery of social work education and CPD.
Collaboration partnership statement (Universities UK): This is a high level statement which sets national/sector level expectations for partnership between universities and employers in England.

2.9 The developing regulatory and best practice frameworks will provide the incentives and guidance to support future engagement in partnerships. Through active participation in a partnership:

- Employers will be able to demonstrate they are meeting the Standards for Employers.
- Employers and HEIs will be able to jointly provide evidence to the regulator of their formal arrangements.
- Individual social workers and managers who are members of local partnerships will be able to demonstrate their skills within the Professional Capabilities Framework[22] and provide CPD evidence at the level appropriate to their role.

2.10 In a climate of financial constraint, joint planning in partnerships will also allow employers and HEIs to demonstrate best value in the delivery of social work education through shared activities and economies of scale. Partnerships will have a key role in the future of social work education, and no employer or HEI should expect to deliver social work programmes without having formal partnership arrangements in place.

2.11 Research[23] shows that the engagement of senior managers is critical to the effectiveness of partnerships. Senior managers from both employers and HEIs should be involved in agreeing the numbers of placements that can be provided and local priorities for CPD. Strategic decision making should be informed by data on supply and demand of social workers. Other groups of staff, under the umbrella of the partnership, will be responsible for operational aspects of the agreement e.g. recruitment of students, provision and quality assurance of placements.

2.12 The aim of the partnership framework is to build on current partnerships and not prescribe structures and detailed arrangements. There should be flexibility to support 'natural partnerships' that work locally, taking into account regional and sub

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[22] Specifically Professionalism (1), Contexts and Organisations (8) and Professional Leadership (9)
[23] *Strengthening employer engagement in the planning, development and delivery of social work education.*

regional arrangements, and the location of universities. All partnerships will need to review their arrangements in the light of this framework. All partnerships will need the capacity to change and meet new expectations as they emerge.

> The Reform Board believes all employers and HEIs involved in any part of the spectrum of social work education and professional development should be part of a formal partnership with at least one organisation and follow the good practice set out in this paper.

Key features that lead to effective outcomes

2.14 A good partnership cannot simply be a bureaucratic structure. Formal arrangements are a means of facilitating relationships between employers and HEIs, in order to distribute power in a constructive way. No partner is able to achieve the outcomes necessary on their own, but what each contributes is essential to the other partner. A partnership framework should enable communication, joint planning and shared activities to move to the complex level necessary to produce high quality social workers.

2.15 This means that the goal of the framework is to create partnerships that are effective joint decision-making forums and able to address such areas as:

- Ensuring appropriate quality and quantity of social workers to support local workforce planning at strategic and operational levels, including:
  - *Making realistic agreements about the number of social work students within a partnership, taking into account resources, need and organisational pressures within the participating organisations.*
  - *Joint planning and participation in the recruitment of high calibre students.*
  - *Developing high quality practice placements.*

- Ensuring agreed contributions from all partners to the delivery of qualifying and post qualifying programmes and provision of:
  - *A relevant and current curriculum for both taught and practice components of the social work degree.*
  - *Robust suitability and assessment processes.*

- Ensuring the quality of social workers in their first year of practice and beyond including:

  - *Agreeing priorities for PQ/CPD taking into account workforce needs and new developments in policy and practice.*
  - *Joint participation in the support of newly qualified social workers.*

- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the learning experience of social workers on placement, in practice and at university, at qualifying and post qualifying levels. Examples might include Joint evaluation of the curriculum of social work and PQ/CPD programmes, with mechanisms for influencing and changing content.

- Implementing, reviewing and monitoring the involvement of service users across the whole spectrum of training for social workers.

- Developing opportunities for shared research and promoting the evidence base for social work decisions.

Suggested content of partnership agreements	Appendix 1
Area	**Indicative content of agreement**
Aim and purpose of agreement	- What are the shared objectives of the partnership? - What is the range and focus of the partnership? e.g. does it cover the full spectrum of social work education or practice learning/CPD only? - Has the agreement been formalised through the signatures of senior managers
Priorities and targets for period of the agreement	- What period of time does the agreement cover? - What numbers of placements have been agreed? - What other priorities and activities for PQ/ASYE/CPD/research have been agreed?
Management of the partnership	- How is the partnership structured? - What sub-groups have been formed to undertake the work? - How will they be supported and resourced? - What are the strategies for managing disagreements? e.g. more or less placements than first agreed - What would be the role of any third party in resolving conflict?
Roles and responsibilities *Expectations should be mutual, and detail will help avoid assumptions.*	- What are the joint responsibilities of employers and HEIs? - What are the separate responsibilities of employers and HEIs? - What is each partner expected to do regarding e.g. recruitment and selection of students, development of the curriculum, provision of practice learning etc? - How will changes be made to the arrangements and whose responsibility will this be?
Quality assurance/measures of success	- What quality assurance systems will be used e.g. QAPL, QAA and how will they interlink? - What other measures of success will the partnership use?
Resources and finances	What will each partner contribute in terms of time/staff/administration resources/financial costs?
Timescales and review	- When/how will the agreement be reviewed? - How will the partners give each other constructive feedback? - How much notice must be given of changes to the agreement outside review period? - How will revisions be made as a result of the review?

Documents used by the partnership work stream   **Appendix 2**

1. *Strengthening employer engagement in the planning, development and delivery of social work education.* This research was commissioned from Salford University by the SWDP. It considers models of partnership in other professions, models of partnership in the UK and internationally, and the outcome of an employer survey. It makes a number of specific recommendations of issues that could be considered in developing effective employer/HEI partnerships in social work. (Skills for Care website – social work section).

2. *Submission from JUC SWEC to SWTF – Models of partnership working.* This submission describes the strengths and activities of eleven partnerships in the UK, illustrating the wide range of activities and arrangements that can contribute to good partnership working.

3. *Higher Ambitions, the future of universities in a knowledge economy (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills).* This places partnership in a wider context of government strategy for sustaining the strength of higher education in an increasingly competitive environment. It stresses the importance of employers becoming active partners with universities, and sets out expectations of universities and employers in producing a skilled workforce.

4. *Evaluation of SWDP funding 2009-10 (summary).* This describes the activities which resulted through the distribution of funding to employers directly or via regional networks. It illustrates the use of financial levers and objective setting.

5. *Feedback from employers on partnership (Learn to Care).* Responses to this questionnaire circulated by Learn to Care stressed the value of having clear objectives set for partnerships.

6. *The Standards for the Practice Learning in the Degree in Social Work.* (Northern Ireland Care Council). These standards are used by the NICC to approve and monitor practice learning arrangements. A set of standards, with rationale and criteria, are provided for course providers and practice learning providers.

7. *Partnering for success - steps and tools. (Tribal/Department for Education).* This toolkit includes a partnership questionnaire and a template for a partnership agreement.

8. *Stepping higher: Workforce development through employer-higher education partnerships (HEFCE/Universities UK/CBI on education 2008)*

9. *Supporting higher education in further education colleges (HEFCE 2005/09)*

10. *Code of practice on indirectly funded partnerships (HEFCE Report 99/63)*

11. These are a range of documents published by HEFCE on good practice in partnership and partnership agreements, relevant to all employer/HEI partnerships.

Regulation and accountability:

- Standards of education and training guidance. (Health Professions Council)
- Proposed Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework.
- Higher education and employer collaboration partnership statement: social work (Universities UK).

Papers produced by partnership work stream:

- Discussion paper – key principles and options
- Report of partnership seminar held on 14th September 2010

Paper produced by practice learning work stream:

- Partnership and practice learning – early ideas

The Social Work Task Force

The Social Work Task Force conducted an independent review of social work over the course of 2009. Members were selected on the basis of their individual expertise and experience, and included individuals who were able to provide a range of perspectives, including those of service users, front-line social workers and social work leaders.

The Task Force consulted widely before making its recommendations, gathering evidence from all areas of the sector, including from thousands of social workers through regional events and its call for evidence. It established a clear consensus about the changes that are needed, and obtained a strong commitment from employers, educators, the profession and government, to deliver them together. In its third and final report in December 2009, it set out the necessary reforms for social work, in the form of the following fifteen recommendations.

The Social Work Task Force's 15 recommendations

1. **Calibre of entrants**: that criteria governing the calibre of entrants to social work education and training be strengthened.

2. **Curriculum and delivery**: an overhaul of the content and delivery of social work degree courses.

3. **Practice placements**: that new arrangements be put in place to provide sufficient high quality practice placements, which are properly supervised and assessed, for all social work students.

4. **Assessed Year in Employment**: the creation of an assessed and supported year in employment as the final stage in becoming a social worker.

5. **Regulation of social work education**: more transparent and effective regulation of social work education to give greater assurance of consistency and quality.

6. **Standard for Employers:** the development of a clear national standard for the support social workers should expect from their employers in order to do their jobs effectively.

7. **Supervision**: the new standard for employers should be supported by clear national requirements for the supervision of social workers.

8. **Front line management:** the creation of dedicated programmes of training and support for front line social work managers.

9. **Continuing Professional Development:** the creation of a more coherent and effective national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers, along with mechanisms to encourage a shift in culture which raises expectations of an entitlement to ongoing learning and development.

10. **National Career Structure**: the creation of a single, nationally recognised career structure for social work.

11. **National College of Social Work**: the creation of an independent national college of social work, developed and led by social workers.

12. **Public Understanding**: a new programme of action on public understanding of social work.

13. **Licence to Practise:** the development of a licence to practise system for social workers.

14. **Social Worker Supply:** a new system for forecasting levels of supply and demand for social workers.

15. **National Reform Programme:** the creation of a single national reform programme for social work.

Membership of the Social Work Reform Board

The Social Work Reform Board met for the first time in January 2010 and is chaired by Moira Gibb CBE, who also chaired the Social Work Task Force. The member organisations on the Reform Board bring together representatives of social workers, employers, educators and service users to plan how, together, they can make reforms happen and report to government on progress.

The Social Work Reform Board has formed three main working groups to bring together relevant parties to develop plans to make the Social Work Task Force recommendations a reality. The working groups involve the different stakeholders interested in the social work reform programme. Their role is to inform and develop the recommendations and draft proposals for consultation to ensure that final arrangements work in practice. The main working groups focus on education, career development and standards for employers.

The Social Work Reform Board is also informed by the Social Workers' Reference Group, which ensures that the views and perspectives of social workers are at the forefront in developing the reform programme.

The following organisations send representatives to attend Social Work Reform Board meetings:

- A National Voice
- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)
- Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)
- Association of Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts (Aspect)
- Association of Professors of Social Work (APSW)
- British Association of Social Workers (BASW)
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (CAFCASS)
- Children England
- College of Social Work
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
- Department for Education (DfE)
- Department of Health (DH)
- General Social Care Council (GSCC)
- Health Professions Council (HPC)
- Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy & Social Work (SWAP)
- Joint University Council – Social Work Education Committee (JUC-SWEC)

- Local Government Association (LGA)
- Local Government Employers (LGE)
- Mind
- NHS Confederation
- Princess Royal Trust for Carers
- Shaping our Lives
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)
- Unison
- Universities UK (UUK)

Government officials from the Devolved Administrations have observer status on the Social Work Reform Board and the following organisations also attend its meetings:

- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC)
- Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
- Ofsted
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
- Skills for Care (SfC)
- Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

Changing contexts and Social Work Reform

Foundations for system reform

In 2010

- *Professor Munro published* The Munro Review of Child Protection – Part One: A Systems Analysis

- *The Department of Health published* A Vision for Adult Social Care

- *The Department of Health published their Public Health White Paper,* Healthy Lives, Healthy People: our strategy for public health in England

- *Frank Field MP published* A New Strategy to Abolish Child Poverty

- Employers carry out the 'health check' recommended by the Social Work Task Force

- The College of Social Work appointed an interim board and co-chairs

- *Building a safe and confident future: One year on* is published setting out proposals in five key areas for reform

System Reform

Spring (up to 31st March) 2011

- Feedback on *Building a safe and confident future: One year on* and further development of proposals

- The Reform Board's proposed model for supply and demand will be published

- The Standards for Employers will be finalised

- *Professor Munro will publish her interim report on child protection (January)*

- *Local Government Employers and the Trade Unions expect to consult on the findings of their work on social work job profiles.*

- *Department of Health will consult on new bursary arrangements for students on social work degrees*

- Work will continue on developing proposals for an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

- *Graham Allen MP will provide an interim report on the issue of best practice in early intervention*

- *The consultation on the framework for adult social care will end*

- *The Family Justice Review will publish its interim report*

- Guidance on the calibre of entrants to the social work degree will be published

- Guidance on practice learning and new practice educator standards will be published

April 2011 to March 2012

- College for Social Work legally established

- College will consider its future role in relation to the Reform Board's work on overarching professional standards, continuing professional development (CPD) and the social work degree

- Professor Munro will publish her final report on child protection (April)

- Consult on new curriculum framework and guidance for the social work degree

- A new framework for CPD ready for consultation

- The Health Professions Council will consult on standards of proficiency for social workers

- Graham Allen MP will publish his final report on early intervention

From April 2012

- Regulation of social work will transfer to the renamed Health Professions Council

- New curriculum framework and guidance for the social work degree will published taking account of consultation responses

From September 2012

- Changes to funding of higher education and student finance will come into effect

- Testing models of assessment for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

2013 onwards

- New practice learning arrangements in place

- HEIs apply the new curriculum framework and guidance

- All practice educators to be registered social workers meeting new practice education benchmark standards

2014 onwards

- Improvements in social work education and training will be embedded

Annex D

Glossary of terms

ACCESS – Access to Higher Education Diploma

ADASS – Association of Directors of Adult Social Services

ADCS – Association of Directors of Children's Services

AMHP – Advanced Mental Health Practitioner

APEL – Accreditation of Prior Learning

APSW – Association of Professors of Social Work

ASWP – Advanced Social Work Professional

ASYE – Assessed & Supported Year in Employment

BASW – British Association of Social Workers

BIS – Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

CAFCASS – Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

CQC – Care Quality Commission

CDWG – Careers Development Working Group of the Social Work Reform Board

CRB – Criminal Records Bureau

CWDC – Children's Workforce Development Council

DfE – Department for Education

DH – Department of Health

EPD – Early Professional Development

ESWG – Employers' Standards Working group of the Social Work Reform Board

EWG – Education Working Group of the Social Work Reform Board

HPC– Health Professions Council

GSCC – General Social Care Council

HEFCE – Higher Education Funding Council for England

HEI – Higher Education Institution

ICT – Information and communication technologies

IELTS – International English Language Testing Systems

JSWU – Joint Social Work Unit of the Department for Education and Department of Health

JUC-SWEC – Joint University Council – Social Work Education Committee

LA – Local Authority

LGA – Local Government Association

LGE – Local Government Employers

NOS – National Occupational Standards for Social Care

NQSW – Newly Qualified Social Worker

NSA – National Skills Academy for Social Care

Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

PCF – Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers in England

PQ – Post-Qualifying (training for social workers)

PRTL – Post Registration Training and Learning (for social workers)

QAA – Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

QAPL – Quality Assurance of Practice Learning

SOLACE – Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

SCIE – Social Care Institute for Excellence

SfC – Skills for Care

SWAP – Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy & Social Work

SWRB – Social Work Reform Board

SWRG – Social Workers' Reference Group of the Social Work Reform Board

SWTF – Social Work Task Force

UCAS – University & Colleges Admissions Service

UUK – Universities UK