Social work teaching partnership programme pilots: evaluation

Final research report

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Executive Summary

Background

Following the publication of the Narey[1] and Croisdale-Appleby[2] reviews of social work education, Government developed a programme to improve the quality of education received by social work students, including through provision of statutory placements for more students and increased employer involvement in student selection. It also accepted Narey's recommendation to define more clearly the skills and knowledge that social workers should have, to carry out their professional roles effectively.

Some of the key drivers for the Social Work Teaching Partnerships (SWTPs) programme are: to enhance partnership arrangements between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and employers; attract more able students; embed the knowledge and skills into academic curricula and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for existing workers; and overall raise the quality of social work practice.

The government document *Children's Social Care – a vision for change*[3] noted that:

> *too often in the past reform of social work education and training has been solely focused on the initial and generic qualification of social workers. This is not sufficient to bring the social work profession to its full potential. We need instead an end-to-end practice-focused national career pathway which develops talent from practitioner to Practice Leader.*
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> *…To deliver this change we must:*
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> * *Bring the best and brightest into social work and give them the training and development they need to succeed at this highly complex work. We will expand the Frontline and Step Up programmes to bring more excellent practitioners in via work based graduate training, and we will expand Teaching Partnerships between universities and employers to ensure students are properly prepared for the social work task.*

Adult social work has an essential role to play in helping people keep themselves safe from harm and getting them the right care and support to achieve the best possible outcomes. To make that happen, Government believes it essential that everyone working in adult social work should have the knowledge and skills to do their jobs well. Raising the quality of social work education, training and practice is central to social work policy.

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[1] Martin Narey (2014). Making the education of social workers consistently effective. Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of the education of children's social workers.
[2] David Croisdale-Appleby (2014). Re-visioning social work education. An independent review.
[3] Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-reform-a-vision-for-change

The first phase of the SWTP programme sought to introduce these reforms by inviting applications from local authority led partnerships. The aim was to strengthen the quality of practice learning and Continuing Professional Development among trainee and practising social workers. The Government believes '*such arrangements would create better join up between training, learning, research and practice and strengthen joint work to improve the quality of initial and post qualifying education.*'[4] The programme was developed and co-funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health (DH).

The programme built upon existing partnership activities whilst at the same time setting a number of ambitious stretch criteria that partnerships should meet. It was intended to be bold and challenging. This evaluation has focused on the initial four funded pilot SWTPs. The report considers the successes, attribution, benefits of activities, challenges overcome and lessons learned. In January 2016 the Secretary of State for Education announced a continuation of the Teaching Partnerships programme. The findings of this evaluation cover the period up until end March 2016. All reporting of evaluation findings is anonymised.

Evaluation Aims, Objectives and Methodology

The overall aim of the evaluation was to enable the DfE and DH to independently assess the quality and effectiveness of the SWTPs in order to inform decisions about potential future development from 2016-17. Individual objectives are summarised below:

- To assess how far teaching partnerships have adapted current arrangements to provide a high quality of education and practice training.

- To examine the individual delivery models adopted and provide a judgement about the ability of the models to provide a high quality of education and practice training.

- To evaluate progress and early impact in each of the SWTPs against the published criteria and against their own milestones for achievement, including identifying factors that helped or hindered progress and achievement of the milestones.

- To consider the implications of teaching partnerships on the wider social work training sector.

The methodology adopted included interviews with national stakeholders and quantitative and qualitative research with key partners within each SWTP. A survey of student social workers was followed by a series of focus groups. Follow up discussions with students,

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/383048/review_of_social_work_education_update.pdf

practice educators (PEs), social workers and course tutors led to the development of eight case studies that were carefully selected to show examples of effective practice. Discussions were also held with representatives of HEIs and LAs local to each of the SWTPs to determine if and how SWTP activities had affected them. The findings were analysed and presented in the final published report.

Meeting the Stretch Criteria

The programme set eligibility and stretch criteria in eight areas of social work education, practice and CPD. The former were conditions partnerships had to satisfy at the point of bidding to be considered for funding; stretch criteria were higher standards in each of the areas which funding could help them achieve. The eight areas were divided into core (areas essential for development) and discretionary (which partnerships had the choice of working towards or not). In the majority of cases SWTPs either met the core stretch criteria by April 2016 or had put in plans to do so; all had planned activities against several of the discretionary stretch criteria too.

All SWTPs had worked together previously in different combinations and in different programmes but these had not entailed the breadth and formality of arrangements required of an SWTP.

Admission requirements were changed at all SWTPs for the 2016 recruitment round, with raised Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) point thresholds and more rigorous recruitment processes that included the involvement of service users.

All SWTPs met their targets for statutory placements although some students were already committed to placements in non-statutory settings before the pilot began.

All SWTPs reported considerable activity in incorporating and promoting the Chief Social Workers' Knowledge and Skills Statements (CSWKSS) including providing workshops, lectures and twilight sessions focussing on them. They reported work to familiarise teaching consultants and practice educators with them, including their incorporation into audit tools and practice guides.

SWTPs, at the time of evaluation, were all well on the way to developing and implementing enhanced career pathways to support social workers throughout their careers, including improved linkages between initial education, the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) and practice education.

All SWTPs had developed ways of involving practitioners in academic delivery, although, for two SWTPs, co-delivery was not scheduled to happen until post-pilot.

All SWTPs had arrangements in place for evaluating and improving the quality of placements and for developing the skills of PEs.

Workforce planning and professional development and career pathways covering the SWTP area, rather than at individual employer level, were common areas of focus within the discretionary stretch criteria.

Academics spending time in practice had taken place in three of the SWTPs and was planned to happen in the fourth.

The benefits of SWTP activities

It is too early to identify impact on students from SWTP activities. Impact will become clearer later in the students' studies and as they move into becoming practising social workers. All of the partners interviewed believe that the statutory placements will benefit students, as will having practitioners increasingly involved in teaching.

SWTPs provided HEIs with the opportunity to develop their awareness of the Government's social work reform agenda, build stronger links with employers, better reflect the workforce needs of employers in their recruitment and curricula and provide academic staff with opportunities to refresh their knowledge of practice.

The majority of employers interviewed confirmed that they had benefited from their involvement in the partnership, including from being directly involved in decision-making.

Greater exposure to theoretical concepts and research findings had led experienced practitioners to increased reflection on, and critical evaluation of, their own practice. There had also been specific interventions within the SWTPs that had brought considerable benefits to practising social workers including training for PEs and work-based supervisors.

Service users had an increased level of involvement regarding admissions. However, their involvement in the curriculum was patchy, although 54% of students surveyed reported some degree of service user involvement in their training and 96% thought that this had been 'very' or 'quite' important. Other initiatives were put in place to involve service users in academic delivery and to ensure their voice was heard in training and in practice.

Additionality and value for money

Funding had allowed existing activity in each SWTP to become more focused. There was strong evidence of partnership working including the sharing of confidential and commercially sensitive information which was essential to ensure partnership activities were able to target the needs of all the partners.

The majority of work streams were led by employers where previously they might have been led by HEIs. Joint workforce planning activities were underway. There was

evidence of cultural change, with a distinct shift in attitudes with some sceptical academic staff and employers now being enthusiastic about partnership activities. Bringing practice into academia had enhanced the student experience and allowed for CPD of the social workers involved.

Each of the partnerships identified a range of activities and outcomes beyond those contained in the stretch criteria that had been made possible by the SWTP model and the funding attached to it. For example, one SWTP instigated monthly twilight sessions to share good practice, research studies and similar material of wider interest. Another developed an undergraduate programme for unqualified practitioners.

It is too early to say if the SWTPs have represented value for money. First impressions were that with some SWTPs there was a new way of thinking, a new spirit and the programme had changed the way the whole sector thought about training with more awareness of the need to develop staff and provide CPD, particularly PEs.

Challenges faced by the SWTPs and how they have been overcome

Partnerships are not working in isolation, with students from their own and other HEIs needing placements as well as those involved in the partnership. This resulted in considerable demand on placements and pressure on social work practitioners with already heavy caseloads to take on more work.

Some Private and Voluntary Institutions (PVIs) that previously would have been considered as providing 'statutory work', on investigation were found not to meet the more stretching definitions for the partnerships. There was concern at losing the richness of experience that can be offered by good quality PVI placements and some innovative approaches were adopted to ensure that experience was captured.

Some non-involved HEIs were nervous about what might happen when existing agreements with local employers come to an end and those employers focus solely on students from within the partnership. Some discomfort had also been expressed by partners in three SWTPs with another HEI within the SWTP catchment area, but which had not been involved in the partnership.

Regardless of the detail of any future roll out of the SWTP programme, there was some local pressure on existing SWTPs to include HEIs who were within their geographic catchment but so far not included and other employers who would like to join their partnership in order to be part of the initiatives that were underway.

In some of the SWTPs the service user related developments were not prioritised perhaps as much as other elements; in others, innovative approaches had been developed to involve service users and capture their experience.

There appeared to be more engagement with children's than adults' services within some local authorities.

There is a clear need for an SWTP Communication Strategy to be central to the programme right from the bidding stage, including someone with project management responsibilities who would sit on all work streams and report back on the ongoing work and progress made.

The gathering of workforce data implicitly assumes that LAs have workforce development strategies or plans and this proved not to be the case.

Across the SWTPs, partners commented on how well the budget had been used and the effectiveness of its distribution across activities. However, it should be noted that not all partners agreed with how the funding was used and its allocation between the partners involved.

The vast majority of partners across the SWTPs mentioned the time constraints to achieve the ambitions of the SWTP.

Key transferable lessons

The key transferable lessons from the evaluation evidence are:

- **Governance structures** – it has worked well to have decision making at director level on a strategy board, with operational groups involved in development and delivery reporting to that board.

- **Communication** – the importance of clear communication strategy (from the outset) with partners, front-line social workers, students, HEI staff etc.

- **Project Manager** – the vital role a dedicated project manager can play in underpinning partnership activities by co-ordinating meetings, acting as a channel for communications etc.

- **Admission criteria** – it takes time for enhancements to be developed and incorporated into admissions procedures.

- **The importance of social worker and service user involvement** – the benefits of having practice and real life experience brought into academia cannot be underestimated.

- **Allow for the different pace between services** - children's and adults' services operate at different paces of development that have to be allowed for in partnership activities.

- **Plan for new employers and HEIs to join the partnership** – if partnerships decide to allow new employers and/or HEIs to join existing partnerships (which is at their own discretion), they need to consider how this will be managed.

- **Staff changes** – restructuring within LAs can impact on the partnership with key individuals changing roles and no longer being available.

Key areas for consideration

Key issues for DfE/DH, existing and prospective SWTPs in relation to the Expression of Interest (EoI) process when bidding to become a partnership

- Any future funding of the partnership programme may wish to consider whether timetables could be brought in line with academic years.

- The development of full risk assessments, a dedicated communication strategy and fully worked-up partner exit plan and entry strategy for possible new partners should be incorporated into any future SWTP EoI requirements.

- The burdens of paperwork on SWTPs trying to establish themselves through their set-up phases should not be underestimated; it is considerable.

- Partnerships should be made more aware that cross-organisational briefing of roles and responsibilities is critical in order to avoid delays as people endeavour to catch up. This also reinforces the need for an adequate induction process to be developed for new partners or new individuals replacing partner representatives.

- Partnerships need to ensure commonality of language throughout both the bidding and submission process; difficulties around language were also felt during the early implementation phase of the pilot.

- SWTP bidders need to be realistic about the scope of achievements indicated in bids; in other words what they could sensibly achieve with the resources and time available.

Wider issues for DfE/DH to consider

- SWTPs should be encouraged to ensure that any applications for future funding reflect the reality of what can be achieved and allow for a period of implementation, testing and evaluation of what has already been achieved rather than pushing forward with further innovation short term.

- SWTPs should be encouraged to consider what else they could bring to their approach from existing programmes such as Step Up and Frontline.

- Consideration needs to be given to some practical questions that are being asked by key stakeholders, SWTP partners and non-involved LAs and HEIs in relation to the future of the SWTP programme and wider roll out.

- Partners have identified a need for a central repository for materials developed by SWTPs that can be shared by others including guidance material and case studies.

Issues for existing SWTPs to consider

- There is a real need for SWTPs to put in place a specific programme and project management function to support partnership activities if they do not already do so.

- Communications strategies should be reviewed and consulted upon within the partnership with a view to improving lines of communication.

- SWTPs should consider how the considerable experience and knowledge of PVIs could be utilised within the partnership structure and explore innovative approaches to development of statutory placement opportunities that include an element of time spent within a good quality assured PVI. This should include a consideration of how to work with national organisations rather than just those with a local office.

- SWTPs should consider the process involved for introducing new partners within their SWTP beyond the current year and how to handle the implications this might have.

- There is a need for induction plans to be in place for new personnel becoming involved in SWTP programmes.

- Further consideration needs to be given to the involvement of service users within the partnership activities. This should include the anticipated benefits of SWTP activities to service users and how partnerships will monitor and evaluate this.

Section 1: Understanding the context

Background

Following the publication of the Narey[5] and Croisdale-Appleby[6] reviews of social work education, Government developed a programme to improve the quality of education received by social work students, including through provision of statutory placements for more students and increased employer involvement in student selection. It also accepted Narey's recommendation to define more clearly the skills and knowledge that social workers should have to carry out their professional roles effectively.

Some of the key drivers for the SWTP programme are to enhance partnership arrangements between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and employers; attract more able students; embed the knowledge and skills into academic curricula and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for existing workers; and overall raise the quality of social work practice.

The government document *Children's Social Care – a vision for change*[7] noted that:

> *too often in the past reform of social work education and training has been solely focused on the initial and generic qualification of social workers. This is not sufficient to bring the social work profession to its full potential. We need instead an end-to-end practice-focused national career pathway which develops talent from practitioner to Practice Leader.*
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The first phase of the SWTP programme sought to introduce these reforms by inviting applications from local authority led partnerships. The aim was to strengthen the quality of practice learning and CPD among trainee and practising social workers. The Government believes '*such arrangements would create better join up between training, learning, research and practice and strengthen joint work to improve the quality of initial and post qualifying education.*'[8] The programme was developed and co-funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health (DH).

The Four Social Work Teaching Partnerships

The SWTP Programme built upon existing activities between LAs and HEIs whilst at the same time setting a number of ambitious stretch criteria that partnerships should meet. It was intended to be bold and challenging. This evaluation has focused on the initial four funded pilot SWTPs. The table below sets out the characteristics of the SWTPs with a brief overview of their partners and local context.

Table 1: An overview of the four Social Work Teaching Partnerships

Social Work Teaching Partnership	Partners and local context
Greater Manchester	This partnership comprises ten local authorities (LAs) (that make up the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)), two Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and two private or voluntary institutions (PVIs). The SWTP became an Academy from the early stages of the programme. Activities are taking place against the background of Devolution Manchester (Devo Manc)[9]. The area has one other local university which is not a member of the partnership.
North West Midlands	This partnership comprises five local authorities/employers, one HEI, a PVI and a non-departmental public body. Owing to the stretched nature of the partnership catchment there are some partners that are a considerable geographical distance from each other. There is one other local university that is not a member of the partnership.
South East London	This partnership comprises three local authorities and one HEI. The partners have a history of working together on specific initiatives and face similar social challenges, which is why they have chosen to form an SWTP. However, London differs in some respects to other SWTPs in that its population density and infrastructure means

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[9] The areas covered by Manchester's devolution agreement include Health, Social Care and Welfare, Employment, Housing, Land, Planning, Children's Services, Community Care, Fire, Policing and Transport.

Social Work Teaching Partnership	Partners and local context
	that students may live, and want placements, in areas outside the SWTP and the variety of HEIs in relatively close proximity gives rise to specialisms.
South Yorkshire	This partnership comprises four local authorities, one Children's Services Trust and one HEI. All LAs within South Yorkshire are in the partnership. Before last year the LAs were part of another partnership called SYNEM (South Yorkshire, North East Midlands) which was disbanded in March 2015 in order to form the SWTP. There is another local HEI that is not a member of the partnership.

Source: HOST Policy Research, Evaluation of SWTP Programme 2016

This report considers the successes, attribution, benefits of activities, challenges overcome and lessons learned by these four SWTPs. In January 2016 the Secretary of State for Education announced a continuation of the Teaching Partnerships programme. The findings of this evaluation cover the period up until end March 2016. From this point, all reporting of evaluation findings is anonymised.

The following two sections set out the aims, objectives and methodology for the evaluation. Sections 4-7 set out the key evaluation findings and the final section sets out transferable lessons and areas for consideration. Appendices include a review of the evaluation methodology, an overview of the stretch criteria that SWTPs were required to work towards, a set of case studies and a glossary.

Section 2: Aims and objectives of the evaluation

The pilot SWTPs had nine months to implement their plans from confirmation of funding to the end of March 2016. The evaluation activities were designed to collect information at key points during that period, with initial contact in September and more detailed follow-up in late October and late February/early March 2016 (to inform this published report).

The overall aim of the evaluation was to enable the Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health (DH) to independently assess the quality and effectiveness of the SWTPs in order to inform decisions about potential future development from 2016-17. Individual objectives include:

- To assess how far teaching partnerships have adapted current arrangements to provide a high quality of education and practice training as a result of participating in the pilot (e.g. number and quality of students enrolled, assessment of entry requirements and methods, assessment of curricula, number and quality of statutory placements, practice education, supervision etc.). To include an early consideration of value for money.

- Examine the individual delivery models adopted and provide a judgement about the ability of the delivery model to provide a high quality of education and practice training and to assess whether the key elements of the programme are being delivered to a high standard (admissions and recruitment, academic delivery, partnership working etc.). This will include a consideration of whether one model of delivery was more successful than another (bearing in mind the limitations of time and other factors specific to the teaching partnership sites).

- Evaluate progress and early impact in each of the selected teaching partnerships against the published criteria and against their own milestones for achievement, including identifying factors that help or hinder progress and achievement of the milestones.

- Consider the implications of teaching partnerships on the wider social work training sector. What effect will they have on local HEIs and LAs who are not currently participating in the partnership?

Section 3: Outline methodology

The timescales for the pilot SWTPs were tight, with notification of successful bids issued in late June 2015, which coincided with the main holiday period for the involved HEIs and many of the involved staff from the LAs. For most SWTPs, therefore, activities began to really get underway in early September 2015 which gave them seven months to implement plans by the end of March 2016 rather than a full academic year. The evaluation was undertaken in seven main fieldwork stages as follows.

Stage 1: Inception, project steering, desk review and development of research tools

This included an inception meeting and review of project documentation.

Stage 2: Interviews with national stakeholders

Semi-structured telephone interviews with key national stakeholders were conducted in September/early October 2015 and repeated in February/early March 2016. A total of 12 key stakeholders participated in these interviews. The aim of the initial interviews was to establish stakeholders' views on expectations of the SWTPs: what they considered to be the greatest challenges; any issues they foresaw; and what they considered to be the success criteria for the partnerships. The second interviews focused on impact, success and benefits of the SWTPs and a consideration of future challenges.

Stage 3: Research with the key partners within each Social Work Teaching Partnership

Research with key partners had two elements - quantitative and qualitative - as follows:

Quantitative research: DfE issued a data proforma to collect basic information on the number of student placements offered and number of teaching staff/practice educators in each organisation. In February 2016, HOST issued a proforma to partnerships in order to gather outcome data in relation to the number of statutory placements.

Qualitative research: Qualitative research was undertaken with the key partners within the SWTPs at three main points in the research.

In September 2015 initial qualitative confidential interviews were conducted with partners and this informed the content of the interim report. Detailed discussions with lead partners enabled the development of a balanced scorecard jointly with each partnership with agreed measures and outcomes. The scorecards were designed to reflect the key activities and outcomes of the partnerships, taken from their implementation plans and grant agreement documentation, mapped against the stretch criteria. The content of the

scorecards was agreed with the lead partners within the SWTPs. The scorecards proved a useful tool for collecting achievement data and were used by several of the SWTPs to monitor their activities.

Interviews were conducted with all partners involved in each SWTP to consider the background to the development of the partnership, what each organisation hoped to achieve by being involved in the partnership, and to identify key challenges that needed to be overcome and any early successes from involvement. 55 interviews were conducted at this point.

In October 2015 a second round of interviews was conducted with lead partners to obtain an up-to-date overview of progress against the scorecard and any issues of particular importance to be highlighted for consideration in the interim report.

A final discussion with the lead partners from each SWTP took place in late February 2016 and March 2016 in order to update the balanced scorecards with achieved outcomes and a perspective on likely achievements by the end of March 2016 or soon after. At the same time, final evaluation interviews were conducted with lead partners and all other partners were invited to submit evaluation forms with their views on benefits, impact and success of their SWTP. Additional interviews were conducted with a range of academic staff, teaching consultants and practice educators. A total of 63 individuals were involved in this stage of the research.

Stage 4: Evaluation fieldwork with student social workers

This fell into two areas:

Quantitative research: In September/October 2015, liaison took place with lead partners and their HEIs to issue each student social worker in scope of the SWTP with an e-questionnaire. A second survey took place in February/early March 2016 with those who agreed to be followed up. The initial survey was issued to 415 student social workers and achieved a 49% completed response. 166 agreed to be followed up in a second survey and this achieved a 35% completed response. The survey proved a valuable source of information that informed the focus group discussions and the development of case studies (presented at Appendix C). However, the numbers involved in the survey are quite small and therefore the results should be treated with caution.

Qualitative research: The results from the second questionnaire were used to inform focus group discussions with student social workers in early March 2016. Five focus groups were conducted with students. In addition, 28 follow up discussions were conducted with student social workers, practice educators and others who had participated in SWTP activities in order to obtain their perspective. These interviews were conducted in confidence and contributed to the development of the case studies in Stage 5 below.

Stage 5: Development of case studies

In March 2016 eight, composite, stand-alone case studies were developed in order to illustrate aspects of effective practice within the SWTP models. The case studies were developed around the positive experiences of student social workers/practice educators/work-based supervisors/academics with an exploration of the Teaching Partnership methodology and innovation that had led to that positive experience. The case studies are presented at Appendix C.

Stage 6: Discussions with local HEIs and LAs not involved in the partnerships

In order to consider the implications of the SWTPs on wider social work training locally ten interviews were conducted with a number of HEIs and LAs who either sit within the partnership catchment but who were not involved in partnership activities or whose catchment area borders on the SWTP operating area.

Stage 7: Analysis and reporting

The two major outputs from the evaluation are the internal interim report which was delivered to DfE in October 2015 (the key findings from which have been incorporated into this report) and this final report.

A more detailed review of the evaluation methodology can be found at Appendix A.

Section 4: Meeting the Stretch Criteria

Key findings:

- In the majority of cases SWTPs either met the core stretch criteria by April 2016 or had put in plans to do so; all had recorded activities against several of the discretionary stretch criteria too.

- All SWTPs had worked together previously in different combinations and in different programmes but these had not entailed the breadth and formality of arrangements required of an SWTP.

- Admission requirements were changed at all SWTPs for the 2016 student recruitment round, with raised UCAS point thresholds and more rigorous recruitment processes that included the involvement of service users.

- All SWTPs met their targets for statutory placements although some students were already committed to placements in non-statutory settings before the pilot began.

- All SWTPs reported considerable activity in incorporating, promoting and embedding the CSWKSS including providing workshops, lectures and twilight sessions focussing on them. They also reported work to familiarise teaching consultants and practice educators with them, including their incorporation into audit tools and practice guides.

- SWTPs, at the time of the evaluation, were all well on the way to developing and implementing enhanced career pathways to support social workers throughout their careers including improved linkages between initial education, ASYE and practice education.

- All SWTPs had developed ways of involving practitioners in academic delivery, although, for two SWTPs, co-delivery was not scheduled to happen until post-pilot.

- The involvement of service users in the curriculum was patchy, although 54% of students surveyed reported some degree of service user involvement in their training and 96% thought that this had been 'very' or 'quite' important.

- All SWTPs had in place arrangements for evaluating and improving the quality of placements and for developing the skills of practice educators.

- Workforce planning and professional development and career pathways covering the whole SWTP area, rather than simply at individual employer level, were common areas of focus within the discretionary stretch criteria.

- Academics spending time in practice had taken place in three of the SWTPs and was planned to happen in the fourth.

The Stretch Criteria

The programme set eligibility and stretch criteria in eight areas of social work education, practice and CPD. The former were conditions partnerships had to satisfy at the point of bidding to be considered for funding; stretch criteria were higher standards in each of the areas which funding could help them achieve. The eight areas were divided into core (areas essential for development) and discretionary (which partnerships had the choice of working towards or not).

The core areas were those which Government prioritised for 2015-16 and included governance; admissions; placements and curriculum; academic delivery; and practice support and development. Partnerships had a choice over whether to include any of the discretionary areas in their proposal; these were progression; workforce planning; and academics' experience of practice. The stretch criteria can be found in Appendix B to this report.

The partnerships undertook a large number of initiatives, most of which fit within the stretch criteria but some of which went beyond them as the increased communication between employers and HEIs led to discoveries of other areas in which they could work together. This meant many partnerships undertook activities that were not originally envisaged and therefore extended or fell outside the expectations of the stretch criteria. These are referred to elsewhere in the report and in the case studies.

The following section looks at what SWTPs achieved against each of the core stretch criteria and in any discretionary areas. It draws upon the evidence provided during interview and data collection with the SWTP partner organisations, the student survey, student focus groups and follow up discussions with students, PEs, work-based supervisors and academics in order to illuminate the findings. Illustration of activities is provided by drawing on the eight case studies conducted for the evaluation and presented at Appendix C.

Governance

All of the partnerships reported that partners had worked together previously in specific areas (for example, Step Up to Social Work) but none had previously established the formal arrangements expected of SWTPs. By the time of the first round of evaluation visits (October 2015), partnerships had been expected to have developed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and established governance and strategic board arrangements. In two partnerships, arrangements had taken longer than anticipated to finalise (in part due to changes of key personnel) but all partnerships had completed this by the end of 2015. Partnerships developed agreed strategies for the pilot and established work streams involving senior staff from across the partner organisations, although for some again staff turnover was an issue that reduced efficiency as new board/work stream members were brought up to speed.

SWTPs had all given thought to sustainability after the pilot. One partnership had engaged an external partner to undertake a regional Workforce Planning Project (concluded before the end of March 2016) to support continuing sustainability. Another had established a Centre of Excellence to carry out key social work education and continuing professional education functions with the key elements of the approach agreed. One SWTP reviewed placement standards and designed a regional standards framework for practice education to ensure high quality practitioner support and training on placement and post-qualification. They also appointed a Quality Assurance and Standards Manager to oversee implementation.

Admissions

All SWTPs had developed plans to involve service users and employers in the admissions process as follows:

One partnership had raised to 100% (from 70%) the involvement of service users/carers in assessment of student capability for entry on the MA programme and to 100% (from 50%) the involvement by practitioners in the partnership's admissions process for all applicants. Another had reviewed the quality of the admissions process ensuring full service user engagement from both adults' and children's services to replicate the processes used for the Step Up to Social Work programme. One partnership developed a system of 'speed interviews' between service users and applicants. Another had identified a Service Users and Carers (SUC) facilitator to work on admissions, programme delivery, assessment and partnership governance delivering two 'Total Respect' training programmes; the intention had been for the facilitator to have already begun work on training for SUCs but this had been delayed and was due to commence at the end of March 2016 with one workshop and a second was planned for later in the year.

All partnerships were recruiting against new minimum UCAS points and degree requirements; while it was too early to determine the impact this will have on the number and quality of applicants, one HEI noted that applicant numbers were lower (at end of February 2016) than in previous years.

An HEI in one partnership had appointed a new recruitment lead to develop and implement the new recruitment processes. Actors had developed case based scenarios to assess capability and 'in situ decision making' in one SWTP, which was highlighted as a key success by partners as it provided a resource that the partnership can utilise for the future. Another had put new admissions policy documents in place that included two additional elements: a verbal reasoning test and a role play. Early feedback was that those getting through to the final stage of the selection process appeared to be resilient, interpersonally skilled and strong academically. A similar approach had been adopted in another partnership which had developed a test at the point of application assessing all applicants' intellectual ability, social work values and behaviours via written assessments,

verbal reasoning, group discussion and scenarios/role play. One partnership developed capability assessment tools including a Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) and quantitative and integrated reasoning tools which they found to be too complicated on review, so they did not proceed with it. Instead, they mapped the domains tested in the GMAT against the existing admissions criteria and made some changes to incorporate additional elements which are now being recruited against and will be evaluated and expanded in the future.

Placements and curriculum

These criteria provided more challenges to the SWTPs than some and led to a more diverse range of approaches.

The stretch criteria required a minimum one and preferably two statutory placements for each of the students involved in the SWTP and partnerships reported that at least one statutory placement would be provided for students in scope by the end of March 2016. All of the SWTPs were able to meet their targets for statutory placements (equating to 259[10] in total across the four partnerships). Of those student social workers responding to the survey, 91% in total of those who had begun or completed a single placement since November 2015 had done so in a statutory setting (the figure was 100% for four of the five HEIs in the partnerships). It must be noted that, in focus groups, a small number of student social workers thought there were benefits to having occasional placements in non-statutory settings, for example in PVIs whose work enabled them to better see and understand service users' issues and experiences related to a particular specialism. SWTPs had all taken steps to review their placement matching approaches and to publish or update guidance. This included taking into account students' preferences where possible and ensuring all students are given at least one statutory placement. Those students in a focus group at one SWTP who were on their second placement confirmed that the revised process was more efficient than the system it replaced and that needs and preferences were better catered for. All four partnerships identified the improved quality of placements as one of the main benefits for students of SWTPs.

It was clear from the student survey that SWTPs have had a mixed success to date with promoting awareness and understanding of the CSWKSS in the curriculum with 27% of students responding to the survey saying that they were 'not at all familiar' with them. Exploring the issue in more depth in focus groups, students reported varying levels of awareness of the CSWKSS in the employers with whom they had their placements ranging from no mention of them at all to one LA where all staff had attended a launch session; it was clear that students were unsure too how they related to the Professional

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[10] This was the total figure from the data provided to us by SWTPs. However, it should be noted that some non-statutory placements had already been arranged before the successful notification of the pilot and are included in this figure (15) and some were final placements that would normally be statutory. Some placements were yet to take place but were due in March.

Capability Framework which they saw as more obviously embedded into the curriculum.

However, partnerships themselves reported considerable activity, including preparing academics and practitioners to embed and deliver the CSWKSS which should feed through to students over time. Reviews of the academic curriculum had taken place in all SWTPs with the intention of embedding the CSWKSS in future social work education programmes. In one partnership, a paper version of a Professional Development Career Portfolio integrating ASYE and the CSWKSS had been developed with the intention of transferring this to a digital platform with a life-long licence to be granted to the SWTP students, portable between HEIs and employers and to incorporate CPD. Implementation was now about to take place and the SWTP partners highlight it as a key success of the partnership activities. The portfolio is completely transferable and could be used by nurses, occupational therapists and others, not just social work and so has considerable reach (and added value).

Other partnerships had used workshops, master classes and practice educator CPD modules to help embed the CSWKSS. In one partnership, teaching consultants had played a pivotal role in embedding the CSWKSS into the curricula with Action Learning Sets and the development of a reflectional evaluation tool that recorded how teaching consultants' inputs align with the CSWKSS and how they have acted as CSWKSS champions. They believed that this enhanced the involvement of teaching consultants in the design and delivery of teaching and learning had enabled a closer alignment between the academic curriculum and contemporary practice.

One SWTP used the frameworks of 'The Child's Journey', 'Integration for Independence' and 'The Professional's Journey' as a means of re-imagining and re-structuring initial and continuing education opportunities for social workers. Pathways were identified by November 2015 and expanded through integration into the structure of the assessments used for practice learning, academic unit content, peer review of placements, the developing CPD framework and the professional development career portfolio. The partnership intended to develop this tool further and this activity was highlighted as a key success by partners; one called it a '*game changer'* as it covers theory and evidence, strength and risk and is transferable across the workforce. The same partnership had intended to establish a Professional Development Learning Centre although this has been delayed pending the outcome of a bid for a Strategic Innovation Grant. Another SWTP had planned to pilot three centres to support student practice and whole systems learning but actually established eight sites which were under development by March 2016; an initiative highlighted as a success by many of the partners involved. They were also working on the development of a sufficiency model based on a robust analysis of the regional social work workforce, mapping and remodelling to support delivery of CPD programmes in line with the proposed new national accreditation programme for social work.

In another SWTP, 94 individual practitioners had applied to one or more modules of the

Practice Education Pathway which enables social workers in the region to meet the requirements of PEPS 1 & 2 and to move into more advanced roles such as Practice Development Educator and NQSW Mentor/Assessor. However a plan for a new designation for practice educators and senior managers delivering qualifying education and ensuring quality assurance in ASYE delivery had been delayed because of the lack of capacity and not being able to start modules within the pilot timeframe, although this will be piloted later in the year. A planned CPD framework and Career Pathways founded on the Skills for Care Principles for developing CPD programmes offering portability of credits between education providers had been developed but not yet commissioned. Uncertainties around government's intentions regarding the PCF and developing something that will meet the partners' varying needs had also delayed things.

One SWTP aimed for an increase of 75 practice educators to stage two via six targeted tutoring events/workshops. This was achieved later than originally planned but 99 PEs have now completed training; 60 at Stage 1 and 39 at Stage 2. Changes to the assessment to make it more flexible proved instrumental in their success. However, plans to develop the professional educator role to include the new practice supervisor role and integrate it with the new national assessment processes are awaiting the outcomes of the national assessment process in relation to Practice Education Pathways (PEPs), and the Professional Educator role.

One SWTP had set up a research group to explore options for a Social Work PhD following on from their new advanced practitioner framework which incorporates a research element. However, the planned Skills Development Days have been delayed until September 2016 as the timescales in their implementation plan did not take into consideration that students starting in September/October 2015 had already been recruited on the old programme in December 2014, before the pilot had begun.

Academic Delivery

SWTPs had taken differing approaches to ensuring that practitioners were involved in helping design, deliver and assess the initial education academic programme:

One SWTP had delivered four two-day workshops for practice educators reaching over 40 such staff in total who were now available to contribute to academic delivery and so will significantly increase the practitioner input into programmes. From April 2016, there will be an accredited post-graduate programme for PEs available. In addition, they had recruited 2.5 FTE teaching consultants (lecturer/ practitioner roles) who will support pre and post qualifying programmes.

In another partnership, plans for practice educators to co-deliver with HEI lecturers have been delayed until September 2016. However, they had offered two three-day public speaking and effective delivery training for PEs with a view to future co-delivery in university which have proved very popular. They had recruited existing social workers to

become work-based supervisors complementing practice educators and supporting students on site who have been through a five-day programme. The SWTP had commissioned an evaluation of the programme.

A third SWTP had recruited a Consultant Academic Social Work Practitioner (Integrated Academic/Practitioner Posts) hosted at an HEI within the partnership to develop a critical approach to professional practice (the original intention was to recruit two). Training had been delivered to increase the skills of social work practitioners in relation to communication in the learning environment. Overall, the partnership had increased practitioner participation in learning and teaching to 15% during the pilot in line with their target.

One SWTP intended to recruit up to 15 teaching consultants but the interest from practitioners was extremely strong and, in reviewing the applications, the partnership realised that the range of specialist skills and knowledge on offer were such that it made sense to involve more people in the role on a part-time basis whilst continuing as social work practitioners. At the time of the evaluation, there were 37 teaching consultants in the partnership. Teaching consultants were given a four day induction to the role and partnered with an experienced academic. One student, interviewed for a case study on teaching consultants (see Appendix C) was particularly impressed by the way in which the teaching consultant modelled social work ethics and values and proved, for the student, that experienced social workers can remain positive, open-minded and enquiring. While having an increased practitioner input into training was primarily intended to support students and help in the transition between theory and practice, there have been benefits for others too. Teaching consultants had, as a result of their work, come into increased contact with academics and research findings which, in turn, had led experienced practitioners to think more about their own practice and to question more. Academics too had benefited from increased exposure to contemporary social work issues and real-life scenarios. Employers had observed wider benefits, one saying that '*the teaching consultant role has rippled through service in terms of changing the learning culture*.'

Involvement of service users had been less systematic although one SWTP had established an apprenticeship scheme aimed at care-experienced young people to contribute to the selection, teaching and assessment of students, a move considered highly successful by partners. Another involved service users in the development of the curriculum through The Child's Journey and Integration for Independence and commissioned training for them. One SWTP had appointed two service user representatives to the Board and is planning an enhanced service users' forum. One SWTP had developed a 'service user reflection and feedback tool' in order to encourage social work students to obtain feedback throughout their placement; more information on this can be found in case study in Appendix C.

In the student survey, 54% of respondents said that at least one service user had been

involved in their training since November 2015 with 82% saying that their involvement had been 'very important' and a further 14% 'quite important'. One student commented that '*It has been immensely useful in terms of being able to gain an understanding by hearing from Service Users themselves about what they want from social workers; what they have found valuable about working with* [social] *services and what they have found less useful, as this kind of feedback is invaluable in terms of informing our practice in the future and our current learning about what it means to be a good social worker.*'

All partnerships had put in place mechanisms for gathering student feedback with targets for raising satisfaction levels; although at the time of final interviews these evaluations had not been completed, some reported that early indications were that overall satisfaction levels were increasing. In one partnership, a Principal Social Worker will complete a 'deep dive' sample of placements to quality assure and measure the impact and outcomes on the students' learning experience. One SWTP has rescheduled its quality assurance and evaluation of placements until after the pilot period as the placements themselves take place in February/March 2016. They had appointed a Quality Assurance and Standards Manager. One partnership instigated an independently chaired Practice Assessment Panel to monitor placement quality standards and have implemented a new quality assurance system for evaluating placements and practice educator performance. The QA system provides a rigorous test of placements based on a systemic approach and is linked to the CSWKSS, PEPs and statutory placements requirements. Responsibility for the quality of placements will be held jointly, with employers designating practice educators for the role. One SWTP had identified front-line managers, practice educators and HEI/SUC representatives to form Peer Review Inspection Teams (PRITs) with an accompanying implementation plan. They had also developed a 360 degree teaching evaluation tool which includes SUC and employer feedback and triangulates total feedback.

Support and development of students on practice placements

One SWTP recruited two consultant practice educators (one for children and families, one for adults' services) to work with agencies to increase the number and quality of statutory placements. They had also established a model for supporting and developing students on placement as well as a comprehensive pathway of student engagement, beyond practice, placement experience and into qualified practice to build professional resilience. Training and development events and support/mentoring sessions for practice educators led by a Practice Learning Fellow have been held for two cohorts of PEs. The partnership also intends to offer honorary lectureships to five PEs with the option to increase the numbers offered lectureships over time.

Another SWTP developed a skills audit tool for PEs leading to the identification of training needs. Their regional standards framework, supported by a practice supervisor handbook, helps ensure high quality practitioner support for students on placement and post-qualification.

One SWTP formed Peer Review Inspection Teams (PRITs) involving front-line managers, practice educators, and HEI and SUC representatives. An evaluation tool for use in inspections was developed by LAs and HEIs jointly with the involvement of SUCs and timescales agreed for inspections. They had also supported training for practice educators (using backfill for posts through SWTP funding) with a target 75 completions from Stage 1 to Stage 2. At the time of the final pilot visit, 99 PEs had completed training, 60 at Stage 1 and 39 at Stage 2 of PEPs.

The final SWTP decided to build on their existing PEP which enables social workers to meet the requirements of PEPS 1 & 2 and to move into more advanced roles such as Practice Development Educator and NQSW Mentor/Assessor. Overall 94 individual practitioners have applied to one or more modules. To improve the quality of placements, a requirement to ensure contrasting placement experience was introduced into the planning process and an independently chaired Practice Assessment Panel monitors placement quality standards using Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL), the social work practice learning quality assurance benchmark statement. All final year students have a statutory placement managed and assessed by a PEPS 2 qualified practice educator. The SWTP had intended to put in place a system for employer designation of practice educators to ensure currency of practice educator skills and knowledge which has not yet been implemented, although a pilot was underway by the time of the final visit. This differs from QAPL in that it will provide a more rigorous test of placements based on a systemic approach. It will be linked to the CSWKSS, PEPS and statutory placements requirements. Employers are also more involved in the student journey through a strategic plan that includes early placement offers and end of placement interviews.

That the focus on improving placement support was beginning to have an effect was illustrated by the comment of a newly qualified practice educator interviewed for a case study (see Appendix C):

"I have been talking to students as part of my role and found this year's cohort have been very grateful for the commitment from the teaching partnership and in my professional opinion this has supported them to be better prepared for practice".

Discretionary stretch criteria

These cover progression, workforce planning and academics' experience of practice. Activities in the pilot SWTPs in relation to these are varied and some examples are given below.

One SWTP had begun a working collaboration with Skills for Care and The Association of Directors of Children's Services **(**ADCS) around models of workforce planning. They had undertaken an impact assessment across statutory and voluntary sectors to identify the partnership's workforce data which revealed insufficiencies in the data now being

addressed through a new data collection template. They are now developing a local standard for the recruitment, retention and career progression of qualified social workers. Alongside this, they had developed and accredited individualised learning pathways for CPD for social workers. Their intention had been to advertise social work vacancies across the partnership and offer students a guaranteed interview within the partnership but found this to be an unrealistic ambition within the timescales of the pilot as it does not fit in with LA recruitment cycles and so will commence this in May 2016.

Similarly, another SWTP proposed to develop a CPD framework and Career Pathways founded on the Skills for Care Principles for developing CPD programmes (incorporating the PCF and the CSWKSS) to be assessed holistically, contain elements of work based assessment, and offer portability of credits so that social workers can transfer credits between education providers. Although there have been some delays (see above), discussions had been useful and agreement had been reached on the balance between informal and formal learning and that components should be skills rather than knowledge-based as knowledge gaps can be dealt with in other ways (for example on-line learning). They will also provide a Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) pathway to employment through the offer of a guaranteed interview to final placement students although implementation falls outside of the pilot time frame.

Another SWTP has ambitions to develop a comprehensive pathway of student engagement, beyond placement experience into qualified practice, with a strategy for this now in place. They had completed an information gathering exercise as a preliminary to establishing a sufficiency model based on a robust analysis of the regional social work workforce, mapping and remodelling to support delivery of CPD programmes in line with the new accreditation programme for social work. The partnership had also devised a communication, engagement and promotion strategy on employer engagement to fulfil their workforce planning aims.

The fourth SWTP had completed a training needs analysis for the whole partnership area against which they can measure the achievement of targets. A workforce profiling analysis tool focusing on recruitment and selection had been approved by the Strategy Board. Following completion of workforce profiling, they planned to review the regional recruitment strategy; this has not yet happened because of delays in finalising the profiling tool but they intend to begin piloting in April 2016. Plans to develop an Advanced Practitioner Framework supporting lifelong career development from ASYE to Leadership level had also been delayed but the framework has now been agreed and a contract drawn up for programmes to be delivered commencing September 2016.

One SWTP had instigated monthly twilight sessions to share good practice, research studies and similar topics of common interest. Students, practitioners, managers and academics all come together to explore areas of interest. Academics in this SWTP are increasingly involved in direct practice, reflective practice discussion groups, and in working with practitioners and service users, for example in helping set up a support

group for young care leavers with children (explored in more detail in a case study in Appendix C). Through a matching process, students are linking their Masters' dissertations with areas of interest among the employers. This enables students to work with relevant practitioners on their area of interest to the benefit of both students – who can find examples and experiences in practice; and practitioners - who learn from research findings. Academics reported being 'invigorated' by increased exposure to current issues within the partnership area and have made curriculum changes and put on workshop sessions to help address these. Another SWTP found their plans for three members of the academic team to have participated in practice during the pilot period slow to get off the ground, although this has now been achieved. One SWTP developed a managed programme of staff exchanges to put academics back into practice and practitioners into practice-led education involving two placements in children's services and one in adults'. The fourth SWTP intended to link academics to practice organisations for placements building on and extending current arrangements; this is work still in progress.

Another SWTP had responded to employer requests by developing an undergraduate programme for unqualified practitioners, embedding the CSWKSS, enabling individuals to study whilst in the workplace. The programme had been welcomed by employers and the 30 initial places that were made available had been swiftly filled. Candidates were tested against the admissions stretch criteria, which now included additional testing of higher level practice skills. The programme is aimed at attracting high level practitioners who are currently operating at an unqualified level and ensuring that high levels of practice experience and expertise are brought into social work training and education. From the 30 candidates selected, 17 had qualifications above the stretch criteria and of these, 12 had an existing undergraduate degree. Ten candidates had entry qualifications which met the stretch criteria and three, supported by their employers, had entry qualifications slightly lower than the stretch criteria but did have high levels of practice skills in line with this model of education.

Section 5: The benefits of SWTP activities

Key findings

- It was too early to identify impact on students from SWTP activities. Impact will become clearer later in the students' studies and as they move into becoming practising social workers. All of the partners interviewed believed that the statutory placements will benefit the students as will having practitioners increasingly involved in teaching.

- Being at the heart of the SWTP activities provided HEIs with the opportunity to develop their awareness of the Government's social work agenda, build stronger links with employers and better reflect the workforce needs of employers in their recruitment and curricula and provided academic staff with opportunities to refresh their knowledge of practice.

- The majority of employers interviewed confirmed they had benefited from their involvement in the partnership including being directly involved in decision-making.

- Greater exposure to theoretical concepts and research findings had led experienced practitioners to increased reflection on, and critical evaluation of, their own practice. There have also been specific interventions within the SWTPs that have brought considerable benefits to practising social workers.

- Service users had an increased level of involvement regarding admissions. Other initiatives are in place to involve service users in delivery and to ensure their voice is heard in training and in practice.

Introduction

This section of the report details the benefits of SWTP activities to various groups including students, HEIs, employers, practising social workers, and service users. This draws upon the discussions with key stakeholders, survey and focus groups with students, discussions with practice educators and with the key partners across all four SWTPs. The case studies prepared for the evaluation (presented at Appendix C) provide snapshots of how some initiatives have worked in practice.

Main benefits for students from SWTP activities

The main stretch criteria relating to students were admissions, placements and curriculum; academic delivery; and practice support and development. As seen in the previous section, the SWTPs had implemented a number of initiatives to improve the admissions process, including the involvement of service users. However, owing to the timing of the grant award for these pilots, most will not see the benefit of these new activities until the next student intake.

The SWTP programme required at least one statutory placement relevant to their specialism to be offered to each student, with preference given to partnerships able to offer two. In child and family settings, these were to offer all students significant experience of using the statutory framework for child and family social work. In adult services, students were to have experience of using statutory frameworks for adult social care in delivering outcome-focused, personalised responses.

Some partnerships had already made commitments to students and employers about placements and had to fulfil these. For example, in one SWTP one group of students went on placement in September/October, the majority with PVIs under plans that were developed before the notification of the grant award was issued. At the same SWTP, another group of students on statutory placement in March 2016 were final year students who would therefore have been in statutory placements anyway. Other students in other SWTPs were either in placement or about to go on placement at the time of the final evaluation activities. In one case, placements had been intended to take place in January 2016 but the SWTP had not allowed for other social work students within the HEI going out for placements at that time. Therefore placements had to be staggered.

Most people interviewed, including key national stakeholders, thought that being able to identify impact on students from SWTP activities would not be expected at this stage. As one SWTP partner said *"students don't know what they don't know and have nothing to compare the SWTP activities with"*.

Stakeholders and partners felt that most demonstrable impact would become clearer later in students' studies and as they moved into becoming practising social workers.

From the survey responses and at focus group discussions, it was clear that students themselves could talk about their own experience but had little prior experience with which to compare in order to show benefit. They clearly valued the statutory placements (though some were unhappy that PVI placements were not available) and some could compare current with previous placements. One SWTP in particular showed considerable improvement in the efficiency of the placement process compared to previously, according to student responses.

Changes to the curriculum and new practice support arrangements were all in the early stages and partnerships did considerable work to embed the CSWKSS in both curriculum and CPD. Some of this has not been implemented due to the time lag encountered in making changes to the academic curriculum. However, in survey responses and focus group discussions students commented upon some activities they had undertaken that had been of particular benefit to them. This included being better able to understand how the theories and values they are learning translate into contemporary practice through hearing first-hand from practitioners and service users.

All SWTP partners were asked what the main benefits were to students from SWTP activities. Not unexpectedly, the provision of statutory placements featured in comments

across all four partnerships, as did the support received from trained practice educators. All of the partners believed the statutory placements would benefit the students as would bringing practice into their teaching.

At one SWTP, being able to record professional development/learning through a professional development career portfolio was emphasised as a key benefit, and it is anticipated that students will be 'very employable'. Several partners at one SWTP highlighted that partnership activities have raised the profile of social work within the HEI, meaning they can give an assurance around the quality of the placements they are able to offer and the future employability of their students. They have the ability to bring practitioners back into the classroom and ensure that the curriculum really does provide skills for practice.

At another SWTP, the student units they were developing will allow group discussions and reflection regarding practice research and best practice. They will also allow for developing further links/opportunities for students within the voluntary sector. Each unit follows a slightly different model under the auspices of a partner organisation (including PVIs) and these are yet to be evaluated. There is no single model for development of the new units and various approaches were being developed according to the available resources of the individual agency involved and the focus of the units. These were still under development and so impact has not yet been assessed. Examples of the approaches to the student units included one unit which is used for group learning and group supervision with two practice educators working with a number of students. Another provides a group learning environment with one practice educator, two students and two work-based supervisors. A shared learning space equipped with resources provides the basis for another unit. Students have separate practice educators but come together for regular group learning. There is a case study on student units at Appendix C.

At another SWTP, students were beginning to tie their Masters' dissertations into areas of interest for employers. This enables students to work with relevant practitioners on their area of interest to the benefit of both students – who can find examples and experiences in practice – and practitioners who gain insights from research findings. Students are more in touch with the reality of social work through the enhanced involvement of service users and practitioners in their training. People in employer organisations are better trained to support them and they have a guaranteed interview with one of the partnership employers at the end of their training which gives them extra reassurance.

Main benefits for HEIs involved in SWTP activities

Being at the heart of the SWTP activities provided HEIs with the opportunity to develop their awareness of the Government's social work agenda, build stronger links with employers, better reflect the workforce needs of employers in their recruitment and curricula and provided academic staff with opportunities to refresh their knowledge of practice. In relation to academic delivery, the eligibility and stretch criteria had targets for

the number of the HEI-employed academic teaching team who are qualified, registered, social workers. The partnership had to evidence that both practitioners and service users were involved in the design, delivery and assessment of the initial education academic programme, backed up by robust internal QA processes which ensured the quality of HEI and placement delivery and that student feedback was used to enhance the academic programme.

In addition, there were additional stretch criteria covering academics' experience of practice which stated that practitioners with current responsibility for statutory social work must be involved in teaching specialist elements of the curriculum and ten per cent of academic staff should be supported to have protected time in practice during 2015-16.

The SWTPs had been active in developing a managed programme of staff exchanges to put academics back into practice and practitioners into practice-led education. At one SWTP, operating within one adults' setting and two children's settings, three academics had been put into practice for five days. This was seen by one employer as *"putting social work on the agenda with universities"*.

One academic, who had taken advantage of this opportunity, found that there had been a number of recent changes in the way that services are organised in the area that she visited, and although she was aware of these through her teaching, discussions with practitioners and reading, she was keen to see these changes in person and to have the opportunity to discuss these with practitioners during and following the observation. She also hoped to consider further how the work undertaken at the university contributes to the practice setting, both at qualifying and post-qualifying level.

Once in practice, she said:

> *"An unexpected outcome of the time spent in practice was the pleasure I had in being involved in the work. It was energising, strongly reminding me of why I enjoyed social work for over 25 years and now work to support students to become social workers. Working late on the practice days was also a reminder of the long hours worked and the unpredictability of the work."*

A case study looking in more detail at this academic's return to practice is presented at Appendix C.

Joining the SWTPs had been a major cultural change for the HEIs owing to the shift in emphasis to being employer-led. Therefore, one of the key benefits to the HEIs, as identified by partners, was that they had been able to hear and work with the voice of employers directly feeding into the programme delivery for students and post qualified social workers. They had benefited from closer collaboration with employers and access to practitioners to teach on the programmes. This meant that HEIs had begun to develop an understanding of local workforce needs and opportunities to experience practice within local authorities.

Main benefits for employers involved in SWTP activities

It is an important aspect of the programme that partnerships should be employer led and, with a few exceptions where LAs have not had the resources to yet fully engage with the SWTP, employers have supported the concept of the SWTPs and invested a great deal of time in developing activities. This is not least in the area of governance, one of the key stretch criteria for employers, where a great deal of time had been spent in governance meetings and working groups developing the detail of the initiatives the individual SWTPs are undertaking.

The majority of employers interviewed confirmed they had benefited from their involvement in the partnership. Several mentioned that they were now talking at an operational level and being directly involved in decision-making. They had appreciated opportunities to be part of developing a new and innovative programme of student and social work education that puts employer needs centrally. They now had a greater influence on student selection and training through design, implementation and governance arrangements. They had developed closer links/relationships with the HEIs, their academic staff and management, including through the development of practitioners involved in either consultant posts and/or delivering programme teaching.

There were now diverse opportunities for staff training and networking across LA borders as well as much greater access to co-ordinated events around the partnership region. Initially employers struggled with the greater emphasis on placements, in some cases owing to scarce resources, but they have risen to the challenge. There was a perceptible sense of pride amongst some partners that they were involved in an SWTP that was in the forefront of developments around social work education and some employers in particular highlighted the benefits this has had on staff motivation.

The teaching consultant roles adopted by several of the partnerships had created a strong new developmental pathway that had also helped to motivate the existing workforce. In turn this was said by several partners in one SWTP to have raised interest in training across the wider workforce.

Employers welcomed being able to contribute to, and influence, the education that social work students receive in the HEI as well as in their first year of practice and beyond. This had also encouraged some to develop their recruitment and retention strategies to help ensure their workforce development offer is strong and that they can compete in a highly competitive market.

Main benefits for practising social workers from SWTP activities

The eligibility and stretch criteria practice support and planning focuses heavily on the development and support of PEs. Partnerships were required to demonstrate how they

would manage quality issues relating to PEs. The discretionary stretch criteria for workforce planning included a comprehensive CPD framework to be established for all practitioners.

Greater exposure to theoretical concepts and research findings had led experienced practitioners to increased reflection on, and critical evaluation of, their own practice. There have also been specific interventions within the SWTPs that have brought considerable benefit to practising social workers.

As evidenced in Section 4, and illustrated in the case studies at Appendix C, all SWTPs had developed various opportunities for the training and qualification of PEs and, in some cases, work based supervisors, to ensure that existing social workers were given the opportunity to retrain and upskill with all activities underpinned by the CSWKSS. At one SWTP there were now opportunities for experienced unqualified social care workers to undertake a degree programme whilst based in practice, and funded by the partnership. Two of the SWTPs had looked at the CSWKSS in relation to supervisors and development workshops had been held. At one SWTP, a workshop had been held with first line managers to explore their development needs. Drawing on their experience of the ASYE programme, the SWTP intended to provide them with additional support in their first year in role including from academics, experienced practitioners and NQSWs, perhaps though action learning sets which would incorporate peer support. It was anticipated that doing this across the partnership would bring economies of scale and also the opportunity to learn from each other. At another SWTP, an Advanced Practitioner Framework offered support for those who wish to stay in practice and was starting to raise the profile of those on practice.

Main benefits for service users of SWTP activities

In relation to the stretch criteria on admissions, the partnerships needed to own a plan that included the involvement of service users and employer representatives at all stages of admissions from September 2015. In addition, service users were to be involved in the design, delivery and assessment of the academic programme.

Across all four SWTPs, service users have an increased level of involvement regarding admissions. The young people involved as service users in one of the SWTP admissions process had gained valuable transferrable skills and had ensured that their expertise had been fully utilised to improve the quality of the selection processes and training of students. At one SWTP there were plans to involve service users in the evaluation of practice education and for them to be involved in programme delivery.

At another SWTP, gathering service user views and engagement were seen as being crucial elements of social work practice, to the extent that they had recruited to a specialist role within the partnership to enable the voice of young people in particular to be heard. The same SWTP had also developed a service user feedback tool which will

ensure that social workers and students include the views of service users in their own CPD. Students were also encouraged to use the tool in order to identify areas of the CSWKSS and PCF where they may not feel as confident in order to support them to seek ways of upskilling in those areas. According to the SWTP, the tool encourages critical reflection and encourages the student to continually reflect on their knowledge and skills and their development as a student and to then reflect on what they feel the service user would say about their opinion of their development and their actual social work practice. The student can then further test out this hypothesis by reflecting with the service user on their development and how they can then improve and/or maintain their professional development. This initiative is explored in more detail in a case study at Appendix C.

Partners at another SWTP said that the partnership has afforded the opportunity to enhance ways of engaging with families. Whilst benefits are 'down the line,' they argued that new social workers should come through the system with the right value-base. Already they were seeing that the learning and development, particularly the reflective practice sessions, had made a difference in how people interact with service users, moving to collaborative and creative ways of engagement, not just 'choose this or that.' Service users in the SWTP had been involved at board level and partners had found that service user views on leadership have been particularly powerful. This made employers realise they need to develop new ways of working with service users, integrating them in all that they do.

Section 6: Additionality and value for money

Key findings

- Funding had allowed existing activity in each SWTP to become more focused. There was strong evidence of partnership working including the sharing of confidential and commercially sensitive information.

- The majority of work streams were led by employers where previously they might have been led by HEIs. Joint workforce planning activities were underway. There was evidence of cultural change, with a distinct shift in attitudes with some sceptical academic staff and employers now being enthusiastic about partnership activities. Bringing practice into academia had enhanced the student experience and allowed for CPD of the social workers involved.

- There were a number of areas where SWTP outputs can be shared and applied.

- Each of the partnerships identified a range of activities and outcomes beyond those contained in the stretch criteria that had been made possible by the SWTP model and the funding attached to it.

- It was too early to say if the SWTPs have represented value for money. First impressions were that with some SWTPs there was a new way of thinking, a new spirit and the programme had changed the way the whole sector thought about training with more awareness of the need to develop staff and provide CPD, particularly PEs.

Additionality

Funding had allowed existing activity in each SWTP to become more focused. The evidence from three of the SWTPs was that the partnership activity took several initiatives underway by individual LAs and put them into a regional rather than local perspective to the good of both. In addition, whilst some things might have developed organically, the partnership provided a framework for developing a common standard and it had forced members to progress things much more quickly than they might have done without the SWTP.

At an early stage in the programme activities (by the end of October 2015), HOST evaluators saw signs of additionality and by the time of the final evaluation fieldwork these were not only confirmed but other areas identified, as set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Additionality identified from SWTP activities

Area	Additionality
Partnership working	Sharing of confidential and commercially sensitive information at a level that would not normally be seen within a partnership of this type as seen, for example, in the sharing of sensitive commercial, workforce and recruitment information amongst partners in all four SWTPs.
Working groups	Whilst establishing working groups is commonplace, within SWTPs the majority of work streams were led by employers where previously they might have been led by the HEIs. The commitment by employers to these work streams has been considerable.
Workforce Planning	Normally something conducted by employers in isolation, working together to develop workforce planning models was a major activity, still underway in most of the SWTPs.
Cultural Change	The funding was clearly allowing employers, rather than the universities, gradually to take the lead on developing and implementing workforce development activities within the partnerships. There has been a distinct shift in attitudes in three SWTPs with some sceptical academic staff and employers now being enthusiastic about partnership activities
Bringing practice into academia	This had enhanced the student experience, allowed for CPD for those social workers involved and provided a shared learning experience with academics.
Transferable learning	There were a number of areas where SWTP outputs could be shared and applied. For example the Professional Development Portfolio, the user feedback tool, the teaching consultants model and the student and PE handbooks.

Source: HOST Policy Research, Evaluation of the SWTP Programme, 2016

In final interviews with lead partners, the issue of additionality and what would have not taken place without the partnership was specifically addressed. Each of the partnerships identified a range of activities and outcomes beyond those contained in the stretch criteria that had been made possible by the SWTP model and the funding attached to it.

In one SWTP, partners stated that the revised baseline of PE standards and the Advanced Practitioner Framework could be attributed directly to the partnership. Increased partnership working and commitments to engage in jointly funded initiatives in

future would not have happened without the partnership stimulus and the employers have welcomed the funded PE training.

The strong focus on practice and practice supervision including improved standards and quality assurance across the region were mentioned by several partners in this SWTP.

Some partners reported a better, more engaged strategic discourse about broader workforce planning, and the development of children's social workers in particular, as well as an increased understanding of the calibre of social workers that should be expected in the future and how they will be trained.

In another SWTP, partners were clear that the partnership had been able to influence local developments. Without the partnership the new undergraduate programme would not have happened. This fast track undergraduate programme is for those wishing to qualify while working. This had been developed and offered at a reduced cost to participating employers who were clearly excited at the opportunity to develop their staff in a way they could not have afforded individually. The partnership funding had also enabled social work training to be far more '*joined up across the patch*', ensuring consistency of the quality of social workers available across the geographic area covered by the SWTP. It had also allowed for mechanisms to be developed for pre- and post-qualifying training that includes different experiences in the non-statutory sector and reflects the journey of service users. In essence, developing a co-ordinated work force strategy from unqualified through to continuing CPD

At a third SWTP, in adults' services, they were developing the role of advanced practitioners using ASYE as the model with progression to PE roles. According to partners, this wouldn't have happened without the partnership as the initial discussion sprang from conversations within the SWTP.

All of the key activities in this partnership - the teaching consultants, academics into practice, new training modules, Knowledge and Skills Statements workshops, twilight sessions and other collaborative spin-offs - would not have been possible without the additional funding that enabled resources dedicated to coordination and backfill for staff. While a limited number of activities were likely to have happened in any case, without SWTP funding, the joining up of initiatives that make things more effective than their individual parts would have been lost. In addition to the range of activities, SWTP funding, according to partners, had made possible a change from a slightly reactive approach to meeting identified needs to a strategic approach that takes into account all stages of a social worker's career, integrating academic and experiential learning with input from all sorts of people including service users.

According to partners, having teaching consultants in the university supplementing theory with practical examples had made teaching and learning more memorable. Hearing how the theory translates into practice had helped plug the study/practice gap as the practitioners helped students to link the values they had been learning to concrete

examples. Teaching consultants were enthusiastic about the role, not only because they enjoyed doing it and felt it was worthwhile in terms of what they could bring to the training experience, but also because it made them reflect on their own practice.

Academics had become more engaged with employers and with the local community, as they could draw on practitioner expertise and, through them, the experiences of service users. The increased communication with employers had enabled the HEI to address gaps in provision quickly and the curriculum had been made more relevant to the issues in local communities.

'Silos' were perceived to be breaking down in and across employers (eg children's and adults' services), across groups (students and practitioners and between frontline practice and academics.

Finally in another SWTP, partners stated that the ability to have consultant social workers seconded to the partnership brought added value to the whole workforce in relation to training and developing a systemic way of working. The funds allowed for the involvement of the HEI and enabled much closer alliances, together with opportunities for future teaching roles for practitioners.

Being able to recruit someone specifically to help the SWTP develop service user led experiences for staff had provided considerable additionality. The establishment of a dedicated post had played a major role in raising the profile of young people and ensuring their voice was heard across all SWTP activities. Developing novel ways of using service users in training (including developing a DVD) and also developing a service user feedback tool were just some of the successful activities that had been undertaken and highlighted as successes by partners.

Access to funded practice education training places was said by some partners to have boosted morale within the service and helped develop further local experienced practitioners who might have been out of HE for some years. This had led to increased levels of motivation amongst the PE cohort generally. In one employer the PEs were now planning to develop a virtual student unit and to participate in designing and delivering learning and development opportunities for their colleagues in adults' social care. Employers reported that the development of practice educators had had a big impact and would support them in being self-sufficient going forward in the field of practice education. The university managed to 'fast track' the PE programme which, in itself, was a major achievement as usually the university approval process takes much longer. Training had also been provided to a large number of work-based supervisors.

Value for money

All key national stakeholders were asked if they felt that the SWTPs had represented value for money. All indicated that it was too early for improvements in the quality of

social work training to translate into newly qualified social workers better able to meet the needs of service users. First impressions were that with some SWTPs there was a new way of thinking, a new spirit and the programme had changed the way the whole sector had thought about training with more awareness of the need to develop staff and provide CPD, particularly PEs.

All SWTP partners were asked if they thought the partnership had delivered value for money. At one SWTP, the general response from most partners was that it was too early to say, though two partners felt that it had not been value for money. Some partners had not seen a financial return from the grant for their input, although free training had been available. There was a lot of goodwill attached to the SWTP in terms of travelling time and costs and additional work which is not chargeable. The lead local authority had undertaken the majority of the work.

At another SWTP, one partner felt value for money had been achieved through the distribution of the grant and making sure all partners benefit from it. This allowed a flow of income to organisations for their input to the partnership. Several partners highlighted the additional work that was required for the partnership and one respondent said it was more about cost-effectiveness. One partner had attended 48 meetings which involved two hours of travel time (and taking time away from their main duties) – this was replicated across the partnership (and indeed across the other three SWTPs). The input of partners far exceeded the grant money provided. ”*Everyone has chosen to invest and not withdraw that investment in spite of it costing more than anyone ever anticipated*.” Partners felt that to date the programme has represented very good value for money for the DfE/DH, particularly when the costs that are being carried by the HEIs and the amount of multiple staff time being allowed by employers to get the Teaching Partnership to its current stage was taken into account. This SWTP was gathering data from partners on their in-kind contributions to the partnership in order to be able to present how much the initiative has actually cost.

At a third SWTP, one partner said that one example of value for money was that, working with the HEI, they had been able to introduce a new approach to working with care leavers who were also young parents. The issue was such young parents often end up in care proceedings and losing custody of their children in a vicious circle. Utilising the HEI academics into practice approach, they were introducing an evidence-based intervention to break the destructive and expensive cycle.

Backfilling for staff using the funding had enabled much more CPD than would otherwise have been impossible. It had also allowed people to take on the teaching consultant role which, in addition to the benefits for students, had been hugely motivational in getting people interested in new ideas and their own professional development.

The partnership approach had also facilitated faster roll-out of changes such as CSWKSS, putting them ahead of most employers.

One partner stated that value for money had included the SWTP driving a change in mind set about the importance and value of professional development, including in those members of staff not directly involved in delivering partnership activities. The ultimate value for money was in:

- How many students in SWTPs go on to have a career in social work compared with the national average?

- How effective are they as social workers?

- Do they promote independence in service users?

- Do they manage risks better?

- Do they stay in social work longer?

It was too early to be sure of any of this yet but, in the partner's opinion, the early indicators were positive.

At the fourth SWTP, several partners stated they were unable to comment on value for money. One partner felt the value for money was in bringing the theory and practice much closer together which has in some ways replicated the Frontline experience: having academics coming to the LA and providing teaching and learning opportunities to students, ASYE and the wider workforce.

One partner stated that some of the activities should have been done by employers anyway, such as developing PEs. However, the academic/employer link had been of value as had the workforce planning, CPD and workshops. The partner felt that the SWTP could be more influential locally and have a better base for activities but it had created the opportunity to establish itself moving forward.

Another partner did not feel it represented value for money as they disagreed with how the money had been allocated to some activities and would have liked to see more funds allocated to placement support within PVIs.

Section 7: Challenges faced by the SWTPs and how they have been overcome

Key findings

- Partnerships are not working in isolation. Students from their own HEI involved in other social work programmes, as well as students from other HEIs in the area but not in the partnership, need local placements.

- Some PVIs that previously would have been considered as providing 'statutory work', on investigation have been found not to meet the more stretching definitions for the partnerships. There was concern at losing the richness of experience that can be offered by good quality PVI placements and some innovative approaches have been adopted to ensure that experience is captured.

- Some non-involved HEIs were nervous about what might happen when existing agreements with local employers come to an end and those employers focus solely on students from within the partnership. Some discomfort had also been expressed by partners in each of the three SWTPs with another HEI within the SWTP catchment, at the lack of involvement of the HEI in the partnership.

- Regardless of the detail of any future roll out of the SWTP programme, there was some local pressure on existing SWTPs to include HEIs who were within their geographic catchment but so far not included and other employers who would like to join their partnership in order to be part of the initiatives that were underway.

- In some of the SWTPs the service user related developments were not prioritised perhaps as much as other elements, with service users being seen as the ultimate beneficiaries of improved quality of social work and social work supervision. In others, innovative approaches were developed to involve service users and capture their experience.

- There did not appear to be a consistent theme in relation to the level of commitment from individual partners within the SWTP, though geography and travel distance to meetings does appear to be an issue. There appeared to be more engagement with children's than adults' services within some local authorities.

- There was a clear need for a SWTP Communication Strategy to be central to the programme right from the bidding stage, including someone with project management responsibilities who would sit on all work streams and report back on the ongoing work and progress made.

- In relation to workforce planning, the gathering of workforce data implicitly assumes that LAs have workforce development strategies or plans and this proved not to be the case.

- Across the SWTPs, partners commented on how well the budget had been used and the effectiveness of its distributions across activities. However, it should be noted that not all partners agreed with how the funding had been used and the money allocated between the partners involved.

- The vast majority of partners across the SWTPs mentioned the time constraints to achieve the ambitions of the SWTP. This meant that for some they were still very much in the learning and change phase and they needed at least another year to embed the learning into everyday practice.

Introduction

This section of the report considers the challenges faced by the SWTPs and, where possible, how they have been overcome. It covers: providing statutory placements; the role of PVIs; impact on non-involved HEIs; new employers and HEIs joining existing partnerships; involvement of service users; communications and participation of partners; workforce planning ;and time constraints.

Providing statutory placements

The requirement for at least one and preferably two statutory placements[11], and the very clear definition of what constitutes 'statutory' provided by DfE/DH was a talking point across all of the four SWTPs.

The intention was to ensure that students get two, good quality statutory placements to ensure they have that experience to bring into their ASYE. The previous 'traditional' model was that initial placements would often be with PVIs with only the final placement in a statutory setting (though in one SWTP most placements were statutory for both placements anyway). This was a significant raising of the placement requirements which has had major implications both in finding the appropriate number of statutory placements required within each teaching partnership (now and in the future) and for the role of PVIs in placement provision.

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[11] Defined in the DfE guidance document 'Teaching Partnerships 2015-16: Invitation to Express Interest' as:

- take place in a local authority setting;
- involve work on S17 and S47 cases (under the Children Act 1989);
- involve work on delivering requirements of the Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005;
- require case records to be updated by the student, under appropriate supervision.

Where PVIs offer placements that deliver statutory work, proposals must show how they are equivalent to statutory placements as defined above.

Whilst all of the SWTPs had been able to source the required number of placements up to end March 2016, it was not without a struggle in some cases and much depended upon the timing of the placements and the goodwill of participating employers. Partnerships are not working in isolation. Other undergraduate and postgraduate students not involved in the SWTP activities but within the social work department of the participating universities still needed placements. There were also other social work training programmes that compete for student placements including Step Up and Frontline. This had all resulted in considerable demand on placements and pressure on social work practitioners with heavy caseloads to take on more work.

This suggests partnerships will need to look closely at the timing of when students go out on placements to ensure demand can be met. This is particularly the case where several HEIs are involved in a partnership or if new HEIs join partnerships in the future.

In some SWTP areas there is perceived to be (by some partners and national stakeholders) an oversupply of social work graduates (though it should be noted this is not necessarily the case nationally) and the TP workforce planning activities have a major role in ensuring that employers' future workforce needs are met. In some cases this may mean reducing the number of students which will ease the pressure on the requirement for statutory placements, but this is a longer term aspiration with the workforce planning reviews still underway.

The role of PVIs

Some PVIs that previously would have been considered as providing 'statutory work', on investigation have been found not to meet the more stretching definition for the programme. All of the partnerships reported that some PVIs thought they were providing statutory placements when in fact they were not. According to one SWTP:

> "*Many PVI agencies that offer placements take a very loose interpretation of what meets the statutory definition. Placement audits are a vital way to probe the work undertaken by PVI agencies and these often reveal that claims that statutory work is available within a placement are sometimes unfounded or debatable*".

Some PVI settings were not able to deliver against the criteria for statutory placements. This was much more commonly true where they claimed to be undertaking S17/47 work under the Children Act 1989. Other agencies, especially those working on a contractual basis with LAs or school based social work teams, can often meet all criteria.

The statutory placement requirement led to one SWTP stating they would not be using PVIs for placements at all. Another SWTP has been unable to provide their partner PVI

with placements with the consequence that the PVI may have to issue redundancy notices to some of their staff[12].

Many national stakeholders, employers and even student social workers in focus group discussions expressed concerns at the potential loss of the richness of experience that can be offered by good quality PVI placements. Individuals highlighted the value of placements in residential care, youth offending, fostering and adoption as examples. One interviewee stated:

> *"Statutory placements do not allow for relationship building at an early stage which leads to an early understanding – not everything runs just around risks and rules".*

One SWTP tackled this issue from the inception of their partnership by having two PVIs as partners who have been tasked with developing some key aspects of the partnership's activities. This included the partnership appointing two FTEs, managed by the two PVIs, to map out the opportunities for learning and available placements within the PVI sector. Part of their wider activity in establishing the Child's and Adult's Journey is the mapping exercise that will enable the partnership to look at developing more flexible placements. This is due to report back in early summer. For example, as part of an individual student's pathway they may be allocated their statutory placement, but within that have defined days with a PVI to understand the relationships, interventions and issues that occur prior to a case becoming part of statutory provision.

Impact on non-involved HEIs

The focus on statutory placements for SWTP students does have implications for students who are in HEIs within the locality of the partnership but not involved. Whilst previous contractual arrangements with employers to offer placements have continued short term, some non-involved HEIs were nervous about what might happen when those agreements come to an end and employers potentially focus solely on students from within the partnership. In some cases, employers had already withdrawn the informal arrangements offering placements to some of these HEIs, meaning that existing students within those institutions were not being given the experience they anticipated as the HEIs concerned had to go much further afield to try and place them. This had financial and placement quality assurance implications owing to the travel distance. One HEI reported this was already leading to complaints from their students.

Some discomfort was also expressed by partners in each of the three SWTPs with another HEI within the SWTP catchment, at the lack of involvement of the HEI in the partnership. For some, the other HEI was actually their local education provider and they

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[12] Since the evaluation activities were completed, the SWTP has provided placements to the PVI agency and redundancy notices have not been issued. The SWTP has developed a pathway to enable students to undertake a PVI and statutory placement.

have long standing commitments to work with them, providing social workers to work with students and providing placements. The drive to provide statutory placements for students within the partnership had hindered their ability to provide placements and support to the other HEI. Indeed some felt that they were required to focus everything on the partnership and exclude the other HEI, something with which, on the whole, they were not comfortable.

Several national stakeholders also expressed concern at the exclusion of other local HEIs and the potential impact on the students and the HEIs concerned. However, two stakeholders did express the view that the SWTPs will cause a shift in the market and encourage HEIs to better align their social work provision with the needs of their local employers and they felt that this may mean the downsizing of social work departments in some HEIs. It should be noted that the regions where the four SWTPs operate are also areas of traditionally high recruitment of social work students[13].

New employers and HEIs joining existing partnerships

At the time of writing, the precise nature of the SWTP programme roll out is unclear. Regardless of that roll out, there was some pressure on existing SWTPs to include HEIs who were within their geographic catchment but so far not included and SWTPs were being approached by other employers who would like to join their partnership in order to be part of the initiatives that were underway.

One of the reasons given by three SWTPs for not including an additional HEI within the partnership in the initial stages was that in their view it would have been impossible to provide the required statutory placements for all of the students involved if they had been included. Two of the SWTPs pointed to new employers joining the partnership as a potential source of new statutory placements.

Interviews with non-involved LAs suggested that where they had the resources to do so they were keen to become involved. Indeed one was very frustrated with the lack of progress on developing partnership activities across their own region and the inability of local HEIs to work together and was therefore looking to join one of the SWTPs in a neighbouring region so that they could benefit from the forward planning and development activities. Another was very confused about how to go forward as there is no HEI in their local area that would enable them to develop a teaching partnership approach (the interviewee assumed there would be a roll out of new partnerships across the country), although there was an existing solid partnership of LAs, and the travel distances to where a teaching partnership currently exists, or could be set up, are prohibitive. That same LA was concerned that coming from outside the local area might mean they would be seen as a 'second class' employer within the partnership. Some

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[13] See p7 of *Social Work Education in England 2015* http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_11320-1.pdf

LAs, however, had little knowledge of the SWTPs or what they were achieving and would need more information before considering becoming involved themselves.

According to existing partners there was a risk attached to new HEIs and employers joining the existing partnerships. The boards and terms of reference were in place but it was a question of culture as well and some partners questioned whether newcomers would have the same vision and engagement as the original partners. A large number of meetings with associated paperwork, rationales behind decisions and the sheer scale of activities mean that any HEI or employer joining an existing partnership faces a considerable task to familiarise themselves. Lead partners in three of the SWTPs were starting to consider how they might manage that induction process. Two lead partners commented that the SWTPs would also need to be clear about their 'offer' to new partners and also what the new partners would bring to the partnership. One SWTP had gone some way towards considering the practicalities of taking on new partners by being in the process of drafting 'partnership standards criteria'.

Some HEIs within SWTPs expressed nervousness about new HEIs joining the partnership and how that might be managed in relation to intellectual copyright and sharing of commercially sensitive information and competition if the partnership moves into more of a commissioning mode. One partner HEI said this was a key tension and concern for how the partnership develops and opens its doors to others to join[14].

Involvement of service users

In some of the SWTPs the service user related developments were not prioritised perhaps as much as other elements, with service users being seen as the ultimate beneficiaries of improved quality of social work and social work supervision. Several partners reported that it was surprising that service users were not on the partnership board (note that they are in one SWTP). Two partners made the point that a PVI is not a service user and therefore should not be seen as a proxy for their views.

One SWTP has service users on their governance board, placing them in the middle of partnership discussions. One SWTP created a dedicated post in order to ensure that the voice of young people was heard throughout the partnership activities and had developed a 'service user reflection tool'.

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[14] Since the evaluation activities were completed, the SWTP reports that their Governance Board has recently taken the decision that the SWTP is not in a position of sufficient maturity for their systems and processes to agree new partners. This is something that is going to be considered throughout the next two years.

Communications and participation of partners

There did not appear to be a consistent theme in relation to the level of commitment from individual partners within the SWTP, though geography did appear to be an issue. Where partnership meetings were consistently held in one central location (perhaps because venues can be offered free of charge) this meant that partners located further away geographically always had to allow for travel time and additional travel costs. One partnership had been particularly affected by this with some partners not attending as many partnership meetings as had been expected. According to one partner, they were almost 40 miles from usual meeting venues and meetings had been scheduled very frequently. Their LA has put a limit on travel and the demands of their primary role, and other partnership commitments, limited their capacity for involvement. One SWTP had looked at the possibility of alternatives to face-to-face meetings but, according to one LA partner, rules on confidentiality and data sharing meant that telephone or video conferencing was not an option for them. Another partner made the point that there are different organisational drivers for partner LAs which can lead to tensions as employers were also competitors.

There appeared to be more engagement with children's than adults' services within some local authorities (for example, someone from children's services always attended a partnership meeting where their adults' services equivalent rarely did). However, one SWTP had a clear adult engagement. The board was chaired by the Adults' Principal Social Worker (PSW) who provided strategic insight and leadership across the system. Three Adults' PSWs and senior managers were involved and contributed to the activity. Indeed, for some LAs the contribution from PSWs was important in achieving the goals of the partnership.

According to one partner "*It is important to remember that within a LA the children's and adults' services can be separate functioning entities*". The main challenge for each SWTP was to ensure that the partnership involved the right senior people in order to ensure commitment at a high level. Two SWTPs have a governance board at director level and an implementation group which focuses on the operational side of the partnership and another SWTP was planning to adopt the same approach. SWTPs reported that it is important to be clear at an early stage where decisions are going to be made within organisations. It is also important to identify 'blockers' (ie people who challenge everything and can take up a lot of meeting time in debate) and work with them outside the meeting.

"*Communication was a challenge in the beginning and continues to be*" according to one partner and this point was echoed by other partners across all SWTPs. Getting other authorities to communicate and cascade information had been especially difficult to achieve in some SWTPs or within individual employers. There was a clear need for a Communication Strategy to be central to the programme right from the bidding stage, including someone with project management responsibilities who would sit on all work streams and report back on the ongoing work and progress made. The dedicated project

manager at one SWTP had made an enormous contribution in co-ordinating the activities of the partnership. Another partner confirmed the need for project management and stated that trying to get everyone to work out what was the common ground and then develop and implement strategies that would work for all was very time consuming. Having dedicated coordination and project management had made an important contribution without which it would have been impossible. One SWTP has a newsletter that it uses to promote its work (alongside some social media activity). Another SWTP will be introducing a newsletter and another has realised they could have done much more to publicise their activities and are now addressing that gap.

According to one lead partner, the partnership model required rethinking the employer's own structures and how people were given the right roles and the capacity to do them. Those parts of the partnership that had struggled for various reasons to do this had been unable to take full advantage of all that the partnership offers.

In one partnership, four partners mentioned that the HEI and the LAs had not shared the same agenda and that there had been some resistance from academic staff. This had not been helped by staff absences. The situation had now largely been resolved but it meant things went at a slower pace than anticipated originally. In another partnership, working more closely with academics had been a big success but an initial reaction from academics to the teaching consultant role had been fear that they would be taking their jobs. This had turned around to enthusiasm about the partnership as academics had seen that the teaching consultant role was complementary and can enhance what they do, not threaten it, and that employers valued their expertise through the academics into practice approach. The reciprocity of this two-way arrangement had been crucial to its success.

One HEI partner stated that it had not got what it had hoped from the partnership financially. With their academic staff there was a difference in how far people wanted to explore things and there was a boundary issue. They raised the question "*How can we work together and preserve some boundaries*?" and this point was echoed by another participating HEI who had to work hard to reassure academic staff and bring them on side with partnership activities. These issues of boundary would be brought into sharp focus if the partnerships were to incorporate another HEI into their structure.

Workforce planning

One element of the SWTP activities, which was part of the discretionary stretch criteria, was a detailed consideration of workforce planning and ensuring that activities were geared to meeting employers' future workforce needs. Whilst all had worked on this activity, several challenges were encountered. Not least, the gathering of workforce data implicitly assumes that LAs have workforce development strategies or plans and this had proved not to be the case. In some, information had not been forthcoming at all and in others it was patchy at best. One SWTP was now building upon the workforce planning

scoping exercise that had been undertaken and had devised a data collection process to ensure that relevant and live data that was captured from employers could be fed into a central workforce plan.

Budget and financial management

Some partners commented on financial management within their SWTP. This was the first time some employers had responsibility for financial management and distribution in a programme of this nature and this was an area of possible challenge identified by some key stakeholders in their initial interview. How would the employers manage the budget and ensure accountability and equity? One SWTP budget co-ordinator stated that it was initially nice to have the money available and then '*it all became a bit of a scramble*'. However, the money helped them realise they needed more strategic people involved rather than devolve down to operational level.

At one SWTP, each partner had individual contracts to say what they were to be paid and when. However, making sure people got their invoices in on time had been a challenge as had been managing different expectations with regards to payments for equipment etc. The SWTP was embarking on an exercise to look at the actual costs of the activity so far, taking account of travel time and attendance at meetings (and any other 'in kind' contributions).

Across the SWTPs, partners commented on how well the budget had been used and the effectiveness of its distributions across activities. However, it should be noted that not all partners agreed with how the funding was used and the money allocated between the partners involved. In two SWTPs some partners received no direct financial benefit from their partnership activities.

Time constraints

One of the areas mentioned by the vast majority of partners across the SWTPs was the time constraints to achieve the ambitions of the SWTP. This meant that for some they were still very much in the learning and change phase and they needed at least another year to embed the learning into everyday practice. According to one partner:

> "*We have had more interaction with the partners in the last six months than in the previous eleven years of working together. But people have worked phenomenally hard to make it all happen. The key lesson is that getting things to work across all the partners is more time-consuming than you might think. People have to give it the necessary time and be supported in their organisations to do this*."

A lead partner stated that they perhaps under-estimated the scale of the challenge in getting employers with very different set-ups, approaches and starting points to all get to the degree of harmonisation necessary to implement all that they wanted to do and this

had led to some delays in plans, though nothing major. Several partners commented that what looked good on paper in the bids had needed more thought in order to bring the ideas into reality and some of the timescales they originally envisaged were underestimates of how long things would take. Staff changes in partner organisations (which were still ongoing) had impacted at various stages and caused some time lag. The time taken for a lead partner who is based in children's services, for example, to familiarise themselves with adults' services in order to provide an overview, should not be underestimated.

A challenge mentioned by several partners before the details of the 2016 programme expansion were announced was the issue of maintaining the level of enthusiasm and momentum of partners if the partnership were to be sustained without further funding.

Section 8: Key transferable lessons/areas for consideration

Evaluator Overview

The HOST evaluators were tasked with the objective of assessing how far teaching partnerships have adapted current arrangements to provide high quality education and practice training as a result of participating in the pilot, including an early consideration of value for money. However, at the time of evaluation it was too early to make a full assessment of quality improvement as the changes by March 2016 were more process focused and with a long lead time to impact. For example, the SWTPs had set up new entry requirements and methods for students starting in autumn 2016 but were only partway through recruiting against them; they have made an assessment of their curricula but implementation was again scheduled for the autumn.

Section 6 of the report reviews the question of additionality and value for money and concludes it is too early to say if the SWTPs have represented value for money. There was clear additionality and first impressions were that, with some SWTPs, there was a new way of thinking and a new spirit and the programme had changed the way the local social work sector within which each SWTP operates thought about training, with more awareness of the need to develop staff and provide CPD, particularly for PEs.

A second objective of the evaluation was to examine the individual delivery models adopted and provide a judgement about the ability of the delivery model to provide a high quality of education and practice training and to assess whether the key elements of the programme were being delivered to a high standard. In the time available, and allowing for the gestation period before SWTPs see a return on their activities, the only way of assessing whether academic delivery was to a high standard was through the perceptions of those interviewed which are reflected in the report – and it is impossible to say whether students yet to be recruited, or start their training, are of a higher standard than their predecessors.

The HOST evaluators were also asked to consider whether one model of delivery was more successful than another (bearing in mind the limitations of time and other factors specific to the teaching partnership sites).

Comparison across the four delivery models is difficult because of the very different circumstances within which the four SWTPs are operating. For example, working in a London borough will be very different to LAs operating in a more rural environment. One of the SWTPs is in a fairly unique position, operating within the context of wider devolution. What is clear from the evaluation is that different types of partnership can be successful. There are, however, some elements in relation to structure that can be drawn out that makes a partnership potentially more successful.

Clearly, SWTPs are particularly successful when participating employers face similar challenges and share similar ambitions. Ideally, each employer would work towards a shared partnership ambition and be equally committed, fielding representatives to the partnership who are of a similar seniority; this also will avoid the issue of one dominant employer.

Building upon pre-existing partnerships has worked well with all of the SWTPs.

One SWTP did have a dedicated project manager, the only SWTP to have recruited someone to this position from the start, which enabled them to make faster progress than those who did not have someone in that position or did so belatedly. The experience of the partnership was that it is important that the project manager is seen to be completely independent of any of the partners and so working for the benefit of all concerned.

There were differences between the four partnerships on whether or not PVIs were included. One SWTP had a PVI partner and whilst they had participated in partnership activities there were issues with statutory placements which the PVI partner was unable to provide. Another SWTP had two PVIs in the partnership and had taken an innovative approach to their involvement. As well as being on the board, these PVIs were at the centre of several leading edge initiatives for the partnership, including a review of how statutory placements could include time spent with a PVI to ensure that experience is not lost.

The involvement of service users in each partnership has been strong around the area of recruitment and admissions. However, two SWTPs stand out in respect of their innovative involvement of service users. One has service users on the board who are at the centre of discussions and decision making and can help shape curricula and delivery. The second has recruited someone with the specific aim of ensuring the voice of young people is heard in partnership activities.

One of the key differences between the four SWTPs is that one SWTP has two HEI members, whereas the others have one. This brings both benefits and challenges. Having two HEIs working together has taken an enormous amount of goodwill and commitment and strong communication processes. Protocols have had to be developed for the two HEIs to share resources and work together to develop initiatives, often having to share what might have previously been considered commercially sensitive information. The two universities have been able to bring different strengths to the partnership.

Whilst having one HEI might be easier to manage, including not having to share commercially sensitive information, or compete with another HEI, that one HEI might not offer all specialisms of value to the partnership. In both cases (one HEI or two HEIs) there is still the issue of existing arrangements that employers may have with other HEIs in the locality who are not part of the partnership and who want to continue taking their students on placements, a point returned to later in this section.

The evaluation has monitored progress and early impact in each of the selected teaching partnerships against the published criteria and against their own milestones for achievement, including identifying factors that help or hinder progress and achievement of the milestones. This third evaluation objective has been a major part of the evaluation activity. The evidence is covered in detail in Sections 4 and 5 of the report in particular. The HOST evaluation team believes that each SWTP has achieved a lot in a short time including: the groundwork for establishing the terms of reference and working protocols for the partnership; establishing working groups to review and develop the key work stream areas and activities as set out in their implementation plans; some tools and changes have been developed and implemented.

The scale of partnership working is significant across all SWTPs with a large number of meetings, working groups and liaison between partners. While most partners in each SWTP had worked together on specific areas previously, many commented that the breadth, scope and strategic nature of the SWTPs were of a different magnitude. The amount of work and effort required by the partnerships to make these pilots work effectively should not be underestimated. Being able to commit this amount of effort and resource, on top of existing heavy work commitments, is commendable.

A step change in behaviour and working culture in SWTPs and with (and within) the involved HEIs is evident, although in some cases it has been a difficult journey to get to that point and for some it is still ongoing. The HEIs, in particular, have had to work at an unfamiliar pace (for example, fast tracking new courses and qualifications) and become more responsive to employer needs.

One clear area of success is the establishment of the partnerships and getting a considerable amount of work underway and largely achieved by the end of March 2016.

The impact of SWTPs on the wider social work training sector and, in particular, how their activities affect those local LAs and HEIs not currently part of the partnership, was another objective for the evaluation and is explored in Section 7 of the report. Whilst some non-participating LAs do not have a great deal of knowledge about the SWTPs, others are very aware and either keen to join an existing partnership or establish their own with their local partners. Some non-involved HEIs are nervous about what might happen when existing agreements with local employers come to an end and those employers focus solely on students from within the partnership. Some discomfort has also been expressed by partners in each of the three SWTPs with another HEI within the SWTP catchment, at the lack of that HEI's involvement in the partnership. In the same way that existing partnerships are now considering whether, and how, to take on board additional HEIs and LAs[15], subsequent new partnerships would need to think about those

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[15] It is not a requirement to take on additional partners, it is at SWTPs' discretion

issues and how they would manage them. This is one of the key issues for the next steps of the four SWTPs.

Key transferable lessons

The key transferable lessons from the evaluation evidence are:

Governance structures – it has worked well to have decision making at director level on a strategy board, with operational groups reporting to that board involved in development and delivery. This ensures top level commitment to partnership activities whilst the practical elements are pursued at a level appropriate within employer organisations.

Communication – the importance of clear communication strategy (from the outset) with partners, front-line social workers, students, HEI staff etc.

Project Manager – the vital role a dedicated project manager can play in underpinning partnership activities by co-ordinating meetings, acting as a channel for communications etc.

Admission criteria – it takes time for enhancements to be developed and incorporated into admissions procedures.

The importance of social worker and service user involvement – the benefits of having practice and real life experience brought into academia cannot be underestimated.

Allow for the different pace between services - children's and adults' services operate at different paces of development that have to be allowed for in partnership activities.

Plan for new employers and HEIs to join the partnership – if partnerships decide to allow new employers and/or HEIs to join existing partnerships (which is at their own discretion), they need to consider how this will be managed. This includes clear operating criteria and boundaries as well as providing appropriate induction for newcomers.

Staff changes – restructuring within LAs can impact on the partnership with key individuals changing roles and no longer being available. This is to be expected within the context of current reform and budget restructuring and needs to be allowed for by succession planning for key members of the partnership and the development of induction for new people.

Areas for consideration

Building on the successes, attribution, challenges and key transferable lessons previously identified, the following are the key areas for consideration arising from the evaluation findings.

Key issues for DfE/DH, existing and prospective SWTPs in relation to the Expression of Interest (EoI) process when bidding to become a partnership

- It was raised with HOST that funding decisions in June 2015 were not helpfully timed for those partnerships ultimately successful, as social work students had already been recruited. HOST suggests that any future funding of the partnership programme may wish to consider whether timetables could be brought in line with academic years.

- The risk assessments prepared for the bids were not detailed and most partnerships do not regularly update them. HOST suggests that the development of full risk assessments, a dedicated communication strategy and fully worked-up partner exit plan and entry strategy for possible new partners should be incorporated into any future SWTP EoI requirements. This will help the bidding partners to think more thoroughly about the practical aspects of working as a partnership, build in contingencies such as in the event of staff absences or changes and enable them to manage risks more effectively.

- HOST has found that the burdens of paperwork on SWTPs trying to establish themselves through their set-up phases should not be underestimated; it is considerable. This is not a paperwork burden imposed externally but rather what is required to facilitate the partnership implementation plans.

- From interviews it is clear that the composition of personnel in SWTPs is prone to significant change between the bidding process and early delivery phase and is ongoing throughout the partnership as employers undergo restructuring; it was quite common for senior people who were involved in developing or signing off the bid to have had very little to do with the implementation leading to an initial lack of understanding around the purpose of the programme from some partners who were not previously involved in the bid. HOST suggests that partnerships should be made more aware that cross-organisational briefing of roles and responsibilities is critical in order to avoid delays as people endeavour to catch up. This also reinforces the need for an adequate induction process to be developed for new partners or new individuals replacing partner representatives.

- Partnerships need to ensure commonality of language throughout both the bidding and submission process; difficulties around language were also felt during the early implementation phase of the pilot. Many partners reported during the early evaluation interviews that they were finding it was a learning curve to understand the terminology used by other organisations, with LAs using different job titles for similar positions and with some differences in terminology/vocabulary. In addition, HEIs and LAs have different working styles and terminology. In one SWTP it was noted that the terminology used in relation to social workers' education and CPD was unfamiliar to practising social worker leads. This issue of terminology will be

exacerbated as new organisations join partnerships and have to be inducted into the partnership culture.

- SWTP bidders need to be realistic about the scope of achievements indicated in bids; in other words what they could sensibly achieve with the resources and time available.

Wider issues for DfE/DH to consider

- Tensions remain in some of the partnerships between ideological aims and practical achievements – which links back to the reality of what can be delivered. SWTPs should be encouraged to ensure that any applications for future funding reflect the reality of what can be achieved and allow for a period of implementation, testing and evaluation of what has already been achieved rather than pushing forward with further innovation short term.

- In preparing bids and developing approaches, SWTPs should be encouraged to consider what else they could bring to their approach from existing programmes; some are involved in Step Up and one in Frontline and there are many examples of innovation and best practice that could be drawn on from activities within those programmes and built upon.

- Consideration needs to be given to some practical questions that are being asked by key stakeholders, SWTP partners and non-involved LAs and HEIs in relation to the future of the SWTP programme and wider roll out. Questions include for example:

  - How will a SWTP work in an area where there is a group of LAs who work together but there is no local HEI (in one case a group in geographic isolation from HEIs essentially)?

  - Can an LA belong to more than one SWTP?

  - Can an HEI belong to more than one SWTP?

  - How would a national body get involved with all the different SWTPs in a sensible way given the time inputs that have been required of partners?

  - How can it be ensured that smaller employers are given a fair voice within a SWTP dominated by, perhaps, a larger LA?

  - How will SWTPs work together if there is a national initiative they are part of?

- Partners have identified a need for a central repository for materials developed by SWTPs that can be shared by others including guidance material and case studies. Where will this repository sit and who will take responsibility for it?

Issues for existing SWTPs to consider

- There is a real need for SWTPs to put in place a specific programme and project management function to support partnership activities if they do not already do so.

- Communications strategies should be reviewed and consulted upon within the partnership with a view to improving lines of communication. Alternatives to face-to-face meetings could be considered to allow for those partners who would have to travel some distance to attend and perhaps a rotation of venue so each partner has some local meetings. The strategies should also look at how the activities of the SWTP can be publicised effectively and shared within the locality, between SWTPs and more widely.

- SWTPs should consider how the considerable experience and knowledge of PVIs could be utilised within the partnership structure and explore innovative approaches to development statutory placement opportunities that include an element of time spent within a good quality assured PVI. This should include a consideration of how to work with nationally based organisations rather than just those with a local office.

- SWTPs should consider the process involved for introducing new partners within their SWTP beyond the current year and how to handle the implications this might have on partnerships i.e. new HEIs/ LAs or voluntary sector organisations? This includes developing clearly established criteria on what the new organisation will bring to the partnership and receive from the partnership.

- There is a need for induction plans to be in place for new personnel becoming involved in SWTP programmes. This may be someone new to a post or taking over a partnership responsibility for an organisation or indeed a new employer or HEI joining.

- Further consideration needs to be given to the involvement of service users within the partnership activities. This should include the anticipated benefits of SWTP activities to service users and how partnerships will monitor and evaluate this.

Appendix A: Overview of evaluation methodology

Following a competitive tender process, HOST Policy Research (HOST) was appointed to conduct an evaluation of the Social Work Teaching Partnership Programme. The evaluation was commissioned by and Department for Education (DfE), supported by the Department of Health (DH), and managed by DfE's Social Work Reform Unit. The HOST project team comprised:

- Dorothy Berry-Lound, Managing Partner of HOST who was Project Director

- Sue Tate, Associate Director for Education, Qualifications and Workforce Development who was Deputy Project Director

- Professor David Greatbatch, Associate Director for Research Methodology and Leadership Development.

The overarching guidelines adopted to scope and inform the research design to meet the objectives were:

- Consideration of research ethics, including ensuring the informed consent and safety of all research participants and the management of confidential data.

- A sufficiently in-depth methodology to meet the objectives, but light touch where possible to avoid placing an undue burden on participants, bearing in mind the heavy workloads of social workers in particular.

- Carefully considered risk identification and mitigation.

- The milestone requirements from the Social Work Reform Unit in reporting and meetings.

- Environmental considerations and HOST's commitment to reducing carbon emissions - which also reduces unnecessary travel costs through the use of 'smart' communications such as Skype, GoToMeeting, etc.

The evaluation was undertaken in seven stages as follows:

- Stage 1: Inception, project steering, desk review and development of research tools

- Stage 2: Interviews with national stakeholders

- Stage 3: Research with the key partners within each partnership

- Stage 4: Evaluation fieldwork with student social workers

- Stage 5: Development of case studies

- Stage 6: Discussions with local HEIs and LAs not involved in the partnerships

- Stage 7: Analysis and reporting

Below is a summary of activities in each of these phases.

Stage 1: Inception, project steering, desk review and development of research tools

Inception meeting and project steering

An inception meeting was held on 19 August 2015. At this meeting discussion took place around elements of the original tender and a review of the practicalities of the research as planned. Following the inception meeting, a Project Plan was prepared. An overview of the research activities and timetable were made available on the HOST Policy Research website.

Review of project documentation

Following the inception meeting, the team reviewed the full submissions of the four Teaching Partnerships and any other relevant project documents in order to:

- Develop an initial overview of the four teaching partnerships and an initial comparison of their objectives, delivery models and methods.

- Develop an initial understanding of the previous education and training arrangements within each teaching partnership.

- Identify where the teaching partnerships have similar goals and direct comparisons may be possible.

- Identify the teaching partnerships' specific milestones in relation to their delivery model and implementation plan.

- Map he wider contexts within which the training partnerships operate through a review of the wider social work training sector, with a particular focus on the areas in which the training partnerships are located.

At key points in the evaluation, prior to stages of fieldwork, all research tools were drafted and submitted to DfE/ DH for comment and approval.

Stage 2: Interviews with national stakeholders

Semi-structured telephone interviews with key national stakeholders were conducted in September/early October 2015, repeated in February/early March 2016. The aim of the initial interviews was to establish stakeholders' views on expectations of the Partnerships, what they considered would be the greatest challenges, any issues they could foresee and success criteria against which, alongside the broader criteria agreed with DH and DfE, outcomes could be evaluated. This included reach and coverage in terms of engagement, the quality of delivery and its intended impact on practice. The interviews also considered the implications of SWTPs on the wider social work training sector and local HEIs and LAs who are not currently participating in the project. A total of 12 stakeholders in total participated in the discussions. Nine were interviewed during the

first phase of the evaluation (three were not available to be interviewed at that time) and nine in the second round of interviews (three were not available to be interviewed though not the same ones as the first round). In two cases, individuals had conducted consultations with their regional representatives prior to their final interview, in order to provide a detailed response.

Stage 3: Research with the key partners within each partnership

Research with key partners was conducted in two key elements, quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative research: DfE issued a data proforma to collect basic information on the number of student placements offered and number of teaching staff/practice educators (PEs) in each organisation. Unfortunately there was not enough consistency in the way the information was provided by the SWTPs to enable any meaningful comparison for evaluation purposes[16]. In February 2016 HOST issued a proforma to partnerships in order to gather final outcome data in relation to placements. This resulted in SWTPs reporting 259 placements. From this data collection activity, it was clear that some partnerships were including placement data for students not directly within the catchment of partnership activities as originally envisaged by them but impacted by it. Their argument was that as the students have been impacted upon directly by the partnership activities their data should be included. One partnership included 15 September placements within PVIs that had been arranged prior to the SWTP being notified of the success of their bid.

Qualitative research: Qualitative research was conducted with the key partners within each SWTP at three points in the research. In September 2015 initial qualitative interviews with key partners took place. These were conducted by a combination of face-to-face interviewing and telephone interviews using a previously agreed interview checklist and involved HEI professionals and key staff in each of the partner organisations. A total of 55 interviews were completed with additional attendance at two SWTP governance meetings.

The aim of this initial discussion was to clarify any queries regarding the partnership model that was being piloted, and discuss what they consider would be the greatest challenges, any issues they could foresee and success criteria against which as with our interviews with key national stakeholders, would sit alongside the broader criteria agreed with DH and DfE in relation to outcomes that could be evaluated. This included expectations for reach and coverage in terms of engagement, the quality of delivery and its intended impact on practice, but also specific outcomes relevant to each partnership.

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[16] Throughout the evaluation the evaluators have been reliant on being given accurate data from the SWTPs and can only work with what has been provided.

Interviews were written up in confidential comparative matrices within each partnership to enable comparison of views. These discussions contributed towards developing the baseline for the evaluation but also enabled us to develop, with the lead partner(s) at each SWTP, a balanced scorecard for the partnership with agreed objectives and measures. Using a balanced scorecard as a tool in this way enabled us to compare and contrast across the four models; it was not used as a ranking tool. The scorecard was developed and agreed with the lead partners within each partnership.

The scorecard for each SWTP was divided into four quadrants; the activities and outcomes within each of the quadrants enabled us to:

- consider the extent to which each SWTP model was successful, taking into account limitations of time and other factors particular to each SWTP site; and

- identify the factors that help or hinder progress and achievement of milestones.

For each quadrant, based on the submitted implementation plans, grant agreement and supporting spreadsheets documentation and early discussions with the SWTPs, objectives were developed as well as measures and key performance indicators (KPIs) that are unique to that SWTP and informed by their vision for the partnership. A second round of interviews was conducted in October 2015 in order to obtain an overview of progress against the scorecard and any issues of particular importance to be highlighted for consideration in the interim report. This round of interviews included a 'lessons learnt' perspective to fulfil the formative role of the interim report.

A final round of interviews took place with lead partners in late February/early March 2016 as well as five focus group discussions. As well as a separate discussion to finalise the outcomes for the balanced scorecards, individual interviews looked at benefits, impact, successes and transferable lessons. All other partners within each SWTP were asked to submit a written response following key questions posed by HOST. Interviews were also conducted with a range of academic staff and teaching consultants. 63 individuals participated in this final qualitative stage.

Stage 4: Evaluation fieldwork with student social workers

This fell into two key areas:

Quantitative research: In September/October 2015, liaison took place with each lead partner and HEI(s) in order to be able to issue each student social worker with an initial e-questionnaire to establish their background and expectations of the programme. Owing to issues of data protection, the HEIs sent the link to the initial questionnaire using a covering email drafted by HOST. HEIs were asked to issue reminders to encourage response. The initial survey was sent out to 415 student social workers and achieved an overall completed response rate of 49%.

The initial questionnaire concluded by asking students for their contact details so that HOST could send them a second questionnaire in February 2016 to review their progress and collect their views on the quality of teaching and the programme in general. They were also asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow up telephone interview (to contribute towards the development of case studies). The second survey with those who agreed to be followed up (166) achieved an overall completed response rate of 35%.

The survey activity for the evaluation highlighted a number of issues. More social work students were considered to be in scope of the survey than anticipated in the original bid documentation in the case of two SWTPs. In one case, the questionnaire was issued to students outside the scope of the SWTP by the HEI and some responses had to be excluded in order to obtain a meaningful student perspective. In another case it was clear that the impact of the SWTP was much wider than just one group of students and so the questionnaire was sent out more widely.

The survey has proved a valuable source of input from students which allowed us to develop the topic guides for the student focus groups and identify key areas for follow up case study discussions. However, the numbers involved are quite low and so results have to be treated with some caution.

Qualitative research: The results from the second questionnaire were used to inform five focus group discussions with a total of 38 student social workers in early March 2016. The focus groups were facilitated by members of the HOST team following a focus group topic guide. 28 follow up discussions/email exchanges were also conducted with student social workers, work-based supervisors and PEs from the SWTPs to explore their experience in more detail, particularly in relation to effective practice. These interviews were in confidence and contributed to the development of the case studies in Stage 5 below.

Stage 5: Development of case studies

We developed eight, composite, standalone case studies. The case studies were developed around the student social worker/practice educator positive experience with an exploration of the teaching partnership methodology and innovation that had led to that positive experience.

The case studies drew on existing evidence from other elements of the research, including the surveys of student social workers and focus group discussions, in order to minimise the burden on research participants and make best use of the information already gathered. This information was supplemented with evidence from the follow up discussions (Stage 4) that were conducted specifically to develop the case studies. Whilst most of the case studies are based on a composite of interview responses, one focuses largely on the experience of one individual and the case study has been checked and approved for publication by the individual concerned.

Stage 6: Discussions with local HEIs and LAs not involved in the partnerships

In order to consider the implications of the SWTPs on wider social work training locally interviews were conducted with ten HEIs and LAs whose catchment area borders on the SWTP operating area. The interviewers used a previously agreed interview checklist with anonymous write ups on comparative matrices.

Stage 7: Analysis and reporting

Analysis

Analysis was ongoing, assessing the extent to which the partnerships make a difference (and why), and where possible addressing the difference between what would have happened without the partnership (the counterfactual) and what actually happened with them (additionality).

We paid particular attention to attribution and the influence of other factors in producing outcomes to enable us to produce a robust assessment of the impact attributable to the teaching partnerships in relation to the quality of education and practice training as a result of participating in the pilot (eg number and quality of students enrolled, entry requirements and methods, curricula, number of statutory placements, practice education, supervision etc).

Outputs

The project outputs were:

- Monthly progress reports increased to weekly during the main fieldwork phases.
- A formative interim report and presentation based on findings to date at the end of October 2015.
- Draft final report by mid-March 2016.
- Eight standalone case studies written to a standard format.
- Final report by mid May 2016.
- Presentation of key findings.

Appendix B: Eligibility and Stretch Criteria

The following table reproduces the teaching partnership stretch criteria published in 2015.

Glossary SUC = service user or carer   PE = Practice Educator   SDD = skills development days   CSWs = Chief Social Workers

	Eligibility criteria	Required evidence	Stretch criteria	Required evidence
CORE AREAS				
1. Governance	• The partnership can include HEIs, statutory and PVI organisations • The partnership can evidence governance arrangements for the partnership • The partnership has governance around safe practice for students • The partnership is led and driven by senior managers within the partnership; Principal Social Workers or equivalent attend partnership meetings • A nominated	• The EoI confirms the partnership currently meets the eligibility criteria. It describes the membership of the partnership, the frequency of meetings and the parts played by senior managers (including Principal Social Workers or equivalent) • Papers are available on request to evidence the partnership meets the eligibility criteria	• A strategy to raise the quality of education and practice training through the Teaching Partnership is co-owned by all the leads in the partnership • The partnership has a credible plan for improved performance for 2015-16 and beyond, which senior managers in all partnership organisations own and will deliver	• A Memorandum of Understanding or Cooperation signed by organisational leaders whereby they confirm their commitment and resourcing to achieve the milestones in the Expression of Interest • An accompanying high level timeline showing the milestones for 2015-16 development; a separate high level timeline for development to 2017-18 **Outcome measures** • **Improved performance in the core areas is**

	Eligibility criteria	Required evidence	Stretch criteria	Required evidence
	employer body in the partnership is willing to hold any partnership funds on behalf of the partnership as a separately accounted fund			**achieved by Sept 2016**
2. **Admissions**	• The partnership can evidence the ways SUCs and employer representatives are involved in the design and operation of admissions, including decisions about recruitment of students • The partnership can evidence the ways it meets SWRB guidance on the admission of students (http://www.swapbox.ac.uk/1133/1/Admission%2520to%2520SW_Dec2011_final%2520doc[1].pdf) • The partnership can evidence that at	• The EoI confirms the partnership currently meets the eligibility criteria • Papers are available on request to evidence the partnership meets the eligibility criteria	• The partnership owns a plan for the involvement of SUCs and employer representatives at all stages of admissions from Sept 2015, including decisions about applicants • The partnership is committed to a minimum of 300 UCAS points or a 2:1 requirement to undergraduate and postgraduate courses respectively from Sept 2016, requirements also maintained at clearing • The partnership develops a test at the point of application before an offer to study	• The EoI describes plans to enhance the admissions process and raise standards of entry • An admissions test is available for review by 30 June 2015 **Outcome measures** • **A visit to the partnership in 2015-16 shows the stretch criteria are being implemented**

	Eligibility criteria	Required evidence	Stretch criteria	Required evidence
	least 240 UCAS points or a 2:1 are required to apply for entry through conventional routes to undergraduate and postgraduate courses respectively, requirements also maintained at clearing • The partnership uses a range of methods to assess applicants		is made. The test will assess all applicants' intellectual ability, social work values and behaviours. The test must include written assessment, verbal reasoning, group discussion and scenarios/role play in all cases. These tests should be applied to all applicants, including those from access courses	
3. **Placements** • **and** **curriculum**	• The partnership's placement provider representatives and SUCs are involved in SDD teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum planning for initial education and CPD • The partnership's SDD programme is structured around jointly agreed learning outcomes	• The EoI confirms the partnership currently meets the eligibility criteria • Papers are available on request to evidence the partnership meets the eligibility criteria	• All placement students are guaranteed statutory placements relevant to their specialism. In child and family settings, these will offer all students significant experience of using the statutory framework for child and family social work. In adult services, students will have experience of using statutory frameworks for adult	• The EoI confirms that statutory placements relevant to students' specialisms will be available to all students in the academic year 2015-16 and beyond. It lists the organisations to be used and describes in full the types of statutory experience students will gain • The EoI confirms the embedding of the CSWs' Knowledge and Skills

	Eligibility criteria	Required evidence	Stretch criteria	Required evidence
	• The partnership's practice learning opportunities are quality assured with a clear learning structure in place • The partnership can evidence clear links to practice, social work law and theories, methods and models of social work in its SDD programme • Partnerships have agreed procedures for assessing student progress; the application of these procedures is consistent and evidence confirms this is the case with rigour in the system. There are clear arrangements to identify poor student progress and take appropriate action to		social care in delivering outcome-focused, personalised responses[17]. Partnerships offering both statutory placements relevant to students' specialisms in contrasting settings will be prioritised in the assessment of EoI • The CSWs' Knowledge and Skills statements have a central place in the curriculum • Programmes providing units in child and family and adult specialisms will be prioritised • Inspectors of practice learning are used to monitor and assess quality of practice learning opportunities • The partnership has a plan for embedding the CSWs' Knowledge and Skills statements, consistency checking of	statements in the curriculum from 2015-16 and summarises any changes required. The EoI describes the specialisms offered in adult and child and family social work • The EoI describes the monitoring and quality assurance arrangements for practice placements • Papers evidencing the other requirements are available on request **Outcome measures** • **A visit to the partnership in 2015-16 shows the stretch criteria are being implemented**

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[17] See the explanatory note on p6

	Eligibility criteria	Required evidence	Stretch criteria	Required evidence
	fail students when needed		ASYE requirements, ACFP and DfE supervisor proposals into CPD during 2015-16 • CPD, including ASYE arrangements, is linked to national requirements for all social workers and the new assessment and accreditation system for child and family social work, reflecting the embedding of progression, learning and development, within organisational identity • The partnership can evidence enhanced collaboration between employers and HEIs to undertake long term planning for training and development of the social work workforce throughout their careers	

	Eligibility criteria	Required evidence	Stretch criteria	Required evidence
4. Academic delivery	• The partnership can evidence that at least 60% of the HEI-employed academic teaching team are qualified, registered social workers • The partnership can evidence that practitioners and SUCs are involved in helping design, deliver and assess the initial education academic programme • The partnership can evidence that robust internal QA processes are used to ensure the quality of HEI and placement delivery • The partnership can evidence that student feedback is used to enhance the academic programme	• The EoI confirms the partnership currently meets the eligibility criteria • Papers are available on request to evidence the partnership meets the eligibility criteria	• The partnership can demonstrate an increase in the amount of child and family practitioner and adult practitioner teaching on the initial education academic programme in 2015-16 compared to previous baselines • In feedback, 90% or more of students rate academic delivery as at least good	• The EoI explains the increase in the amount of adult, and child and family practitioner teaching compared to previous baselines and how it will be quality assured. **Outcome measures** • **A visit to the partnership in 2015-16 shows the stretch criteria are being implemented** • **Practitioners directly deliver some of the teaching**

	Eligibility criteria	Required evidence	Stretch criteria	Required evidence
5. Support and development of students on practice placements •	• The partnership can evidence that at least 50% of all PEs currently used by the partnership have demonstrated capability against Level 2 of PE Professional Standards • The partnership can evidence that PEs are required to provide evidence of ongoing capability. The partnership can evidence how it deals with quality issues relating to PEs • Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) feedback indicates enhanced placement experience for students • The partnership can evidence that HEIs and employers make joint decisions on matching students	• The EoI confirms the partnership currently meets the eligibility criteria • Papers are available on request to evidence the partnership meets the eligibility criteria	• The partnership can evidence how students will be supported and developed throughout their placements by a broad set of child and family and adult practitioners appropriate to their placements and not just by a single practice educator • The partnership can evidence that no more than 20% of PEs used will be independent • The partnership has a clear plan and accompanying rationale to allocate a fixed amount of time to ensure that child and family and adult supervisors and/or team managers appropriate to students' placements support and develop students in 2015-16 • At least 80% of PEs supervising placements should be social	• The EoI describes a plan for meeting the stretch criteria from Sept 2015. This includes the increase in practitioners' supervision time and any increase in the number of practitioners that will supervise in 2015-16, matched against changes in placement numbers for 2015-16 **Outcome measures** • **A visit to the partnership in 2015-16 shows the stretch criteria are being implemented**

	Eligibility criteria	Required evidence	Stretch criteria	Required evidence
	with PEs		workers involved in direct work with children and families, and/or adults, as appropriate to students' placements • The partnership can evidence how experienced, effective child and family, and adult social workers (whether or not they are PEs) are involved in curriculum development • All those supporting and developing students must be familiar with the CSWs' Knowledge and Skills statements	
DISCRETIONARY AREAS				
6. Progression	• The partnership can evidence that employability rates in social work 6 months and 12 months after graduation are 50% and 70%	• The EoI confirms the partnership currently meets the eligibility criteria • Papers are available on request to evidence the	• There is a plan to deliver 2015-16 employability rates in social work of at least 70% and 80% 6 months and 12 months respectively after	• The EoI describes what is in place to meet the stretch criteria **Outcome measures** • **A visit to the**

	Eligibility criteria	Required evidence	Stretch criteria	Required evidence
	respectively • The partnership can evidence that vacancies across the partnership are systematically advertised to students	partnership meets the eligibility criteria	graduation • The partnership can evidence that a system is in place to support final year students in their transition to qualified practitioner, above and beyond final placement arrangements	**partnership by March 2015 shows a support system is in place** • **6 month employability targets are met by end Jan 2016**
7. Workforce planning	• The partnership can evidence that the number of students admitted to qualifying programmes is linked to an area or regional workforce development programme • The partnership can evidence that CPD plans are informed by employer demand and that practitioners are supported to access CPD opportunities • The partnership can evidence that a	• The EoI confirms the partnership currently meets the eligibility criteria • Papers are available on request to evidence the partnership meets the eligibility criteria	• The partnership has a plan for improving workforce planning during 2015-16, endorsed and driven by senior managers • The partnership has a plan for embedding the CSWs' Knowledge and Skills statements, ASYE requirements, ACFP and DfE supervisor proposals into CPD during 2015-16	• The EoI describes what is in place to meet the stretch criteria **Outcome measures** • **A visit to the partnership in 2015-16 shows the stretch criteria are being implemented**

	Eligibility criteria	Required evidence	Stretch criteria	Required evidence
	comprehensive CPD framework is in place to enable social workers to develop career pathways			
8. **Academics' experience of practice**	• Practitioners with current responsibility for statutory social work must be involved in teaching specialist elements of the curriculum • The partnership can evidence that 10% of academic staff are supported to have protected time in practice during 2015-16	• The EoI confirms the partnership currently meets the eligibility criteria • Papers are available on request to evidence the partnership meets the eligibility criteria	• Practitioners involved in teaching are supported by employers to do so • There are joint appointments across practice and education • There is a plan to embed practitioner research approaches for students and ASYEs in partnership with HEIs	• The EoI describes what is in place to meet the stretch criteria **Outcome measures** • **Evidence of personal practice experience informing the academic content of the programme and raising its quality**

Appendix C: Case studies

Eight case studies have been developed to illustrate activities that have been conducted in order to meet the stretch criteria. The case studies are:

- The Value of Developing New Practice Educators

- Working with Care Leavers

- Developing Student Units

- The Service User's Voice

- Embedding the Knowledge and Skills Statements

- Training Involving Teaching Consultants

- CPD and Qualifications for Practising Social Workers

- Academics increase Current Practice Experience

The Value of Developing New Practice Educators

All four SWTPs had developed training and support for practice educators (PEs). The specific interventions by SWTPs had been welcomed by all those who had participated. Access to programme-funded practice education training places had boosted morale within the service and helped develop further local experienced practitioners who might have been out of HE for some years.

Consultations with 13 individuals who had been on practice educator training within two SWTPs suggested how valuable this training was for individuals and how well received were the opportunities afforded by the SWTPs.

All had attended the training on offer as part of career development. One stated she had been a work-based supervisor for a few years following a work-based supervisor course in 2010. Twice before she had unsuccessfully tried to get onto a PE course without success and she was delighted to be accepted onto this one and for her workplace to grant her the time to attend. One individual hoped that being a PE would also make her challenge and question her own practice which, she said, was always good for personal and professional development.

The training had been a four or five day course, depending on which SWTP presented it. One individual said that the training had updated the class on how the university operated and what students required in order to achieve a pass on their first placement as well as providing the information about what was expected from a PE.

Individuals across the board commented on how useful they found the materials that were provided during their training, how much they enjoyed the group discussions and how the training appeared to be completely appropriate to individual learning needs. Comments included

> "*A very effective course that gave me the tool and suggestions to go on and create an effective learning experience for my student.*"

> "*I felt it was very effective. The aspects that were particularly useful were those that you don't do as the work based supervisor; for instance being more involved in the Placement Agreement and Midway Review meetings; full supervision (not just managerial supervision); refresher on direct observations; writing the report (rather than just sending in a contribution). I enjoyed meeting other workers from different authorities who worked in different aspects of social work. An explanation about the (name) partnership and the wider role of the practice educator in going into university to offer training was helpful*".

Some were yet to put their new learning into practice but were very excited about doing so. One had been creating a varied induction fortnight for the student she was expecting based on her recent PE training and identified support materials. Another had been able

to apply his learning in relation to students' learning styles, supervision methods, types of assessment, where and how to look for the students' assessed work, observation and the College of Social Work Domains. He said:

> "*From the training, I feel I put together a robust and enjoyable placement for my student. Principally, I applied the value of organisation and thinking ahead, so that neither I nor my student were ever caught out by the demands of a busy placement*".

Another newly qualified PE stated:

> "*I have been talking to students as part of my role and found this year's cohort have been very grateful for the commitment from the teaching partnership and in my professional opinion this has supported them to be better prepared for practice*".

Working with Care Leavers

One employer within a partnership was particularly concerned about repeat removals of children from the same families through care proceedings. This concern was heightened when national research showed particularly high levels of repeat removals for their local authority and for their SWTP partners. Within that cycle, their own research showed that very young mothers were over-represented, as were those who had themselves been in care (there was obviously considerable overlap between the two groups). Other research indicated that care leavers have a one in ten chance of having their own children taken into care. Even where children remain with their birth mothers, their research showed that care leavers often need considerable ongoing support to help them care for their children.

The local authority felt that it was important to find ways to work better and differently in this area, both in their authority and across the partnership.

As part of their partnership activities, the SWTP had instigated monthly twilight sessions. The sessions happened between 4 – 6pm once a month to share good practice, research studies etc. Students, practitioners, managers and academics all came together to explore areas of interest. In discussing the content of future twilight sessions with the HEI and raising the issue of supporting care leavers who are themselves young parents, the Principal Social Worker discovered that academics at the partner HEI had had experience of evaluating a programme designed to support vulnerable parents and realised that the approach taken there might have some helpful elements. This programme included group work, which had once been part of the LA's support for care leavers but which had subsequently been dropped.

As the partnership were exploring how to maximise the benefits of academics coming into practice, they felt that the HEI co-facilitating a group with care leavers would help achieve that aim.

Alongside this, the LA was using part of the SWTP funding for backfilling to second an experienced practitioner to be a full-time PE for four students on placement in a practice hub for care leavers. This provided a development opportunity for the PE and statutory placements for the students who are provided with an opportunity to work with older care leavers (16 plus). The hub also used the research expertise of academics in the partnership. One of the intentions of the hub was to help students better understand the journey young people make from leaving care into adulthood.

For the PE, this had been an exciting professional development opportunity that would not have been possible without the SWTP. She also believed the hub and the involvement of academics had been an excellent way for students to consolidate what they had learned at university through translating it into practice.

To initiate things, a meeting was held that involved the Children's Rights Officer who facilitated the Children in Care Council as well as practitioners and academics from across the partnership. It was clear from discussions at the meeting and research evidence from the academics that parenting interventions designed specifically for young mothers, especially ones that helped develop social capital in young parents, were most likely to meet the needs of care leavers. They had found from experience that some care leavers gravitate back to their family of origin after leaving care but many others are left feeling isolated, so developing social capital provides an important dimension.

A programme devised by an academic at another HEI was identified as being the best fit with their needs. There had been two meetings by the end of the evaluation to get the programme off the ground with training provided by the programme's designer for practitioners across the partnership and academics on setting up and facilitating the group for care leavers. The group was to launch in April with 30 care leavers identified by end March who would benefit. This would be piloted in one LA on behalf of the partnership with a view to other employers doing something similar in their LA in the future. The model would encompass new groups being set up on a rolling basis which would identify and include care leavers from across the partnership area as the need arose.

The model being piloted was that the group would meet weekly for eight weeks, co-facilitated by practitioners and academics. Thereafter, the group would still meet weekly but be largely self-directed although some support would be provided as needed. The group would be open to any young care leavers who were struggling, not just those in imminent danger of being subject to child removal proceedings. These would include some where child protection was involved, as well as those identified as having children in need and some who had had a previous child taken into care. Although there are existing programmes of this kind (for example, Incredible Years), research suggested that the kind of intervention proposed in the SWTP (based on Baby Fast) would give such vulnerable young parents the confidence and boost in self-esteem necessary to engage in other, less tailored programmes. It would also provide an opportunity for restorative work as those care leavers in contact with their own mothers could include them and conflicts could potentially be resolved or alleviated.

Over time, combined with the practice hub, students would be given a real opportunity to broaden their knowledge and skills in working with care leavers and vulnerable young parents. This also chimed with the partnership's aim of recruiting and training local social workers who understood the needs of service users in the area.

The students on placement at that time were due to finish in April which, unfortunately, was just before the launch of the group. However, it was hoped that, if they wished and had the time, they could be involved with the group as volunteers. The PE working with them currently was to be one of the programme leaders for the group, which comprised a team of six – three professionals and three service users. The three service users were

being recruited in advance so that they could help shape how the programme would be set up and delivered.

It was intended that as new students came on to placements, they would be able to be involved with groups as part of their training. The timing of subsequent groups was to dovetail with placement timetables.

The LA was confident that the group would not have happened without the SWTP. The working relationships between practitioners, the Principal Social Worker and the academics through the partnership had enabled the generation of ideas and the funding had allowed for dedicated time to develop the new approach. Before the TP, there had been no space to '*look above the parapet and generate new ideas and bring them to fruition. The reflective discussion space, idea generation, and the ability to access people with the expertise to see things through and make things happen are all down to changes because of the teaching partnership*.'

Developing Student Units

Three of the SWTPs were developing the use of 'student units' or 'pods' to deliver aspects of placement support. For example, at one SWTP the development of a number of student units was being supported by a dedicated teaching consultant, various agencies and their practice educators. One of the SWTPs had devised a set of aims for their student units which included:

- Provide opportunities for group supervisions/discussions/reflections/ action learning sets regarding practice, social work theory and research and best practice, facilitated by a collective of practitioners with different knowledge, skills and expertise. This will enhance the whole learning experience.
- Provide opportunities for more than one student to be on placement at one time and a rolling programme of partnership students and students from different pathways such as Step Up.
- Promote excellence in social work practice learning with a whole systems approach to the students' learning and their journey which fosters a commitment to a community of practice and learning with a shared commitment and responsibility for the students' ongoing development and assessment.
- Provide support to all those involved in practice learning including any student difficulties/issues including failing and marginal students.
- Revitalise the commitment to practice learning including the continued professional development of the practitioners involved.
- Enable the sharing of practitioner expertise as part of the induction and ongoing journey and assessment of the students.
- Facilitate the enhancement of multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working across the agencies and within the voluntary sector.

One of the partner agencies of the SWTP had been using the concept of student units (pods) since 2011 and case work supervision was delivered through weekly pod meetings. The pod supervision had the following features:

- Shared ownership of cases
- Collaborative working
- Multiple perspective taking
- Space to test multiple hypotheses and plan work
- Allocate actions and timescales.

Two other agencies within the SWTP also had experience of working through student units/clusters. The SWTP had been able to build on these examples.

There was no single model for development of the new units and various approaches were being developed according to the available resources of the individual agency involved and the focus of the units. These were still under development and so impact has not yet been assessed. Examples of the approaches to the student units included

where one unit was used for group learning and group supervision with two practice educators working with a number of students. Another provided a group learning environment for one practice educator, two students and two work-based supervisors.

A shared learning space equipped with resources provided the basis for another unit. Students had separate practice educators but came together for regular group learning. This concept of a shared learning space was also being developed in another authority. They were developing a student curriculum as part of their recruitment and retention strategy so that their students complete practice experience having been exposed to a shared learning experience. Practice educators will be providing group learning as a way of utilizing specialism, enhancing learning and sharing out the load.

At another authority, students had individual practice educators but came together for action learning sets with a particular focus on applying theory to practice. In addition it was hoped that this unit would provide support for the practice educators, who would be able to deliver specialisms to groups of students.

New areas being considered for further development by those involved in the units were the options for training regarding action learning sets and exploring a practice educator 'buddy system'.

The Service User's Voice

Two of the SWTPs had made considerable efforts to ensure the service user's voice is heard in their activities. For example, one had invited service users to sit on their governance board. Another, however, had put some considerable resource into recruiting to a post with the specific responsibility of ensuring that service users' views were taken into account in academia, in practice and in placement.

One of the main initiatives had been the development of a 'service user reflection and feedback tool' in order to encourage social work students to obtain feedback throughout their placement. This meant in practice that the service users with whom the students work had the opportunity to have their views heard in relation to the interventions they received. Students were also encouraged to use the tool in order to identify areas of the Knowledge and Skills Statements and Professional Capabilities Framework where they might not feel as confident, in order to support them to seek ways of upskilling in those areas.

The reflective tool was developed following reading into approaches to service user and carer involvement in social work education and the gathering of feedback. One of the findings was that service users and carers' involvement did not lead to the learning from the feedback being transferred into practice. The gathering of feedback was not approached reflectively, was often tokenistic and was not sought to encourage empowerment and participation. After having conversations with service users and asking them the best methods of asking for feedback, the consensus was that most people preferred being asked for feedback using a face to face communication method as opposed to a feedback form.

The tool encourages critical reflection and encourages the student to continually reflect on their knowledge and skills and their development through their journey as a student and to then reflect on what they feel the service user would say about their opinion of their development and their actual social work practice. The student can then further test out this hypothesis by reflecting with the service user on their development and how they can then improve and/or maintain their professional development.

The envisaged feedback prompted by the question *"what would the service users that you are working with say about this?"* and then the actual feedback that the student gets, encourages them to reflect on their own view of their social work practice and how their knowledge has been constructed and their practice developed. It then goes on to further support them to critically reflect on how their knowledge and skills were constructed and used, exploring the social work theories, research and models of intervention that informed their practice and to further explore the core values that underpinned their practice. This enables further reflection into what truly underpinned their intervention and decision making.

The tool not only supports the student to reflect, it supports the service user to reflect on the students' practice and their involvement in their lives. This makes it an empowering approach for the service user, encouraging partnership working within the intervention

and effective service user participation in social work education and social work professional development.

Working with a teaching consultant, the tool had been presented at a recall day for students on placement so that they could develop an understanding of how to use it. Several students mentioned the tool during focus group discussions as being an interesting development they were learning to use, and how the presentation had brought into focus the need to take account of service user feedback. The tool was presented in the whole context of portfolio building and placement experience as well as methods of reflection and social work theory that link particularly to service user inclusion and obtaining the voice of service users. The hope is that the theories and models introduced to the students will be transferred into their practice, thus improving the likelihood that service users will be listened to, empowered, and have the opportunity to give quality feedback.

Embedding the Knowledge and Skills Statements

All four SWTPs began processes to embed the Chief Social Worker Knowledge and Skills Statements (CWKSS) into qualified practice. It is early days for the introduction of the CWKSS and it will take some time for them to become fully integrated in both learning and practice.

The SWTPs had taken different approaches to embedding the CWKSS. In focus group discussions at one of the SWTPs, students commented that an Adult Principal Social Worker had come in to the HEI and taught the students about the CWKSS very early in the autumn term. A group of students at another SWTP mentioned that it had been introduced to them during their induction period. At two SWTPs, students had attended workshops on the CWKSS and at another SWTP there was a CWKSS workshop planned for May 2016 in the context of recruitment and employability. SWTPs had also looked at the CWKSS for supervisors and one SWTP had held a workshop with first line managers to establish their development needs.

According to one lead partner:

> *"The CSWKSS have been rolled out to the whole workforce and the TP gave us the mechanisms to do this. In fact, the SWTP structure enables you to respond to local and national challenges and initiatives because the structure is there to do this."*

The CWKSS were incorporated into the placement learning plan and induction pack of one group of students. They were clearly familiar with the detail of the CWKSS and, according to one student, *"Learning the KSS is easier than the PCF"*. One student commented how the CWKSS were incorporated into her personal development portfolio and included in discussions with her PE. However, others in the same group stated they had a learning plan prepared with their PE and the CWKSS were not covered.

One of the SWTPs had produced a PE handbook which amongst other things includes the CWKSS for both children's and adults' services so that PEs could ensure they were familiar with them. The same SWTP had looked at CWKSS and leadership as part of masterclasses and additional CPD.

Students themselves felt they needed to understand why they need to work with the CWKSS and that involved taking time to read and understand the individual elements of the CWKSS. Across several focus groups students said that the CWKSS was so new that the tutors rarely talked about it, the social workers they worked with on placement didn't know about the CWKSS and the various systems they had to work with in their placement didn't meet the CWKSS. Students felt they had an advantage because their knowledge was leading edge. However, they thought the CWKSS felt like it had been 'bolted on' whereas the PCF was integrated into everything they did.

Training Involving Teaching Consultants

One SWTP was making extensive use of practising social workers to support training delivery in the partner HEI. The intention had been for a limited number of social workers to take on this role but the interest from practitioners was extremely strong and, in reviewing the applications, the partnership realised that the range of specialist skills and knowledge on offer was such that it made sense to involve more people in the role – more than twice the number originally envisaged.

Teaching consultants, as they were named, were given a four day induction to the role and partnered with an experienced academic.

Students reported that having such an increased input from practitioners into their training had been very positive in a number of ways:

- They were able to answer questions about contemporary practice that lectures could not.
- They really wanted to help and give support to students.
- They were open and willing to share.
- They were honest and provide insights into how things really were, not how they should be.
- They helped link the theory to practice through concrete examples.
- They provided a reality check on what really went on in practice currently, not historically.
- They provided practical tips – e.g. how to protect yourself – that were not part of academic lectures.
- Students were reassured and felt better prepared for practice.
- The teaching consultants themselves had been open to new ideas and it was encouraging for students to know that curiosity was maintained in practice.
- Teaching consultants' involvement had been particularly powerful in presenting case studies and leading interactive question and answer sessions.
- Having input from teaching consultants from different employers within the partnership had helped students realise that culture and practice can differ and this not only prepared them better for employment but helped them to think about what they would be looking for when applying for jobs.
- Having teaching consultants in college supplementing theory with practical examples added another dimension and made teaching and learning more memorable. Hearing how the theory translates into practice helps plug the study/practice gap.

One student found the teaching consultant's input especially powerful when looking at adoption issues. The teaching consultant had worked in adoption for a long time and was able to bring theory and practice together in a way the student found really inspiring. The consultant had been involved in supporting a number of sessions, including leading a discussion on contemporary adoption issues including ethnic matching and same-sex couples adopting, drawing on real case studies. Similarly, in exploring attachment issues, the consultant had been able to look at the theory and show how it would be used to

support practice – for example, in matching children to adoptive parents based on the types of attachment issues they had experienced.

What really impressed the student, however, was the way in which the teaching consultant modelled social work ethics and values and proved that experienced social workers could remain positive, open-minded and enquiring. This, in turn, made the student feel much more enthused and optimistic about the longevity of a career in social work and also made her interested in working in the teaching consultant's local authority.

While having an increased practitioner input into training had been primarily intended to support students and help in the transition between theory and practice, there were benefits for others too.

Teaching consultants had, as a result of their work, come into increased contact with academics and research findings which, in turn, had led experienced practitioners to think more about their own practice and to question more. For some, the role sparked interest in becoming a practice educator.

Academics too benefited from increased exposure to contemporary social work issues and real-life scenarios. It had brought additional credibility to the curriculum, bridging the gap between theory and practice. As one described it, '*it has moved practice into the centre stage in a way that hasn't been done before in social work programmes*.' Increased understanding of the work undertaken by social workers in the partnerships had enabled the HEI to make the curriculum more relevant to the issues in local communities.

Employers too observed wider benefits, one saying that *'the teaching consultant role has rippled through the service in terms of changing the learning culture.'* While there had always been an element of practitioners supporting training, formalising the role and implementing a process of selection had given it gravitas. This had transformed it from being something that people might do on the side if they have time into an integral part of some people's role, with training and development to support them. It was important that it was an equitable developmental pathway that others could aspire to. One employer commented that '*creating additional development pathways has helped motivate the existing workforce with a strong knock-on effect on the wider workforce as they realise that training is everyone's business*.'

CPD and Qualifications for Practising Social Workers

All of the SWTPs had developed CPD activities for practising social workers. This ranged from practice educator training and work-based supervisor training to the delivery of specific masterclasses or workshops for social workers and managers (for example on the CSWKSS or working with service user feedback). According to one employer:

> *"This is a very good development opportunity for (practising social workers) and many of them are keen to embrace this".*

One SWTP had developed a Professional Development Career Portfolio that was to be digitised and go on-line by early summer. Once implemented, this would become the vehicle for employers and social workers to develop CPD pathways. However, the portfolio was also completely transferable and could be easily adapted for use by, for example, nurses and occupational therapists.

The same SWTP had developed a fast track, practice-based, undergraduate programme which had been designed to capture a high level of practice and experience from highly trained staff working within unqualified social work positions.

The undergraduate programme had been developed directly in response to identified employer needs. The SWTP had identified a Level 4 skills gap amongst unqualified workers. It was decided to develop an academic platform for these individuals to undertake a qualification.

The programme had been developed to be located within practice and delivered by practitioner lecturers and was an innovative model designed to focus on high levels of practice as part of the entry criteria and in its overall operating model. The SWTP funding had enabled the development of this programme and it was being offered to local authorities at a considerably reduced market cost as a result. This had been well received by the local authorities who would have been unable to afford to develop a similar programme for their staff individually.

Thirty students had been recruited to the programme following an interview process involving over 49 candidates. Each of the involved employers selected five candidates to be put forward to be considered for the programme. Candidates were tested against the admissions stretch criteria, which now included additional testing of higher level practice skills. From the 30 candidates selected, 17 had qualifications above the stretch criteria and of these, 12 had an existing undergraduate degree. Ten candidates had entry qualifications which met the stretch criteria and three, supported by their employers, had entry qualifications slightly lower than the stretch criteria but did have high levels of practice skills in line with this model of education.

The operating model for the programme was as follows:

- Six months Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) of high levels of practice experience supported by six days of lecturer practitioner input and 3 days

of action learning in practice jointly with lecturer practitioners and practicing social workers.

- On completion of the above, the following 18 months includes a number of defined 'schools' of activity at defined points – a summer school, winter school, and an autumn school. Again delivered by lecturer practitioners and supported by experienced and established academic staff.

- This is further supported by learning in action via jointly (with practitioners) facilitated action learning sets. The practice learning element is delivered in employment and centred on the Child and Adult Learning Pathways that have also been developed by the SWTP.

Participants are therefore 'training in practice about practice'.

Employers were very enthusiastic about this new programme and were clear that without the SWTP it would not have happened. According to one:

> *"We have an experienced unregistered worker who has taken up a place on the SW qualifying course that is being jointly delivered and practice led – this would have been impossible before the partnership".*

Academics increase Current Practice Experience

Whilst systems of knowledge exchange (academic to practice and vice versa) exist within several of the HEIs participating in SWTPs, plans were in place at one SWTP to identify practice placements for academics and establish action learning sets with defined practice/research areas for consideration.

However, another SWTP had already developed a managed programme of staff exchanges to put academics back into practice and practitioners into practice-led education. Operating within one adults' setting and two children's' settings, three academics had been put into practice for five days. This was seen by one employer as *"putting social work on the agenda with universities"*.

One academic shared her experience of gaining current practice experience through the staff exchange. She has extensive experience as a social work practitioner, working with children and families in a range of roles, but felt it was important to remain in touch with current practice so that her work at the University was informed by an accurate understanding of the present social work practice context and experience. In agreeing to the exchange, she was also interested in seeing directly how social workers in a variety of positions undertake child protection work today, looking at the assessment and decision-making process and the use of thresholds and how the work progressed through different teams. She said:

> *"I welcomed the opportunity to observe work by accompanying workers on visits and in meetings and to discuss practice issues and what informs their decision-making and interventions."*

She found that there have been a number of recent changes in the way that services are organised in the area that she visited, and although she was aware of these through her teaching, discussion with practitioners and reading, she was keen to see these changes in person and to have the opportunity to discuss these with practitioners during and following the observation. She also hoped to consider further how the work undertaken at the university contributes to the practice setting, both at qualifying and post-qualifying levels.

Once in practice, she said:

> *"An unexpected outcome of the time spent in practice was the pleasure I had in being involved in the work. It was energising, strongly reminding me of why I enjoyed social work for over 25 years and now work to support students to become social workers. Working late on the practice days was also a reminder of the long hours worked and the unpredictability of the work."*

She was interested to be able to see the impact of more recent changes in action, particularly around multi-agency working. A positive change was the co-location of some teams which meant that there could be daily multi-agency meetings to look at new domestic abuse referrals and decide on the multi-agency intervention. Timely strategy meetings with face-to-face contact could also take place with the minimum of disruption

for workers, as social care, education and police were on the same office floor. The use of technology enabled skype discussions with people unable to attend meetings. Technology was also utilised to show what calls were coming in to the office and response times. This gave her a better understanding of the organisational context as well as practice issues.

Throughout, it helped that workers were welcoming and open to her presence and involvement. The individual is a registered social worker and works to the HCPC standards of conduct, performance and ethics – which incorporate respecting confidentiality and in particular not disclosing any information relating to service users. There was no hesitation in workers discussing work with her, reflecting on reports they had written and allowing her to accompany them on visits. It was very useful to meet social workers who had completed the course at the University over the last couple of years and hear about their experiences since qualifying. She was impressed by the quality of the work that they were undertaking, including direct work with children when in a duty, short-term setting. She was able to read their assessments, as well as discuss the clear challenges of the work.

Before starting the practice days she found it hard to judge how to prioritise her time and how long to spend in different settings. She therefore had to judge as the experience progressed. During one day spent in screening, she spent time with a manager and two different social workers, and attending meetings enabled her to obtain a good understanding of the work undertaken. After two subsequent days in duty, she again felt that she had sufficient understanding of the work, having attended a strategy meeting, accompanied a worker on a section 47 and several other visits. Her plan was to spend the final two days in April with the Safeguarding team who undertake longer term work.

She said:

> *"The experience confirms the value of my previous social work experience and its validity in the current social work setting. The experience has however contributed to my knowledge of the changes in ways services are organised, my understanding of current thresholds and the demands on workers at different levels. This deepening of my understanding is utilised in discussion with practitioners in teaching and on placement visits.*
>
> *In planning teaching for next semester I plan to include the learning from the practice days, particularly around multi- disciplinary work and widening the skill base to take full account of technological changes.*
>
> *The experience will contribute to my teaching of child care law and safeguarding, particularly when considering thresholds for intervention."*

Appendix D: Glossary

ADCS Association of Directors of Children's Services

AMHP Approved Mental Health Professional

APEL Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning

ASYE Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

CPD Continuing Professional Development

CSWKSS Chief Social Workers' Knowledge and Skills Statements

DfE Department for Education

DH Department of Health

GMAT Graduate Management Admission Test

HEIs Higher Education Institutions

LAs Local Authorities

MOUs Memoranda of Understanding

PCF Professional Capabilities Framework

PE Practice Educator

PEP Practice Education Pathway

PRITs Peer Review Inspection Teams

PSW Principal Social Worker

PVIs Private or Voluntary Institutions

QA Quality Assurance

QAPL Quality Assurance in Practice Learning

SUC Service Users and Carers

SWTPs Social Work Teaching Partnerships

UCAS Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

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