

Social Work Reform Board

**Building a safe
and confident
future:**

One Year On

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

December 2010

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

Summary

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

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

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

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

Proposals

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

Improving the calibre of entrants to social work degrees

- More rigorous selection criteria including a written test, interview and group activity
- Thresholds for entry including minimum UCAS point thresholds for undergraduates, a 2.1 normally required for Masters-level study, basic skills requirements and competence in written and spoken English
- Involvement of employers, service users and carers in selection processes

Practice learning

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

- Development of a practice learning curriculum to inform placements and the permeation of teaching and learning within the HEI
- Arrangements for supervision and assessment of students on practice placements
- Quality and quantity of practice placements

Curriculum development, delivery & regulation

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

Underpinning principles

1.2 The principles which underpin our proposals are:

- That social work education and training should be a shared responsibility between employers and HEIs; and
- That employers, service users and carers should be consistently and substantially involved in the design and delivery of courses.

What can you do?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction

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

The four recommendations are to:

- Strengthen the calibre of entrants accepted to study on social work degree courses (Recommendation 1)
- Review the content and delivery of the curriculum (Recommendation 2)
- Establish new arrangements for providing sufficient high quality placements which are properly supervised and assessed (Recommendation 3)
- Put in place more transparent and effective regulation of social work education and training (Recommendation 5)

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

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

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

Context

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

Standards Act 2000¹.

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

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

Links with other recommendations of the Social Work Task Force

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

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

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

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

¹ Sections 63(5) and 63(6)

Partnerships

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

Common issues

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

- Public sector funding constraints mean that Local Authorities and other agencies may have less capacity in future to provide placements and be involved in the design and delivery of education and training.
- Changes to higher education (HE) funding and student finance may present a challenge to the aspirations for improvements to social work education. Work is underway to understand the implications of these funding changes for the social work degree and the future supply of social workers.
- The Department of Health is reviewing the student bursary and formal consultation will take place in the New Year.

Aims and objectives in improving the social work degree

2.13 The proposals in this paper will:

- Improve the skills and expertise of social work graduates
- Achieve greater consistency in content, quality and outcomes of degree courses
- Better link theory and research to practice
- Ensure that courses are based on shared expectations between employers, practitioners, HEIs, the profession and government
- Ensure sufficient high quality placements are available for students
- Reinforce the degree as the start of a continuous process of learning and development throughout a career in social work

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2 There is strong consensus that change is needed because:

- Some HEIs do not have sufficiently rigorous selection procedures
- Social work is a complex and demanding job which requires a particular mix of intellectual capacity, analytical skills, and personal qualities such as emotional resilience, empathy and use of authority
- We need students who can successfully complete the course and enter the workforce as competent and confident professionals

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

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

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

PROPOSAL 1A: Clearer information for applicants

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

PROPOSAL 1B: Written Test

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

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

PROPOSAL 1C: Interviews and group activities / exercises

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

Notes: *There is mixed research evidence of the effectiveness of interviews as a selection method and some HEIs have stopped undertaking interviews for reasons of cost and time. However, except for a small proportion of academics, there is a strong intuitive view, that all applicants should be interviewed due to the importance of good communication and relationship building skills for effective social work practice. This aligns with procedures for other professions², but is not currently required by the HPC for other courses they regulate.*

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

PROPOSAL 1D: Thresholds for entry

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

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

² Including teachers, nurses and many medical schools

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

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

Notes: *There is strong support for these proposals to ensure that those entering social work courses have the intellectual capacity for complex decision making, managing risk, producing high quality reports and communicating with a range of senior professionals., The prior academic achievement of students is one of the best indicators of success at degree and post graduate level ³. Raising the academic thresholds is likely to raise the profile of HEIs offering social work degree courses and the status of social work as a discipline. ⁴*

The continuation of ACCESS courses as an alternative route is accepted and in line with Government policy for ensuring mature students and those from less traditional education backgrounds can access higher education.⁵

PROPOSAL 1E: Basic skills requirements

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

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

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

PROPOSAL 1F: Competence in written and spoken English

3.14 Social work courses should raise requirements for communicating and comprehension skills to International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) to level 7. ⁶ This is already required for lawyers, teachers, nurses, and other health staff and would standardise criteria across the country.

³ (UUK 2003) | (Pelech et al, 1999, Munro and Bridges 1995, Holmstrom and Taylor 2008)

⁴ How the world's best performing schools systems come out top. (McKinsey 2007)

⁵ In line with government ambitions set out in *Unleashing Aspirations* and *Higher Ambitions, the future of universities in a knowledge economy*, BIS, 2009.

⁶ www.ielts.org.uk

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

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

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

Costs

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

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

- Ensure that students have the intellectual capacity and personal qualities to learn and develop through their courses to the standard required and reduce the risk of unsuitable graduates entering social work.
- Reduce the levels of withdrawal.
- Reduce the disproportionate time and public money spent supporting unsuitable students or those who are having difficulties and provide more equitable support for all students.

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

Section 2: Practice learning

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

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

The practice learning proposals

PROPOSAL 2A: Placement arrangements

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

- keeping the current requirement for 200 days for practice learning
- requiring two practice placements, the first of 70 and the second of 100 days
- allocating 30 days of practice learning time to focus on skills development and integration between theory and practice, to be delivered collaboratively by HEIs and employers
- developing a practice curriculum based on the agreed Professional Capabilities Framework

Notes: *The weight of opinion supported retention of 200 days for practice learning⁷. The proposal takes into account the valid arguments for ensuring more time on skills development and preparation for placement whilst maintaining two substantial placements including a final placement of not less than 100 days.*

⁷ Some parties wanted to reduce the 200 days, particularly with respect to Master programmes

The proposal should ease the problems of placement availability, as some HEIs move from offering three placements to two and the first placement is shorter.

There is broad support for national consistency in the number and length of placements.

PROPOSAL 2B: Practice learning curriculum

4.3 It is proposed that a practice curriculum is developed to specify the components of statutory social work tasks and legal interventions that students must experience during placement. This will build on the definition of practice placements developed and tested by the Social Work Development Partnership in 09/10⁸ and will address the concerns raised in the notes box below.

Notes: *There is concern that a tight definition of a statutory placement would:*

- *Exclude voluntary sector placements which offer highly complex and high risk work.*
- *Create confusion as to which local authority placements would meet the definition*
- *Exclude placements within the private, voluntary and independent sector which equip students well for future employment.*
- *Have a negative impact on supply in the current context of restructuring of services, e.g. Social Work Practices and the personalisation agenda*

These concerns notwithstanding, there is broad support for the development of a practice learning curriculum due to the importance of high quality placement experiences in preparing students for becoming effective social workers.

PROPOSAL 2C: Supervision and assessment of students

4.4 All students must be taught and assessed by qualified and experienced social workers. Non social work professionals can continue to contribute to teaching and assessing students but cannot undertake the final assessment themselves. From October 2013 all practice educators of social work students should be registered social workers and demonstrate that they have met the new practice education benchmark standards⁹. The standards set out requirements at two stages, recognising the different levels of complexity and responsibility in teaching, assessing and supervising students.

⁸http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/socialwork/practiceplacements/sw_statutory_practice_placements.aspx

⁹ Quality Standards for Practice Learning,
http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/socialwork/practiceplacements/sw_quality_standards_for_practice_placements.aspx

Assessors of first placements

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

Assessors of final placements

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

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

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

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

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

4.7 Regulatory levers need to be in place to monitor and assure the quality of practice learning. The HPC have clear standards for practice placements¹⁰. A tool to measure quality against national benchmarks (the Quality Assurance of Practice Learning¹¹) is also available and could be held by the College of Social Work in the future. Proposals have been made that the provision of practice learning funding should be conditional on the quality of placements.

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

¹⁰ <http://www.hpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/standards/sets/>

¹¹ Quality Standards for Practice Learning, http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/socialwork/practiceplacements/sw_quality_standards_for_practice_placements.aspx

- Pressures on frontline services can restrict the availability of placements.
- Specific funding has yet to be identified to ensure that sufficient numbers of practice educators who are registered social workers are trained by 2013.
- Current placement provision is often secured on an ad hoc basis rather than as part of a workforce planning approach which is supported at the highest level.

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

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

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

Section 3: Curriculum development, delivery & regulation

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

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

Background

5.2 The curriculum for the social work degree is currently determined through a combination of the QAA benchmark standards for social work¹², the DH requirements for social work training¹³ and the National Occupational Standards¹⁴. The Task Force was concerned that the plethora of standards set by different bodies is confusing, lacks transparency and provides weak levers for driving up the quality of social work education and training.

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

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

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

¹² QAA subject benchmark for Social Work (QAA 2008)

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/statements/socialwork08.pdf>

¹³ Requirements for social work training (DH 2002)

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4007803

¹⁴ http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/developing_skills/National_Occupational_Standards/social_work_NOS.aspx

PROPOSAL 3: Developing the curriculum framework

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

- Use of the Professional Capabilities Framework to agree outcomes at different stages of the course. This should improve consistency across HEIs, and ensure shared expectations of outcomes, a comprehensive and up to date curriculum, and a clear link between the degree and standards of practice beyond qualification.
- Design and delivery of curriculum content in partnership by HEIs, employers, the profession and service users and carers.
- Better integration of theory and practice, linking academic and practice learning and identifying clear learning outcomes, including those for assessing readiness to undertake their first and second placements.
- Good balance between core requirements and flexibility which enables educators to drive up the quality and relevance of their courses.
- Future-proofing so that social work programmes can be responsive to the changing practice and research evidence
- A focus on the 'process' of learning, recognising that 'how' the curriculum is taught and learnt is significant.

Timescales

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

The regulation of social work education

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

5.8 Until the transfer of functions from the GSCC to the HPC, the GSCC will continue to regulate social work education. GSCC has already improved the transparency and effectiveness of regulation by publishing monitoring and inspection reports and introducing a new risk-based framework¹⁵ for regulation.

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

¹⁵ <http://www.gsc.org.uk/page/111/Social+work+education+publications.html>

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

The role of the College of Social Work

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

Further work and next steps

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

- Robust HEI assessment mechanisms so that only those who are suitable to practise as social workers pass their course. HEIs should:
 - ensure fair and robust assessment of practice, with consideration of grading of practice;
 - ensure suitability of students to continue professional training; and
 - provide guidance on use of exit routes.
- Development of the practice curriculum.
- Exploration of different models for delivering the curriculum such as alternative routes and regional collaboration.
- How to ensure that academics are up to date with research, policy and practice, building on existing examples of secondments, joint appointments, research opportunities and the new CPD framework.

Appendix 1

Sources which have informed this paper

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

Membership of the Social Work Reform Board

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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