

# **Summary report on the revision of the Standards in Social Work Education consultation**

May 2017

## **Background**

This consultation gathered the views of the sector, stakeholders and key partners, on the draft revised Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE) and asked if they cover the requirements for current social work practice. It ran from 25 November 2016 until 20 January 2017. The revision of the SiSWE, which underpin social work degree programmes in Scotland, is part of the wider Review of Social Work Education led by the SSSC. The draft revised SiSWE are one part of the review and there was significant stakeholder involvement and sector engagement in the development of the proposed revisions.

## **Revision of the SiSWE**

There has been no formal review of the Framework and Standards in Social Work Education since 2003. Since then the social work landscape has changed significantly in response to shifts in policy, systems, demand and demographic changes. Significant reviews of social work education have also taken place in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The review of the SiSWE intends to make sure the standards reflect the many changes in social work practice since their publication in 2003.

Stakeholder involvement and feedback from the review told us the existing SiSWE remained broadly 'fit for purpose' however they needed revision to include an increased emphasis on:

- personal capabilities
- the wellbeing and resilience of social workers
- the role of social work in integrated settings
- supporting people to take part in decision making processes.

We commissioned further work by the University of Stirling during 2015 to test the proposed areas of revision of the SiSWE with a range of stakeholders. This work informed the draft revised SiSWE. You can read the details of this in [The Review of Social Work Education: Statement of progress 2015-2016](#).

## **Consultation on the revised SiSWE**

The consultation was an online questionnaire which, in addition to questions about who was responding to the questionnaire and mandatory equality-based questions focussed on the following key questions.

- How well do the changes reflect current policy and practice developments?
- How clearly does the wording in the 'knowledge' column (of the standards) explain what students are expected to evidence?
- How clearly does the wording in the 'transferrable skills' column (of the standards) explain what students are expected to evidence?
- How clearly does the wording in the 'competence demonstrated' column (of the standards) explain what students are expected to evidence?
- Do you have any comments on any of the three columns (of the standards)?

- To what extent do you think the revised SiSWE will equip qualifying social workers with the knowledge, skills and values needed for current practice?
- Is there anything which you think should be in the revised SiSWE which is not included?

A rating scale of 1-5 was used for most questions (5 representing 'very clear' or 'very well' and 1 representing 'not very clear' or 'not very well'). Respondents were also invited to share their views on the content of the standards and whether they will equip qualifying workers for current social work practice.

The mandatory equality based questions focused on the impact of the SiSWE and promotion of equality.

### **Who responded to the consultation?**

There were 30 responses to the online consultation, 22 from individuals and eight on behalf of organisations. The organisations which gave their names were the Centre for Excellence for Looked after Children in Scotland (CELCIS), the Scottish Association of Social Work and the Scottish Organisation for Practice Teaching.

### **What sector did respondents work in?**

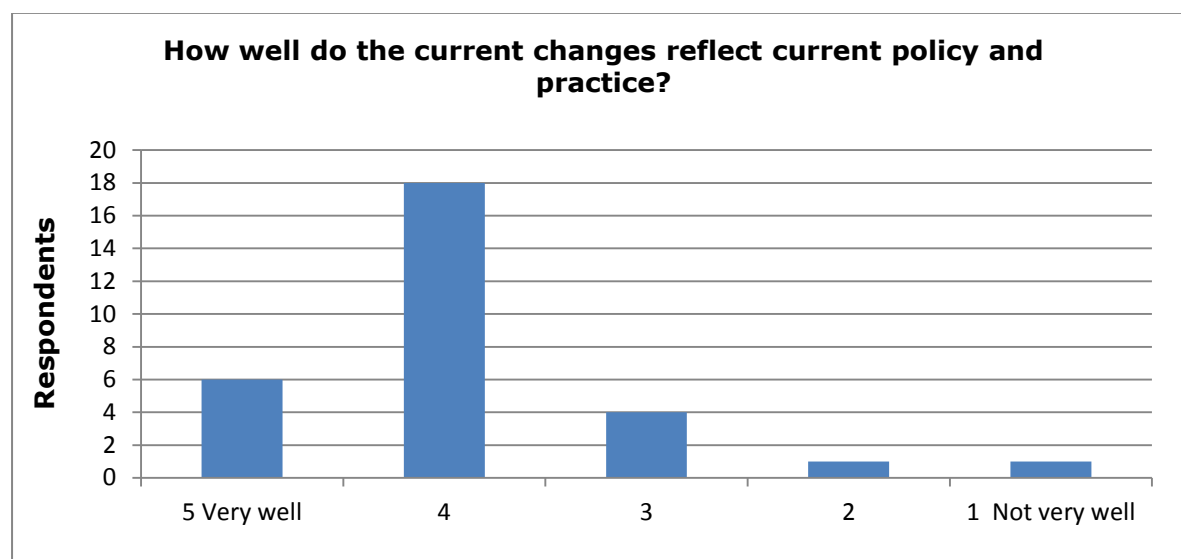
Further/Higher education	13	43%
Public	10	33%
Independent/Private	3	10%
Cross-sector	2	7%
Other	2	7%

### **What was their interest in the review of the social work education?**

Practice educator/teacher	12	40%
Tutor/Lecturer	10	33%
Manager	2	7%
Social worker	2	7%
Senior practitioner	1	3%
Linkworker	1	3%
Other	2	7%
Social service worker	0	
Newly Qualified Social worker	0	
Mentor	0	
Student	0	
Person using services	0	

## Consultation findings

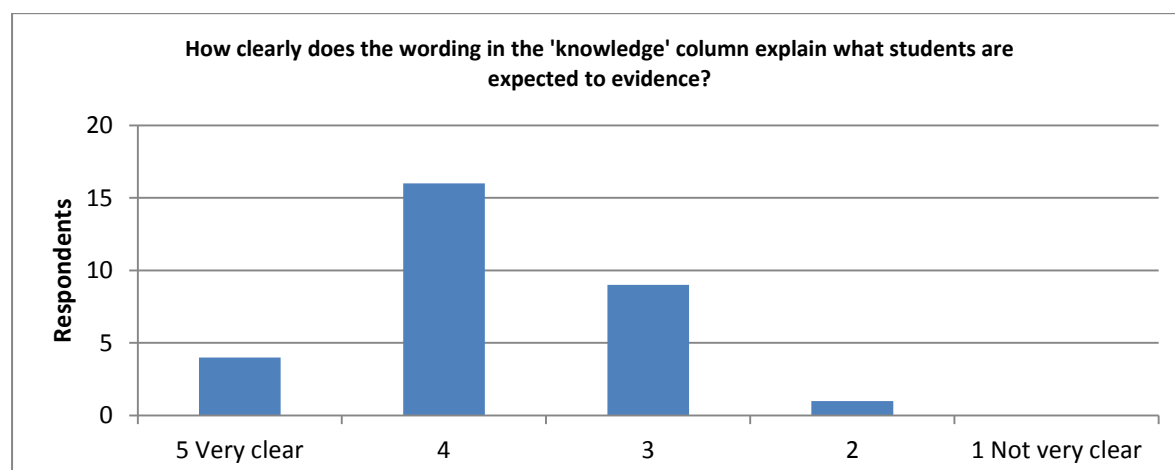
### How well do the changes reflect current policy and practice developments?



### Responses according to specific groups

Respondent group	Very well 5	4	3	2	Not very well 1	Total
Practice educator	1	8	2	1		12
Tutor/Lecturer	4	5	1			10
Manager	1	1				2
Social worker		1	1			2
Senior practitioner						1
Linkworker		1				1
Other		2				2
Total	6	18	4	1	1	30

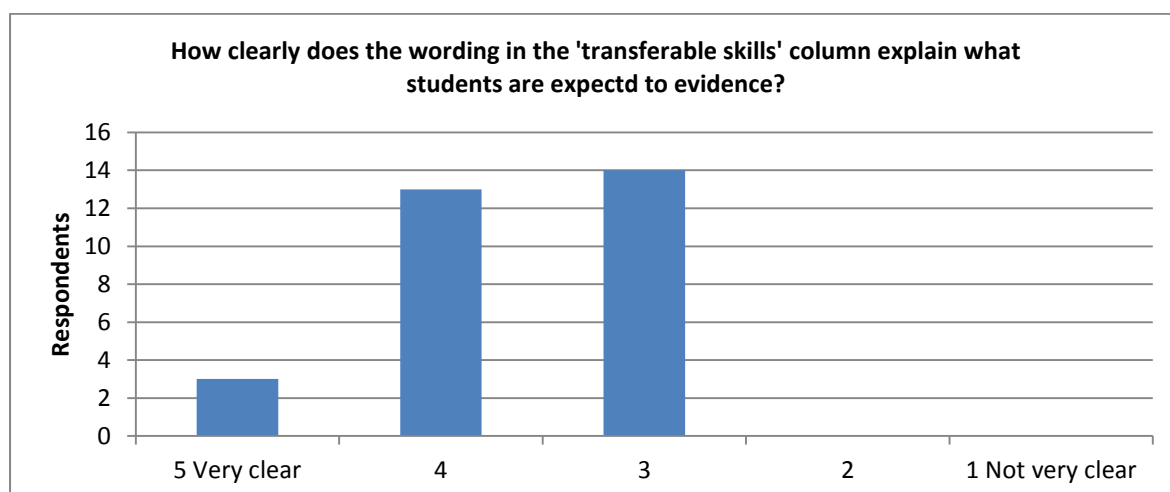
### How clearly does the wording in the 'knowledge' column (of the standards) explain what students are expected to evidence?



## Responses according to specific groups

Respondent group	Very clearly 5	4	3	2	Not very clearly 1	Total
Practice educator	1	5	6			12
Tutor/Lecturer	2	6	2			10
Manager	1	1				2
Social worker		2				2
Senior practitioner				1		1
Linkworker			1			1
Other		2				2
Total	4	16	9	1	0	30

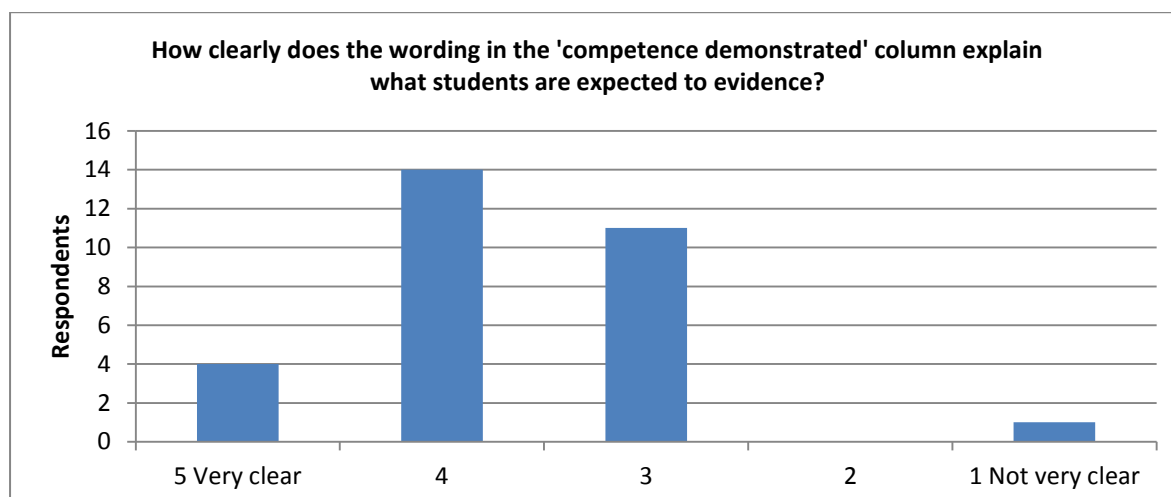
**How clearly does the wording in the 'transferable skills' column (of the standards) explain what students are expected to evidence?**



## Responses according to specific groups

Respondent group	Very clearly 5	4	3	2	Not very clearly 1	Total
Practice educator		4	8			12
Tutor/Lecturer	1	5	4			10
Manager	1	1				2
Social worker		1	1			2
Senior practitioner			1			1
Linkworker		1				1
Other	1	1				2
Total	3	13	14			30

## How clearly does the wording in the 'competence demonstrated' column (of the standards) explain what students are expected to evidence?



## Responses according to specific groups

Respondent group	Very clearly 5	4	3	2	Not very clearly 1	Total
Practice educator	1	6	5			12
Tutor/Lecturer	2	4	4			10
Manager	1	1				2
Social worker		1	1			2
Senior practitioner					1	1
Linkworker			1			1
Other		2				2
Total	4	14	11		1	30

## Do you have any comments on any of the three columns?

In general, the majority of the 15 respondents to this question believed there was clarity about the wording in the three columns of the SiSWE (knowledge, transferable skills, competence demonstrated) and provided a range of comments and suggestions. However, responses to the previous question about transferable skills indicate there is slightly less clarity about what students are expected to demonstrate in the 'transferable skills' column.

While there was consensus about some areas, there were differing views about others. For example one respondent said the wording was clear, while another thought clarity overall was required. Similarly one respondent thought the standards were comprehensive and far ranging, another thought they were not specific enough and another thought they should be rewritten.

## **General comments from respondents**

A third of respondents expressed concern about the need for conciseness highlighting, for example, the length of the standards and use of long sentences. One respondent thought this could be overwhelming for students. Two respondents also thought the language could be simpler (for example in the transferable skills and knowledge columns). There were also some polar views, for example two respondents indicated that repetition/overlap across the key roles should be avoided, while another suggested that some themes needed to be included in more than one key role. Two respondents noted that it was not clear why some skills/competences were in one column and not another. A further respondent noted an overlap between values and principles, leading to potential confusion. Two respondents noted that some practice environments can make it difficult to meet the standards (for example, systems, processes or support).

## **What respondents welcomed about the proposed revisions**

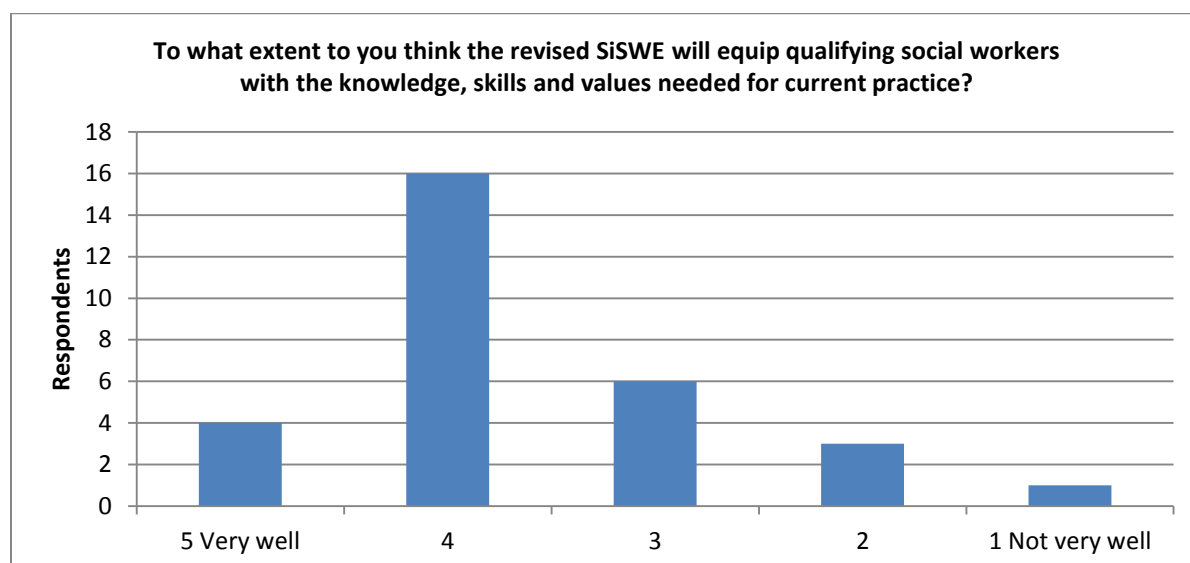
Overall respondents welcomed the revisions to the standards. Six respondents highlighted updated terminology and reflection of current policy and practice developments. Other welcomed changes or inclusions highlighted in individual responses were:

- practice developments regarding self-directed support; personalised services; integrated services
- designing services with individuals and communities
- prevention and early intervention
- broadening of risk assessment and risk management
- emotional intelligence, wellbeing and resilience
- engagement with a broader range of stakeholders than under the current standards
- focus on interpersonal skills
- reflective and critical thinking throughout the SiSWE
- evaluating the effectiveness of one's own practice
- strengthened value base
- knowledge of theories of development and impact of developmental delay, trauma and resilience
- reference to a broader range of groups of people using services.

What respondents would like to see strengthened:

- relationship building
- speaking to and involving children and young people
- increased reference to disability and gender
- further emphasis on the importance of joined up services and partnership working with agencies
- further explicit reference to the concept of wellbeing.

## To what extent do you think the revised SiSWE will equip qualifying social workers with the knowledge, skills and values needed for current practice?



## Responses according to specific groups

Respondent group	Very well 5	4	3	2	Not very well 1	Total
Practice educator	1	7	2	2		12
Tutor/Lecturer	3	5	1	1		10
Manager		2				2
Social worker			2			2
Senior practitioner					1	1
Linkworker		1				1
Other		1	1			2
Total	4	16	6	3	1	30

## Is there anything you think should be in the revised SiSWE, which is not included?

There were a number of suggestions for specific additions to the standards which included:

- forced marriage and FGM
- policy including those relating to transition, permanence or care at home
- how the brain develops, the impact of trauma on the brain and resulting behaviours
- permanency in child care
- managing sex offenders
- mental health
- more explicit accord with recent Scottish public service policy priorities around: social justice, reducing inequalities and promoting equality



- moral courage, or the ability to interrogate and/or challenge policy and process.

There were also a number of very specific and detailed suggestions, for example about rephrasing, alignment with [Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection](#) (Scottish Executive, 2006) and moving specific content within the key roles.

### Equality based questions

Do you think the implementation of the revised SiSWE will result in less favourable treatment for particular groups?			Does the proposal to implement the revised SiSWE promote equal opportunities?		
No	24	80%	Yes	22	73%
Not Sure	6	20%	Not sure	5	17%
Yes	0		No	3	10%

### Are there ways we could change it to better promote equal opportunities?

There were eight responses with different suggestions for better promoting equality in the standards and themes including:

- service user participation in their care
- the use of independent advocacy
- equalities and anti-discrimination being included throughout
- simplifying while clarifying the key themes and principles
- the impact of structural inequality, difference, diversity and power; structural divisions and disadvantage
- using the list of protected characteristics in the standards.

### Suggestions about additional guidance to the SiSWE

There were a number of comments which indicate that guidance would be helpful to clarify the following areas:

- the meaning of specific terms such as term 'professional judgement', 'effective leadership', 'life style choices', 'positive risk taking'
- how comprehensively students need to demonstrate the standards and details about the requirements of the mandatory standard for qualification
- who the standards are for (for example, prequalifying students, practitioners, NQSWs etc)
- what constitutes 'social work values'.

## **Next steps**

The Scottish Government published the Vision and Strategy for Social Services in Scotland in 2015. One of its actions is to: 'support the implementation of the recommendations agreed as an outcome of the current review of the social work degree'.

Following this consultation we intend to undertake final minor revisions to the SiSWE informed by the consultation. We will also develop guidance with the sector to complement the SiSWE.

We will publish the revised SiSWE during 2017/18 and implement them during 2018/19. We will continue to review the broader principles underpinning the Framework in Social Work Education during 2017/18 as ongoing work to implement the wider recommendations of the Review of Social Work Education.