

Review of Social Work Education

Statement on progress 2015-2016

November 2016



Contents

1. Executive summary	3
2. Background and context	5
3. Process	6
4. Vision	7
5. Findings and recommendations	8
5.1 Realising a shared approach to professional learning	8
5.2 Updating the Framework and Standards in Social Work Education	10
5.3 Developing a supported year and Standards for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs)	11
5.4 Improving selection standards and widening access	13
5.5 Continuous professional learning	15
6. Implementation plan	17
7. References	19
Appendix one	20
Appendix two	21

1. Executive summary

In 2013, the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) outlined a commitment to develop a new approach to professional learning in Scotland through a learning strategy that addresses qualifying and post-qualifying learning for the social service workforce. In 2015, Scottish Government published Social Services in Scotland: a shared vision and strategy 2015 – 2020, which was guided by the Social Work Services Strategic Forum (Scottish Government/Social Work Services Strategic Forum, 2015). The strategy includes an action to support the implementation of any recommendations agreed following the SSSC's Review of Social Work Education.

The Review of Social Work Education has advanced in two phases. Phase one established a broad stakeholder group which met monthly and reviewed a range of evidence. Phase one concluded:

- social work education in Scotland is 'fit for purpose' however is facing significant challenges similar to those facing the profession as a whole
- there is a continued commitment to a generic social work degree, with undergraduate and postgraduate routes, albeit with clear areas for enhancement.

Phase two sought to develop the evidence base for strengthening professional learning and to engage a wider constituent group. Work was structured around three broad themes (integrated professional learning, design and delivery of qualifying and post-qualifying programmes and resources and frameworks) and was advanced through the commission of 10 shared areas of inquiry, research and draft standards (see appendix one). The findings of this work were reported at a national stakeholder event in March 2016 (see appendix two). They are reported on under five headings:

- Realising a shared approach to professional learning
- Updating the Framework and Standards in Social Work Education
- Developing a supported year and Standards for NQSWs
- Improving selection standards and widening access
- Continuous professional learning.

Realising a shared approach to professional learning

The principle of shared professional learning is fundamental to the review recommendations. It describes an approach to professional learning that rests on substantial contributions from all partners, including universities, professional leaders, employers, practitioners, people who use services and learners. It is an approach that spans the social work career journey and is capable of delivering a skilled, valued and resilient workforce. The review recommends the development of a national infrastructure that is capable of enabling and sustaining a shared approach to professional learning.

Updating the Framework and Standards in Social Work Education

The social work degree will remain a generic qualification with undergraduate and postgraduate routes delivered by existing partners, albeit with an enhanced role for employers. The development of additional work-based routes will be explored (see 5.4).

The existing Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE) (Scottish Executive, 2003) have been revised to better reflect the current context of practice and the sector will contribute to the final consultation on these in late 2016.

The broader principles underpinning the Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2003) will continue to be revised during 2017/18 to enable a shared approach to professional learning.

Developing a supported year and Standards for NQSWs

The review has developed a set of draft Standards for NQSWs. These will form the first part of the post registration professional learning pathway for qualifying social workers. The review recommends the introduction of a supported and assessed year for NQSWs.

Improving selection standards and widening access

Stakeholders identified a need to strengthen the place of values, people using services and carer involvement, employer involvement and face-to-face approaches in selection processes for prospective social work students. The updated Framework will enable the above while also underscoring the importance of the retention of students through their learning journey.

Modern apprenticeships have developed as a core strand of the Scottish Government's economic policy. The review identified clear challenges and opportunities in this development and recommends that pathways to widen access into social work education require further discussion between relevant partners.

Continuous professional learning

The review found a clear appetite for strengthening the place of learning in professional practice. The SSSC is reviewing the existing post registration training and learning (PRTL) requirements for social workers, as part of work to develop a new Standard for Continuous Professional Learning. The new Standard will be developed with key partners from education and practice during 2017/18. The Continuous Learning Framework and sector leadership capabilities are integral to this shift in approach.

The report concludes by setting out the implementation plan for progressing phase three of the review during 2017/18 and 2018/19.

2. Background and context

The reliance on social services is increasing as people live longer. Improvements in healthcare and social support over the past 30 years has resulted in a reduction in infant mortality, a general trend of increasing population size and extended life expectancy. This growing demand for services and public sector provision is creating unprecedented pressures on health and social service systems. Social services are facing challenges in adjusting to demographic change and an ageing population, societal change, rising expectations and consumerism, changing employment and family patterns, evolving technological opportunities and funding issues.

Therefore, it is essential that public services provide services more cost effectively and sustainably. At the same time, there is a pressing need for social services to build capacity, not only in their workforce, but also with the people who use services. This will require a focused effort on maintaining the momentum created by the uptake and attainment of core qualifications as a result of workforce regulation, but also an expansion of efforts in relation to continuing learning and development for the workforce – beyond the emphasis on compliance training which can dominate the learning development landscape in the sector.

Many of the above noted sector challenges pertain also to the higher education sector. Social work education providers now operate under acute resource pressures, within which they must deliver an expanding, inter-disciplinary and flexible portfolio of learning; while at the same time meeting broader university drivers of widening access, research excellence, and public engagement. Substantial changes in policy and practice, for example personalisation and service integration, place new demands on social work education providers as each change to the professional landscape has to be accommodated in the curriculum. In addition, some of the progressive partnerships upon which professional learning depends are showing signs of significant strain (practice based learning in particular) and new opportunities for post-qualifying learning, research and knowledge exchange are constrained by fiscal cuts and broader public sector priorities.

The above pressures sit amid significant achievement, activity and opportunity. Resource pressures continue to prompt innovation and partnership, new drivers around internationalisation support a more global approach to professional learning and in recent years we have seen increasing alignment across education, research, knowledge exchange and wider activity. Further, as social work services are subjected to increasing demand, scrutiny and reform, social work education, research and evidence has a key role to play in helping the profession articulate its identity, contribution and method in a challenging and changing social landscape.

3. Process

Against the above backdrop, in late 2013 the SSSC announced a broad intention: to develop a new and different approach to professional learning in Scotland through a learning strategy that addresses qualifying and post-qualifying learning for the social service workforce. The review of social work qualifying education was an important aspect of that work and was given further support through the launch of Social Services in Scotland: a shared vision and strategy 2015 - 2020. The strategy includes a commitment to 'support the implementation of the recommendations agreed as an outcome of the current review of the social work degree'.

The review work has advanced in two phases. In September 2014, phase one established a working group with a broad membership including social workers, students, people who use services and carers, professional leaders, employers, academics, the SSSC, Social Work Scotland, the Scottish Organisation for Practice Teaching, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Government. The group met on a monthly basis and explored a wide range of evidence. The headline message from phase one was that social work education in Scotland is 'fit for purpose' and there is a continued commitment to a generic social work degree with undergraduate and postgraduate routes. However, social work education is facing significant challenges similar to those facing the social work profession as a whole. Core emerging questions related to the nature of social work education, the relationship between education, practice and professional learning, the changing demands on social workers and the adequacy of current arrangements and processes that support professional learning (see Review of Social Work Education: Statement on progress 2014-2015, SSSC, 2015 for more detail).

Phase two has focused on developing the evidence base for strengthening professional learning and engaging a wider constituent group. Informed by the questions arising from phase one, a series of inquiries were commissioned focused around three broad themes:

- integrated professional learning¹
- design and delivery of qualifying and post-qualifying programmes
- resources and frameworks.

Much of this work was commissioned with the condition that inquiries were taken forward as partnerships between universities, employers and people who use social work services.

The inquiry findings were reported on at a national stakeholder event in March 2016, allowing opportunity for dialogue and feedback (appendix two). It is not possible to report on the detail of the individual inquiries here, rather this report documents the key findings that have emerged across the phase two work (appendix one).

¹ This is now referred to as 'shared professional learning' to avoid confusion with developments around integrated services.

More broadly, the process of reviewing social work education in Scotland has confirmed that though we each approach professional learning with different priorities, pressures and resource, there exists considerable consensus around the outcomes we require from professional learning, and from the profession more broadly, as well as the methods by which we believe these can be achieved. Excellent professional learning outcomes require substantive contributions from employers, academics, professional leaders, practitioners, people who use services and carers and learners. It also requires an infrastructure which enables each partner to fulfil their responsibilities in a shared way. The review process has strengthened existing alliances and provides a platform from which professional leaders should build this infrastructure as well as opportunity to capitalise on an evident appetite and capacity for outcome focused strategic collaboration.

4. Vision

The review's vision is of an excellent and shared approach to professional learning that rests on substantial contributions from all partners, including universities, professional leaders, employers, practitioners, people who use services and learners. It is a vision of professional learning that spans the social work career journey and is capable of delivering a skilled, valued and resilient workforce, able to respond to the strengths, rights and needs of 21st century citizens and communities.

Though the review work began with a focus on qualifying education and, to a large extent, university based provision. It quickly became clear that the continued splitting of education and practice and of pre and post-qualifying learning was at odds with our need to realise a shared approach and outcomes. The review acknowledges that significant progress has been made on this front in recent years through the sustained efforts of learning partners. However, we have not yet reached a point where responsibility for qualifying education and continuing professional development is sufficiently shared between academic and employer partners. So the term shared professional learning is used throughout this report to invoke a shift beyond remaining silos of education and practice, qualifying education and continuing professional development, towards a shared approach to professional learning that is co-owned and co-produced by partners across the social work sector. Partners include professional leaders, policy makers, employers, academics, practitioners, people who use services, carers and learners.

This vision provides the foundation for the discussion that follows. It is intended to enable the kind of cultural, organisational and professional identity change needed to ensure that new investment and initiatives in professional learning – qualifying or post-qualifying – are relevant, effective and sustainable.

5. Findings

5.1 Realising a shared approach to professional learning

Key messages

Existing models of social work education in Scotland rely on partnerships between university providers and employer partners. However, current partnerships rest largely on goodwill, have no regulatory reach to employer partners and lack the infrastructure and professional leadership to consistently realise required outcomes.

The review recommends the development of a national infrastructure that is capable of enabling and sustaining a shared approach to professional learning. A strategic approach to embedding professional learning across the social work career journey will contribute to a more resilient workforce of the future.

Evidence points to the efficacy of formal partnership models in supporting the kind of cultural, professional and organisational change required to achieve excellent professional learning outcomes. An options appraisal is needed to allow this work to progress collaboratively and ensure that we arrive at a model that is relevant to the needs of social work learning and practice in Scotland.

The review group recognises that this is an ambitious vision in the current landscape of public sector transformation. However, it responds to longstanding challenges reported in this and previous reviews of professional learning. It also reflects a commitment to ensure that future investment in, or revisions to, professional learning are capable of delivering desired outcomes.

Findings and recommendations

A shared approach to professional learning describes the development and delivery of qualifying and post-qualifying learning drawing on the commitment and contribution of employers, academics, professional leaders, practitioners, people who use services, carers and learners. It requires a shift in employer, academic and professional cultures, towards a culture, infrastructure and practice where professional learning is everyone's business, where every social worker is a social work educator and every setting a learning site.

Realising these ambitions in practice requires a sustained process of change. A prerequisite for achieving this is having an infrastructure in place that ensures shared ownership, understanding and accountability across key partners. Building on the existing regulatory framework, a new national governance infrastructure comprising formal regional partnerships would deliver on a commitment to shared professional learning in qualifying and post-qualifying contexts in Scotland. Informed by some of the models in place in social work in

England, Wales and Northern Ireland and in initial teaching and medical education, this approach would also consolidate, strengthen and channel existing initiatives and good practice in Scottish social work education. Initial evaluation of the recently introduced Social Work Teaching Partnerships in England (Berry-Lound et al., 2016) has found they are beginning to meet some of their stated aims, including: building stronger links between universities and employers; increasing opportunities for experienced practitioners to integrate research and critically evaluate their practice; and achieving greater knowledge exchange between academic and practice learning sites. Importantly, they have also precipitated the kind of cultural change and impact on learning for students and practitioners that has been called for consistently through the research and consultation activities carried out in phase two of this review:

‘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’ (ibid, p10).

Any similar development in Scotland would need to be informed by experience of related historical initiatives here and by the particular features of the Scottish context. But it is envisaged they could play a pivotal role in meeting other objectives of the review, including securing the significant improvements required for practice learning and facilitating both the proposed supported year in practice for NQSWs and the development of a comprehensive continuous professional development pathway.

Proposed next steps

The structural and cultural change advocated here would require a detailed options appraisal to assess the particular needs of Scotland against the models currently in operation in the other UK countries. Careful consultation with current partners, including universities, Social Work Scotland, Scottish Government and the SSSC would sit alongside a full cost analysis and assessment of the resources required.

Impact for workforce and people who use services and carers

Having a national infrastructure in place is predicted to enhance professional learning and so improve outcomes for social work students, practitioners and people who use services. It has the potential to facilitate co-ownership of decision making in relation to aspects of professional learning across the social work career. As such, it would have direct bearing on the qualifying and post-qualifying curriculum, facilitating the inclusion of subject areas and issues that all parties deem important to reflect changing social, legal and practice contexts; a current example being the need for social workers to develop skills in capacity building and co-production, precipitated by the aforementioned demographic, economic and societal changes. In addition the proposed infrastructure would help improve confidence in admission and selection processes by pooling best practice and applying it more consistently across the country. Importantly, it would also implement a national quality assurance framework that is urgently required to increase the quality and consistency of practice learning

opportunities. Further, an infrastructure to deliver continuous professional learning would enable social work to genuinely value and embed learning, knowledge exchange and research in practice.

In each of these areas, the proposed national infrastructure provides a mechanism through which to meet the Scottish Government's key strategic aims of 'supporting the workforce', 'improving use of evidence' and 'promoting public understanding', as set out in the Vision and Strategy for Social Services in Scotland. However, like any initiative it is not offered as a panacea. Its efficacy will depend on our capacity to develop a model that fits our needs and ambitions, as well as our willingness as partners to invest in it.

5.2: Updating the Framework and Standards in Social Work Education

Key messages

The social work degree will remain a generic qualification with undergraduate and postgraduate routes delivered by existing partners, albeit with an enhanced role for employers. The development of additional work-based routes will be explored (see 5.4).

The existing Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE) have been revised to better reflect the current context of practice and the sector will contribute to the final consultation on these in late 2016.

The broader principles underpinning the Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland (2003) will continue to be revised during 2017/18 to reflect and enable a shared approach to professional learning.

Findings and recommendations

In 2014, the existing SiSWE were mapped alongside the revised National Occupational Standards in Social Work and draft proposals for revising the SiSWE were agreed with the SSSC Council and the Review of Social Work Education Group. The review found that the SiSWE remain broadly 'fit for purpose' but needed to be revised to include an increased emphasis on personal capabilities, the wellbeing and resilience of social workers, the role of social work in integrated settings and an increased emphasis on supporting people to participate in decision making processes.

During 2015/16 additional work was undertaken to test out proposed areas of revision with a range of stakeholders and their views have informed the draft revised SiSWE which will be used for formal sector consultation in late 2016. The SSSC has approved existing social work programmes for the next four years, therefore a generous transition programme for implementing the revised Framework and Standards will be developed.

Proposed next steps

The SSSC will undertake formal consultation with the sector on the revised draft standards in social work education in late 2016 and early 2017.

The revised SiSWE will be implemented in 2017/18 by the SSSC and will become an integral part of the revised Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland and post registration continuous learning pathway for social workers.

Fuller revision to the Framework is dependent on resourcing to support implementation of a shared approach to professional learning, therefore timescales for consulting on the SiSWE and revised Framework will be undertaken sequentially. Rewriting and publishing the full revised Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland during 2017/18 will be a central part of the next phase of implementing the Review of Social Work Education findings.

Impact for workforce and service users and carers

The involvement of people who use services and carers, the workforce and citizens across our communities remain at the heart of the principles underpinning social work education and the proposed shift to an explicitly shared approach to professional learning strengthens their role in the Framework.

Revising the Framework and Standards to better reflect existing National Occupational Standards and the recently revised UK wide Social Work Benchmark Statement will ensure they reflect the requirements of contemporary social work practice.

5.3 Developing a supported year and Standards for NQSWs

Key messages

The review found that NQSWs need a more structured system of support in their first year of practice to become the skilled, valued and resilient workforce envisioned in the Vision and Strategy for Social Services (2015). This finding takes cognisance of the systems of professional support in place for related professional groups, as well as initiatives in the other three UK countries, each of whom have already introduced a range of supported and assessed programmes for NQSWs.

The review recommends the introduction of a supported year and that this should be both mandatory and assessed. This is necessary if it is to secure the commitment and contribution of key partners (including NQSWs, employers and higher education institutions (HEIs)) and if it is to contribute to the kind of cultural, organisational and professional identity change described above.

The review has developed a set of draft Standards for NQSWs. These will form the first part of the post registration professional learning pathway for qualifying social workers.

Findings and recommendations

The SSSC commissioned work to explore a range of options for developing a supported and assessed year for NQSWs (Implementing a Probationary Year for Social Workers in Scotland, SSSC 2016). Existing models from across the other three UK countries informed this report. Indicative costs for each model have been produced, however further detailed financial modelling work is required. These options were presented to and debated with a broad range of stakeholders at the national event in March 2016. The consensus favoured the development of a model which is both mandatory and assessed. During 2017 in-depth consultation and development of the future delivery model will be undertaken with all relevant stakeholders.

To support this initiative, a proposed draft set of Standards for NQSWs has been developed through a significant piece of commissioned work. The Standards will also be consulted on during 2017.

Proposed next steps

Resourcing is required to explore the preferred models with a range of stakeholders. Once appropriate resource has been agreed for detailed options development, identifying the barriers and enablers across the preferred models will be a key part of the next phase during 2017/18.

The proposed draft Standards for NQSWs will be reported to the SSSC Council and provided for consideration to the Scottish Government during 2016/17 with the aim of a comprehensive sector consultation taking place during 2017/18. This will be dependent on the Scottish Government and key sector partners supporting this significant policy change. If supported, the new Standard for NQSWs will be published and launched during 2017/18. This will become part of the revised Framework for Social Work Education and continuous learning framework for qualified social workers.

SSSC activity during 2017/18 will focus on a full public consultation across the proposed NQSW models and proposed Standards.

Impact for workforce and service users and carers

Currently social work students receive their mandate to practise on attainment of their social work degree; this would continue and become strengthened if a requirement to undertake a supported and assessed year in practice for all NQSWs.

The SSSC currently registers all social workers on one part of the Register and social work students on another part. NQSWs currently have to demonstrate that they have met SSSC PRTL requirements of 144 hours within 18 months of qualifying when they register as a qualified social worker. This would be replaced by the introduction of an assessed and supported year in practice, aimed at improving outcomes for practitioners and people who use services and carers alike.

People who use services and carers are an integral part of the assessment process for those undertaking social work programmes and this principle would also underpin the assessed and supported year in practice.

5.4 Improving selection standards and widening access

Key messages

The review reinforced the importance of attracting and retaining people with the requisite knowledge, skills, values and experience to social work education. While there was no strong evidence that favoured one particular method of selection, stakeholders identified a need to strengthen the place of values, people who use services and carer involvement, employer involvement and face-to-face approaches in selection processes. The updated Framework will enable the above while also underscoring the importance of the retention of students through their learning journey.

Modern apprenticeships have developed as a core strand of Scottish Government's economic policy of improving youth employment opportunities and tackling social inequality (Scottish Government, 2014). The review identified clear challenges and opportunities in this development and recommended that further pathways to widen access into social work education, through work-based degrees or graduate apprenticeships, requires further exploration between Scottish Government, the SSSC, Skills Development Scotland, HEIs and employers.

Findings and recommendations

The review found a wide range of exacting and multi-faceted demands facing social workers in contemporary practice. It identified a consensus across stakeholders that the profession must maintain the highest possible standards by selecting people with the requisite knowledge, skills, values and experience, while at the same time ensuring access for all groups. The review also concluded that sufficient support and guidance should be available to meet the diversity of student learning needs.

The review identified a range of robust practices in current selection processes across the university sector. It acknowledged a lack of clear research evidence favouring a particular method. Nonetheless, it found that some stakeholders stated a strong preference for direct 'relational' approaches to selection, exemplified by face-to-face interviews, which some universities currently use. The review also identified a need to strengthen the place of values in the selection of students. Approaches aimed at ensuring applicants have values aligned with their relevant profession have gained traction across health and social services in the last few years. While good practice is evident in relation to this activity, the review supports a stronger values-based approach to selection. It also confirmed that the involvement of people who use services, carers and

employers in selection varied across the sector. It further recommended enhancement of existing approaches to supporting the retention of students across the qualifying education journey.

In view of the above, the review recommends that the revised Framework for Standards in Social Work Education updates requirements in respect of selection processes, giving emphasis to values-based methods, the role of people who use services and carers, face-to-face approaches, the role of employers and measures to support retention. The proposed national infrastructure outlined in priority 4.1 may help in delivering these objectives.

The review was also asked to consider the issue of widening access to social work education and practice through graduate level apprenticeships. Modern apprenticeships have developed as a core strand of Scottish Government's policy of improving youth employment opportunities and tackling social inequality. The review identified challenges and opportunities in plans to extend apprenticeships into social work education. This included stakeholder groups acknowledging the risks of returning to a predominantly work-based education, for example, focusing on procedural learning at the expense of developing a critical appreciation of the social work task. Relatedly, fears were expressed about the profession developing routes into social work similar to recent initiatives in England that were found to lack a sound evidence base and were seen as potentially diluting the depth and breadth of student learning. However, across the review findings there has been consistent acknowledgement of the importance of work-integrated learning and a need for further research to develop the optimal methods for marrying academic and practice skills and knowledge. Graduate level apprenticeships might provide such an opportunity. They may also potentially widen access to the professional social work qualification by being part of a developing modern apprenticeship framework that recognises the value of work-based and informal learning from school onwards; so providing a clear career pathway for people who wish to go straight into employment rather than undertaking the traditional degree. The range of issues presented here indicates that further discussion is required with the sector and that plans to develop graduate level apprenticeships should be subject to robust testing and evaluation.

Proposed next steps

The revised Framework and Standards for Social Work Education should incorporate the above noted recommendations relating to selection in social work degrees. The proposed options appraisal for a national infrastructure would include a focus on selection and retention. Further discussion with the sector is required on the subject of graduate level apprenticeships and any new initiatives would need to be tested and evaluated.

Impact for workforce and people who use services and carers

Improved selection and retention processes will facilitate more consistent application of best practice across the sector, helping to ensure that all student social workers have the required attributes to practice as competent and confident professionals. Ultimately, this should result in improved outcomes for

people who use services and carers. Further discussion and testing of graduate level apprenticeships will allow for thorough consideration and robust evaluation of this approach in a social work context.

5.5 Continuous professional learning

Key messages

The review found a clear appetite for strengthening the place of learning in professional practice. However, learning was found to occupy a marginal place in the current culture, identity and resourcing of social work professionals. Social workers reported an inconsistent and fragmented experience of continuous professional learning and development opportunities, placing them in a vulnerable position in an integrated professional landscape.

The SSSC is currently reviewing the existing PRTL requirements for social workers as part of work to develop a new Standard for Continuous Professional Learning. This Standard will ultimately replace the existing PRTL requirements, will more effectively enable all modes of learning to be captured and will enhance the employer's role in supporting workers' continuous professional learning.

The new Standard will be developed along with key partners from education and practice during 2017/18. The Continuous Learning Framework and sector leadership capabilities are integral to this shift in approach.

Findings and recommendations

The current PRTL requirements were developed at a time when the registration of the workforce was in its infancy. The existing system has been incrementally developed to accommodate additional parts of the workforce as they are required to register and now needs revision to better reflect current approaches to ongoing professional learning and better fit workforce needs.

Informed by the review process, the SSSC has developed a proposed new draft Standard for Continuous Professional Learning for the whole social service workforce which sets out clear expectations of the evidence and standards required to achieve what is needed at the point of renewal of registration. Research was commissioned to explore how other professions have developed continuous professional learning standards and systems for evidencing these, and this underpins the proposed Standard.

The key purpose of the Standard for Continuous Professional Learning for social workers is to:

- maintain and improve the quality of social services by ensuring the competence of social service workers as identified in relevant professional standards

- support, maintain and enhance social service workers' professionalism and the reputation of the social service sector in Scotland.

During 2017/18, the SSSC will work collaboratively with the sector in exploring the issues and implications of the Standard and how best to implement it.

One of the proposed changes is that employers will be required to take a stronger role in verifying that individual workers' professional learning meets the Standard. This means that all social service workers can benefit from regular and effective planning and review of their professional development.

The SSSC will continue to examine a sample of workers' professional learning records and evidence, to ensure consistency of approach to verification by employers. The SSSC propose to review each worker's professional learning records and evidence at least once every five years. This will better align social service professionals' requirements with those in similar professions.

Proposed next steps

During 2016/17 the SSSC will establish a strategic group to oversee the development and implementation of the new Standard for Continuous Professional Learning.

Activity in 2017/18 will focus on consulting and finalising the new Standard for Continuous Professional Learning and agreeing a five year implementation plan.

Impact for the workforce, people who use services and carers

The new Standard for Continuous Professional Learning will set out expectations of social workers in relation to professional learning, alongside strengthened entitlements for all social service workers to enable them to develop and progress as professionals. The new Standard will eventually replace current requirements for PRTL. It will become the professional standard expected of all social service workers. Given the diversity of PRTL requirements across parts of the registered workforce, an incremental approach to implementing this is recommended, starting with NQSWs.

The Standard also outlines the responsibilities that employers and managers have to ensure the effective continuous professional learning of workers which is reinforced in the [SSSC Codes of Practice](#) (2016).

6. Implementation plan

The implementation plan sets out the recommendations from the Review of Social Work Education phase two report and the actions required to deliver improvement. These actions will be delivered in 2017/18 as part of phase three of the review.

Actions areas	What	Who	When	Cost
1. Realising a shared approach to professional learning	Undertake an options appraisal to assess the resources required to establish relevant strategic Social Work Learning Partnerships.	SSSC/Scottish Government	Quarter 1 2017/18	£30k to commission externally
2. Update the Framework and Standards in Social Work Education	Sector consultation on revised SiSWE and publication of the revised standards.	SSSC	Quarter 4 2016/17	£10k
	Produce and publish new SiSWE (online).	SSSC/HEIs	Quarter 1 2017/18	£10k
	Implementation of revised Framework and Standards.	SSSC/HEIs	Quarter 1 2018/19	£10k
3. Developing a supported year and professional standards for NQSWs	Develop the model with sector consultation on Standard for NQSWs, to include costed options and implementation plan subject to the spending review.	SSSC/key stakeholders/Scottish Government	Quarter 2 and 3 2017/18	£30k
	Implement supported year subject to full agreement of all stakeholders and commitment in regard to resource required.	SSSC/Scottish Government/employers/HEIs	2018/19	
4. Improving standards and widening access	Implement recommendations from the RSWE findings to improve existing delivery.	SSSC/HEIs/key stakeholders	2017/18 2018/19	£15k To be further developed within new learning

				partnerships
5. Continuous professional learning	Work with the SSSC, Social Work Scotland and learning providers to develop options for graduate apprenticeships as routes into social work to include financial modelling.	SSSC/key stakeholders	Quarter 1 2017/18	£40k to scope and develop model with sector
	Develop a Standard for Continuous Professional Development.	SSSC	Quarter 2 2017/18	

The sector consultation on the revised SiSWE and the publication of the revised standards with an estimated cost of £10k will be continued in the agreed 2016/17 SSSC budget.

7. References

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Appendix one

Research

Integrated Learning in Social Work: A review of approaches to integrated learning for social work education and practice. Glasgow Caledonian University and University of Dundee.

Implementing a Probationary Year for Social Workers in Scotland: An option appraisal prepared for the Scottish Social Services Council. Dr Brenda Gillies.

Draft standards

Revised Standards in Social Work Education and a benchmark Standard for Newly Qualified Social Workers, University of Stirling.

Areas of inquiry

1. How can universities best select the right people for social work programmes?
2. How can we maximise the impact of the collective experience of people who use social work services and their carers, in the design, development and delivery of social work programmes?
3. To what extent should social work education have a stronger focus on community development and engagement?
4. Is there a shared philosophy of learning across social work programmes and post qualifying learning?
5. Should there be a core curriculum, if so, what should be in it?
6. How much of the qualifying programme should be undertaken with students from other professional groups, and how can these opportunities be maximised.
7. What new skills will social workers of the future need?
8. What should practice learning look like?
9. What are the key characteristics of effective university/employer partnerships?
10. What role can social work qualifying education play in developing social workers as leaders of the profession?

Appendix two

Review of Social Work Education Engagement Day – 23 March 2016

Over 100 key stakeholders attended this national engagement event including Chief Social Work Officers, social work university educators, the Scottish Organisation of Practice Teachers, Scottish Government, Social Work Scotland, Scottish Association of Social Work, Who Cares? Scotland, Scottish Care, Community Care Providers Scotland and a wide range of frontline social work practitioners and social work students.

The purpose of the day was to:

- increase the shared ownership of professional learning between educators and employers
- bring people together to hear the evidence so far about the future of social work education
- encourage everyone to actively take part in setting the future direction
- help the review group think through what needs to happen next.

At the event we presented details of the review progress so far, the areas of inquiry and commissioned work as the basis for discussion, with a strong emphasis on gathering participants' views to inform next steps. The programme for the day allowed maximum engagement of all participants across the various themes of the review. A keynote presentation on the potential models for implementing a supported year in practice for NQSWs was the focus of a whole delegate conversation.

Strengthening and protecting the professionalism of social work is central to the [Strategy and vision for social services in Scotland 2015 - 2020](#). This vision highlights the importance of recruiting the right people and retaining experienced staff in frontline practice through career long learning and career pathways.

Two of the key actions identified in this strategy were central to this event.

'Support the implementation of the recommendations agreed as an outcome of the current review of the social work degree.' (p19)

'Explore the benefits and related costs of strengthening and improving the mandatory, structured framework for newly qualified social workers'. (p19)

Core themes across the range of feedback from the day were:

- funding
- practice learning
- social work identity
- leadership
- capturing and sharing good practice

- framework for learning in practice.

There were some key messages which emerged from this event which the review group has considered in finalising and reporting on phase two work and planning for implementation.

- Co-ownership, partnership, shared responsibility and accountability are fundamental to developing an integrated model of social work education.
- Integrating the worlds of learning and practice are central to achieving a new whole system approach to professional learning involving all stakeholders.
- There is a commitment to co-producing the development of a shared philosophy of learning for social work in Scotland as a means to cementing the partnership working approach.
- There is a commitment to embracing and developing 'boundary spanning' roles which move between academy and practice, become part of a career structure, and more effectively embed 'academy in practice' and 'practice in academy'.
- Social work needs a more clearly defined career pathway structure which is embedded into employment, includes qualifications but is not restricted to it.
- Continuing career pathways need to be constructed for social work and embedded into employment.
- Developing and adequately resourcing a supported year in practice for NQSWs was seen as central to retention and recruitment. There is a need for significant further discussion of the range of proposed models to support engagement in taking this forward.
- Career pathways should include the whole social work system, including academics, social workers, managers, commissioners and extend beyond to other social service professions and job functions (routes in and routes out).

Views from participants

'Today has been an incredibly interactive day in terms of taking all this back into my own organisation'

'The NQSW supported year should be strengths based and not another 'hoop' to jump through before you are seen as good enough'

'A supported year should create pathways to post-qualifying educational opportunities'



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