# Mapping of Standards in Social Work Education to the revised National Occupational Standards in Social Work

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# 1. Introduction

Student social workers in Scotland have been required to achieve an honours degree in social work, or an equivalent postgraduate award, since 2004. The Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE) set out the knowledge, understanding and skills that qualified social workers require. They are used to design, monitor and review social work education programmes in Scotland and form the criteria which social work students must achieve to be awarded the degree (Scottish Executive, 2003). The SiSWE comprise six standards, each of which is made up of a number of learning foci (22 in total).

The understanding of the expectations of qualifying students has been influenced by a number of developments and publications. As well as meeting the SiSWE, students have, since 2007, also been required to meet learning outcomes and competencies in relation to child care and protection in social work. These 'Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection' (Scottish Executive, 2006a) were developed by the Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education in response to a concern to ensure that the protection of children was seen as a core aspect of all social work. They are aligned to the SiSWE and are designed to enhance the SiSWE's more generic standards by ensuring that all qualifying social workers are aware of 'their roles and responsibilities in respect of children and young people' (Scottish Executive, 2006a: 3).  Other documents, such as the Codes of Practice for social service workers (SSSC, 2009) and the Continuous Learning Framework (CLF)[1] (SSSC et al., 2008), also sit alongside the SiSWE and have influenced social work education both in programme design and in the assessment of competence within those programmes. The recognition of the central role of carers in health and social care through legislation, policy and practice is also an increasingly key element of social work education.

The Health and Social Care National Occupational Standards in Social Work (NOS)

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[1] The Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2003) requires all providers of social work education to 'make sure that the students' continuing learning requirements are recorded in an individual learning plan that they can take with them into their career in social work' (p 16, point R).

provide a UK wide description of best practice in the field. They are used as benchmarks for qualifications as well as for defining work roles and recruiting, appraising and supervising staff. The NOS are jointly owned and reviewed by an alliance of sector partners in the four UK nations. The social work NOS were introduced in 2002 and were revised during 2012/13 (Skills for Care and Development, 2013). The SiSWE are based on the 2002 Social Work NOS, developed by the Topss UK partnership (Scottish Executive, 2003; Topss, 2002). There are 19 standards in the current NOS, which are each broken down into 5 -11 Performance Criteria (P).

## 2. Aims

In December 2013 the SSSC commissioned the authors to map the SiSWE against the revised Social Work NOS. Jean and Moira are social workers and educationalists with considerable experience of working with the SiSWE as practice teachers, university tutors and researchers. They each also bring to this project practice experience from a range of perspectives, experience which allows them to analyse the NOS in terms of current and past practice. Jean has worked as a social worker in residential, hospital and community settings, mainly with children and adults with mental health problems. She is a Practice Teacher and a Mental Health Officer. Moira's practice background is in hospital social work and her practice teaching experience in care homes for older people is aligned to that practice history. Moira worked, for a number of years, in an academic management role in relation to social work qualifying education.

The brief for this project was to:
● Identify any significant gaps in each learning focus of the SiSWE in comparison to the content of the revised NOS, highlighting in which learning focus any missing NOS might, in principle, sit;
● Consider how well the existing SiSWE accommodate and promote learning for student social workers in relation to current policy drivers in Scotland, specifically Self-directed Support and the Integration of Health and Social Care.

The methods we used to undertake the mapping of SiSWE to NOS are summarised below. Our findings are then set out in relation to the two aims of this short life project: the identification of significant gaps and the extent to which the SiSWE remain 'fit for purpose' in the context of changing policy and practice in Scotland.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1 The SiSWE and the NOS

Any mapping of standards has an element of subjectivity; it is rare that two standards correspond exactly, and interpretations of each standard's precise meaning may, in any case, vary. The two sets of standards under examination were also developed ten years apart, at very different times, socially, economically and politically, so that there are differences in language and tone as well as content.

The remit of this exercise was to compare the competence expectations of the SiSWE and the revised NOS, rather than to undertake an examination of the whole of either framework. Much of the difference which is identified between the two sets of standards could be illuminated by an exploration of the vision behind the SiSWE and the detail of the skills, knowledge and values expectations of the NOS.

In undertaking this mapping exercise our approach was to examine the competence expectations in detail but to be 'broader brush' in our analysis and report so as to facilitate a consideration of possible ways forward. We therefore undertook a double mapping process of:
- The SiSWE against the NOS, and
- The NOS against the SiSWE

In each case the mapping process primarily involved examination of practice standards: 'competences' in the SiSWE and 'performance criteria' in the NOS. Where there was any dubiety about the 'fit' between practice competences we drew on the skill and

knowledge statements that form an integral part of these two frameworks in order to make decisions about similarities and differences. Where relevant we have also referred to the Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection (KC) and to the Codes of Practice (CoP) for social service workers (SSSC, 2009).

This method created two maps of the standards, indicating where they overlap and where they differ from each other. We compared the two maps, discussing and resolving any perceived differences in the findings from each mapping process. This allowed us to draw up a list of significant gaps in the SiSWE in relation to the NOS as discussed in detail in Section 4.3, below.

## 3.2 The SiSWE, personalisation and integration

The second part of our task was to analyse the extent to which the SiSWE are fit for purpose in relation to recent policy and practice change in Scotland, specifically personalisation through self directed support and service integration (see Section 5). We drew on the mapping process to consider how the SiSWE might be used to focus learning on workforce development, structuring our analysis around a set of statements provided by SSSC (2013).

The work was conducted between January and March 2014, and included regular meetings and consultation with the project commissioner, Karen McLaughlin, Senior Education and Workforce Development Adviser at the SSSC. Wendy Paterson acted as a consultant to the project, providing opportunities for us to gain from her experience as a social work educator, and acting as critical reader of the draft report.

# 4. Mapping findings

## 4.1 Overview of findings

The analysis of gaps in the SiSWE as compared to the NOS is based on a detailed mapping exercise. In the first instance gaps in the expectations of qualifying social workers are identified and then the report moves onto the broader issue of how the SiSWE continue to be fit for purpose in the context of the new policy drivers of personalisation and integration.

While there are, as one would expect, some differences between the SiSWE and the NOS, these are found to be largely variations in language, tone, approach and emphasis; those variations generally reflect the time lapse between the development of these two sets of standards. Many of these differences reflect the shift towards the personalisation of services through co-production (hyperlink to definition of co-production in Section 5).

Custom and practice over time has affected the ways in which the SiSWE are interpreted and the breadth of that interpretation. While the SiSWE are sometimes approached in a reductionist way and considered as standalone standards and learning foci, they are part of a framework which incorporates guiding principles and expectations of knowledge, skills and values within which competence is to be assessed. When the SiSWE are considered within the context of their framework, the differences identified with the NOS become less pronounced. Much of what is explicit in the NOS but not in the SiSWE is implied by the context within which the SiSWE are framed.

The content of the NOS is more recent than that of the SiSWE and reflects many issues and debates which have taken place within the social work profession over the last decade. The impact of inquiry reports and their recommendations in terms of the demands of the social work role and how it is carried out by practitioners are evident in the approach and wording of the NOS.

## 4.2 Focus of the mapping and analysis

This analysis focuses on the Performance Criteria (P) of the NOS as compared with the Standards and learning foci of the SiSWE. It also includes comment on relevant aspects of the Key Capabilities in child care and protection (KC) and the SSSC Codes of Practice for social service workers (CoP).

In line with the project brief to identify 'gaps' in the SiSWE as compared to the NOS, we use the term 'gap' to refer to elements which are identified within one or more of the NOS but are not discernible in any of the SiSWE. For clarity within this report we use the same term, 'gap', when discussing differences in tone and approach between the two sets of requirements.

The findings of the mapping exercise, along with some commentary, are presented as identification of a series of nine 'gaps' in the SiSWE as compared with the content of the Performance Criteria ('P') of the NOS. In order to illustrate the effect of differences which are indicative of global shift in tone and approach, three pairs of exemplars are presented (link to that section). For interest, a table of elements of the SiSWE which are not evident in the NOS is presented in [Appendix 1](Appendix 1) as this element of the analysis was not part of the project brief.

## 4.3 Performance Criteria in the NOS which are not in, or are differently expressed within, the SiSWE competences

### 4.3.1 Expectations which are about the social worker as a practitioner
- Personal capabilities

The NOS place a greater emphasis on a social worker's personal capabilities (one can observe quite a strong overlap with the Continuous Learning Framework (SSSC/IRISS/Scottish Government, 2008)). Those personal traits, mentioned in the NOS but not in the SiSWE, relate to *assertiveness, creativity, addressing hostility and resistance* (SW9) and *persistence* (SW13, P4). Many of the NOS Performance Criteria (P) are explicit about *use of self, reflection* and *learning from experience* (e.g. SW17, P5,P6). Overall the social worker is more evidently positioned in the NOS as a critically reflective, self-aware practitioner than in the SiSWE, where one might infer those

qualities but they are not explicit. The need for the social worker to be resilient and to be supported in that resilience is clear in the NOS but not foregrounded in the SiSWE. This expectation is a feature of CoP 6.

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**Gap 1**: SiSWE 4.2 could be enhanced by the inclusion of personal capabilities which run through the NOS, particularly that of the ability to reflect critically.

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- **Own well-being**

The issue of a social work practitioner's own *well being* and *resilience* features in the NOS but not in SiSWE. NOS SW3, Manage your role as a professional social worker, states that 'The work can affect their personal well-being, both physical and emotional' and P6 of that NOS requires social workers to be able to 'Recognise the effect that work situations may have on your well-being and your practice.*'* The corresponding Standard 5 in the SiSWE, 'Manage … own social work practice ..' has quite a different tone in terms of its emphasis on accountability within the employing organisation. CoP 6 also requires the social worker to take heed of her own needs, both professionally and personally. That this is not an easy task is acknowledged in the developing literature in the area of resilience and social work (for example, see Grant and Kinman, 2013).

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**Gap 2**: NOS SW3, P4, P5, P6 and P7 could sit in SiSWE 5, particularly 5.1, though a new learning focus might be an appropriate solution.

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### 4.3.2 Expectations which are about specific aspects of social work practice
- **Risk**

*Risk* plays a much more obvious role in the NOS than the SiSWE. Of the 19 NOS standards, four (SW12, 13, 15 and 16) mainly relate to aspects of risk. Within the NOS risk is often considered separately from and, arguably, privileged over broader aspects of need. This may well reflect a shift towards risk, and, in particular, risk management being regarded as a more central part of social work activity.

Some aspects of risk management are tackled/ expressed differently than in the SiSWE; there is a focus on *capacity* assessing (SW10, P1; SW15, P2)), building and developing a *long term therapeutic plan* and working with the *least restrictive option*

(SW16, P4,P5). Whilst in both sets of standards risk is primarily tacitly assumed to be risk of harm, the notions of positive risk and of risk enablement make an important appearance in the NOS (SW15). In the NOS risk management processes are more detailed in relation to how an individual social worker is expected to respond, and 'fit' more closely with a personalised response to managing risk. The wording in SW4 is stronger on professional judgement than anything in the SiSWE. However, within the Codes of Practice (SSSC, 2009) which underpin the expectations of the SiSWE, CoP5 exhorts the workers to uphold public trust and confidence in social services, and CoP3 and 4 are directly relevant to the social worker's role in enabling a balanced and proportionate approach to promoting independence and autonomy against protection from harm.

**Gap 3**: It is not obvious how the SiSWE would be enhanced by the inclusion of risk management processes, separately from the role and task of social work in general.

- Communication

Reflecting the time difference between the creation of the SiSWE and the NOS and taking cognizance of the many Inquiries and Serious Case Reviews which found that communication failure was a factor in so many tragic events, ICT and ways of communicating with people (including telecare) are explicitly included in the NOS in relation to inter-disciplinary working (SW7, P4) and are implicit in SW1, P8 ('... *integrate current and emerging research into your own practice*') whereas ICT skills are explicit only in the requirements of providers of the SiSWE. Communication is a vital element of the expectations of social workers in relation to child care and protection in the Key Capabilities (Scottish Executive, 2006a).

**Gap 4**: Given that ICT competence is now an expectation of students' performance within their degree studies, it may not be necessary to add this expectation to the SiSWE. If it were to be included, it might sit within 5.1 and/or 5.6.

### 4.3.3 Expectations which are about social work practice in general
- **The social worker as an enabler**

The social work approach which emerges from the SiSWE could be seen to be a 'top-down' one in comparison to the enabling and working-with-service-users tone which runs through the NOS and is explicit in SW14 and 18. The NOS see the social work role as one of supporting individuals and families to make decisions and to achieve self-defined *outcomes* (SW14, P2; SW18 P1). Service users are instrumental in working to *secure agreement* to provide resources (SW14) and the social worker's role, as seen through the NOS, is to support that endeavour, rather than to work 'on behalf of' the service user. The change is one of a shift of emphasis towards greater self-direction by the service user and is important in terms of the policy driver of Personalisation.

*Advocacy* and *supporting people to take part in decision making processes* (NOS SW10) are given more emphasis than in SiSWE. *Capacity* is explicitly addressed in the Performance Criteria of SW10 and the social work role, as reflected in that NOS, includes assessing capacity (P1) and working with people to build their own capacity (P6).

CoP 1,3,4 include guidance on respecting and ensuring the rights of service users.

> **Gap 5**: A shift in social work role and emphasis underpins the NOS and any change to the SiSWE would need to be global i.e. throughout the standards. More specifically NOS 10 could sit in a revised SiSWE 6.

- **Anti-oppressive practice**

*Power, anti-discriminatory practice, promoting social justice* and *cultural context* are explicitly addressed in the NOS but not in the SiSWE. This is usually in the context of critically reflective practice. NOS SW3 requires the social worker to '*challenge your own assumptions that could lead to discrimination in your practice'* (P8) and '*Reflect on the way you manage your role, to ensure continual development ...*' ) P9.  The requirement in SW4 to '*consider the need to modify your own judgement where new evidence is*

*presented'* (P8) reflects a major difference in approach between NOS and SiSWE, where the need to reflect on one's own approach and modify it where necessary may be implied in SiSWE 4.4 but is not articulated.

**Gap 6:** This is an underpinning difference between NOS and SiSWE. The importance of anti-oppressive practice could be addressed within a values statement rather than adding this fundamental matter of principle to any specific learning focus.

- **Critically reflective practice**

The requirements to engage in on-going evaluation of outcomes, reviewing effectiveness and learning for future practice are not explicit in the SiSWE but run through the NOS. These link with other themes such as the social worker's responsibility to safeguard her own well-being (SW3), not only to ensure her own professional development but also to take some responsibility for the development of the profession (SW2, P8) and to constantly review her practice in line with 'current and emerging research' (SW1 P8). It reads as if the NOS have a different emphasis in this area than the SiSWE, congruent with an increasing emphasis in the profession on the importance of evidence-based practice and the social worker's responsibility to engage with research and research findings, [as further discussed below](#).

Among the NOS which address the issue of weighing up factors in coming to a decision, SW4 P2 specifically includes mention of considering a range of options for addressing the situation. The implication here is that the social worker will not always have a clear answer and this self-questioning approach is not explicit in any of the SiSWE.

**Gap 7**: Again the gaps noted here are global rather than specific, but the language of SiSWE 4.1 could be enhanced to place emphasis on critically reflective practice.

- **Research-mindedness**

In line with the emphasis on critical reflection in the NOS, there is also an explicit expectation of research-mindedness in a social worker as part of their reflection on their practice. This expectation is articulated forcefully in the recent review of Social Work

Education in England,

> 'To be a really credible profession, social workers must be equipped to carry out research as part of their critical and reflective practice.' (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014: 17)

That translates into one of the conclusions of that review, viz.,

> 'Conclusion 9: That all future qualifying education delivers newly qualified social workers with the capability to engage in research throughout their career, inculcating an understanding that the ability to carry out research is an essential component in their professional capability in practice.' (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014: 33)

In general the NOS convey a much stronger focus on *evaluation* and *research informed practice* than the SiSWE. *Staying up-to-date in terms of knowledge and evidence* (SW1) and *developing one's practice through supervision and reflection* (SW2) explicitly underpin all the NOS. The definition of *evidence* in the NOS is a wide one which includes practice wisdom as well as drawing on more formal research. NOS SW4 expects the social worker to consider a range of information when coming to a decision (P1). Those decisions should be *evidence-based* (P4) and defensible (P5,6). The requirements in NOS SW4 for social workers to be able to articulate their rationale, reflects the tone of accountability to a wide audience which is seen across the NOS but is not obviously part of the SiSWE.

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**Gap 8**: Research-mindedness would be part of critically reflective practice and could be included under that expectation in any revised SiSWE but would be particularly relevant to Standard 4. Alternatively, and perhaps more appropriately, it could be included in a SiSWE values statement, since this attribute, like critical reflection, should permeate all of the SiSWE.

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### 4.3.4 The distinctiveness and responsibility of Social Work as a profession
- About social work as a profession

The NOS incorporate an element of the responsibility of the individual practitioner to

contribute to the development of the profession (SW2), alongside their own professional development, specifically requiring the social worker to '*contribute your own knowledge of best practice to the continuing development of the profession*' (SW2, P8). Because of 'the distinctive role and contribution of the social worker' (SW6), the NOS expect social workers to uphold the role and function of social work, particularly in multi-disciplinary contexts (SW6, P2). While SiSWE 4 and 5 do address multi-disciplinary working, the emphasis of asserting the value and importance of social work is missing. That emphasis is included in the Key Capabilities where the importance of clarity about role and expectations is part of being 'professionally competent and confident' in relation to child care and protection. In the context of the increasing integration of health and social care this aspect of competence is now very important across all areas of social work practice.

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**Gap 9**: SiSWE 4.2 and 5.6 could be enhanced by a change of emphasis to bring them more in line with the NOS SW6, particularly P2 and P4.

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Table 1 Summary of the noted gaps in SiSWE relative to the NOS

| Issue | Gap | Potential change to SiSWE |
|-------|-----|---------------------------|
| Personal capabilities | Gap 1 | SiSWE 4.2 could be enhanced by the inclusion of personal capabilities which run through the NOS, particularly that of the ability to reflect critically. |
| Own well-being | Gap 2 | NOS SW3, P4, P5, P6 and P7 could sit in SiSWE 5, particularly 5.1, though a new learning focus might be an appropriate solution. |
| Risk | Gap 3 | It is not obvious how the SiSWE would be enhanced by the inclusion of risk management processes, separately from the role and task of social work in general. |
| Communication | Gap 4 | Given that ICT competence is now an expectation of |

| | | students' performance within their degree studies, it may not be necessary to add this expectation to the SiSWE. If it were to be included, it might sit within 5.1 and/or 5.6. |
|---|---|---|
| The social worker as an enabler | Gap 5 | A shift in social work role and emphasis underpins the NOS and any change to the SiSWE would need to be global i.e. throughout the standards. More specifically NOS 10 could sit in a revised SiSWE 6. |
| Anti-oppressive practice | Gap 6 | This is an underpinning difference between NOS and SiSWE. The importance of anti-oppressive practice could be addressed within a values statement rather than adding this fundamental matter of principle to any specific learning focus. |
| Critically reflective practice | Gap 7 | Again the gaps noted here are global rather than specific, but the language of SiSWE 4.1 could be enhanced to place emphasis on critically reflective practice. |
| Research-mindedness | Gap 8 | Research-mindedness would be part of critically reflective practice and could be included under that expectation in any revised SiSWE but would be particularly relevant to Standard 4. Alternatively, and perhaps more appropriately, it could be included in a SiSWE values statement, since this attribute, like critical reflection, should permeate all of the SiSWE. |
| About social work as a profession | Gap 9 | SiSWE 4.2 and 5.6 could be enhanced by a change of emphasis to bring them more in line with the NOS SW6, particularly P2 and P4. |

Further detail of the mapping of these gaps is presented in Appendix 2.

## 4.4 Exemplars of NOS and SiSWE which are similar in expectation but are different in tone and emphasis

The mapping exercise identified some areas which are covered in the NOS but are not explicit in the SiSWE. While there are some gaps, as identified above, in general the differences between the two sets of standards are differences of approach and emphasis rather than of substance. Because the SiSWE is part of a wider framework, some of what is explicit in the NOS could be said to be implicit in SiSWE in that those 'missing' elements are covered by the wider framework and/or the other documents which inform the interpretation of the SiSWE, as outlined above (Link to that bit of the introduction). To illustrate how differences in approach and tone translate into the competence requirements the following pairs of Standards/Criteria are presented, each focusing on a particular area of practice.

Table 2: Pair 1 - Comparison in relation to managing ethical conflicts

| NOS | SiSWE |
|---|---|
| *SW5 Manage ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts*<br><br>P3 Reflect on how your own values and experiences may impact on managing ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts<br><br>P6 Evaluate outcomes of how you have managed ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts to inform your future practice | *4.3 Understanding and managing complex ethical issues, dilemmas*<br>*resolve value dilemmas and conflicts*<br><br>Identify, understand and critically evaluate ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts affecting their practice<br><br>Devise effective strategies to deal with the ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts<br><br>Act appropriately, even in uncertain and ambiguous circumstances and critically reflect on, and learn from, outcomes |

These requirements which relate to managing ethical dilemmas are very similar. The

practitioner is required to recognise the ethical issue and to find a way to manage it. The NOS acknowledges the impact of self on the process and requires, more explicitly, a review of the response and action taken. The SiSWE could be read as interpreting the ethical challenge in a more objective way, rather than confronting the impact of self in the process of recognising and managing ethical issues.

Table 3: Pair 2 - Comparison of expectations directly relevant to integration of health and social care.

| NOS | SiSWE |
|---|---|
| *SW3 Manage your role as a professional social worker* | *SiSWE 4.2 Working within agreed standards and social work practice* |
| P2 Establish the parameters of your own work role and how the responsibilities of others link with these | Work at all times within the professional code of practical ethical principles and service standards that underpin high-quality social work practice |
| *SW4 Exercise professional judgement in social work* | Exercise and justify their professional judgement |
| P6 Justify your professional judgements where others disagree or challenge them | Use appropriate assertiveness in justifying professional decisions and upholding social work practice values |
| P7 Challenge judgements of others that appear to conflict with the evidence or to work against people's best interests | [...] |
| *SW6 Practise social work in multi-disciplinary contexts* | *SiSWE 5.6 Working effectively with professionals within integrated, multi-disciplinary and other service settings* |
| P2 Uphold the role and function of social work when working in a multi disciplinary context | Develop, maintain and review effective working relationships within and across agency boundaries |

| P4 Ensure that social work principles, codes of practice and values are applied when working with others | Contribute to identifying and agreeing the goals, objectives, working procedures and duration of professional groups and to evaluating their effectiveness |
| | Work effectively with others in delivering integrated and multi-disciplinary services |
| | Deal constructively with disagreements and conflict within work relationships. |

These sets of expectations illustrate how the focus has shifted from multi-disciplinary working to the need for social workers to be clearer and more assertive about the distinctive contribution their profession makes to a situation. The NOS expect the social worker to be able to stand up for and defend the profession in a multi-disciplinary situation. Workers must be able to articulate the rationale for their judgements (SW4, P5) and defend them when challenged. This is stronger and more self-assured than the tone of the SiSWE.

Table 4: Pair 3 - Comparison of elements relating to personalisation of services

| NOS | SiSWE |
| --- | --- |
| *SW10 Support people to participate in decision-making processes* | *SiSWE 6 Support individuals to represent and manage their needs, views and circumstances* |
| *SW14 Plan in partnership to address short and longer term issues* | Assess to what extent their should act as a representative for an individual, family, carer, group or community |
| *SW18 Access resources to support person centred outcomes* | [...] |

| | |
|---|---|
| *SW11 Advocate on behalf of others* | Where appropriate, represent individuals, families, carers, groups and communities in partnership with them |
| *SW12 Assess needs … in partnership with those involved* P3 Identify obstacles that create limitations for people | Support people who use services to manage their affairs, including managing finances and purchasing care services*.* |

These NOS are at the heart of the policy of supporting service users and carers to take control over their own services. SW11, P8 requires workers to 'review the effectiveness of advocacy', an approach to advocacy which implies more of a partnership than a service. The language and approach of the NOS in relation to working with service users and carers seems to be based on an assumption about capacity and ability. The tone of the relevant SiSWE suggests a professional role of 'doing to' people, rather than helping to remove barriers so that people can manage their services independently. Challenging barriers to participation (SW10, P10) and acknowledging sources of power (SW10, P4) suggest a critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) approach to partnership working, an approach more in line with the ethos of personalisation than is apparent in the SiSWE. Personalisation is underpinned by co-production which emphasises doing things 'with people' as opposed to doing things 'to' or 'for' people. True co-production involves a transformational change in the way that services are designed, planned and delivered:

> 'Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change.' (NESTA/NEF, 2013)

This shift of approach is discussed in more detail in .

## 4.5 Values and skills

One way in which the SiSWE could be amended to take into account the changes in approach and tone which are identified above (Gap 6) would be to include a values statement as part of the Standards themselves, perhaps extracted from the 'Introduction' section of the [Framework](#) document. That statement might also refer to the Codes of Practice and to the International Statement of Ethical Principles (IFSW 2014), clarifying that social work students are expected to be aware of the broader expectations of how they practise. The recent workforce planning document for Scotland's Health Service (Scottish Government, 2013a) starts with a strong [statement of values](#). Those values, applicable to working in any part of the Health Service, are immediately familiar to those working in social care as well as being fundamental to any ethical work with people. To include such a strong values statement in the SiSWE, as opposed to those values only being in other parts of the Framework document, could support the awareness and development of critically reflective practice (Gaps 7, 8).

The skills and knowledge expectations within the NOS are in line with the expectations of the SiSWE and are relevant to most SiSWE learning foci. The only exception to that is [communication](#) (Gap 4), as discussed above. Each framework (SiSWE and NOS) includes statements of expectations about knowledge and understanding. Without having completed a detailed analysis of those parts of the frameworks, our view is that there are no substantial differences in content, though are there are some shifts in emphasis and tone which are reflected in the differences found in the competence requirements as discussed above. Each NOS descriptor includes a list of skills which are expected in relation to that NOS. None of these presents any major change in terms of the skills expected within the SiSWE framework document.

## 5. Policy and Practice Change in Scotland

### 5.1 Context

We can expect significant changes in the demand for and supply of social support over the next 10 to 15 years, influenced by both the socio-economic climate and changing expectations of those who use (and will use) services. The ways in which that support is

designed, negotiated and delivered are also likely to be subject to considerable change. Key drivers include:

- Public sector reform
- Personalisation of services, through, for example, self-directed support
- Integration of health and social care
- A renewed interest in community networks and capacity
- A focus on leadership, including citizen leadership
- The growth and development of technologies such as telecare and telemedicine

This section of the report analyses the extent to which the SiSWE take account of policy and practice change in Scotland, focusing on personalisation through self-directed support and integration of health and social care. Table 5 below takes 8 statements about future learning and development needs of the workforce (SSSC, 2013) and maps them against current SiSWE content, indicating the degree of 'fit' between the aspiration and the current standards. The final column suggests ways in which the SiSWE might be developed to meet these aspirations.

| Workforce capabilities<br><br>The Workforce … | Where is this in the SiSWE/ Key Capabilities for Child Care and Protection/ SSSC Codes of Practice? | How might SiSWE be used to focus learning on this aspect of workforce learning and development? |
|---|---|---|
| ..has an experiential understanding of personalised outcomes-focused approaches and their value in day to day practice | *Knowledge and understanding*<br>**Mostly not addressed**<br>Contributing knowledge:<br>SiSWE 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 6.1<br>KC: Knowledge and Understanding | Changes would be required throughout SiSWE /KC knowledge and understanding criteria to shift language and emphasis towards personalised, outcomes-based practice. |
| ..recognises and values people receiving services as 'equal partners' in their support | *Values/ competence*<br>**Mostly not addressed**<br>Contributing values/competences:<br>SSSC CoP 1, 3<br>SiSWE: 1.1,1.2,1.3., 2.2, 2.3,  6.1 | Though partnership is an important theme in SiSWE, changes would be required throughout SiSWE competences and KC to reflect language and emphasis required to convey the shift in balance of power required for 'equal' partnership. |
| ..actively involves people in directing their own support | *Competence*<br>**Mostly not addressed**<br>Contributing competences:<br>SiSWE: 6.1 | Partly a need for a generic shift in language and emphasis,. A more substantial Standard 6 with a focus on the skills, knowledge and practice skills required to enable people to direct their support could go some way to meeting this capability. |
| ..looks beyond service-led solutions to valuing community assets | *Values/ competence*<br>**Mostly not addressed**<br>Contributing competences:<br>SiSWE: 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 | Working with communities and strengths based approaches both feature in SiSWE, but focus is service-led. Changes in language and emphasis, and further requirements about community-focused skills and knowledge required. |
| ..participates in and contributes to appropriate induction, supervision and professional development to reinforce and improve practice standards | *Values/ Competence*<br>**Mostly addressed**<br>Contributing competences:<br>SSSC CoP 6<br>SiSWE: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1 | Generally addressed, though induction not addressed explicitly. Could be strengthened by incorporating a greater emphasis throughout SiSWE on critical reflection and using learning from experience to improve practice standards. |

| | KC: Professionally confident and competent | |
|---|---|---|
| ..continually improves knowledge and skills and contributes to the learning and development of others | *Competence*<br>**Mostly addressed**<br>Contributing competences:<br>SSSC CoP 6<br>SiSWE: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.2<br>KC: Professionally confident and competent | Could be strengthened by incorporating a greater emphasis throughout SiSWE on critical reflection and using learning from experience to improve practice standards. |
| ..demonstrates leadership at all levels | *Competence*<br>**Partly addressed**<br>Contributing competences:<br>SiSWE: Standards 4 and 5<br>KC: All capabilities | Implicit in both SiSWE and KC in relation to taking the lead in own learning, and leading (or managing) practice processes, but not explicit / congruent with modern understandings of leadership. Requires a greater emphasis throughout SiSWE on use of self / anti-oppressive practice. |
| ..promotes citizen leadership for people receiving support and their carers | *Values/ competence*<br>**Mostly not addressed**<br>Contributing competences:<br>SiSWE: 6.1 | A more substantial Standard 6 with a focus on the skills, knowledge and practice skills required to enable Citizen Leadership, including competences related to facilitation and promotion (as opposed to service led intervention). |

This mapping process highlights some similar gaps in the SiSWE to those identified when the SiSWE are mapped against the NOS:

- The role of the social worker as 'enabler' rather than 'fixer', reflecting personalisation's shift from service led to citizen led support
- The importance of critical reflection, use of self and learning from experience
- The need for a greater emphasis on power, empowerment and social justice underlying the move towards more equal partnerships between citizens and service providers.

The workforce capabilities identified by SSSC (2013) include a focus on leadership, which is not explicit in the NOS or the SiSWE. However, the emphasis of the NOS on use of self, for example the social worker's ability to be 'assertive' and 'creative' does convey a stronger sense of the need for leadership qualities in the qualifying social worker. A previous mapping of the SiSWE and Key Capabilities against the leadership elements of the Continuous Learning Framework (SSSC/ IRISS/ Scottish Government, 2008) emphasised the importance of attitudes and skills in relating to others to leadership,

> In many respects the standards of the SiSWE were seen as being couched in terms of tasks rather than the kinds of personal attitudes, such as self-awareness and motivation, and 'soft skills', like listening, relating to others, and negotiating that were seen by all respondents as fundamental to leadership. As one practice teacher said, "leadership starts with the person but the standards are mostly about tasks". (Gordon and Coles, 2011: 15)

The next two sections of the report will focus specifically on personalisation and on service integration, drawing on the mapping in Table 5 to explore the extent to which the SiSWE prepare today's social work students for these increasingly important aspects of their practice.

## 5.2 Personalisation and Self-directed Support

### 5.2.1 Context for change

We were asked to consider how well the SiSWE accommodate and promote learning

for student social workers about self-directed support. Self-directed support has become a central issue for social work and social care in Scotland since the passing of the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 in January 2013. The Act gives people a range of options for how their social care is delivered, empowering people to decide how much ongoing control and responsibility they want over their own support arrangements. It builds on the current capacity of local authorities to offer direct payments, available to some citizens since the early 1990s. There are a number of different ways in which service users can direct their support. Whilst this discussion refers mainly to service users, it is important to stress that the role of carers is also central to any discussion of self-directed support. The 'typical' mechanism for accessing support is an individual budget allocated to an service user following an assessment of need. The person can take this individual budget as a direct payment, or can use the budget to choose services which the local authority then arranges on their behalf (SPICe, 2011: 4).

Self-directed support (SDS) is just one element of a much bigger shift towards personalised services in Scotland, that is services that enable 'the individual alone, or in groups, to find the right solution for them and to participate in the delivery of a service. From being a recipient of services citizens can become actively involved in selecting and shaping the services they receive.' (Scottish Government, 2009: 10). Personalisation is embedded in a number of wider Scottish policies, including social inclusion, participation and co-production. It is not only about increasing choice and control for individuals and their families, but constitutes a far more radical change to public services that recognises that, to be effective they must be 'designed with and for people and communities – not delivered 'top down' for administrative convenience' (Christie Commission, 2011: ix). The growing importance of personalisation and co-production in social services in Scotland was emphasised in *Changing Lives* which identified 'building the capacity for personalised services' as one of its key outcomes (Scottish Executive, 2006b: 32).

### 5.2.2 Implications of personalisation and SDS for social work education and practice

Personalisation is of course not new; elements of the shift described above can be seen at work in all sorts of ways in social care and other services, from person centred planning and Citizen Leadership through Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence to 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (Scottish Government, 2012) and recovery approaches in mental health. There has nevertheless been a steady, and apparently accelerating, shift, towards personalised approaches to public services in Scotland as well as in other UK nations, since the SiSWE were first developed. The Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 may be regarded as a crystallisation of these changes in Scotland, a vehicle that should bring the personalisation of services to the forefront of social care policy and practice in Scotland.

The Workforce Learning and Development Strategy for Self-directed Support in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2013b) has emphasised that ensuring that the health and social care workforce is properly trained, supported and regulated where necessary is key to the implementation of personalised and flexible services such as self-directed support. It is therefore essential that the standards for social work qualifying (as well as post-qualifying) education reflect these major changes and prepare students for practising in personalised ways.

The changes envisaged involve a rebalancing of power, a shift from expert, provider centred services to personalised ones in which the citizen, rather than the service, is at the centre. They have important implications for the training of social workers, as well as other professionals, in preparation for the roles that social workers of the future may take on.

Duffy (2010) has described the need for a 'new script' for social work, one with an emphasis on the social worker's ability to enable people to take control and act for themselves when they are able to do so, drawing on a range of 'social assets' such as community organisations, local networks and peers, as well as service providers. At the

same time it is important, in exploring the sufficiency of the SiSWE, to recognise those aspects of existing social work training and practice that accord closely to those of personalisation, including a focus on human rights, relationships and supporting people's rights to choice, control and self-determination (Tyson, 2009).

Musselbrook (2013), imagining what the social services workforce in Scotland may look like 25 years hence, suggested that key changes include shifts towards (or, in some cases, arguably, back to):

- Doing things 'with people' rather than 'to them'; moving from expert 'fixing' to co-facilitating and co-producing in partnership with people.
- Outcomes based approaches
- Relationship based care, including new communication approaches (eg talking mats, dementia diaries)
- Asset/ strengths based approaches, including an emphasis on community capacity and networks
- Less risk averse ways of assessing and managing concerns about people's safety, balancing tensions between empowerment/ protection and autonomy/ responsibility to arrive at shared understandings of risk between individuals, families and professionals.

These shifts will require significant changes in culture and approach in social work, as well as other members of the health and social care workforce (Scottish Government, 2013b). They need to be supported by their knowledge of power and anti-oppressive practice, coupled with an ability to reflect on, and learn from personal and professional experiences of the use and abuse of power.

### 5.2.3 The SiSWE, personalisation and self-directed support

There are aspects of the SiSWE in their current form that reflect the changes outlined above.  Some examples of competences from Standards 1,2 and 6 that can be interpreted as core to personalisation are listed in Table 6  below.

Table 6: Examples of competences in the SiSWE which contribute to a personalised approach

| Standard | Examples of competences in Learning Foci |
|---|---|
| **1** | 1.3 Work with others to help people who use services to achieve and maintain greater independence |
| **2** | 2.2 Develop relationships with individuals, families, carers, groups and communities that show respect for diversity, equality, dignity and privacy<br>2.4 With individuals, families, carers, groups, communities and others, identify, explore and evaluate support networks that can be accessed and developed |
| **6** | Support people who use services to manage their affairs, including managing finances and purchasing care services. |

Aspects of the SSSC Codes of Practice (SSSC, 2009) further reinforce these elements (e.g. 'Protect the rights and promote the interests of service users and carers'). However, for the most part, the SiSWE are not written in the language and tone of personalisation, in particular:

- They are predominantly service led rather than citizen led
- They refer to needs, not, on the whole, outcomes
- The focus is on task (e.g. making an assessment, making a plan) rather than facilitating and enabling service users and carers to access choice and take control over their support arrangements through a process of co-production
- Risk is interpreted as risk of harm rather than taking a more nuanced view of risk that balances positive and negative risks.

Again the SSSC Codes of Practice help to some extent with the interpretation of the SiSWE. CoP 3 'Promote the independence of service users whilst protecting them as far as possible from danger or harm', for example, conveys more of the tone of the complex balancing act involved in personalised approaches to risk of harm than the corresponding SiSWE. The SiSWE, however, have two particular strengths in relation to personalised services:

- An assets focus in SiSWE 1.2 and 1.3

- Reference to the importance of support networks, and to the social worker's role in working with individuals, families and communities to develop and maintain these networks.

Our earlier analysis demonstrated that the NOS, in contrast with the SiSWE, implicitly convey the values, skills and knowledge associated with personalisation. An explicit reference in the NOS to arrangements for supporting people to access person-centred services (SW18) also refers to the social work role in the administration and funding associated with self-directed support. In contrast, SiSWE 5.3 refers to the role of the social work student in, for example, purchasing services and setting service standards, rather than enabling the individual to do this themselves.

Table 6 referred to a number of potential opportunities to enhance the SiSWE to reflect the values and practice of personalisation. SiSWE 6, *Support individuals to represent and manage their needs, views and circumstances,* offers the most obvious potential for expansion to address the gaps outlined above. SiSWE 5.3 could also be adapted to include the competences required for social workers to facilitate the management of resources by service users and carers. However, tinkering around the edges of the SiSWE will not change the general tone and approach of the current standards, which, because of the era in which they were written, cannot convey the transformation of care and support services that personalisation implies. Table 6 provided an illustration of how the NOS differ from the SiSWE in this respect. At the same time there are inevitably some dilemmas here about how to ensure that standards for practice are future-proofed. For example, whilst increasingly social work and social care is framed in the language of outcomes, current legislation refers to the duties of social workers and others to 'assess need'.

## 5.3 Integration of Health and Social Care

### 5.3.1 Context

The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill (Scottish Government, 2014), at Stage 3 in the Scottish Parliament at the time of writing, sets out the aim of the Integration of

Health and Social Care which is to improve outcomes for people who use health and social care services and their carers by providing consistency across the provision of services, particularly when those services move between Health and Social Care. The implications of this policy driver for workforce development, and social work education in particular, are immediate. That the changes required of workers and organisations are more to do with the quality of services provided and of the service provision process, is agreed by all those involved (SSSC, 2013). This approach is in line with the emphasis on service-user based values which is so prominent in the workforce plans (Scottish Government, 2013a) of NHS Scotland. The NHS Scotland values statement, which underpins the Health Service Scotland workforce development plans for the rest of this decade, is about managing the workforce and supporting it to provide excellent service to those who need it and to their carers. Workers are expected to work with people on a basis of:

- care and compassion
- dignity and respect and
- openness, honesty and responsibility.

'Quality and teamwork' are also included in this statement and the desired outcome is better and more effective support for those who receive services, not organisational change per se. National policy in relation to the integration of health and social care recognises that the underpinning driver for change should not be the process or structure of integrated services but that from integration there should be a better, more effective support to people who use services and their carers to achieve the outcomes that matter to them.

Petch (2012) noted that integration is very different than joint working or collaboration, models which underpin both the requirements of NOS and SiSWE. Integrated organisations and integrated care are not synonymous and expectations that integrated care will happen purely as a result of a change of policy or organisational systems are certain to be misplaced. Integration can happen at many levels and in areas of joint work. Petch uses a distinction articulated by Reed et al. (2005: 2) which identifies macro

strategies (taking place at the societal level), mezzo strategies (at a service system level), and micro strategies (occurring at an individual service user level).

### 5.3.2 Implications of integration for social work education and practice

Research into joint working and integration of services, including evidence from Northern Ireland where an integrated health and social care service has been the norm for many years, suggests that changing ways of thinking is much more important than structural or political change (Petch, 2012). It is in this area that the SiSWE could make a contribution to the integration agenda. Service integration rather than organisational integration is what will make a difference to service users.

Croisdale-Appleby (2014), reviewing social work education in England, notes the importance of social work education taking on the challenge of this policy change which is happening across the UK. His Recommendation 8 asserts that:

> 'Social work qualifying education and CPD should equip social workers to play a much greater role in major transformational developments such as the closer integration of healthcare and social care, so knowledge about the capabilities and perspectives of other, related professions should be introduced into both curricula as a clear signal of this direction of travel of the profession in utilising the skills of other professions in social work and contributing social work skills to working in inter-professional partnerships.' (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014: 87)

The implications for social work education of this transformational change in how social work services are designed and delivered are extensive. There will be changes to the knowledge and understanding required of qualifying social workers but changes to competence expectations must also occur. A shift from the skills needed for multi-disciplinary working which feature strongly in SiSWE 4 and 5 to actively asserting the role and contribution of social work in working with other professions can be seen from the tone and language of the NOS. Both the NOS and the SiSWE address issues of working in multi-disciplinary settings and contexts but the move to *integration* of health

and social care services may require a different approach. Our mapping identified this shift in terms of an enhanced assertiveness expected of social workers in assessing a situation, making a judgement, articulating the rationale for that judgement and being prepared and able to defend it. Another important emphasis which comes through the NOS but is less evident in the SiSWE is the expectation that the social worker will see and be able to represent the particular contribution of social work to a complex situation.

Table 7: Examples of competences in the SiSWE which contribute to the skills and abilities needed within integrated services

| Standard | Examples of competences in Learning Foci |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1.1<br>b) Contact and work with relevant professionals and others to get additional information that can influence initial contact and involvement |
| 4 | 4.2<br>c) Exercise and justify their professional judgement.<br>d) Use appropriate assertiveness in justifying professional decisions and upholding social work practice values<br>4.4<br>c) work with colleagues in related professions to develop and further integrate services |
| 5 | 5.6<br>a) Develop, maintain and review effective working relationships within and across agency boundaries<br>b) Contribute to identifying and agreeing the goals, objectives, working procedures and duration of professional groups and to evaluating their effectiveness<br>c) Work effectively with others in delivering integrated and multi-disciplinary services<br>d) Deal constructively with disagreements and conflict within work relationships. |

### 5.3.3 The SiSWE and integration of health and social care

Where the SiSWE relate to the skills and competences which social workers might need within an integrated service, they are couched in terms of multi-disciplinary working as can been seen in Table 7 above.

# 6    Conclusions

Any workforce education or practice standards are necessarily 'of their time' and will quite inevitably date. This is certainly true of SiSWE which were developed only shortly after devolution, and near the start of a period of rapid political, economic and legislative change in Scotland. More than 10 years later the SiSWE require careful interpretation to ensure that they accord with the current realities of social work practice in Scotland. There are also, of course, challenges, and potential pitfalls in 'future proofing' any new standards. For example, whilst, as we have indicated in this report, increasing personalisation and integration of services are currently significant drivers for change, we can only hazard informed guesses as to what social work practice will look like in 5, 10, or 25 years time. 'Imagining the future', as Musselbrook's (2013) analysis makes clear, has to take into account the potential for several alternative scenarios, related to unknowns such as future economic prosperity, the outcome of the 2014 independence referendum and decision making about, for example, welfare reform or immigration.

## 6.1 Mapping the NOS and SiSWE

In comparing the NOS and SiSWE, our major finding was that, whilst there are some discrete gaps (e.g. in relation to use of technology), the differences between the two sets of standards are ones of language, tone and approach. These more 'global' differences pervade all six of the SiSWE's standards. In terms of direct practice with service users and carers, they can mostly be related to the steady shift towards personalisation through co-production, currently exemplified by the passing of the Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013. While the SiSWE pick up some of the features of personalisation - in relation, for example, to assets based practice and the

importance of family and community networks - the standards are generally more task-focused and service-led than the NOS. In relation to the role and positioning of the social worker, the NOS place more emphasis on use of self, critically reflective practice and learning from experience than the SiSWE. Neither of these fundamental differences can be 'fixed' by simply adding on some additional learning foci to the current SiSWE competences. Effective incorporation of these changes would, in our view, require a thorough review and revision of current competences, skills and knowledge.

Our task has been to focus on the SiSWE competences and NOS performance criteria. However, it is important to note that a broader reading of SiSWE including, in particular, their Guiding Principles and Vision (Scottish Executive, 2003, pp. 18-20) provides a more rounded view of the values that underpin social work practice. These values are linked explicitly to the SSSC CoP, setting out a context for ethical practice that is considerably closer to, if not the same as, the changing expectations of social work practitioners and their practice with service users described above. However, our experience as educators suggests that the values and principles that inform and help to contextualise and interpret SiSWE can easily get lost when the pressure is on for students to 'meet the competences'. One approach, therefore, to enabling the current SiSWE to more accurately reflect current thinking and practice would be to revisit the SiSWE in their entirety and to find ways to place more emphasis on these sometimes hidden, but vital, principles that should inform understanding and use of all the standards. This might, for example, involve incorporating a more prominent value statement, linked to the CoP, in the body of the SiSWE competences.

Although most of the differences we identified between NOS and SiSWE tended to be global and overarching, we did identify a number of specific gaps in the SiSWE in relation to the NOS that might be addressed by adding to the SiSWE. For example, the current standards could be expanded to include:

- more emphasis on personal capabilities of the social worker in relation to e.g. critical reflection on practice, use of self (Standard 4)

- the importance of enabling practitioners to look after their well being and develop resilience (Standard 5)

- the distinctive role of social work within integrated services (Standard 5)

- more emphasis on supporting people to participate in decision-making processes, incorporating some key concepts - capacity, self-advocacy, empowerment - that are either missing or not strongly present in the SiSWE (Standard 6).

## 6.2 Changing policy and practice

We were also asked how the SiSWE might be used to focus learning on areas of workforce development which are emerging as particularly important within the context of recent and current policy and practice changes in Scotland. There are a range of key drivers, including evidence based practice and leadership, that we have only touched on in this report. Our focus was on personalisation, and specifically self-directed support, and on service integration. Our earlier analysis of the NOS and SiSWE had indicated that personalisation of services was a key shift in policy and practice that is not adequately represented in the SiSWE. As we have indicated above it is not possible to recommend any 'quick fixes' for the SiSWE that can take account of current and potential future change without marginalising this potential transformation of public services. Nevertheless it is important to stress that the SiSWE do already incorporate some aspects of personalised practice, such as the focus on strengths-based practice seen in Standard 2.

In contrast, the integration of services seems unlikely to require changes to the SiSWE. Standard 5 already encapsulates the main competences, skills and knowledge that qualifying social workers will need to bring to integrated services. The most distinct gap we identified was in relation to the role of social work in integrated settings. This gap links to a broader raft of the kinds of personal capabilities, such as assertiveness and creativity, referred to in the NOS, that social workers require to make a significant and distinctive contribution to multidisciplinary teams and services. These capabilities

cannot of course be disentangled from those linked to other changing agendas, relating to, for example, leadership, and to personalisation's focus on the citizen at the centre rather than the role of individual services.

## 6.3 Looking ahead

Our task has been to undertaking a mapping process, identify any significant gaps in the SiSWE and to make proposals about meeting these gaps. We have identified few 'significant' gaps in the sense of glaring holes in the SiSWE relative to the NOS, but, perhaps unsurprisingly, have concluded that the SiSWE are beginning to show their age, in relation to social, economic and political change in Scotland. Some parallel debates about standards have been happening in England, where two recent reports have been highly critical of the lack of clarity resulting from the multiple standards and benchmark standards which currently guide social work education (Croisdale-Appelby, 2014; Narey, 2014). As Narey (2014, p.8) put it,

> 'Despite (or because of) the hundreds of pages to be found in this plethora of guidance documents for universities, there is very little clarity about what a newly qualified social worker needs to know.'

This is perhaps a salutary reminder that any proposed changes to current standards in social work will need not only to improve student social workers' preparation for the job, but also convey expectations of the social work role in a straightforward and accessible way.

# Acknowledgements

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# Appendix 1 - Elements which are in the SiSWE but are not explicitly mentioned in the NOS

- Groupwork (2.4) – groups and group dynamics do not appear in the NOS
- Crisis intervention (2.1) and taking prompt action (2.5) – implicit in some of the risk PCs but not explicitly addressed in the NOS other than the requirement to ensure that records and reports comply with legal requirements (NOS SW7, P5)
- Taking part in decision making in the specific context of meetings  (5.5)
- SiSWE address more of the processes of engagement and disengagement with individuals and families (especially SiSWE 1 and 2)
- The SiSWE language tends to focus on need, and risk is less obviously considered. Overall, one can discern a more strengths based approach in SiSWE which fits well with asset based approaches in some new policy directions, such as Self-Directed Support
- The SiSWE seem to be more explicit about attention to broader values such as dignity and respect (see SiSWE 2), the NOS to the social worker's capability to attend to the dynamics of power, challenge discrimination and be a critically reflective practitioner.

# Appendix 2 – detailed analysis of gaps identified

The gaps in SiSWE which are identified in [Section 4.3](#) are presented in more detail in Tables 8 to 11 and are matched with possible amendments to the SiSWE.

Table 8: NOS Performance Criteria (P) which address self-awareness and/or critically reflective practice

| What the NOS say | Possible amendments of SiSWE |
|---|---|
| *SW2 Develop one's own practice through supervision and reflection*<br>P5 Reflect on the cultural context in which you practice and how this impacts upon your work<br>P6 Reflect on your own values, beliefs and assumptions and how they impact on your social work practice | *Personal capabilities*: SiSWE 4.2 could be enhanced by the inclusion of the NOS approach to the practitioner's responsibility for the quality of their practice (Gap 1).<br><br>On *own well-being* NOS SW3, P4, P5, P6 and P7 could sit in SiSWE 5, particularly 5.1, though a new learning focus about own well-being might be an appropriate solution (Gap 2). |
| *SW5 Manage ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts*<br>P3 Reflect on how your own values and experiences may impact on managing ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts | Research-mindedness and critically reflective practice in general could be included in any revised SiSWE but would be particularly relevant to Standard 4. Alternatively, and perhaps more appropriately, it could be included in a SiSWE values statement, since these attributes should permeate all the SiSWE (Gap 8). |
| *SW8 Prepare for SW involvement*<br>P5 Reflect on aspects of self that may have an impact on the social work relationship | Gap 7: SiSWE 4.1 could be enhanced by some alteration to the language therein so as to encompass critically reflective practice. |

Table 9: NOS which address how the social worker is expected to work with service users

| What the NOS say | Possible amendments of SiSWE |
|---|---|
| *SW9 Engage people in social work practice*<br>P7 Work with others to address any hostility or resistance encountered<br>P8 Appraise the impact of self in sustaining engagement and partnership working<br>P10 Adjust the way you develop and sustain engagement in the light of reflection and feedback | To reflect the difference in emphasis between the enabling approach of the NOS requirements and the 'social worker as expert' approach that emerges from parts of the SiSWE, NOS 10 could sit within a revised SISWE 6 (Gap 5). |
| *SW11 Advocate on behalf of others*<br>P8 Review the effectiveness of advocacy | The expectation to review the effectiveness of an intervention runs through the NOS but is not explicit in any of the SiSWE (Gap 5). This would be a useful addition to SiSWE 6. |
| *SW18 Access resources to support person centred outcomes*<br>P4 Support people to deal with any unexpected or unwelcome news that may arise when securing resources | It is not obvious how the SiSWE would be enhanced by the explicit inclusion of this fundamental aspect of the social work task. |

Table 10: NOS which address specific social work tasks

| What the NOS say | Possible amendments of SiSWE |
|---|---|
| *SW12 Assess needs, risks and circumstances in partnership with those involved*<br>P2 Identify obstacles that create limitations for people | Risk is given a higher profile in the NOS than it has in the SiSWE. No fewer than four NOS explicitly focus on risk and its management. There is inclusion of capacity assessment in NOS that is not in the SiSWE and the NOS address how a social worker might develop a personalised approach to risk, which is not evident in any of the |

| | expectations in the SiSWE (Gap 3). It is not, however, clear that adding anything to one of more of the SiSWE would address the shift of approach to risk which is inherent in policy developments on personalisation. Any change to be made would have to be at the level of principles and values. |
|---|---|
| *SW13 Investigate harm or abuse* <br> P4 Use persistence and assertiveness to gather direct evidence about the harm or abuse | See comment on SW12 <br> The requirement for the social worker to be confident in her own professional judgement may enhance SiSWE 1.3, 2.1, 2.3, 3.1 and/or 4.4. |
| *SW15 Agree risk management plans to promote independence and responsibility* <br> P2 Assess the individual's capacity to make decisions regarding risk <br> P5 With the individual, develop a plan to minimise risks while maximising independence and the responsibility for taking positive risks | See comment on SW12 |
| *SW16 Agree plans where there is risk of harm or abuse* <br> P3 Support the person to be as fully involved as possible in the planning process <br> P4 Negotiate agreement on the least restrictive and least damaging plan of action that will offer short term safety in respect of the risks evidenced <br> P5 Develop a long-term therapeutic plan to restore or continue to provide protection | See comment on SW12 |

Table 11: The value and importance of social work as a profession

| What the NOS say | Possible amendments of SiSWE |
|---|---|
| *SW6 Practise social work in multi-disciplinary contexts* <br> P2 Uphold the role and function of social work when working in a multi disciplinary context <br> P4 Ensure that social work principles, codes of practice and values are applied when working with others | SiSWE 4.2 and 5.6 could be enhanced by a change of emphasis to bring them more in line with the NOS approach to valuing the social work profession and its contribution to multi-disciplinary work (Gap 9). |

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