

Implementing a probationary year for social workers in Scotland

An option appraisal commissioned by the
Scottish Social Services Council

Dr Brenda Gillies
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If you get it wrong, you set someone on the path to stress, perhaps depression, perhaps burnout.
Michelle Lefevre, Guardian Dec 2015

Remit

This report presents an analysis of the options and comparative costs of implementing a probationary year for social workers in Scotland which:

- a. summarises how other professions have implemented a probationary first year in practice. This should include social work in the other UK countries, teaching in Scotland, community learning in Scotland, and other similar professions
- b. describes how the costs associated with an initial probationary year have been met in other professions, differentiating between costs met by government, by employers, by individuals and funded by other means
- c. explores potential options for implementation of a probationary year for newly qualified social workers in Scotland, providing an options appraisal, including a cost/benefit analysis and a recommendation of a preferred option
- d. takes into account the work being done to develop a benchmark standard for the probationary year to describe the possible structure and content of a probationary year
- e. explores whether the probationary year should be assessed and, if so, in what way
- f. explores whether the probationary year should be mandatory (for employers and practitioners, and how this could be done.

The report was produced in consultation with a wide range of individuals who gave generously of their time, not least to ensure accuracy in how their contribution was represented, particularly those from the Care Council Wales (CCW), Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) and Skills for Care (SfC). A full list of contributors is included at the end of the report.

Introduction

Arguably, a profession can be judged on how it recruits, nurtures and develops its members. As social work strives to strengthen its professional credentials (for example, Changing Lives 2006; Shared Vision and Strategy 2015), it is timely to examine how those new to the profession can better be inducted and encouraged to remain in this exacting and increasingly complex career. An effective profession is one which can demonstrate how it invests in and values its members while demanding consistently excellent professional standards. Professional confidence is likely to contribute to a more settled workforce with lower attrition rates. While the current unrest of junior doctors reminds us that working conditions can unsettle any profession, we are now more fully informed about the challenges facing the newly-qualified social worker (NQSW) in Scotland. The focus on a more structured approach to initial professional practice, such as a probationary year, derives from recommendations made across a number of research outputs (Welch 2014, Grant et al 2014, Gillies 2015) and specifically the Social Services in Scotland; a Shared Vision and Strategy 2015-2020 (Scottish Government, 2015) with direction from the Social Work Services Strategic Forum.

The latest available statistics (SSSC, 2014) indicate that Scotland's universities produced 529 social work graduates that year of whom 306 completed the 4 year Hons degree, and 223 completed the Post Graduate route. Statistics for the same period indicate 1574 NQSW were registered with SSSC (the NQSW population straddling three years), that Scotland's Local Authorities employed 1163 of these while another 400 NQSW were employed by the private/voluntary/independent sector in Scotland (with a small number employed outside Scotland or the UK, or unemployed). So, while the local authorities employ the vast majority of social work (SW) graduates, a significant percentage find employment across a broad range of employers. Figures for the wider workforce (2011) indicated that there were 555 non-statutory employer organisations and that 322 of these (60%) employed only one social worker. This is an important and challenging picture as any form of mandatory scheme for formalising NQSW initial professional practice must be able to accommodate the widely differing experiences and opportunities of this dispersed population.

This report has been prepared in parallel with activities related to the revision of the SW degree and the preparation of a new set of standards for NQSW – the standards they will be expected to meet at the end of any probation period. While these are yet to be finalised it can be anticipated that any such standards will reflect a generic workforce demonstrating the consolidation of the knowledge and skills developed during their initial training, and evidence of their successful transition from student to confident, capable professional. The options section at the end of this report outlines a number of practice areas which could inform the new standards for NQSW including emotional resilience and use of social media. SSSC identified the following as necessary attributes of the NQSWs practice.

- Having the necessary knowledge and skills to manage complex cases.
- Having the necessary resilience.
- Being able to use sound professional judgement.
- Demonstrating habits of learning and enquiry.
- Understanding outcome-based approaches and able to deliver personalised services.
- Able to take on SW roles in integrated services. (SSSC cited in Welch et al 2014).

In line with the aspirations of the Vision and Strategy we might also consider research leadership as the basis of a professional standard in order to harness, maintain and develop the research mindedness of the SW graduate on entry to the profession.

The purpose of an option appraisal is to examine the costs and benefits of a range of choices. How the probationary year might take shape will be based on the supporting evidence and justification emerging from the appraisal. Even with modest aspirations, it must address the shortcomings in the current post registration training and learning (PRTL) processes and the experiences of NQSW while, at best, it could establish a robust, well-resourced career foundation with an embedded and flourishing learning and research culture.

Section 1: Social work probationary arrangements across the UK

Scotland's post registration training and learning (PRTL)

The most important principle to bear in mind is to view PRTL as 'no big deal'. It is about recognising when learning has taken place and recording it on a regular basis so you do not forget. (Keen et al 2009:61/2)

This rather mechanistic view of PRTL perhaps sums up the inherent weakness in the current system, the perception that it is a recording chore which must be undertaken in order to achieve professional registration. The positive aspects of the scheme are that the NQSW is expected to take responsibility for their professional learning, both creatively and opportunistically, and where reflection on learning and demonstrating the impact on practice of that learning become routine and embedded. The process is supported by online guidance and support and the mandatory days include specific hours dedicated to adult and child protection training, albeit not specified by type or quality.

Various first-hand accounts confirm that PRTL forms are routinely recorded retrospectively, typically just before the deadline and any developmental learning is thus rendered less effective. We also know that submissions are often too descriptive with inadequate reflection on the impact of learning on practice. Anecdotal evidence (SSSC) suggests, however, that standards of recording and the quality of reflection are improving possibly as a result of time invested by employers and, at an earlier stage, by SSSC and HEIs in preparing final year students for what lies ahead.

Currently PRTL submissions are signed off by employer representatives and each one is scrutinised by SSSC advisers, some 500 scripts per year at between one and two hours per script. This is time consuming and expensive but deemed necessary in the absence of any other form of quality assurance. The diverse nature of PRTL does not lend itself to a standardised submission although the requirement for specific days dedicated to both child and adult protection ensure minimum standards of professional development in these practice areas. Not enough is known, however, about the quality and content of in-house provision and the extent to which this is duplicated, or transportable between authorities.

Perhaps the biggest weakness in the current system is the variation in employer involvement and contribution. At one level, the system merely requires an employer representative's signature. At the other extreme, some employers are investing significantly in structured induction, regular supervision, protected case-loads, and opportunities for employer and peer-led development time. Within authorities there is inconsistency across teams and therefore any attempt at even an average costing is futile. However, one learning and development manager has indicated time dedicated as 2 full days orientation followed by either one-to-one mentoring or peer group mentoring for every NQSW, equal to approximately 12-15 hours (ie 2.5 days) in year one to support PRTL, followed

by informal buddying with team member, unquantifiable. In addition, this authority provides formal training, elearning, corporate induction and shadowing all amounting to far in excess of the 144 hours PRTL requirements. This level of investment is considered worthwhile in relation to the authority's retention rates.

Costs (while unquantifiable) can be attributed to:

Backfill for reduced caseloads
Backfill for study leave/development opportunities
Learning and Development staff support
Line manager support and supervision
Peer and buddy mentoring
HEI preparation for PRTL throughout the degree in social work
SSSC preparation of final year students for PRTL requirements
SSSC workplace preparation of NQSW
SSSC scrutiny of PRTL records

To summarise, the characteristics of PRTL are:

- a mandatory scheme based on required number of hours learning and development
- flexibility in how learning is acquired
- non-assessed and non-credit bearing
- no quality assurance in relation to learning
- resource greedy in relation to SSSC scrutiny
- wide variation in employer support provided to NQSW
- wide variation in protected time afforded to NQSW
- little or no evidence for what PRTL achieves in relation to, eg establishing a learning habit, promoting a learning culture, raising standards of practice, improving public perception.

In **England** an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) was introduced in 2012. The ASYE has developed in two directions with separate registration portals and systems. The Department for Education (DfE) administer the system for Child and Family services and Skills for Care (SfC) disperse the grant for adults on behalf of the Department of Health (DoH).

Although the ASYE in Child and Family services is not mandatory, there is a clear expectation on the part of the DfE that employers will provide support along these lines. This aligns with employer endorsement stage of the proposed 4 stage ACFP (accredited Child and Family practitioner) accreditation. In Adult services the chief social worker has a clear expectation that employers will participate, bolstered by growing expectation and demand from NQSW favouring employers who provide the perceived benefits of the ASYE in their first post. These benefits include time for reflection; peer support; structured support and guidance, an aid to transition from education to practice; workload protection and aid to future employment (HOST evaluation). Employers are increasingly linking completion of the ASYE to recruitment conditions. Additionally employers who were formerly reluctant to invest in NQSW, preferring more experienced employees, have encountered difficulties with retention and are now more willing to invest their resources and energies in NQSW whom they can nurture and hopefully retain. There are 153 local authorities (apart from the Isles of Scilly with only 1.5 social workers) all of whom have been engaged to some extent depending on their recruitment situation. Social workers employed by smaller, independent, private and voluntary organisations are notoriously 'harder to reach' and therefore less likely to be exposed to the benefits of ASYE, particularly if they are the only social worker in the organisation or working in a role aligned to but not fully meeting the requirements of a registered social worker. However, a number of local authorities are syphoning off their social work services to Community Interest companies thus boosting the engagement in the private, voluntary and independent sectors. HEIs are also proving helpful by promoting the ASYE during the qualifying courses.

Based on their separate Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS), NQSWs along with the rest of the professional workforce in Child and Family services will shortly enter a national assessment and accreditation system which will apply to three areas of practice: Approved Child and Family Practitioner (ACFP) mandatory for all CandF practitioners including NQSW; Practice Supervision (PS); and Practice Leadership (PL). These new accreditations will provide a national, practice-focused, career pathway based on an online assessment system' that is seen to be a fair and reasonable method to assess the knowledge and skills of Child and Family social workers and that can be implemented at scale in a cost effective way' (DfE). This assessment and accreditation process will be overseen by recently announced new regulatory body that will be set up to take responsibility for all social work standards, training and regulation of the profession, including adult social work.

In Adult services it is anticipated that the new regulatory body will provide independent validation for the ASYE. The Adult services approach is one of national consistency and portability using an internal, external and national moderation model. External endorsement is assured through a National Framework for the Assessment of Social Workers at the end of their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment England comprising standardised arrangements for assessment and moderation led by SfC. The framework provides a series of specifics such as the form the assessment should take (ie number of direct observations, nature and number of written pieces to be undertaken, number and range of samples of case notes and reports to be submitted, examples of suitable feedback from peers, managers and service users, how the assessment process will be carried out and endorsed). Employers do not have to use this documentation but have to satisfy the national moderation panel that they have met the requirements of the KSS adults.

The assessment of the ASYE is against the KSS and the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). KSS provides a level descriptor for the ASYE based on the PCF and the holistic assessment of capability should be based on this statement. In short, the KSS provide the overall expectations and the PCF provides the level and the detail which should be used as a diagnostic tool. It seems likely the KSS will be retained and further strengthened to some extent by the emergence of Teaching Partnership who are tasked with embedding the KSS across their member organisations. Following the closure of the College of Social Work, BASW has taken over the PCF and have revamped its appearance and are committed to its continuation.

Some HEIs have built around elements of the record of support and progressive assessment and the critical reflection log as part of their academic processes so the NQSW can gain academic credits while meeting the ASYE requirements.

To summarise, the DfE and the DoH have taken different approaches with DoH supporting a much more controlled approach based on moderation whereas the DfE are not prescribing how the ASYE happens merely that NQSWs have to be assessed against the KSS. Employers who are running both Child and Family and Adult ASYE schemes are in many cases employing the moderation approach across the board.

Employers are reporting to SfK that now they have come to terms with the ASYE they are looking at KSS across the whole workforce, the motivation being that they provide the means for those aspiring to become managers or supervisors, using the KSS and appraise their own learning needs – an honest look at what they need to improve. Child and Family services will now have the accreditation awards as further motivation. Employers appear to recognise tangible benefits in driving up standards throughout the workforce and initiating change, as anticipated.

In spite of the growing enthusiasm demonstrated by employers, the quality and quantity of supervision/assessment is seen by SfC as the main weakness in the system. Routinely NQSW are supervised and assessed by first line managers who are, in the main, overworked and overwhelmed, routinely managing crises and for whom supporting a NQSW is one task too many. As such they are arguably the poorest role model for aspiring NQSWs who are hopefully eager and enthusiastic, questioning and challenging. Interestingly SfK, when engaging with managers using their 360degree toolkit, have found that helping managers regain their professional identity and enthusiasm, renders such supervisory activity rewarding once more.

Findings from the Skills for Care ASYE longitudinal study Report one – Social worker and supervisor surveys Autumn 2015 reveal that 'It was encouraging to note that four-fifths of the respondents to the Social Worker survey felt that the ASYE had prepared them 'very' or 'fairly well' for the transition from student to social worker. Two-fifths said that it had influenced their confidence levels in practice 'a lot' and half said it had influenced their confidence 'a little'.

Costs

The two routes through ASYE are funded separately and with different budgets.

Employers are paid £2000 by DfE for each NQSW in Child and Family services. In 2015 this amounted to **£5.5m** for their 2774 NQSW. This is paid in two tranches of £1k, the first following the completion of the learning agreement and the second £1k on completion of the final assessment, irrespective of pass or fail. Currently there is no cap on numbers.

By contrast, in 2015 the budget for NQSW in Adult Services was capped at **£1.6m** meaning that for their 1365 NQSW employers received a minimum of £1100 per capita from DoH, through Sfc using a funding formula based on the type of organisation and the number of social workers in that organisation. Smaller organisations with less established schemes get more than large local authorities who can employ the economies of scale and who can pool resources to provide an integrated ASYE. In this way the Child and Family budget might be subsidising Adult services. Smaller employers are more likely to have to buy in independent assessors and moderation arrangements.

SfC resources dedicated to the ASYE are not available.

To summarise, the characteristics of the ASYE are:

- a rapidly changing context with two discrete pathways, different requirements and outcomes
- different funding schemes with shared aim of driving up standards but different approaches to achieving this

- discrete but overlapping administrative bodies
- some common support materials
- measurable and significant improvement in the NQSW experience
- recognition of rising professional standards across workforce
- uncertainty about the role of the PCF with its transfer to BASW, with possible incorporation to KSS.
- the need to improve capacity for robust assessment and supervision
- uncertainty about the scope of the new regulatory body.

Northern Ireland introduced an Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) in 2007. This is a mandatory scheme, designed to ensure that newly qualified social workers have made the transition from student to employee and have demonstrated sustained, continuous and effective competence in the workplace. Having achieved the degree in SW, candidates are moved to the SW section of the register. During the AYE they are assessed against the six Key Roles within the NOS and the 5 NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice (revised in November 2015). The AYE also encompasses the NISCC Induction Standards for all social care workers. The AYE is linked to full professional registration in that it constitutes a condition that must be met. In other words the NQSW is registered as a Social Worker but with the condition of the AYE. The AYE comprises two core parts, guaranteed support to newly qualified social workers in their first year of practice and a framework for formative and summative assessment of newly qualified social workers against the National Occupational Standards for Social Work.

The AYE is designed to provide the basis for career progression and professional development and its successful completion allows the SW to progress into and up the professional pay scale (band 5 to band 6) so there are real financial as well as professional incentives. The AYE forms the foundation to Professional in Practice (PIP), the CPD framework for Social Work which is a flexible, credit-accumulation framework, recognizing a broad range of training and learning and which provides the means of meeting PRTL requirements as well as working towards three Professional Awards (Consolidation, Specialist and Leadership and Strategic). The credit accumulation process follows a simple 2+1 formula (2 credits per hour of learning plus 1 credit when impact is demonstrated) supported by effective online tools. Following the removal of her/his AYE condition the registered SW has three years to complete the Consolidation phase of PIP.

The five trusts in NI are contracted into this scheme which attracts no additional central Government funding. The participating trusts manage the scale of the scheme by keeping tight control over the type of posts they offer for AYE registrants, principally posts where a SW qualification is essential. Voluntary organisations participating in the AYE will offer posts where a SW qualification is desirable, ie the Trusts operate a higher threshold. In either case the post must be sufficient to allow the AYE candidate to demonstrate professional development by consolidating and extending skills.

Significantly, almost 50% of the approximate annual 350 social work graduates are unable to find permanent jobs on graduating and many NQSW work for agencies filling short term or temporary posts often in the voluntary sector. Short term or temporary posts can qualify for AYE status but the period must be long enough to demonstrate professional development over time. A large number of graduates work on short, (often weekly) rolling contracts for agencies and this renders their access to AYE more challenging, particularly in terms of

continuity and demonstrating consolidation of knowledge and skills as opposed to the wide range of experiences they will encounter. An unexpected benefit of the AYE, however, is that voluntary organisations are seeing a rise in professional standards since such a proportion of their posts is now filled by qualified SWs undertaking the AYE.

Assessment of the AYE is fully prescribed, comprising samples of work including assessments, utilisation of at least two recognised SW models/methods and two short reflective summaries (750 words) at mid-point and final appraisal. There are no specific observations required and the AYE must be supervised by a qualified SW. The employer undertakes the mid-point and final appraisal and must confirm to the NISCC that the registrant is fit to practise as a fully accountable social worker before the AYE condition can be removed. By contrast all subsequent post-qualifying activity through PIP is externally assessed at Masters level.

Significantly, the HEIs have no role in the AYE, largely due to the lack of funding. Quality assurance is set out in the annual return of the participating Trust where they are required to outline their standardisation arrangements. Small organisations generally standardise for each other. NISCC are currently strengthening their quality assurance processes and annual monitoring of the AYE arrangements is conducted by the HSCB to ensure compliance, to recommend improvements and to promote regional consistency across HSC Trusts.

Like Scotland, N Ireland has recently published The Social Work Research and Continuous Improvement Strategy 2015-2020 which aims to 'build a research minded organisational culture' (p8) which it claims will apply to the 715 current trainees undertaking the AYE as well as the wider workforce. Given there is currently no HEI involvement in the AYE it is difficult to see (and harder to elicit an explanation from anyone involved!) in how this will be developed.

What the AYE guarantees is an induction phase against published NISCC standards, regular supervision and feedback (fortnightly for the first six months and monthly thereafter) and feedback, and a minimum of 10 developmental days. Given its pedigree of some 10 years, students are well prepared for the expectation of the AYE throughout their initial training

Overall I had a good year and found the AYE process to be simple to follow. [Our supervisor] gave great guidance and advice. She supported us to reflect upon our cases and experiences and what could be learnt from them. Also, having another AYE registrant going through the process at the same time gave me support and encouragement which I felt made

my experience a positive one.
Recently completed AYE registrant

Costs

With no specific Government funding for the AYE, costs are absorbed largely by employers.

As an example, In the Belfast Trust with an average cohort 24 AYE registrants (albeit currently 36), this accounts for 0.25FTE of the Learning and Development Co-ordinator (Band 7). This includes meeting individually with AYE registrants, providing a voluntary monthly thematic-based forum for all registrants, preparing, updating and supporting line managers, liaising with the AYE administrator, conducting an annual audit and continuously updating guidance material for registrants and supervisors. To this can be added the compulsory fortnightly, then monthly supervision by the line manager/team leader, employer assessment and signing off responsibilities and substantial administration costs of monitoring the AYE candidates. New line managers are required to undertake a management development course to prepare them for the requirements of AYE. Technically the AYE registrants provide a full FTE post (198 plus 10 development days) so should not require resource backfill and although there is a weighting system for caseload monitoring, there is no clear evidence of the extent to which caseloads for AYE registrants are limited or protected or required to be supplemented by other resources.

More generally, NISCC consider that costs to Employers can be significant, particularly during the first 6 months when supervision is more intensive (fortnightly). Some smaller organisations within, for example, the voluntary sector, resort to outsourcing professional supervision if they do not have the internal capacity and the numbers of AYE candidates is small. This requires significant expenditure. As a result, some smaller organisations operate a waiting list for AYE candidates.

NISCC contributes a significant resource to supporting and monitoring the AYE and advises that the overall national scheme has yet to be costed.

In summary the characteristics of the AYE are:

- mandatory scheme involving all statutory employers and a requirement for registration
- guarantees robust induction, supervision, development time
- costs absorbed by employers
- assessment by employer, some quality assurance by NISCC through sampling
- assessments have a professional focus without an academic requirement

- no HEI involvement so potential 'disconnect' during AYE between degree and later career development
- lack of 'appropriate' posts leaves large percentage of graduates without access to the AYE
- popular with registrants and perceived to be good grounding for PIP
- interest from HEIs in offering Masters credits for AYE activities but funding not available.

Wales

The Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) Framework sets out 4 levels of programme which are largely work- based: The CPEL Framework serves the important function of underpinning the National Career Pathway for social workers. The programmes are designed to support social workers to develop excellent practice whatever their role and will help prepare social workers to deliver the Welsh Government vision for citizen centred services.

The four levels are:

- Consolidation for NQSW – introduced 2013
- Experienced Practitioner – introduced 2014
- Senior Practitioner – introduced 2014
- Consultant Social Worker - introduced 2015.

This means a social worker can now progress professionally while maintaining a practice role without having to follow a managerial route.

To support the implementation of the National Career Pathway, Role Profiles have been attributed to each stage which set out clear roles and responsibilities for, and define the differences between, the different levels of social worker. The Roles comprise both responsibilities and capabilities required for each level and as such can be used by employers to develop job descriptions. The CPEL is one of the ways in which the career pathway is implemented – by providing the training and learning for the roles in the career pathway.

The Consolidation programme is designed to support effective transition from social work graduate to competent practitioner. It builds on learning from the social work degree and provides opportunities to practise and embed key skills with a focus on three specific areas - working collaboratively, using professional judgement in complex cases and the application of analytical skills to inform interventions. Unlike the three subsequent levels, it is commissioned and delivered regionally. The Consolidation Programme lasts about 18 months and will normally be started in the second year of social work practice. It consolidates and complements the development of social workers in their first year during which it is expected their employer will have established a formal induction programme, regular mentoring and a protected caseload. Where NQSWs undertake the Programme will vary according to the arrangements their employer has made. A large part of the Programme takes place in the workplace. National requirements mean that learning on the Consolidation Programme will attract a minimum of 30 credits at Level 6. The assessment of learners will draw on a range of work based evidence, including direct observation of practice working with service users. Successful completion is a requirement for renewal of registration.

The Consolidation Programme is now mandatory for all social workers qualifying from April 2016 onwards. All local authorities are signed up to one of the two Consolidation Programmes available in Wales which are:

- Porth Agored which is a collaboration of 12 local authorities in Wales in association with University of Wales Trinity St David and which offers the graduate certificate in consolidation of Social Work Practice
- the South Wales Consolidation Programme delivered through the University of South Wales and Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Costs

All local authorities in Wales (currently 22) bid for funding through the Welsh Government's Social Care Workforce Development Programme. The Consolidation Programme is paid for by employers who may use some of the £40k provided to them as part of the Programme grant. This scheme is the major funding stream for social care learning and development in Wales and provides a 70% grant against agreed expenditure. The grant element, which provides 70% of the cost of the programme, will be £8,158,670. The SCWDP grant is intended as a supplement to employers' own training resources, a significant supplement to the resources provided by employers to train and develop their own staff. The annual circular sets out some of the conditions of the grant and this year's indicates, at paragraph 30, that a certain amount has to go to social work training including the Consolidation Programme viz Partnership plans will be expected to show how they will continue to work with others to deliver the Consolidation Programme in 2014-15 and how funding will be targeted to deliver this objective. The ring fenced allocation for social work training was increased in 2012-13 to support this objective. The £40k however also funds social work degree secondments, other post qualifying training and supporting practice learning so there are considerable competing demands. The cost of Consolidation Programme modules is between £380 and £450.

The funding of the remaining parts of the CPEL Framework is supported by the Care Council which funds 100 full CPEL places of 60 credits or the module equivalent to the value of £300k each year. This is just to cover the Experienced Practice in Social Work, Senior Practice in Social Work and Consultant Social Work Programmes. The 100 places are allocated between local authorities and the Private and Voluntary sector according to an agreed formula. These awards are national as opposed to regional. Employers can purchase places in addition to their funded places at a discounted rate – approximately half the price of the full place, however this will vary every year depending on demand.

There are approximately 250 SW graduates hoping to enter the workforce annually. There is a modest over-supply of qualifying social workers but evidence of people taking longer to get social worker posts and taking other

posts instead. Many of these are in the third and private sectors and there are questions about whether the Consolidation Programme is appropriate to them. The CCW rule of thumb is that if the post demands competence in the NOS for social work they will probably be able to meet the evidence requirements. To date only a handful have expressed concern about whether they should take a particular post. Since first implementation in 2013 of the 377 entering the Consolidation programme, 186 have passed, 39 have withdrawn or failed to complete and 152 are continuing.

In summary the characteristics of the Consolidation programme are:

- credit bearing award
- linked to registration
- the foundation level of a career pathway
- largely work-based but HEI provider
- government grant aid to employers which also funds HEI provision.

Section 2: Probationary Arrangements in different Professions

Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS)

There is no hiding place for a struggling probationary teacher
Local Authority Probation Manager

The TIS is a Scottish Government scheme managed by the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS). This is a recommended, structured scheme of 190 days (one school year) guaranteed for new graduates who wish to teach in Scotland's state schools. An alternative, flexible route (270 days) is available and also provides for those ineligible for, or choosing not to enter, the TIS or who do not wish to work in a Scottish local authority school. Only about 12.5% of graduates opt out of the TIS and for a variety of reasons, including deferment. New graduates apply for provisional registration, nominating five local authorities of their choice. Primary school candidates have a 90% of achieving their first or second choice of school and secondary teacher candidates, 80%. A substantial financial incentive (£6k for primary and £8k for secondary) is offered to those relinquishing this choice element, known as the preference waiver scheme, which assists supply of teachers for less popular areas. Scottish Government liaises with local authorities who anticipate their workforce needs in order to predict vacancies and nominate their capacity for TIS candidates and funding follows these probationers on a per capita basis.

The GTC is an independent body wholly funded by subscription from the profession (initially £65 reducing to £50 pa). It functions equally as a regulatory body and as a professional body, the latter boosted since the introduction of the Professional Update framework. In addition to its administrative and quality assurance roles, it provides professional development advice and will try to resolve problems arising during the TIS either with individuals, the school or the local employing authority. Probation managers (see below) attend two developmental events each year and GTCS officials visit undergraduates each year to advise on and promote the TIS. It has a staff of 60, within which two teams of four have substantial input into the TIS.

All newly qualified teachers (probationer teachers) during their guaranteed 1 year's employment work towards achieving the GTCS's national benchmark standard, the Standard for Full Registration (SFR) which is the 'gateway to the profession' as this standard also applies to all fully registered teachers as the basis of their continued registration with the GTCS. Each local authority has an identified Probation Manager with responsibility for managing the TIS, a role that is either a fully dedicated post, or a supplementary function. Probationer teachers are guaranteed protected development time, reduced class time (typically 0.8 FTE) and multiple levels of mentoring support, (school, local authority and national) and, for example, the resources in the dedicated website, in2teaching. Each local authority will provide a programme of CPD for their

probationers, with regular out of school study events encouraging peer support and sharing good practice and many will involve their locality HEIs in these events, typically but not always on a quid pro quo basis. In more rural areas these can require more intensive overnight commitments to accommodate the geographical spread of the probationers.

A graduate undertaking the TIS is supervised in school by a supporter (sometimes called mentor) who is required to offer weekly meetings and provide a range of supports. A teacher graduate will leave university with a record of achievement, the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) profile which should form the basis of the Individual Professional Development Action Plan (IPDAP), in discussion with the supporter and in line with the school's development plan and targets. These weekly meetings are logged with actions signed off by the supporter measured against the Standards. This electronic log, or profile, becomes an interactive document where evidence is stored towards achieving the SFR. It is here the probationer will routinely log any form of professional learning and, crucially, the impact this learning has had. This document can be accessed by the GTCS, the probation manager, the school senior management and the probationer teacher. The role of supporter is seen as developmental and although it does not require a specific qualification as yet, there are some local initiatives considering this based on a coaching approach.

Assessment is carried out by the school, typically the Head Teacher or a senior staff member. Throughout the year a minimum 9 formal observations take place on a three weekly cycle (feedback from observation, planning the teaching session, observation) with feedback and identified actions logged. Each element of the probationer's assessed activity is measured against the standards. At final assessment, a probationer can be recommended for full registration, offered an extension of up to 12 weeks to meet the standards (of whom 70% do so) or for cancellation. The success rate of the TIS is approximately 98% and the scheme is acknowledged to have raised teaching standards to a significant degree and has been called 'world class' (OECD).

Quality Assurance and consistency is provided by GTCS who manage the TIS on behalf of Scottish Government and who 'sign off' the probationer as ready to move to full registration. Each probationer's portfolio (profile) is scrutinised electronically to ensure it adheres to the rules which regulate the system. In addition, a sample of final portfolios is examined by GTCS as a further layer of quality assurance.

Costs

This gold standard is achieved at a cost. The Scottish Government budget for an annual cohort of between 2,500 and 3,000 graduates entering the scheme is £51 million and there is significant additional resource allocation from GTCS. In 2015, 2795 successfully passed through the TIS and thus achieved full registration, with an approximate 60% primary: 40% secondary split. The

budget finances the 0.2 gap of each probationer's FTE, costs, along with the 0.1 element of their supporter's workload, equivalent to 2+hrs per week. This accounts for approximately £14 million annually. The remainder represents a fixed budget of £37.6 million dedicated to 'additional costs' which include the financial incentives for the preference waiver scheme. Some TIS placements are accommodated by freeing up more senior staff to work in other areas of the school activity or to secondments. In addition some placements are fully funded, particularly in areas where there is less demand from graduates. It is also used to fund certain posts where, for example, the TIS candidate must be paid full time for what the school funds as a part-time vacancy. Employers, once the fees have been allocated, enjoy a measure of autonomy in how the funding is spent and this makes the quality assurance role of GTCS challenging at times.

The most recent school census showed that 86% of the previous year's probationers were employed and there is overall a strong upward trend in employment rates. The shortfall can be accounted for partially by those self-deselecting from the profession, choosing to work abroad or in the independent sector and in <1%, failure to meet the required standard.

Maintaining research mindedness

Probationer teachers, as part of their standards, undertake a Practitioner Enquiry assessment to demonstrate their 'knowledge and understanding of the importance of research and engagement in professional enquiry'. This requires them to demonstrate they know how to access and apply research and how to engage appropriately in the systematic investigation of practice. Some probationers achieve publication while all have access to the Education Hub, hosted on GTCS website, a repository for unpublished research.

Summary

- A recommended, highly structured and quality assured scheme with almost 100% success rate.
- A scheme which makes a significant contribution to workforce demands.
- Funded by Scottish Government but with additional GTCS staff investment.
- Complementary roles for Scottish Government, GTCS and employers.
- In school mentoring and support scaffolded with robust online systems and resources at local and national level.
- Partnerships with HEIs fully established if not yet aligned with TIS requirements.
- Consolidation phase of a career pathway but not award bearing.
- Transformative in terms of raising standards of teaching.

Community learning and development (CLD)

The CLD Standards Council has not yet established a requirement for a probationary period in relation to registration (which is, in any case, voluntary and free). Some employers have their own probationary arrangements and can use the CLD Code of Ethics for Employers to support these. However, an expectation about professional development is part of the registration commitment. While there is a legal responsibility for employers to provide 'adequate CLD' services, there are no protected titles as in social work and there are fewer boundaries within services to distinguish a specific career identity. The service relies on a significant voluntary workforce which dilutes professional identity to some extent.

Part of the Standards Council's role is to encourage and motivate employers to employ registered workers and some employers now make registration a condition of employment. The Council recently successfully challenged one employer where the specific CLD service was about to be diluted. Membership, arguably, affords the registrant a degree of professional identity and inclusion in professional conferences and learning events.

Professional standards are competence based with accompanying guidance on how these might be applied in specific settings, albeit generic in nature. Employers are encouraged to provide supported induction but plans to produce a national Framework for Induction have been shelved as being overly prescriptive. However, The Professional Development Strategy and Action Framework supports practitioners and employers to plan and develop professional learning, including induction.

Professional development is supported by i-develop a portal to support competence-based learning. In terms of induction, some employers use private space on i-develop to support induction and CPD.

Summary

- No formalised Probationary Period and informal regulatory framework
- Limited funding
- A large volunteer workforce
- Supported by robust e-portfolio for self-directed learning and development

Nursing and midwifery

[This section, including citations, is provided by University of Stirling].

Newly Qualified Nurses

Preceptorship Framework and the 'Flying Start' Scheme

The preceptorship programme is intended to provide a structured period of support for newly qualified nurses to assist them in making the transition from student to practitioner (Department of Health 2009). The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (the UK's regulatory body for nurses, midwives and health care visitors) strongly recommends preceptorship for newly qualified nurses. However, the preceptorship scheme is not mandatory, and it was found in 2009 that 'substantial proportions' of newly qualified nurses across the UK did not receive preceptorship (Robinson and Griffiths 2009:4). There has been little research carried out in relation to the preceptorship experiences of Scottish newly qualified nurses, and it is therefore difficult to ascertain the proportion of those who actually take part in a preceptorship programme.

The notion of preceptorship is by no means new or unique to the UK; similar programmes are also in place in the US, Canada and Australia. It is well documented within literature across the world that the transition from student nurse to working practitioner can be a particularly stressful and challenging time (Andrews et al 2005; Ellerton and Gregor 2003; Mooney 2007), necessitating the need for effective support and guidance. Interestingly, the UK preceptorship occurs post-qualification whereas in other countries it tends to occur pre-registration (Currie and Watts 2012).

Preceptorship involves the provision of support and guidance to assist newly qualified nurses to make the transition from student to practitioner. The Department of Health (2010) and the NMC (2006) highlight that the preceptorship should involve the following key elements:

- The newly qualified nurse should have protected 'learning time' in their first year of practice
- The newly qualified nurse should have access to, and regular meetings with a designated preceptor. These meetings should be documented
- The NMC (2006) strongly recommends that the preceptorship should last around 4 months (however they also state that this is likely to vary according to local circumstance and individual needs)
- Preceptors should have at least 12 months experience in the same area as the newly qualified nurse. It is also expected that the preceptor will have attended a relevant and appropriate training programme for the role (NMC 2006)
- The newly qualified nurse has various responsibilities (listed by the Department of Health (2010)). Some key responsibilities include: to

practice in accordance with 'the code' (NMC 2008); identify learning needs and develop an action plan to address these needs, reflect on their practice and experience, seek feedback on their performance from their preceptor and team with whom they work.

Robinson and Griffiths (2009) carried out a scoping review of preceptorship for nurses, involving a thorough systematic review of studies exploring preceptorship in the UK. Positively, they found that nurses wanted preceptorship, and relationships with preceptors were generally viewed positively. Furthermore, many newly qualified nurses reported that assistance was provided to them in relation to helping them ease into their new role and develop their skills. However, Robinson and Griffiths (2009:4) note that 'there was sometimes a discrepancy between being allocated a preceptor and actually receiving preceptorship.' For example in the study carried out by Gerrish (2000), it was found that although newly qualified nurses had been paired with a preceptor, experiences varied considerably. Some participants in the Gerrish (2000) study reported that their preceptors provided little constructive feedback and limited support. Similarly, Bick (2000) also found considerable variation in preceptorship provision with participants views on the programme 'ranging from very effective to little more than a paper exercise' (Robinson and Griffiths (2009:10).

Lack of time was also found to be a key barrier in effectively delivering the preceptorship programme. In all of the studies reviewed, Robinson and Griffiths (2009) found that they all reported 'lack of time' as the main barrier in achieving an effective preceptorship programme. Problems with staff shortages, the demands involved in supervising students, having too many preceptees, and not being allocated to work together were commonly reported issues (e.g. see Hancock 2002 and Bick 2000). Lastly, Robinson and Griffiths (2009) also found that many preceptors had received little preparation for their role. This led the researchers to conclude that an organisational commitment is required so that staff have the time to deliver preceptorship and also receiving robust training prior to taking on the preceptor role.

The 'Flying Start' scheme

The Scottish Executive commissioned NHS Education Scotland to develop a web-based educational resource for all newly qualified nurses to access. Scottish NHS boards were funded to implement 'Flying Start' in 2006 which aimed to create an approach which was consistent across Scotland (Banks et al 2011). Flying Start set out to ease the transition between student and practitioner for nurses, involving online learning, structured study days and mentor support. The programme requires nurses to show evidence of learning in ten different areas to complete their preceptorship. Newly qualified nurses are paired with a mentor and have protected learning time. In order to complete the programme, nurses must demonstrate evidence in their portfolio in relation to ten learning units, showing that they have become capable and confident within these areas. The

portfolio of evidence is a reflective account of the nurses perceptions and experiences. Mentors also contribute towards reports in the portfolio to report on how they think the newly qualified nurse has developed. When the mentor and relevant manager is satisfied that the nurse has successfully met the ten learning units, and at the end of their first year in post, a date is set for a 'knowledge and skills framework' review and completion paperwork for Flying Start is filled out.

Banks et al (2010) carried out an evaluation which explored the impact and effectiveness of flying start in Scotland, to consider how the programme affected newly qualified nurses particularly in terms of their confidence, competence and career progression. The study involved a two year evaluation employing a range of methods and a wide range of participants involved in the scheme across Scotland. Some of the main findings from the Banks et al (2010) evaluation are listed below.

- A majority of newly qualified practitioners who took part in the study reported that Flying Start had been useful in terms of clinical skills development and confidence
- Those who were able to take protected time were more likely to complete the learning units and report that the support they received was good
- Newly qualified nurses shared that they found self-directed study challenging and felt that they required support in terms of time management and completion of the programme
- Evidence showed that flying start was particularly successful if there was an 'ethos of support at all levels of the organisation' (Banks et al 2010:4)
- Newly qualified nurses were often not able to make use of their protected time for various reasons including lack of time due to wards being busy
- A majority of newly qualified nurses indicated that they completed flying start in their own time.

Summary

- The preceptorship scheme is strongly recommended by the Nursing and Midwifery Council, however it is currently not mandatory.
- Preceptorship occurs post-registration in the UK and completion of the programme is not required for registration.
- Preceptorship varies across the country however it is recommended that it takes place over four months, involves protected learning time, and regular meetings with the preceptor should take place.
- The 'Flying Start' Scheme is a web-based resource for newly qualified nurses which links in with preceptorship programmes, which was rolled out in Scotland in 2006. It involves being allocated with a mentor, and completing an evidence portfolio made up of 10 learning units online.

[End of Section provided by University of Stirling]

Costs

No figures were made available in relation to costs of providing preceptorship but approximately 29,000 nursing staff are counted as 'interns', from a total nursing workforce of 59,287 FTE in Scotland (although it is not clear what intern denotes in relation to preceptorship) During 2014/15, just over 3100 students entered training courses. (NES Annual Statistics, ISD).

Revalidation

From April 2016, on a rolling programme, all NMC registrants will be required to demonstrate that they are practising to the Standards of the revised NMC code (March 2015), supporting and demonstrating professional values and meeting a range of elements of the Code. In addition to routine practice they will have to undertake 35 hours CPD, write reflective accounts and gather external feedback on their practice. A programme Board has been established in Scotland to support the implementation of the revalidation process.

Section 3: Consultations

While the scope of this appraisal did not lend itself to substantial consultation, opportunistic meetings (with follow up surveys) were held with the Social Work Academics Group (SWAG) and with statutory employers. Further comments were gathered through a dedicated workshop at the Shaping our Future conference for NQSWs.

The views of statutory employers

Employers, through the CSWO committee of SWS with approximately 28 attendees heard a brief presentation about the probationary year and provided verbal comments. These indicated, with the caveat of limited firm information, a significant majority in favour of a mandatory scheme and, further, some support for as comprehensive a scheme as possible. Strong concerns were expressed about costs in already stretched budgets and limited L and D resources, particularly smaller authorities who may employ fewer NQSW and would find it challenging to meet mandatory conditions.

A follow up survey based on an adapted nominal group technique has yielded, to date, 14 responses from a possible 32, a disappointing but typical response rate for a postal (electronic) survey. Not all submitted questionnaires were complete and 'half' scores were rounded up. Caution must apply to the representative nature of the scores, particularly as those motivated to submit their return may represent those with the strongest views. Respondents 'scored' a series of statements from 1 to 5 on the basis of importance and ease of implementation, with 5 being highly important and easiest to implement. The scores presented below represent an average of the frequencies for each statement.

	Statement	Significance	Implementation
1	A probationary year should be mandatory for all NQSW	4.6	3.6
2	Employing probationer SW should be mandatory for all employers	4.0	2.8
3	The probationary year should be formally assessed	4.6	3.2
4	Assessment of the probationary year should be the sole responsibility of the employer	3.4	2.8
5	The probationary year should be prescribed and follow a broad curriculum linked to new national Standards	3.5	3.2
6	Successful completion of the probationary year should lead to a recognised national Award as part of a career pathway	2.9	2.4
7	Supervision of the probationer should be carried out only by a qualified social worker	4.5	4.1

8	HEIs should have a role in delivering and/or assessment of the probationary year	3.5	2.8
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As would be expected the scores for significance are higher than for implementation - indicating perhaps that aspiration is easier than finding the means to follow through. The principal findings are that there is strong (but by no means comprehensive) support for a mandatory and assessed process, that employers should be expected to participate, with the necessity of a qualified social worker as assessor (an aspiration which is perceived to be achievable). There is more muted support for the probationary year's place in establishing a career pathway, a finding which arguably warrants further exploration. The qualitative comments below (selected for brevity in this context) attached to each statement illuminate the scores.

Statement 1: A probationary year should be mandatory for all NQSW

To ensure the support and development of SWs this would be an effective recommendation.

It would provide consistent support to NQSW to develop confidence and competence in the work setting. There is a big step from a protected practice learning experience to a full member of a team. The challenge would be about the model for assessing. Different objectives eg ability to transition to a practitioner with a full caseload, increased demonstration of skill sets, performance?

Highly committed to this. This will required to be resourced and co-ordinated which has resource/funding implications. We already have an induction programme in Year1 for NQSW and rely heavily on our L and D team to support this. My preference would be for learning to be more integrated across social work but demands on the service means that this is challenging.

This provided employers an opportunity to ensure that a NQSW has the required skills to meet the real time demands of the SW post

Evidence and recent research indicates NQSWs are not being sufficiently supported in the first PQ year. We would fully endorse probationary period as mandatory for all NQSW. It is likely we would offer one year temporary contract with a formal review/performance appraisal at end of probationary period

Statement 2: Employing probationer SW should be mandatory for all employers

It is not possible to identify and distinguish all employers across the social services landscape therefore the ease of implementation would be complex. There are no targets for minimum numbers of SWs in the way that there are for other professionals and therefore there may be different levels of opportunity across organisations.

I would not support this. We regularly recruit NQSWs and also recruit workers with experience to get a balanced team when necessary. It is an employer decision.

Creates challenges in recruitment for rural areas as probationary years are easier to facilitate in urban areas, this may cause a greater difficulty to recruit/retain.

As for third sector employers it may not be feasible for smaller organisation to have this mandate and this needs further consultation.

Smaller organisations may struggle to provide the support required so, whilst it should be mandatory for qualification it shouldn't be mandatory for employers.

Statement 3: The probationary year should be formally assessed

Linked into the practice teachers' identified learning needs.

I believe everyone's practice should be assessed but not sure how formally. Assessment of practice is typically done during regular supervision sessions.

At the end of the probationary period (not necessarily a year) there needs to be a 'formal' review of performance utilising existing HR processes and procedures eg appraisal. This could/should be more rigorous for NQSWs eg 360 degree feedback including from service users and carers; team manager's endorsement (and potentially input from practice educator). This would have resource implications for the employer.

There is a risk of this becoming a third practice learning assessment. As a qualified worker they have already been assessed as meeting the level of competence required to practise. We need clarity about what is being assessed and by whom. Perhaps there is value in working with the continuous learning framework to evidence development.

Statement 4: Assessment of the probationary year should be the sole responsibility of the employer

This raises issues of capacity, currently probationer teachers are assessed by both mentor and line manager, where concerns are raised a central officer would also be involved.

It is not always the case that one agency will have all the necessary info – it depends on where the probationer was sited during the year.

This is more complicated. Should the SSSC be involved? If so, it may be over bureaucratised. However there needs to be some external 3rd party validation. Perhaps the employer could assess and the assessment process be validated by an external body, perhaps the SSSC or the Care Inspectorate.

Statement 5: The probationary year should be prescribed and follow a broad curriculum linked to new national standards

In the workplace there should be a specific curriculum. Social work training is already too broad.

I think this needs careful exploration so it does not become a burdensome award and volume of hours of CPD over and above normal requirements. It would make sense to integrate it with the SSSC PRTL requirements and find ways of ensuring relevant learning and development activity in the first year is counted. Otherwise there is a risk of the NQSW being overwhelmed with meeting evidence and CPD activity for 2 purposes (PRTL and probationary Year).

In principle, the idea of linking NQSWs competences to a set of standards is a helpful one.

A core programme would ensure that the standards are applied, but we need to ensure that the year is not solely focused on knowledge and skills. Self-awareness and self-management is key in practice, so flexibility and bespoke elements are required.

In general there was mixed response from [my] managers. Some thought it provided motivation, recognition and reward to new workers. It encourages a natural progression towards any chosen specialism and strengthens the identity and role of the professional SWs. However, others felt it should be more in line with the probationary period for pharmacy or teaching where it is an expectation rather than an achievement.

Statement 6: Successful completion of the probationary year should lead to a recognised national award as part of a career pathway

I don't think it necessary to have an award for completing a probationary year of work. Successfully completing is a reward within itself, as then we are not considered NQSW (which suggests new to SW/lack of experience) but social workers.

Yes. I am concerned that SW as a profession does not have a pathway which links professional development with practice particularly well. While SWs gain additional qualifications in, for example, mental health or child protection these are not well linked and tend to be considered as stand-alone qualifications. An initial probationary period with professional assessment could be the 1st stage in a professional development path which links a range of future qualifications.

Statement7: Supervision of the probationer should be carried out only by a qualified social worker

Professional supervision should be carried out by a qualified social worker with appropriate training and experience. However, this would not necessarily mean that their day to day line management would require to be by a qualified social worker.

This may be resource intensive however there is an issue of professional credibility if it is not a qualified SW carrying out the assessment.

Supervision needs to be done by a senior practitioner who has the time to mentor probationers properly and who has experience in the field they're in. No need for further certificates or qualifications.

There needs to be a national approach to creating a coherent practice learning framework which all QSW staff are expected to fulfil (subject to satisfactory practice).

Statement 8: HEIs should have a role in delivering and/or assessment of the probationary year

Not sure how this would work, may help to address my concerns about capacity, but there will be implications for the more rural areas.

This should be standard.

There is an increasing gap between what frontline SW services need and the SW curriculum taught in HEIs. [] Employers need to retain main responsibility for the workforce – including probationary SW and making professional judgements about their performance in the workplace [] The probationary period needs to be seen as a supportive, positive, addition for both NQSWs and employers (with additional resources from Scottish Govt?) not an obstacle or resource-intensive 'hurdle' that prevents NQSWs from being employed.

This is an interesting point, in general, no, however an HEI could develop a standard qualification for managers who support probationers.

A role but not necessarily equal responsibility.

No, HEIs should play no part in assessing an employee. As students we are assessed on placement. Successfully completing the course and earning the degree(s)/qualification(s) are enough to assess that we are capable workers.

I would think this would be very helpful in supporting the process.

Agree this is important for continuity.

The views of social work academics

The evidence presented from HEI respondents is of a slightly different nature in that the questions were posed differently. The bulk of the responses come collectively from one University's staff group and additional comments from a few individual academics hence, again, representation is an issue.

Q1: What part, if any, should HEIs play in a probationary year (PY)? (eg delivering an agreed 'curriculum'; partnership arrangements with employers; assessment panels etc?)

It would be a good opportunity to ensure objectivity and make sure the probationary year contained a measure of a learning experience if HEIs were involved in all of what you suggest (besides, it would be exciting to be involved that close to practice). But if HEIs are to be involved there will be a cost. Who pays?

Given the requirements for PRTL in the first year to 18 months begs the question what more is required.

If there is a notion that the PY is some kind of post-qualifying award it could be an opportunity for us in delivering a distance learning type package – maybe 10 -15 study days in the year. Presumably would need a strong practice focus so model such as the MHO course might be the way to go where a practice assessor type person manages the workplace issues – including allocation and supervision of casework and reports back. Not sure what role an assessment panel would have other than a general quality control.

I think HEIs have an important role to play in supporting the improvement of the use of research and evidence in social work practice. There should be academic/research mentors for NQSWs in the probationary year, providing further teaching input on use of research and evidence and advice to individuals/groups of NQSWs.

Q2: As the probationer will be employed (presumably), will the employer necessarily have the lead role in assessing the probationer as 'ready' for full registration?

My first thought is that employers are unlikely to embrace the concept of any type of lead role in a PY.

Again might be a bit like the MHO course whereby practice assessors sign off on the practice element and perhaps we could set one or two reflective tasks related to this work which we could grade. The Northern Ireland model for assessing ASWs gives practice assessors a role in marking

academic work as did the old MHO course here so that might be a possibility.

In one sense, the probationer is an employee and it would seem appropriate for the employer to have the say; as, for example it does when it is an apprentice electrician. On the other hand, passing a probationary year is surely a passage for life and it would seem restrictive to give that say to one single employer, who may have other axes to grind (it may end up being more about how satisfied the employer is that the probationer has met the services needs than the needs of service users, for example). I do not like the concept of a 'lead role'. Better for it to be a partnership decision of internal and external bodies (be they HEIs or who-ever).

While the employer might have a lead role, the HEIs could certainly have a partnership role in terms of use of research and evidence/theory in practice.

Q3: Would you like to see the PY embedded in a new academic and/or professional award?

If there is going to be a form of assessment to ensure that the criteria for the PY are successfully achieved, then it would make sense for a qualification to be attained and I think it would make sense for this to be an academic as well as professional award.

I also feel that any PY needs to be linked to some type of qualification. Social workers have already completed 4 years of training to achieve the BA Hons SW so a further year could be linked to a Masters Qualification. I think this is the model used for the MPharmacy. This would then mean that HEI's would correctly, play a significant role. I assume that if the SSSC want a PY that they are prepared somehow to pay for it. I think SAAS do currently provide 5 years of fees for the MPharmacy.

However this may then mean that the recognised social work qualification becomes a Master in SW with inherent funding and selection issues.

We already have a very good system in place through qualified Practice Teachers and academic staff to assess a further award. Again I feel that it is unlikely that employers will commit to this. Issues of consistency and standards may become an issue if assessors are drawn from the very wide spectrum of practice. Any practice supervisor /assessor of a PY year should be a qualified and experienced social worker.

Would need to consider whether if it is a new award would it be level 10 or 11 – not sure how this works in terms of university regulations as it is essentially post-qualifying.

Some questions then arise: does someone need to do this immediately on finishing the social work course, would someone achieving the award via a post graduate route still have to do it, would this only be a requirement for someone working in local authority? If there is a delay between completing the BA and employment how long is acceptable? How would this be funded and if HEIs involved who pays the fees?

I think that over-complicates it. Better to see the passing of a probationary year as a registration gateway, mainly based upon integrating learning with practice, but with a bias to the practice elements.

Q4: Within the employing agency, who would be the best supervisor/supporter -eg a mentor? a line manager? an existing practice teacher? - or do you envisage a new type of role is required?

I think the role would need to be carried out by someone who worked in the same area (client group and setting) as the newly qualified worker. Not necessarily a practice teacher but probably need to train and support people in this role.

I think that a dual role would make sense (in [my HEI] a probationary academic has a teaching adviser and a research mentor and these are separate). Similarly there could be a research mentor and a practice supervisor. It would be important that the research mentor is an active researcher.

Line manager is too close and has too much interest in the employer's agenda. A PT might be a good person to be involved. So too might an HEI tutor. But you need to think about resourcing this and how it would work in the more sparsely populated parts of the land (Argyle and Bute and Wick, for example).

Q5: Irrespective of role, should this supervisor/supporter be a qualified social worker, as is the case in N Ireland?

Absolutely!

Almost certainly though a very experienced nurse or OT employed by social work who has been working in a care management role may be able to do this (some practice teachers are nurse qualified)

A split role could mean that the practice supervisor could be a qualified SW but this would not be necessary for the research mentor.

Additional comments

Arguably most of the problem here arises because local authority employers tend to place newly qualified workers in complex roles very quickly. Perhaps this PY should be a rotational arrangement whereby newly qualified workers are placed in different areas of social work – a bit like medical trainees – indeed arguably with this approach perhaps a two year period of rotation to give workers a rounded experience of several areas of local authority social work – perhaps linked to some reflective assignments and assessment as described above and linked to pay increases as an incentive.

However this does not deal with the issue for workers in the voluntary and even private sector.

Post qualifying CDP includes within the 1st 2 years mentor training that is also linked to being a link worker for SWITs. On attaining this you get an additional increment/protected study time/extra leave entitlement. Within 5 years you have the option to develop this into a PT award with again additional recognition in terms of pay/study leave etc

Teams that fulfil these objectives receive a learning culture award and protected team development time/money for resources/money for a lunch. Agencies/Departments that develop the learning culture throughout will mentor each other in creating the culture and there could be national recognition of excellence in this area.

The link worker will be able to be mentors as will PT's. They will all be qualified SWs. Mentoring of probationary years will not be open to anyone else.

The HEIs will offer the CDP courses that will focus on relational and strengths base practice and developing learning cultures and could offer a more overt role in supporting all practitioners they have contact with. The learning culture embraces former students, link/mentors, PT's and those going on to study Masters and hopefully PhDs.

While the comments above have been, to some extent, 'cherry picked' to provide a balanced representation of the range of views, the analysis warrants further attention and a thematic analysis due to the richness of the data provided. Private, voluntary and independent employers have not been included

and any further consultation requires time and resources to fully garner the views of key stakeholders across Scotland. These findings are supplementary to an earlier consultation on the wider aspects of PQSW activity in Scotland (Gillies 2015a).

The views of NQSW and final year SW students

Views were gathered from a dedicated workshop at the NQSW Shaping our Future conference on 26 February where the majority of those attending supported a mandatory probationary year. Some concern was expressed about duplication of the final year of the SW degree but this seemed to relate to one particular programme.

There was discussion around the extent to which the probationary year could compensate for gaps in practice learning experience, (for example, the erroneous belief that meeting the Key Capabilities might be carried over) during the qualifying programme and some support for a rotational model during a probationary year with exposure to a number of specialties.

One employer representative admitted that their employment criteria will exclude a graduate without child care practice experience. Some final year students attending expressed concern at their lack of knowledge about their PRTL requirements. NQSWs attending a workshop dedicated to explaining PRTL, expressed anxiety about the process, what was required, what counts as evidence etc.

Brief summary of evidence

The other UK countries have established formalised systems to support their NQSW - England (ASYE); Wales (Consolidation Award); Northern Ireland (AYE).

Where not yet mandatory (as in England) they are considered 'expected'.

These schemes are based on various expressions of national standards.

In Wales and Northern Ireland, these form the foundation for a career pathway.

England's ASYE has two funding sources with different priorities.

In Northern Ireland, although mandatory, employers absorb the costs of their AYE.

NQSW in Scotland experience wide variations in levels of support, quality of induction and protection of caseloads which impact on their ability to address PRTL requirements.

PRTL requirements and how to meet them remain a source of concern for NQSW and SW students

In teaching the TIS is not mandatory but is 'encouraged' and is the means of obtaining guaranteed employment for a year. As such it attracts the vast majority of graduates.

Entry level salary for TIS is reduced, as it is for the AYE in N Ireland.

CLD graduates experience an informal induction and probationary period but with the expectation of maintaining their CPD.

Newly registered nurses are encouraged to seek preceptorship but their registration does not depend on this.

There is employer support for the idea of a mandatory probationary year for NQSW, supervised by a qualified social worker. There are concerns about funding in times of stretched resources. There is more ambivalence around the inclusion of HEIs in delivering this and about establishing a career pathway.

SW academics see a role for HEIs in a probationary year and the potential for a joint practice/academic pathway.

Section 4: Options

The evidence drawn from other models in SW within the UK and from other professions, examined alongside what is known about the current experience of NQSW in Scotland, provides a range of options for improving the status quo. The costs for the various schemes considered earlier in this report, where decipherable, vary widely as do the funding models. In the best resourced profession, teaching, the TIS incurs very large costs as a consequence of **guaranteeing** their 3000 annual graduates a year's employment requiring the funding of the preference waiver scheme. There is no equivalent in social work. Taking these factors into account it is possible to begin to see how a robust, structured and supported probationary year for SW could be provided but at significantly less than the annual £51m dedicated to the teaching profession.

The table below uses the most recent figures (2014/15) available. It sets out comparable costs where these are broadly appropriate.

Scheme	Numbers	Total cost	Per capita cost
England ASYE (CandF)	2774	£5.5m	£2000.00
England AYE (Adult)	1365	£1.6m	£1100.00*
Wales (Consolidation)	250 approx	£8m**	Not costed
NI (AYE)	350	Not costed	Not costed
Scotland (NQSW)	529	Not costed	Not costed
Teaching TIS	3000 aver.	£14m (of £51m)^	£4666.00
CLD	150	Not costed	Not costed
Nursing	3185^^	Not costed	Not costed

*Some cross subsidy from CandF grants where employers appoint both

** This figure covers 70% grant towards all the learning and development employer contribution, of which Consolidation is one of four elements.

^£51m is total cost of TIS including the £37m dedicated largely to the preference waiver scheme

^^ Figure represents entry to qualifying courses, not workforce.

Option 1: Strengthening the existing PRTL process

The least intrusive and expensive change is to improve the current PRTL processes whereby employers are encouraged, (if not compelled through annual inspection, for example) to take greater ownership of the process by providing a standardised induction and a minimum level of regular supervision and support in order to help the NQSW meet the requirement of what will be the new standard for NQSW. Employers will incur greater costs and the existing duplication of in-house provision and lack of transferability may not be addressed until the induction and supervisory requirements become standardised and economies of scale, possibly through locality networks, can be embedded.

Option 2: Introduction of a voluntary probationary year

Implementing a probationary year for social workers in Scotland

This option would require the conditions and systems to be in place to support a probationer through a structured year but would not be immediately mandatory as a requirement for registration or a wholesale replacement for PRTL. As in England, it would allow time for an evaluation and a gradual embracing of the scheme as the benefits become more obvious. Start-up costs would be considerable and, as England has now moved (in all but word) to a mandatory scheme, there is perhaps a strong indication that a phased introduction is not necessary. The message of a 'voluntary' scheme is also confusing and it would produce a two-tier level of NQSW.

Option 3: Introduction of a mandatory probationary year (Model A)

This option would standardise the probationer experience across Scotland, with mandatory conditions for both NQSW and employers (induction, supervision) linked to registration. This would contribute to a general rise in standards across the NQSW workforce. However, it could remain learner-driven as the NQSW demonstrates how they have met the new standard for NQSW through a self-reporting system similar to PRTL. As in the N Ireland AYE, employer-led 'assessment' would be practice based and light-touch with external quality assurance provided by, for example SSSC.

Option 4: Introduction of probationary year (Model B)

This would be a more robust version than Model A in that it would impose an assessment framework linked to the new standard for NQSW. It would remain employer-led with assessment, practice-based. Completion would lead to a professional award as the foundation stage of a new career development pathway.

Option 5: Introduction of probationary year (Model C)

A progression from Model B in that it provides parallel professional and academic credits with employer and HEI partnership arrangement. An approved curriculum and assessment framework linked to the new standards for NQSW consolidating research mindedness and evidence-informed practice. Awards in line with established career progression pathways.

This would represent the 'gold standard' and preferred option in that it signals a significant and transparent commitment to those entering the profession, predicated on effective partnership arrangements, a clear career pathway and the resulting raising of standards across the workforce.

The table below sets out the benefits accrued by incremental changes to the status quo.

Non-cost benefit analysis

Option	Enhancement	Descriptor	Characteristic	Outcome
1	Minimum	Amendments to current PRTL requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory • Non-assessed • Introduction of employer induction standard and supervisory requirement • Linked to registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parity of experience • Standardisation of support for NQSW • Greater employer involvement and ownership • Entry to SW Register on completion
2	Modest	Phased introduction of probationary year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary for NQSW • Optional for employers • Not a condition of registration • Learner - produced evidence against new NQSW standard (as in current PRTL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradual buy-in • Incremental confidence in the benefits of involvement • Mixed message re value of scheme • Two tier level of graduate
3	Moderate	National introduction of probationary year (Model A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory for NQSW and employers • Learner - produced evidence against new NQSW standard (as in current PRTL) • Non-assessed • Linked to registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured adherence to new standard for NQSW • Growing clarity around expectations for NQSW • Greater employer buy-in and ownership
4	Considerable	National introduction of probationary year (Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory for NQSW and Employers • Employer-led • Assessed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation stage for career progression pathway

		B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award bearing • Linked to registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit accumulation towards Professional awards
5	Comprehensive	National introduction of probationary year (Model C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory for NQSW and Employers • Professional and Academic progression • Flexible routes • Assessed • Credit and award bearing • Employer and HEI partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation stage for career pathway • Credit accumulation towards Professional awards • Credit accumulation towards academic awards at Masters and Doctoral levels

Consideration of a probationary year provides the opportunity to incorporate many of the features of work-based and flexible learning now considered necessary for hard-pressed professionals. The process of establishing a probationary year also provides the opportunity for considering many possibilities including the following.

For employers, HEIs and SSSC to recalibrate their roles and relationships around the clarity of a shared vision for the probationary year – what do we agree it needs to achieve?

To consider economies of scale through locality arrangements.

To establish a robust foundation to a national career pathway in line with current professional update activities.

To augment gaps in the NQSW practice experience, particularly if a rotating specialty model was made possible.

To incorporate routine, formalised and secure use of social media for learner-driven updating and to consider how this can be linked to the new NQSW standards.

To consider introducing an apprenticeship model where employment provides the greater learning augmented by HEIs through new approaches to integrated

learning.

To consider leadership potential at probationer level (not least in research) and how this can be linked to the new NQSW standards.

To consider strategies and skills for strengthening emotional resilience and how these can be linked to the new NQSW standards. Many feel supervision discusses case specifics but fails to take account of workers own emotional health [extract from 'What Matters to us' – email correspondence from Rebecca Laing NQSW].

To consider formalised joint training during the parallel probationary arrangements for aligned and integrated professionals.

To encourage creative and positive risk taking within the safe environment of a protected 'probationer' status.

To clarify the legal status of the SW graduate as 'qualified social worker' in relation to 'probationer social worker' in order to avoid disadvantage and employment discrimination.

To evaluate the impact on the wider workforce of the probationary year in driving up standards, creating a learning environment and in reinvigorating an appetite for continuous professional development.

To consider how the public face of social work can be enhanced through the development of a confident professional voice throughout the probationary year and beyond.

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