EVALUATION OF THE POST REGISTRATION TRAINING AND LEARNING OF NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS

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1: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our thanks to the many people who helped us to collect the information for this study. First and foremost our thanks go to the newly-qualified social workers and managers with whom we piloted our survey tools and to all of those whom we interviewed. We were also greatly helped by the contributions of service users and carers who met with us to help us shape our thoughts on our emerging findings. Thank you also to Vikki McLeish who helped to smooth our way while we worked at Compass House and to Bryan Healy who managed the Project on behalf of the SSSC.

2: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This aim of this study, commissioned by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), was to:

> *examine whether and in what way newly-qualified social workers are evidencing the impact their Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) has on their practice.*

In addition the researchers were asked to look at personalisation, reflection and research-based evidence in practice.

We scrutinised the Records of Achievement[1] submitted by newly-qualified social workers and interviewed newly-qualified social workers, managers, service users and carers. We also examined guidance documents and materials used by the SSSC in presentations to social services organisations.

The findings showed that about half of newly-qualified social workers, in their first job after qualifying, were offered induction and support in meeting their PRTL requirements by their employers. Newly-qualified social workers were appreciative of the wide range of training opportunities available to them, as they were of group meetings for newly-qualified social workers where these were arranged. The involvement of learning and development staff in the arrangements for both induction and PRTL was welcomed and valued. It was notable that most social workers selected their learning activity independently of their managers.

Examination of the Records of Achievement (RoAs) showed a mixture of approaches to their completion by newly-qualified social workers, but often the record comprised a description of learning activity with little in the way of reflection on learning or evidence of the application of learning to practice.

Both social workers and managers aspired to reflection in the workplace but this was often not achieved through supervision. When discussing personalisation, newly-qualified social workers and managers emphasised the person-centred approach of individual social workers. Service users and carers, on the other hand, held to a more systemic understanding of personalisation closer to that envisaged in Changing Lives (Scottish Government, 2007). Service users and carers also strongly endorsed the positive difference that individual social workers could make to the service received. Use of research-based evidence in the workplace was found to be very weak both in scrutiny of the RoAs and interviews with social workers and managers.

The purpose of PRTL is to ensure that all newly-qualified social workers undertake training and learning to assist them to consolidate their social work skills, knowledge and values at the start of their career as registered social workers and help them contribute to the protection of children and adults. The study showed that the introduction of PRTL has, in large part, had a positive influence on how individuals and organisations view the continuation of learning beyond professional training.

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[1] The Record of Achievement is the document completed by newly-qualified social workers when they report training and learning activity undertaken in their workplace within the first year after qualifying as social workers.

3: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

A review of the Post-qualifying Framework in Scotland led the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to develop a wider continuing professional development (CPD) strategy for the whole social services workforce (SSSC, 2004). CPD is viewed here as on-going learning and development to improve and extend professional practice throughout an individual's career. It is aligned to the vision for Scotland's social services of developing and sustaining a competent and confident workforce capable of delivering services in a changing environment and committed to developing a culture of learning (SSSC, 2004). The SSSC aims to embed CPD through Post-Registration Training & Learning (PRTL). The Code of Practice for Social Service Workers and their Employers (SSSC, 2002) lays down requirements for individuals within the qualifications-based regulatory framework for the social services workforce in Scotland. These concepts are also linked to Scottish Government's policy developments in relation to changes in the statutory framework and Changing Lives (Scottish Executive, 2006).

The broader context for CPD for the social services workforce is that of a new minimum level of qualification for social workers at honours degree level (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, level 10), registration of social services staff and post- and re-registration requirements, the ending of the Post-Qualifying Framework originally developed by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW, 1990) and the development and publication of a Continuous Learning Framework (CLF) (SSSC, 2008). These developments have made a considerable impact on workplace learning, not least for newly-qualified social workers. The four countries in the UK have different systems for recognition of CPD for social services staff.

It has been argued that CPD should be the joint responsibility of employers, practitioners and educational providers – the 'CPD tension' model (Brown, Keen and Rutter, 2006). Cooper and Rixon (2001) found that supporting and sustaining a positive workplace learning environment requires the active involvement of colleagues, managers and supervisors. Importantly, there is a need for underpinning practical arrangements that enable workplace study, learning and reflection. These studies have informed the work taken forward by the SSSC. Promoting Workplace Learning (Menmuir & Thomson, 2006) calls on evidence from case studies and points up the gains from workplace learning for employers, staff and service users. It also highlights the difficulties associated with workplace learning (time away from the work etc) for organisations, staff, and for people who use services.

In CPD transfer of learning could be said to occur when a social services worker applies learning from experience in earlier practice situations to a new one, or when new learning from a programme of study, a newly-discovered theoretical approach or findings from a relevant research study are tested out or applied to a current practice problem or to working practices in the learner's working environment. This focus on transfer of learning, its theoretical basis and the potential for its evaluation leads to a more detailed consideration of key processes necessary for 'deep' learning and its transfer within the practice environment. These include: 'reflection', 'reflective practice', 'critical reflection', 'reflexivity' and 'writing reflexively'.

Reflection may be defined as self-observing and reporting actions to raise awareness of underlying assumptions, reasons and feelings (Gould and Taylor, 1996). Reflective practice in the context of professional learning and development becomes a process whereby a supervisor or tutor coaches students or staff members to consider their practice, examine their findings in the light of their stored repertoire of knowledge and experience and then test this extended understanding in practice. All of these processes and activities are of importance to newly-qualified social workers.

3.1: Overall Aims

The purpose of this research is to provide an evidence base for the SSSC to understand the current situation in relation to post-registration training and learning of newly-qualified social workers. In practical terms the work of the project team was:

> *To examine whether and in what way newly-qualified social workers are evidencing the impact their Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) has on their practice.*

The specific aims were to:

1: Evaluate the PRTL Record of Achievement submissions of newly-qualified social workers (over the period April – November 2009) to identify whether submissions show evidence of reflection on practice.

2: Analyse the types of learning utilised in submissions of PRTL from newly-qualified social workers (e.g. study, training courses, seminars, reading, teaching or other activities).

3: Identify the use of research-based evidence informing newly-qualified social workers' practice.

4: Interview a sample of newly-qualified social workers and managers of newly-qualified social workers to ascertain levels of support offered, tools and resources utilised and unmet support needs.

5. Interview a sample of users of services and their carers to begin seeking evidence on the extent to which the user and carer experience influences practice.

The SSSC wanted the study to enable it to:

- Consider and act to improve the evidence for reflection on practice in the PRTL submissions of newly-qualified social workers.

- Understand the range of learning situations and resources being utilised for PRTL purposes.

- Consider the guidance required by newly-qualified social workers and their managers to promote best practice in supporting newly-qualified social workers.

- Begin to build an evidence base on the understanding of and commitment to the personalisation of services in the practice of newly-qualified social workers.

- Show the place of research-based evidence in the practice of newly-qualified social workers.

3.2: Methodology and methods

Evaluating training and learning presents a number of challenges. It is relatively simple to capture response to learning events and to assess knowledge gain, but exploring further and deeper requires collecting information about a range of changes beyond these. It is essential to determine behaviour change and outcomes. A deeper evaluation requires a variety of methods to collect the necessary evidence and highlights the importance of interviewing and triangulating the data gathered from newly-qualified social workers, their managers and, wherever possible, service users and carers. The Kirkpatrick model of evaluating the impact of training was used as the methodological scaffold to achieve this (1994). Level 1 examines reaction to the learning event, Level 2 identifies participants' learning, Level 3 looks at changes in behaviour resulting from the learning and Level 4 examines results in the workplace. These levels informed the design of the tools used to gather data for the study.

The staged approach the SSSC wished the researchers to use was:

Stage 1: reading and analysing RoAs submitted by newly-qualified social workers between April and November 2009.

Stage 2: interviews with newly-qualified social workers and their managers.

Stage 3: interviews with users of services and their carers.

Stage 4: presentation of a final report detailing the findings in each area.

3.2.1: Desk-based research

A sample of about one third of RoAs submitted between April – November 2009 from across Scotland (approximately n=152) was made available in order to analyse the types of training and learning activity used in PRTL submissions.

The desk-based research was intended to meet the aims of the project through:

- Examining the types of learning cited in the RoAs to include: attending or delivering training and education activities, reading research literature and theories, reflecting on practice in particular the role of values and ethics in the context of the SSSC Code of Practice for social workers.
- Examining whether newly-qualified social workers have shown how five out of the 24 PRTL days have contributed to their understanding of how to work effectively with colleagues and other professional to identify, assess and manage risk.
- Assessing the type and extent of learning resources newly-qualified social workers have used to support their PRTL such as the Continuous Learning Framework, the Learning Exchange, the community workspace or the Child Protection webspace.

3.2.2: Semi-structured telephone interviews

It was planned to select a sample of approximately a quarter of the newly-qualified social workers from the desk-based research sample (n= 40) to interview in order to assess barriers and facilitators to completing their PRTL Record of Achievement. A sample size of around 30 would achieve saturation – that is, gather enough interview data to show clear and recurring themes. Increasing the sample to 40 would have assured sufficient data collection.

However, there were practical difficulties in obtaining a sample as contact details given to us did not reveal where newly-qualified social workers worked, which led to extremely time-consuming activity in tracing them and arranging to interview them. The timescale for the project precluded interviewing more than 30 newly-qualified social workers and it was agreed with the SSSC that this would be sufficient. All participants were given information about the purpose of the research and the nature of their participation. If they chose to participate, their informed consent was sought. An illustrative example of a letter describing the study and the process of gaining consent is in *Appendix 4: Example of letter sent to Newly-Qualified Social Workers.* The interview schedule was piloted to ensure its fitness for purpose. The interview schedule for social workers is in *Appendix 1: Interview Schedule used with Newly-Qualified Social Workers.* The interview schedule for managers is in *Appendix 2: Interview Schedule used with Managers.*

It was planned to select a sample of approximately n=40 managers of newly-qualified social workers. The research team endeavoured to sample the managers of the newly-qualified social workers selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. It was originally hoped to match newly-qualified social workers with managers to compare and contrast the data collected. In the event, due to the difficulties in tracing social workers and their managers, it proved not to be possible to match respondents in this way, so a separate sample of managers was identified and contacted.

The interviews with newly-qualified social workers and managers were planned to meet the aims of the project through:

- Exploring the levels and types of support given to newly-qualified social workers by employers and learning providers, including the practical resources and opportunities made available to them to enable workplace study.
- Charting the tools and resources used such as the CLF, the Learning Exchange, 'in-house' resources, various workspaces and webspaces.
- Exploring whether explicit links were made between individual learning needs, the PRTL requirements, the objectives of their roles with their employing organisations and whether organisations have a strategy for PRTL of newly-qualified social workers.
- Charting what mechanisms and processes they used to support reflection on practice, the opportunities made available to test these new understandings in practice and whether any of these demonstrate personalisation in services.
- Exploring whether there were any unmet support needs.

The research team anticipated asking the managers to identify a sample (approximately n=20) of service users and carers who had experience of newly-qualified social workers from their knowledge and their agency records. Because of the movement of managers and their staff it proved not to be possible to use this method to obtain a sample. Our research strategy therefore had to change. We approached a number of groups representing carers and users and succeeded in recruiting both users and carers for the study. They participated in the research with reference to their own experiences as service users and carers and by examining and commenting on our emerging findings in relation to personalisation of services. We held a focus group with carers, two individual interviews with service users and an interview with the Facilitator of the Tayside Carers Support Group. The aim of these interviews was to gain views on the following questions:

- To what extent do service users and carers select and shape the services they receive?

- What difference does the individual social worker make to the services received?

- What could social services managers do to help service users and carers select and shape the services they receive?

The researchers used the SSSC PRTL guidance document to inform the precise analytic categories to capture the various types of learning, examples of evidence that demonstrates reflection on practice and the use of research-based evidence that newly-qualified social workers have used to inform their practice. We also drew on an understanding of the personal and organisational capabilities embedded in the Continuous Learning Framework (SSSC, 2008) in relation to the supports and barriers that may exist in relation to developing the capabilities of newly-qualified social workers. The evidence indicators for learning organisations developed by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (2004) were used to elicit and analyse day to day specifics of learning in practice and their contribution to an organisational learning culture.

All data from the interviews and desk research were systematically analysed to draw out key themes. This involved a simple quantitative analysis of types of learning cited. However most of the analysis was qualitative involving the thematic coding of data. The aim of this process was to illuminate the similarities and differences within and between data collected from newly-qualified social workers and their managers as well as gain insights into the different organisational contexts that maximise learning and recording of achievements.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1   Analysis of Records of Achievement

The purpose of PRTL requirements for newly-qualified social workers is to ensure that all newly-qualified social workers undertake training and learning to assist them to consolidate their social work skills, knowledge and values at the start of their career as registered social workers and to assist them to contribute to the protection of children and adults from harm. The SSSC's registration rules require that all newly-registered newly-qualified social workers must complete 24 days (144 hours) of study, training courses, seminars, reading, teaching and other activities which could reasonably be expected to advance the newly-qualified social workers' professional development or contribute to the development of the profession as a whole. At least five days (30 hours) of these shall focus on working effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk to vulnerable groups in order that all social workers are assisted to meet their primary responsibility of protecting children and adults from harm. The Records of Achievement (RoAs) are the documents that newly-qualified social workers complete to evidence that the training and learning they have undertaken meets the PRTL requirements.

4.2   Types of Learning Cited in the Records of Achievement

The team had aimed to examine 30% of the RoAs submitted during the period April to November 2009. However, due to practical constraints the team analysed 23% of the submissions received by the SSSC during that period. This meant a sample of 106 RoAs were analysed for types of learning activity associated with consolidating social work knowledge, skills and values and the types of learning associated with contributing to the protection of both children and adults from harm.

In order to record and categorise the types of learning the team designed a pro forma that was informed by the guidance given to newly-qualified social workers on the types of learning activities that the SSSC considered appropriate and relevant training and learning activities.

The types of learning were recorded in the following way:

- Use of induction materials, attending induction events or programmes that included information about roles and responsibilities of posts, governance and accountability arrangements, relevant legislation, organisational policies and learning about the various information technology (IT) and record-keeping systems of the employing organisation.

- Visiting local relevant organisations services to learn about services and meet personnel.

- Attending accredited or non-accredited training courses, seminars and workshops that consolidated core social work skills such as interviewing and assessment skills, policies and

procedures, case recording and IT skills and systems. We also included events and opportunities provided in the workplace where practice and learning experiences were discussed and reflected on, for example a newly-qualified social workers' forum.

- Shadowing the work of colleagues.

- Reading across a range of areas such as policies, practice texts, reports from regulatory bodies and other self-directed learning such as independent study, research, supervision and development time that demonstrated a reflective approach to learning.

4.2.1 Types of learning associated with consolidating social work knowledge, skills and values.

Perhaps not surprisingly, training, seminars and workshops accounted for most of the PRTL activity for the majority of newly-qualified social workers, with 104 out of the 106 of the RoA (98%) attributing some of their PRTL activity to this type of learning. The hours ascribed to this type of learning varied from three to 150, with the average being 76 hours.

Reading, self-directed study and supervision were cited in 72 out of the 106 records (68%). Twelve of these had undertaken a systematic review of literature in order to inform a particular practice issue. The hours given to this type of learning varied from one to 84 hours with the average being 18 hours.

In relation to visiting local services 62 out of the 106 (58%) specifically mentioned this as a PRTL activity. The time ascribed to visiting local services varied from one to 41 hours.

Fifty two out of the 106 (49%) RoAs specifically mentioned induction and the time spent on induction ranged from 1 to 120 hours, although activities that might have derived from induction may not always have been cited as such. Some described a corporate programme (i.e. across a number of departments) as induction whereas others included a range of activities specific to social services such as visits to local services, shadowing and reading policies and procedures. This may in part reflect the variety of induction events, programmes and packages provided by employers. Some employers provided lengthy and varied programmes of induction, most often over a week, and a handful of employers provided a programme of induction activities over 3-4 weeks.

Forty four out of 106 (42%) specifically mentioned shadowing as a PRTL activity, with the time for this varying from one to 60 hours. There may have been more shadowing and visits undertaken as these activities were often included as part and parcel of induction programmes lasting a week or more.

4.2.2 Types of learning that contributed to the protection of children and adults from harm

Again training, seminars and workshops accounted for most of the learning activity in relation to child and adult protection: this was described in 96 out of the 106 records (90%). The time given to this type of learning varied from six to 85 hours with 35 hours being the average.

Self-directed learning was described in 40 out of the 106 records (38%), with the time given to this type of learning varying from one to 30 hours, and the average being seven hours. Fifteen out of the 106 (14%) records specifically mentioned shadowing as learning that would contribute to the protection of children and adults from harm. Nine out of the 106 records (8%) specifically mentioned visiting local services as learning that would contribute to the protection of children and adults from harm. The time ascribed to this type of learning varied from one to 120 hours, with the average being 21 hours. None of the learning that contributed to the protection of children and adults was described as induction.

4.2.3 Other learning

It became clear from the records that many newly-qualified social workers were citing experiential learning as PRTL activity. Out of the 61 out of the 106 (58%), newly-qualified social workers who cited experiential learning, 11 allocated over half their PRTL hours (over 72 hours) to this type of learning. Experiential learning was most often associated with new experiences, such as working with clients for the first time, preparing reports for the first time or participating in process and procedures for the first time. Many of the accounts describing experiential learning were included because they consolidated knowledge, values or skills, demonstrated links between the learning and professional development in relation to current role, previous learning, professional standards and the way they informed current practice. Some of these accounts clearly demonstrated a reflective approach. For example the quote below is typical of those that were able to illustrate reflection and the way in which a learning experience had facilitated re-evaluation of their beliefs, ideas, knowledge or assumptions.

> *'I was able to observe 3 different cases all with different outcomes, it allowed me to know what to expect ... it was interesting to witness the kind of questions they ask and how they challenge the social worker if they are unclear about areas of the care plan…... I learned that every aspect of the care plan I write must be justified and evidenced based.'*

That said, many of accounts appeared to be simply describing activities rather than recounting learning experiences that demonstrated a reflective approach to learning or learning and consolidation of their knowledge, values or skills. A typical example of this is illustrated by the quote below

> *'Eight days phone duty managing a variety of situations and making assessments on risk. Gathering information and accurately being able to relay that to the appropriate people.'*

In other words there were many descriptions that did not identify specific examples of practice that had enhanced their knowledge, skills or values.

Supervision was another activity that was often just described rather than being recorded and analysed so as to demonstrate the way in which it facilitated reflection, advanced professional

development or consolidated knowledge, skills and values. The quote below is typical of an activity that contains simple description:

> *'Discussion of workload and case based supervision'* (cited four times)

The quote below, however, illustrates how the newly qualified social worker used the medium of supervision to reflect on how training and self-directed study informed their understanding and how they will translate that into their practice.

> *'I carried out further reading (three books) looking at the evidence-base surrounding the AIM2 training. This furthered my understanding and made me consider the future care plan of the young person's future placement and education provisions … I was able to apply it to my practice in relation to re-considering risk assessments regarding other young people I work with, through discussing this in supervision and through discussions I had with other work colleagues.'*

We also found descriptions of activities that did not appear to fall into the categories of appropriate training and learning activities listed in the PRTL guidance. For example one RoA ascribed 154 hours of personal life experience as PRTL. Another wrote:

> *' Sixty hours of core group meetings attended, observed then taken over organizing and chairing meetings related to casework, supported by senior social worker as observed pieces of practice'*

The last newly qualified social worker had not demonstrated what learning has occurred, how this learning was put in practice or how it contributed to their professional development. Accounts such as these make it difficult to ascertain how the recorded training and learning has consolidated social work knowledge, skills and values or how it has contributed to the protection of children and adults from harm.

4.2.4 Impact of learning

The guidance for newly-qualified social workers makes it clear that more than a simple description of learning is required, and a demonstration of a reflective approach to learning is expected. The guidance makes clear that newly-qualified social workers are expected to identify specific examples of where their knowledge, skills or values have been enhanced through the various appropriate and relevant training and learning activities. We found that 37 % of ROAs (39 out of 106) contained a number of examples of what could be defined as 'a simple description of the learning experience' with no record of how this learning experience consolidated their knowledge, values or skills, enhanced their professional development or had facilitated reflection on their personal beliefs, assumptions and ideas in light of this learning experience. Although a small minority relied heavily on simple descriptions, all RoAs also contained descriptions of learning experiences that did illustrate how some of their learning experiences had consolidated their knowledge, values or skills, enhanced their professional development or had facilitated reflection on personal beliefs, assumptions and ideas. Below are typical examples of how some newly-

qualified social workers articulated in their RoA the impact their learning and training experiences had on their practice:

'Knowledge: developed my understanding of how crisis intervention benefits young people in order to reduce risk and enable them to understand their situation in order to improve it. Skills: enabled me to improve my negotiation, interpersonal and communication skills both with staff and young people. Values: enabled me to recognise that each young person is individual and therefore care plans must be tailored to meet their needs.'

'I also learned more about the value and use of supervision to reflect on power imbalances and my thoughts and feelings about care versus control and the principles of client self determination versus the safety of others.'

'This experience showed me that we should make our own assessment of situations rather than simply follow those of other workers. It also reinforced my values in relation to empowering and supporting clients and respecting their right to make choices.'

'I find it perplexing that 16 and 17 year olds are tried in adult courts. As such I offered to write a literature review ... to further my own learning. My learning was a far deeper understanding of the difficulties that young people face in being tried in adult settings. This learning strengthened my conviction that all but the most serious 16 and 17 year old offenders should be dealt with in the children's hearings system ... I am in a position to argue for this in court reports and advice hearings.'

4.2.5 Meeting the required hours

The SSSC guidance states that newly-qualified social workers need to complete 144 hours or 24 days of PRTL, including 30 hours or five days specifically related to both protection of children and adults. The training and learning in relation to the protection of vulnerable groups needs to focus on working effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk.

In the sample of RoAs we examined 73 out of 106 (69%) had completed 144 hours or more in total. We do not know how many of these had been assessed by a SSSC Education and Workforce Development Advisor to have met the PRTL requirements.

Of the 33 who had not completed 144 hours, we found the lowest number of hours to be completed was 30 and the highest to be 142 with an average of 117 hours completed in total. We also found that some newly-qualified social workers had completed 144 hours or more overall although they had not completed 30 hours of training and learning in relation to the protection of vulnerable groups. This leads us on to the findings relating to the second aim of examining the RoAs which was to examine whether they show how five PRTL days contribute to newly-qualified

social workers' understanding of how to work effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk.

4.3: Working Effectively with Colleagues and Other Professionals to Identify, Assess and Manage Risk

4.3.1 Learning Activity and Focus

The SSSC guidance documentation consistently states that there is an expectation that all newly-qualified social workers need to record how they have undertaken five days or 30 hours training and learning which focuses on working effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk to vulnerable groups. This requirement applies to **both** children and adults irrespective of their current work context. It is acknowledged that this training and learning may focus more on children or adults depending on the specific responsibilities of the current job role but that the evidence in the RoA should cover both groups.

The RoA document requests newly-qualified social workers to detail learning and training in relation to the protection of vulnerable groups separately. However, we understand that the Education and Workforce Development Advisors take into account the entire RoA when evaluating the type and sufficiency of protection-orientated entries, rather than just that recorded in the specific section of the RoA. This is prudent, as we frequently found entries that detailed learning and training in relation to this requirement in the incorrect section - the section that asked for an account of how their learning and training had consolidated their knowledge, skills and values. Where it was obvious that the training and or learning described met this requirement the researchers counted it as such. An example of this would have been training that explicitly focussed on the protection of vulnerable children and or adults.

However, it is possible that the researchers have not counted some of the training and or learning undertaken in relation to this requirement in the same way as the Education and Workforce Development Advisors. This relates back to the particular aims of the evaluation which was to 'examine whether newly-qualified social workers have shown how five out of the 24 PRTL days have **contributed** to their understanding of how to work effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk'. For example if an ROA contained an entry in the consolidated knowledge, skills and values section that was described in the following way - *'read 2 texts on domestic abuse, this has improved my understanding of this area'* or *'visited Women's Aid to find out what services they provide'* – the researchers would not have counted these activities as training or learning activities associated with the protection of children or adults. This is because entries such as these arguably do not evidence how this learning or training has contributed to them working effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk. It was under these conditions that we found that 88 out of the 106 (83%) had completed 30 hours of learning and training in relation to the protection of adults **and or** children. Of those who had completed 30 hours, 58 (55%) had completed training and learning in relation to **both** children and adults, 27 (25%) had completed training and learning in relation to children only, three (3%) had completed training and learning in relation to adults only and two (2%) had completed neither.

We deemed that 18 (17%) RoAs had not clearly demonstrated 30 hours training or learning in relation to the protection of vulnerable persons Of these seven evidenced the training and learning in relation to the protection of **both** children and adults and that this had amounted to an average of 25 hours. Five of these 18 had completed training and learning in relation to the protection of children only and this training and learning had amounted to an average of 12 hours. Four of these 18 had completed training in relation to the protection of adults only and this training and learning amounted to an average of 19 hours. Two of the 18 cited no training or learning in relation to the protection of either children or adults.

Of the 18 RoAs that had not clearly demonstrated they had undertaken 30 hours training or learning in relation to the protection of vulnerable persons, seven had completed the minimum of 144 hours of training and learning. We also found there was a relationship between the type of protection training and learning undertaken and the practice context. Of the 27 who had undertaken training and or learning in relation to the protection of children only, 25 appeared to be working in a children and families setting.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that out of the 106 RoAs we examined we found two instances whereby the worker was excluded from participating in child protection training. One was a temporary worker from an agency who was expected to learn from experienced practitioners how to conduct child protection investigations. The other social worker was on a fixed-term contract and therefore deemed not eligible for the five-day child protection training although s/he undertook self-directed learning on the subject. The manager explained that the social worker did not come into contact with children during the course of her work in criminal justice but was judged to be *'entirely sound in her ability to refer on any concerning matters to appropriate colleagues'*. The SSSC Code of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers clearly states that employers must support staff to meet their registration requirements. These instances may suggest a lack of clarity around whether these rules and or employer obligations apply to agency staff and or staff on fixed term contracts.

4.3.2 The Nature of Learning about Protection of Children and Adults

A pattern emerged in relation to the training and or learning about the protection of children and adults cited in the RoAs completed by newly-qualified social workers. We found that 27 out of the 106 records indicated that the newly-qualified social worker had participated in a particular type of child protection training. This was a five-day training course run by the employer and delivered by child protection committee officers with input from in-house trainers, police and health professionals such as paediatricians or health visitors. The overall aim of these courses was to develop practitioners' knowledge, understanding and skills to assist them to undertake assessment and investigation in relation to child protection concerns. All but two of the 27 workers who attended this type of training were working in children and families teams. We found that training and learning was described largely in terms of how it had consolidated knowledge, skills and values. As this training was relatively common, we have used it to show the different ways in which newly-qualified social workers interpreted PRTL requirements.

We hope these highlight the differences between simple descriptions of the training as opposed to demonstrating how training consolidated their knowledge, skills and values and how the learning has contributed or advanced the newly qualified social worker's professional development as a social worker.

An example of a simple description:

> 'This training gave an overview of child protection procedures, interviewing procedures and interdisciplinary approach. This allowed me to undertake child protection case work and be 'on call.'

Examples of how training consolidated knowledge, skills and values

> 'This training was invaluable in consolidating my knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and role of all agencies working with children, young people and their families. This training focused largely on legislation, policy and procedures and how to put these into practice in a child-centred, sensitive manner ... great emphasis was placed on the importance of interagency working and some of the difficulties with some of this such as different policies and procedures. This training gave me the opportunity to re-examine knowledge gained at university and make connections between theory and practice. In preparation for and during this training I found it useful to undertake independent learning to consolidate my knowledge and help me understand the role of the social worker in child protection. I made extensive use of the NHS e-library, the Social Services Knowledge Scotland and the Athens web portal.'

Although the example above states that the learning was used in practice it does not illustrate how the learning was put in practice. In the quote below we can see how a newly-qualified social worker applied the learning to specific practice issues and situations

> 'The information given by the health professionals was particularly useful, the information on patterns and types of physical injury…this informed my initial assessment of an allegation of physical abuse and ensured such issues were taken into account. The training enabled me to revisit the various definitions of neglect ... this informed my practice around the thresholds of need and protection, I was able to reflect on previous decisions and see why they were made. Re-visiting theories of abuse and reasons for such acts enabled me to acknowledge the need for family support and assessment of need. I felt more able to consider factors such as social deprivation as well as risk and protection. The training enabled me to assist with the planning of a child protection investigation.'

4.3.3 Patterns of Learning about Adult Protection

We looked at the data given on learning about protecting adults in the 106 RoAs we examined and found that 58 gave information on learning about adult protection. With two notable exceptions, the amount of time spent on learning about adult protection, irrespective of the setting in which

newly-qualified social workers were located, was considerably shorter than the equivalent for child protection.

The main programmes mentioned were training on the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, protection of vulnerable adults' legislation, working with adults with incapacity and with domestic abuse. In addition to this learning activity, some newly-qualified social workers included reading as time spent on learning about adult protection. One reported spending spent five days on reading, another reported spending 20 days on writing procedures which included, among policies on adult protection issues such as the protection of vulnerable adults and adults with incapacity, policies on gifts, mobile phones, diversity and race. A wide range of experiential learning about adult protection was reported in the submissions we examined. These included attending a case conference for a person with learning difficulties, attending a tribunal for a service user in a secure ward, direct work on an adult protection issue and discussion about a vulnerable adult in a child protection situation. These entries tended to lack description of how this learning had been put into practice or how it had enhanced their ability to work effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk. It is not clear why learning or training in relation to adult protection was more descriptive and demonstrated less often how it had been put into practice, consolidated knowledge, skills and values and contributed to or advanced professional development. However it may be an area where newly-qualified social workers need more support and guidance on in order to demonstrate how PRTL activities assist them to meet their primary responsibility of protecting children **and** adults from harm.

4.4:   The Learning Resources Used to Support the PRTL of Newly Qualified Social Workers

As well as explicitly looking for instances where these particular examples were cited in the RoAs, we also looked for specific resources identified by the newly qualified social workers.

Figure 1

We found that 73 out of the 106 (69%) RoAs cited one or more specific type of resource they had used either in self-directed learning, to prepare for or consolidate training, to undertake research or to prepare for a new practice experience. Books were cited most frequently. Some RoAs cited one book (n=29), others two (n=29) and a lesser number (n=11) three or more. Reports were often legislative, policies and procedures documents such as Serious Case Reviews, Acts of Parliament or guidance in relation to policy and or procedures. Sources of the articles and reports were often not clear and it may have been they were sourced from Social Services Knowledge Scotland (SSKS) the NHS e-library or a university library. Specific websites mentioned were often practice-related such as the Dementia Services Development Centre and Criminal Justice Development Centre websites or were related to a very specific practice issue such as working with children with autism or working with people who have Muscular Dystrophy. However we found no mention of the learning resources we had been specifically asked to look for (The

Continuous Learning Framework, the Learning Exchange, the community workspace or the Child Protection webspace).

Number of instances resources were mentioned

Resource	Count
Books	69
Reports	44
Articles	31
Specific websites	24
University Library	4
Social Services Knowledge Scotland (SSKS)	3
TV	2
Professional Journals	2
NHS E-library	2
Continuous Learning Framework	0
Learning Exchange	0
Child Protection webspace	0
Community Workspace	0
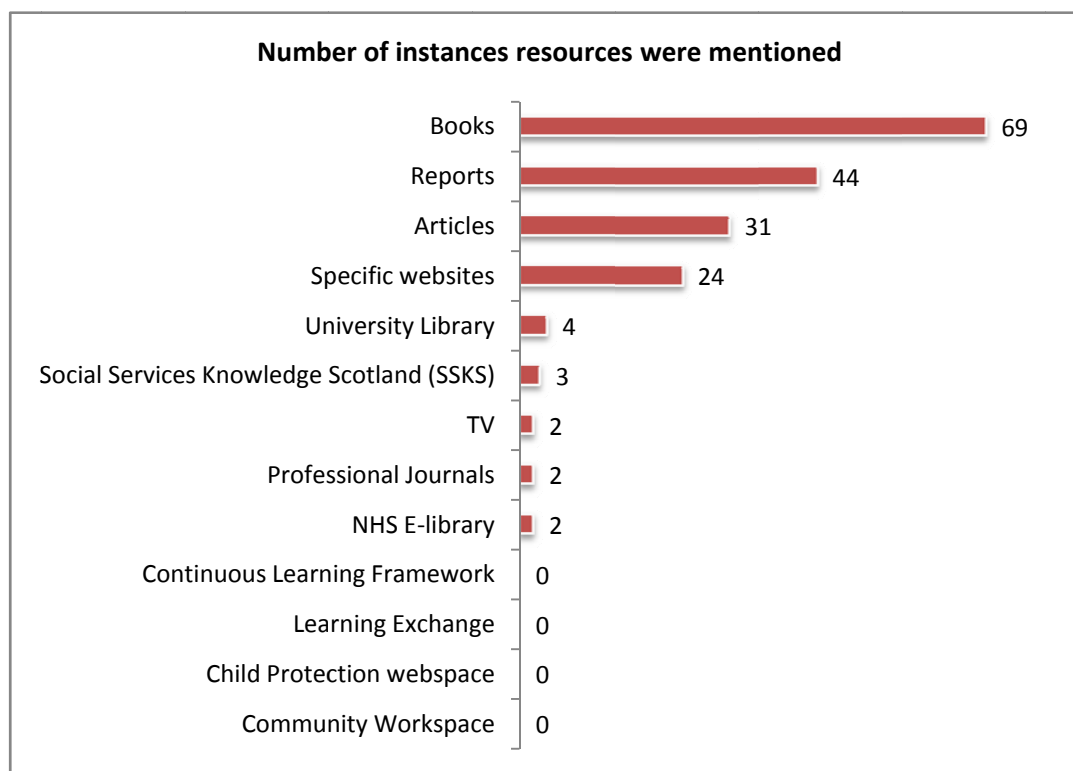
4.4.1 Employer support with learning

Although it was clear from the vast majority of RoAs that newly-qualified social workers were accessing a wide range of support for learning from their employers, some employers had developed particular learning and development opportunities for newly-qualified social workers. We found 20 out of the 106 RoAs specifically mentioned participation in a newly-qualified social workers' forum, programme or group. We found seven different employers providing this type of opportunity for newly-qualified social workers in the first year of registration. Although seven employers provided these, three employers accounted for 14 out of the 20 accounts. The following examples illustrate the benefits of these meetings perceived by the newly-qualified social workers involved:

'This group has continued to meet monthly…..analysis and discussion of cases with other newly-qualified social workers was very valuable as it is often difficult to find time for such in-depth case discussion. Furthermore discussion allowed us to see that we faced similar dilemmas and challenges and afforded the opportunity to learn how others handled them.'

'I felt the support group was an important part of my development throughout my first year of practice. This allowed me to build on my knowledge-base and was useful in measuring my development alongside my peer group. I particularly enjoyed the case presentations as this allowed everyone to get a different perspective on a case they

were involved in. It was also a great opportunity to build networks with people from various services which was often a benefit to my own practice and my client group.'

4.5:   Conclusions from Analysis of Records of Achievement

We found that the predominant types of learning cited in the RoAs were training, seminars and workshops. These accounted for most of the PRTL learning activity both in the number of records in which they were cited and the time ascribed to them. It was notable that the time spent on adult protection training and learning compared to child protection was considerably less, irrespective of practice context. Learning about adult protection was more likely to be gained through self-directed learning or from direct practice experience than training, seminars and workshops. Learning about both child and adult protection tended to be described rather than articulated in such a way that demonstrated how this type of learning had consolidated their knowledge, skills and values or enhanced their professional development. It may be useful to consider how best to support employers and newly-qualified social workers to achieve more of a balance between types of learning and how to demonstrate where it has consolidated their knowledge, skills and values or enhanced their professional development.

We were also asked to examine whether newly-qualified social workers had shown how five out of the 24 PRTL days had contributed to their understanding of how to work effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk. In the sample we examined we found that while 69% had completed 144 hours or more overall, 83% had completed 30 hours of protection training on adults **or** children but that only 55% of these had completed 30 hours or more in **both** children and adult protection. We acknowledge that the thresholds of inclusion between the researchers and the advisors may be different in this regard.

The notion of threshold also relates to a further finding. All RoAs contained descriptions of learning experiences that illustrated how their learning experiences had consolidated their knowledge, values of skills, enhanced their professional development or had facilitated them to reflect on their personal beliefs, assumptions and ideas in light of their learning experiences. However, we also found that 37% of ROAs (39 out of 106) contained a number of examples of what could be defined as '*a simple description of the learning experience'* with no analysis of how this learning experience consolidated their knowledge, values of skills, enhanced their professional development or had facilitated reflection on personal beliefs, assumptions and ideas in light of this learning experience. Simple descriptions were more associated with particular types of learning such as supervision and learning from direct practice experience. Twelve of the 39 RoAs which contained these simple descriptions without analysis relied largely on these particular types of learning and had not identified specific examples of where their knowledge, skills or values had been enhanced through the various appropriate and relevant training and learning activities.

It may be useful to consider a slight rewording in relation to the requirement around the 30 hours of training or learning which focuses on working effectively with colleagues and other professionals to identify, assess and manage risk to vulnerable groups. Currently the guidance states that the RoA requires evidence that 30 hours of training and learning has **focussed** on working effectively with colleagues and other professional to identify, assess and manage risk to vulnerable groups. However given the purpose of PRTL it may be more useful to ask the NQSW to demonstrate **how** this training and learning has consolidated their social work skills, knowledge and values to assist them to contribute to the protection of children and adults from harm, and that this needs to be detailed in the relevant section.

5: INTERVIEWS WITH SOCIAL WORKERS AND MANAGERS

5.1: Development of the Sample of Interviewees

The study design aimed for a sample of approximately a quarter of the newly-qualified social workers from the desk-based research sample (n= 40) for interview. We also hoped to interview approximately 40 managers of newly-qualified social workers and to match newly-qualified social workers with their managers to compare and contrast the data collected.

As the research commenced, several factors arose that limited the ability of the research team to develop samples along these lines. First of all the RoAs were anonymised so it was not possible to match these with subsequent interviews. A request from the SSSC asking newly-qualified social workers and managers 'opt in' to the study yielded insufficient responses to allow us to construct a viable sample. Furthermore, as social workers and their managers volunteered separately we found we had few matching pairs to interview.

The research team then sent a second letter to newly-qualified social workers using contact details provided by the SSSC. This letter was based on an 'opt out' principle, whereby social workers and managers were asked to indicate by reply if they did not want to participate. This was more successful in that after accounting for illness, annual leave, pressure of work and other reasons for absence among interviewees we achieved a sample of 30 newly-qualified social workers and 26 managers. Our sample could be described as a convenience sample, and we were not able to fully control for geography, type and size of employer in the way we would have liked. Detail of the sample is given below.

The interview schedules (Appendices 1 and 2) for both newly-qualified social workers and managers were informed by the four levels in Kirkpatrick's model for training and learning evaluation (1994) and the indicators for learning organisations from Social Care Institute for Excellence (2004).

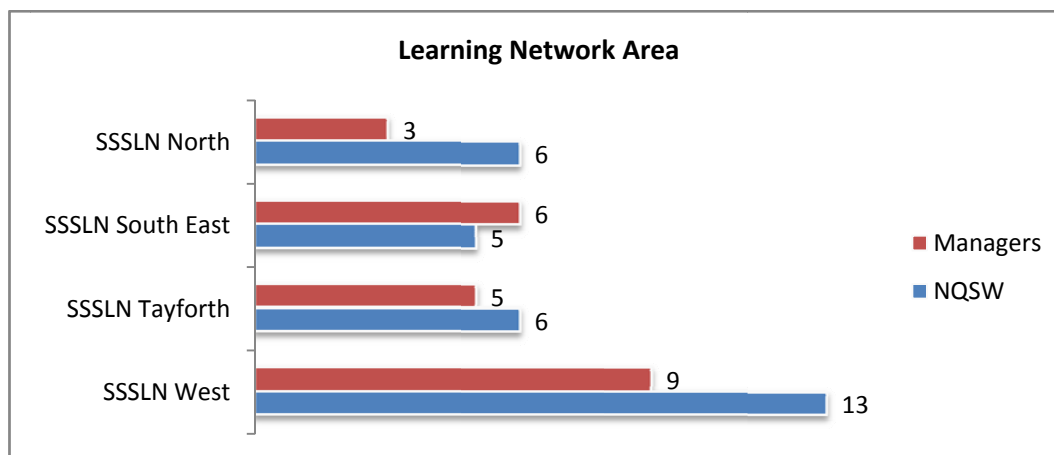*5.1.1: The Sample of Newly-Qualified Social Workers and Managers*

The sample consisted of 30 newly-qualified social workers and 26 managers. The majority of the sample was based in local authority teams, as shown in figure 2 below;

Figure 2:
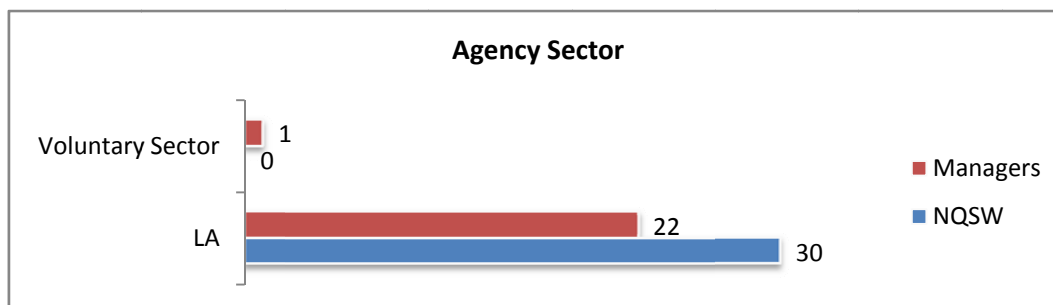
The breakdown of employing agencies by Learning Network area is shown below;

Figure 3:

Learning Network Area

Learning Network Area	Managers	NQSW
SSSLN North	3	6
SSSLN South East	6	5
SSSLN Tayforth	5	6
SSSLN West	9	13

The sample of social workers was predominantly employed in children and families teams, and based in fieldwork settings, most usually local authority area teams.

Figure 4:

Client Group

Client Group	Value
Older People	2
Criminal Justice	2
Adult Services	8
Children and Families	18

Figure 5:

Agency Setting

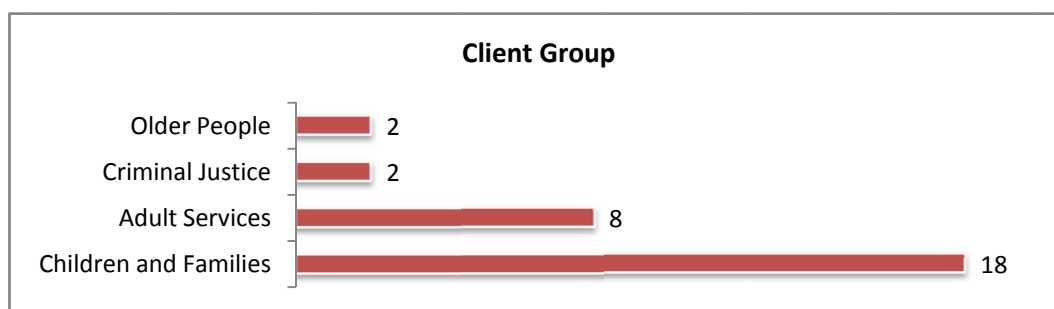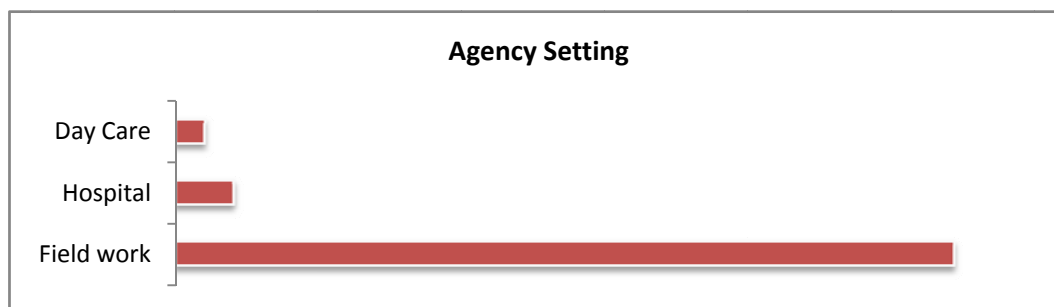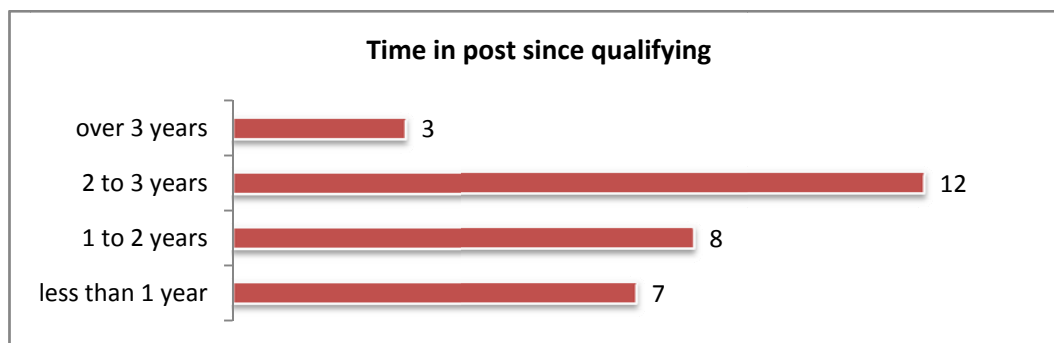| Agency Setting	
Day Care	
Hospital	
Field work	

Most newly-qualified social workers had been in post for between one and three years. A small number had been employed in their current agency for a significantly longer period prior to undertaking professional training as part of a secondment arrangement.

Figure 6:

Time in post since qualifying

Category	Value
over 3 years	3
2 to 3 years	12
1 to 2 years	8
less than 1 year	7

The figures showing dates of qualification and registration suggest that for some social workers there was a significant gap between qualifying and completing the registration process. There are several reasons why this occurred: reference was made to delays in obtaining a job, taking time out for maternity leave and delays in the registration process itself preventing workers taking up posts as social workers.

Figure 7:

Year in which NQSW qualified and registered

Year	Qualified	Registered
2009	1	1
2008	7	16
2007	16	12
2006	6	1

Figure 8:

University attended

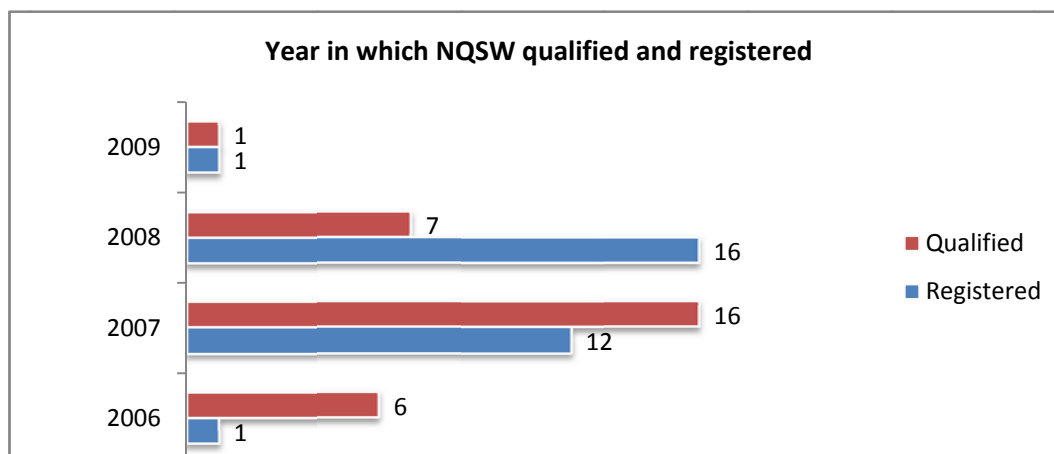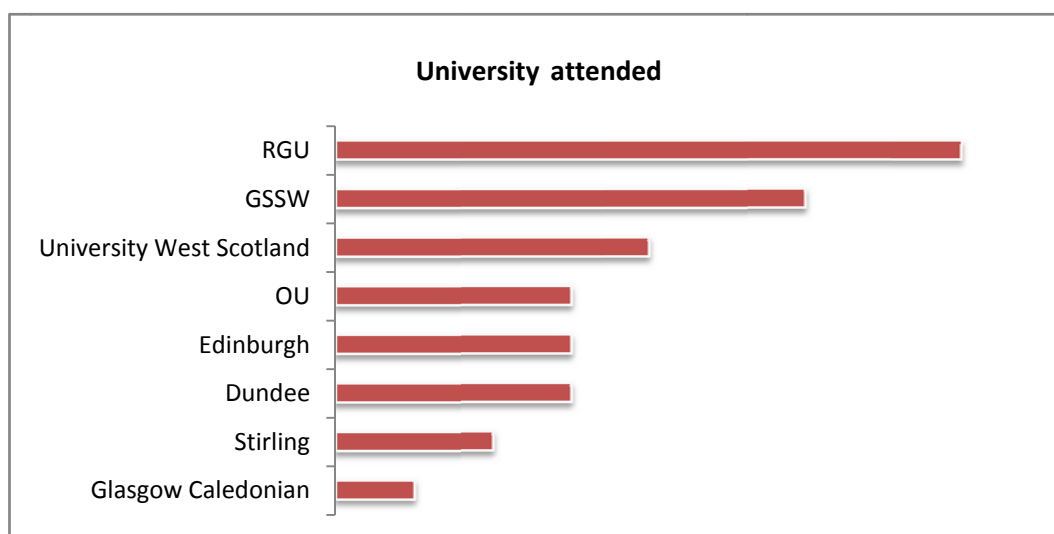| University	
RGU	
GSSW	
University West Scotland	
OU	
Edinburgh	
Dundee	
Stirling	
Glasgow Caledonian	

5.2: Findings from Interviews with Newly-Qualified Social Workers and Managers

5.2.1: Understanding of Post-Registration Training and Learning

When asked what PRTL meant to them the majority of newly-qualified social worker interviewees mentioned that it was a requirement for their registration as social workers, and that it involved continuing the learning begun on their professional training and keeping up to date. One social worker explained that she had particular difficulties as she had not managed to get a permanent job near her home and worked for a locum agency. Little training was available and she thought this precluded her from completing her PRTL requirements. It was only later that she realised that she could use learning activities other than training programmes.

Eight of those interviewed referred to the need to meet mandatory requirements, and four made reference to needing to produce evidence of the learning activity they had undertaken. The majority interviewed mentioned that the point of the learning was to develop their practice and used phrases such as '*keeping fresh'*, '*broadening their knowledge'* and '*continuing their professional development'*. As one respondent put it:

> '*It's a good thing … it helps you to evidence theory to practice'*

Others said:

> '*So you can reflect on practice and see how you can improve it. It's also about research … how you can use up-to-date research.'*

> '*The regulations placed upon me by the SSSC … expectations of my professional development.'*

In contrast to this approach others referred to it as '*a set of hoops to be jumped through'*. Comments made along similar lines were:

> '*It was a weighty piece of work … a great pressure to do it while getting used to a new job'*

Managers were also asked how they see PRTL. Five of the managers interviewed told us that they knew very little about PRTL.

> '*My knowledge is fairly sketchy.'*

> '*I have to admit it doesn't mean a lot.'*

One said '*I have a very busy job and I can't always get to things … I need concise and succinct information.'* Others were much more aware of the need to meet registration requirements and to ensure that newly-qualified staff receive the necessary training and support.

> '*Making sure people get the time to reflect on training, current practice and research. Help them look at alternative ways of working with clients.'*

> '*… about evidencing training, similar to all registration requirements but particular to newly-qualified social workers, making sure they get relevant training and support.'*

Two managers mentioned that newly-qualified social workers have academic or theoretical knowledge but need help in applying these in practice. Heavy reliance was placed by managers (n = 8) on Learning and Development staff having a key role in ensuring that PRTL requirements are met. One manager commented on the different supervision needs of newly-qualified staff from more experienced worker – they need:

> *'a higher level of supervision ... frequency and intensity ... and more of an open door approach.'*

On the whole managers were less aware of the detail of the PRTL requirements than were the newly-qualified social workers themseves. It was somewhat disapppointing that almost 25% of the managers interviewed admitted to knowing very little about PRTL, as it might be reasonable to expect that managers of qualified social workers would have had at least a working knowledge about its purpose. Overall both groups were aware of both the regulatory nature of PRTL and the spirit which some respondents in both groups understood as linking in to lifelong learning and CPD. It was encouraging to see that most of the newly-qualified social workers saw the benefits to themselves as beginning professionals.

5.2.2: Post- Registration Training and Learning Activities

Responses to a question about what social workers did to meet the PRTL requirements included a wide range of activities, but the most common single response (n=13) was that they had attended one or more training programmes. Seven social workers mentioned training programmes on either child or adult protection and referred to these as mandatory programmes in their employing organisations. Other programmes mentioned were on suicide prevention, Makaton, CareFirst, motor neurone disease, risk assessment and single shared assessment. Induction was mentioned by four interviewees. Other activities included shadowing more experienced colleagues, reading, attending team development days and making visits of observation to other services. Two social workers mentioned that they had attended meetings of groups of newly-qualified social workers. One social worker described how joining the board of a local voluntary organisation had helped to expand her knowledge of how the voluntary sector worked.

Some social workers had a clear understanding that experiential learning could contribute to their PRTL submission, while others believed that only training programmes counted towards the required number of hours. One mentioned that she saw herself as lucky as:

> *'... I managed to get the actual amount of days through training courses, whereas other people were using other ways to make up the hours.'*

The wide range of activities reflects the variety of approaches to PRTL from different employers. It was clear that some managers involved themselves in the detail of how social workers met the requirements, while others did not.

One social worker, who seemed to have gained a great deal from the PRTL process said she had used:

> *'a lot of varied activity ... this was done on purpose ... at first it was quite daunting ... but my manager had some material from the SSSC showing how you can evidence PRTL- I thought it was just about training courses ... but when it became clearer it was much easier ... I was able to complete it in less than a year.'*

When asked about how they had met the special requirements for learning about child and adult protection most respondents referred to training programmes they had attended. Most of the child protection training programmes mentioned were five days long. Specific mention was made by four social workers of having undertaken training on adult support and protection legislation. Getting it Right for Every Child (Scottish Executive, 2005) was mentioned by three respondents.

The interviews suggested there had been confusion in the minds of some social workers who appeared not to have realised that learning about both types of protection needed to be included.

> *'I didn't put anything in about adult protection as I did not realise you had to do both.'*

The results from our interviews for the different types of protection training are shown in the following table.

Figure 9:

Type of protection training undertaken

Both Adult and Child Protection	21
Child Protection Only	7
Adult Protection Only	2
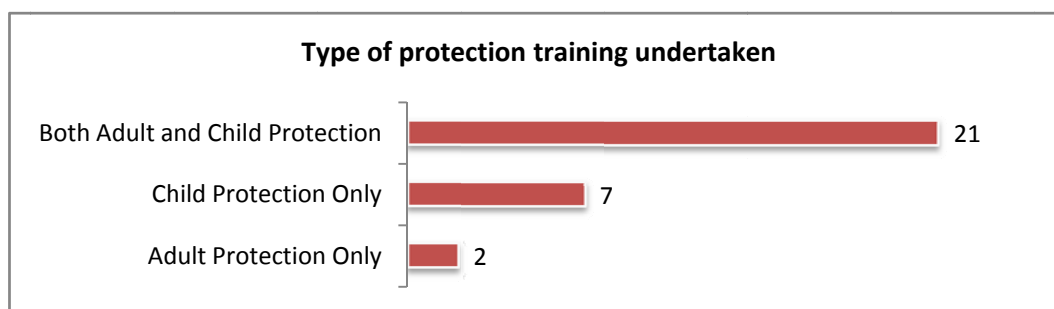
Despite this, they were all deemed to have successfully met the PRTL requirements.

Identification of learning needs was achieved, in the main, either through supervision with social workers' managers or was something they worked out for themselves, bearing in mind their job roles and responsibilities. Two respondents commented that they found it quite difficult to do as they did not feel they knew enough about their jobs to know what might be most useful. Two local authorities used a formal process for Personal Development Reviews, and these map out future learning and development activity based on requirements of the role and the experience of their social work staff. The answers to this question from some of the respondents suggest that they were not clear how to differentiate between learning needs and learning activities.
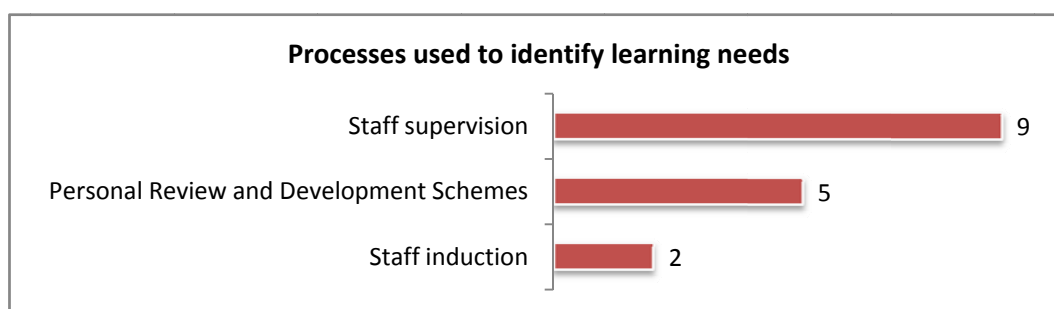
> *'It's obvious from training courses' objectives, but a lot of training was mandatory.'*

However, one social worker was able to give a very full and clear answer which showed that she had understood the difference between the two:

> *'I think it comes along as you are allocated cases and you realise what you need to do ... the university can't cover everything ... so it's by working with families you may realise you don't know enough about criminal justice for example, so you speak with your manager to look at how you can meet the needs'*

When managers were asked how learning needs were identified, they referred to three organisational processes. These were:

Figure 10:

Processes used to identify learning needs

Process	Count
Staff supervision	9
Personal Review and Development Schemes	5
Staff induction	2

Managers pointed out that some newly-qualified social workers were long-standing employees of the organisation and had completed the Fast Track Scheme or a distance learning programme and thus had a great deal of knowledge of the organisation and the service. Their learning needs as newly-qualified workers were very different from new entrants and were likely to be identified in staff supervision.

When it came to selecting learning activities there was less evidence of a systematic process. Two thirds of the social workers interviewed (n=20) talked of choosing from a list programmes to attend on the basis of what was available and usually information about programmes was shared either at meetings or through email.

> *'I went for any course that was available and suitable'*

This was corroborated by answers given to a subsequent question about the extent to which social workers chose their learning activities, where twenty seven of the thirty interviewed said that to some or a great extent they alone chose which learning activities to attend. Personal interest features highly as a reason for making those choices. Only three social workers made particular mention of having identified learning activities in response to a learning need arising from their workload. One employer makes a sum of £500 available for courses to social work staff, though this was also used to fund some mandatory programmes.

A wide range of methods was used to select learning activities other than those that were regarded as mandatory. Personal interest and issues arising from social workers' workloads were most often cited by managers as the prompts for particular learning activities, and in general discussion about these took place in supervision.

One manager mentioned that her organisation had an annual Quality Improvement Plan which contains actions for all staff, and these fit with the broad objectives for the service. Another manager linked choice of learning activities with discussions that took place in the newly-qualified social worker scheme.

Comments by managers on the way in which learning activities were selected included:

> *'They were based on priority of need: core tasks and duties, then protection issues.'*

> *'We looked at his caseload and the identified areas he wasn't so comfortable with. We identified suitable ways to meet the needs: such as training, reading, personal research etc.'*

> *'Through the Individual Learning Review we matched up learning aims with organisational needs. For example, one newly-qualified social worker was particularly interested in risk assessment. She worked in children and families but we enabled her to do a piece of work that broadened things out to adults as well... She got access to the British Journal of Social Work about risk in older adults, got fresh ideas and current research and then these were used in the department. She presented the ideas to the older adults' team and was able to take some ideas from this team back to her work with children and families.'*

The linkage between training activity and organisational objectives was not found to be particularly strong in our interviews with social workers. Twelve interviewees felt that the training, especially the mandatory training, was linked to organisational objectives, although they did not explain what the link was. A further thirteen commented that either there was no link or that the link was rather weak.

One respondent did explain how helpful her induction training had been in making the links clear for her:

> *'We had a NQSW course and induction pack that we worked through that included aspects of organisational objectives and strategy ... from basic health and safety to understanding your role and how the organisation works'*

It may not be reasonable to expect new entrants to the profession to be able to make such links themselves, which suggests that employers, probably through line managers, need to ensure that the fit between organisational objectives and particular learning programmes is made explicit, either in promotional material for training programmes or by training providers themselves.

Managers were asked how the PRTL learning activities for newly-qualified social workers were linked to organisational objectives. Four of the managers interviewed made reference to the newly-qualified social worker scheme or Personal Development Plans arranged by their employers. One linked mandatory training to the requirements set by the Child Protection Committee and one referred to the Quality Improvement Plan mentioned earlier. In the main, however, managers did not explicitly link the learning activities of newly-qualified social workers with organisational objectives, other than in the general sense of improving outcomes for service users.

Twenty four of the thirty social worker interviewees received induction, and three of the remainder commented that they had not needed induction following their completion of the qualifying programme as they had previously worked for their employer for many years. It is clear from their responses that induction, though widely offered to newly-qualified social workers, is varied in its length, quality and content. The extent to which PRTL was incorporated into induction was also very varied, with nine saying not at all, 11 a little, four said to some extent and four to a great extent.

Figure 11:
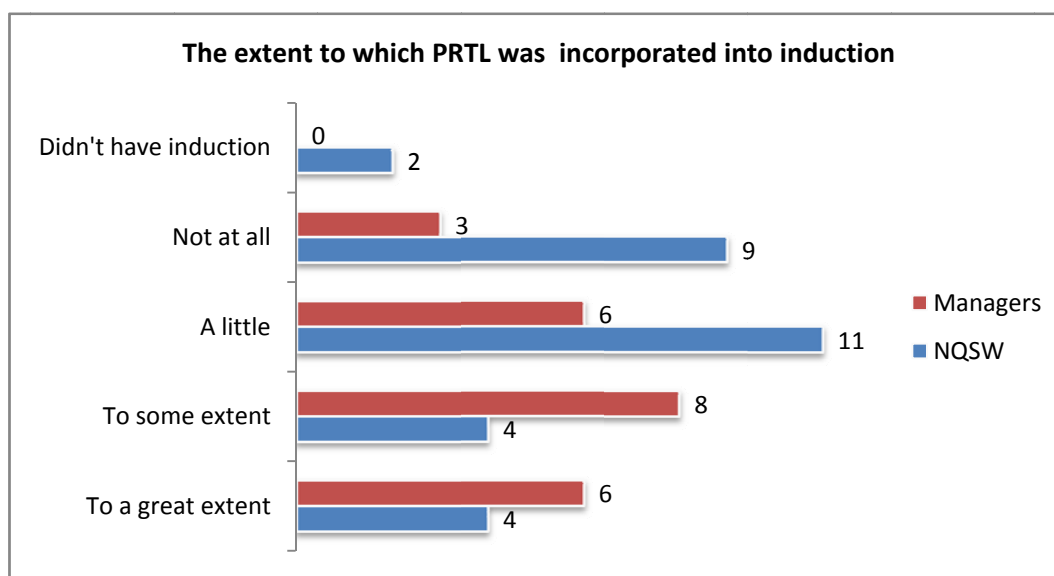
Where employers arranged induction across the whole organisation (as opposed to specifically for social services) there seemed to be no mention at all of requirements for professional registration or PRTL. Some organisations provided comprehensive induction programmes with observation visits, shadowing arrangements, contact with other local organisations and information about policies and procedures.

> *'The programme was developed by the Professional Development Manager specifically for newly-qualified social workers. There were 40 different things to do ... visits, organisations to met, people to shadow.'*

> *'There was introductory training including a seminar for new workers. This covered departmental and council structures, other agencies and networking opportunities. It was very helpful and included the voluntary sector. I was able to shadow other workers who were very friendly and welcoming.'*

Two social workers, however, described themselves as having been *'left to get on with it'*, and one of these remarked on how stressful it was for her.

Managers were asked whether newly-qualified social workers received induction, to what extent PRTL was incorporated within induction and to give examples to illustrate their responses. Only five of the managers interviewed responded in a way that suggested they were familiar with the induction process, whether it was corporately arranged or whether it was arranged for social services staff only.

Examples given by these managers included reference to an electronic system that records training for PRTL purposes and mention of evidence-based practice being included in the agenda for the NQSW group.

> '{The electronic system} reminds managers of their responsibility to support PRTL for newly-qualified social workers.'

> 'Induction is much better organised with PRTL requirements covered in the first of 6 sessions.'

Responses from the remainder suggested that they were not fully aware of the content of induction and thus they were not able to give examples of where PRTL was embedded in induction.

> 'PRTL is included more by chance than by planning.'

> 'Not uppermost in my mind ... I was looking at it from a practical perspective ... getting her ready for work.'

The responses to this question again show some differences between managers and social workers. Most social workers thought that PRTL was only incorporated a little if at all, whereas over half of the managers were of the view that PRTL requirements were incorporated to some or to a great extent.

The relatively high number of social workers (9 out of 30) who said that PRTL was not incorporated into induction may be explained by two factors. Several had been part of the Fast Track scheme, and consequently had undertaken induction as a new employee prior to starting at university, and a small number were seconded to university as established employees. It is, however, an issue that may require a further look to see if closer links between induction and PRTL could be useful.

5.2.3: Support Needs for Post-Registration Training and Learning

In a section of the interviews which focused on support needs we asked newly-qualified social workers to tell us about the main challenges they faced in meeting their PRTL requirements. Ten of our interviewees saw making the time to undertake the training and write about it as the biggest challenge. Having to work to a deadline was difficult for two interviewees. One commented that she had left it rather late and another said that he would have found a reminder from the SSSC a help. Particular difficulties were experienced by one respondent working in an adult setting in meeting requirements about child protection and one other social worker working in a children and families team said she had found it hard to meet the requirements on adult protection.

Getting the RoA signed off by a manager presented one social worker with problems, and poor supervision was seen by another as an obstacle to meeting the requirements. One interviewee had five supervisors in her first year of practice. Words used to describe the process of meeting the requirements and completing the RoA included *'overwhelming', 'daunting', 'confusing'*. One commented:

> 'it became a chore to get through, even though I saw the value of it ... I wish I had had more time to embrace the process.'

When asked how social workers dealt with these challenges their responses were varied.

> *'I worked very hard deep into the night.'*

> *'It's hard to ask for the time.'*

> *'You just have to do it – fit things in, but it was very stressful. You know that if you don't you can't be registered.'*

Time management was mentioned by 15 social workers. Good supervision was specifically mentioned as invaluable by six social workers. Four social workers used their own time to do the written work.

> *'I didn't find it much of a challenge ... everything was really there for me ... it didn't cause me any stress ... but I did most of it at home because of workload demands.'*

Discussion with others seemed to be very helpful to two social worker interviewees, while two others asked for time away from their desks to complete their submissions.

> *'I got support from the manager and the team. I was able to block off personal time to make sure I got it done.'*

> *'It was useful having a NQSW group – we could help and guide each other ... we could also go on resource visits together and share the work.'*

Work pressure was felt by three social workers to be a barrier to completion of the work for PRTL, and that sometimes managers did not give enough workload relief to take account of this. Two respondents mentioned that their managers knew very little about PRTL and so were unaware of the requirements and the pressure on newly-qualified staff.

> *''They didn't seem to take into account the time involved to prepare the PRTL records.'*

When managers were asked about the main challenges faced by newly-qualified social workers in meeting their PRTL requirements the answers had a rather different tone. Making the transition from student to social worker was the single most common response, with getting the time to undertake training and write up their learning the second most common response.

Figure 12:
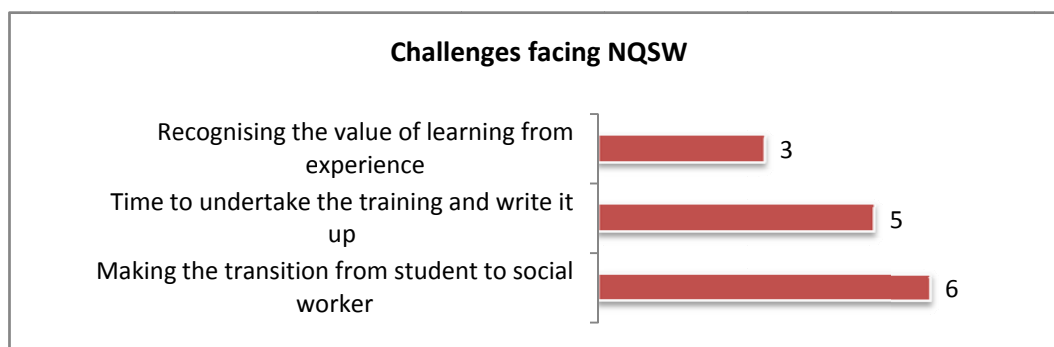
Interestingly, three of the managers commented on the difficulties some newly-qualified social workers had with considering learning from their day to day work as eligible for inclusion as PRTL activity.

Groups and programmes for newly-qualified social workers were mentioned as especially helpful in overcoming the challenges by three respondents, although one of these had missed out as her job title was Drugs Counsellor rather than social worker, so her manager had assumed it was not relevant to her.

> *'The NQSW group makes sure you have one day a month to build on. You can get support from other newly-qualified social workers and share information. There are lots of spin-offs from networking – even doing joint work.'*

When it came to discussing how newly-qualified social workers had overcome these challenges managers' responses were, once again, varied. Some did not give clear responses but of those who did the following emerged:

Figure 13:

Meeting the challenges

Category	Value
Supervision	5
Support from the team	3
NQSW Group	2
Workload relief	1
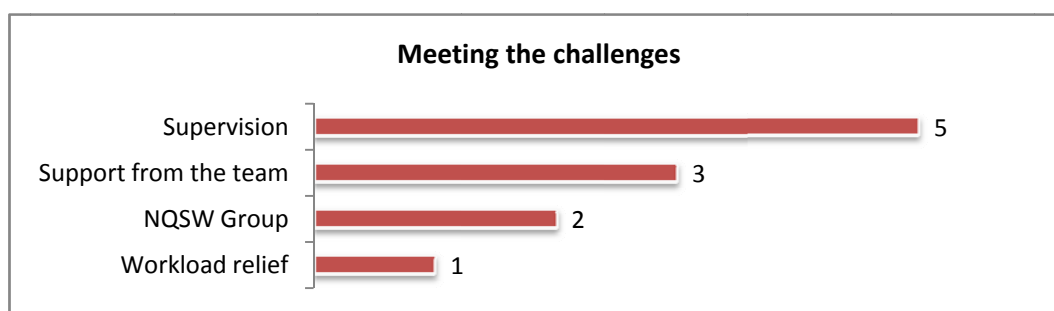
Taken together, supervision and support from the team featured as aspects of a team culture that managers believed supports and encourages an organisational learning approach. It seemed that the experience of making the transition from student to social worker was an issue for a number of newly-qualified social workers, and that the team culture was important in making it possible for them to ask for support from colleagues or seek it during staff supervision.

> *'Being a supportive team with people who had completed PRTL is a real help.'*

> *'He was given supervision, plus extra if needed.'*

> *'(She) got into problems about role identity ... became stuck, unable to do the job and the task- my role was more that of a practice teacher.'*

A question to newly-qualified social workers and managers about their employers' provision of support for meeting the requirements elicited mostly positive responses. Nine social workers said that their employers had provided support 'to a great extent', while a further 16 said they provided support 'to some extent'. Five respondents said that their employer had provided a little support to help them meet PRTL requirements.

Examples of support given included giving time for training and for writing up, support from learning and development staff and backing applications for training. Other respondents mentioned the problem of finding the time to undertake training and do the necessary writing up.

Figure 14:

Did your agency provide adequate support to meet post registration training and learning requirements?

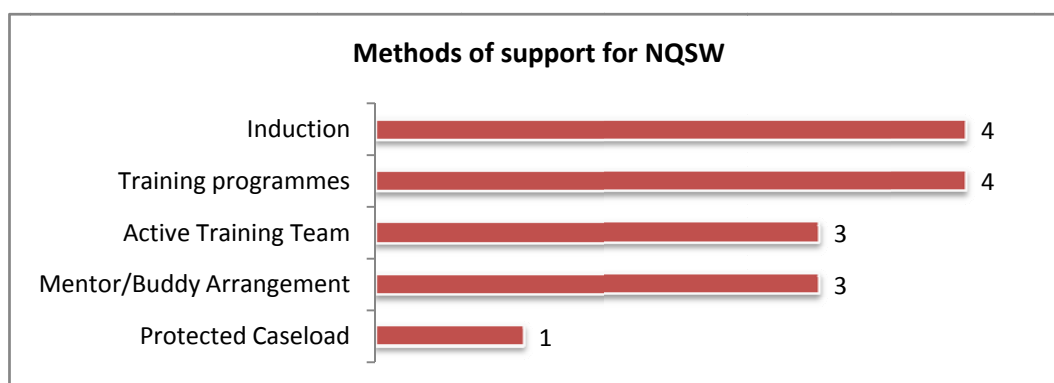| Category	Managers	NQSW
Not sure	2	0
A little	0	5
To some extent	3	16
To a great extent	21	9
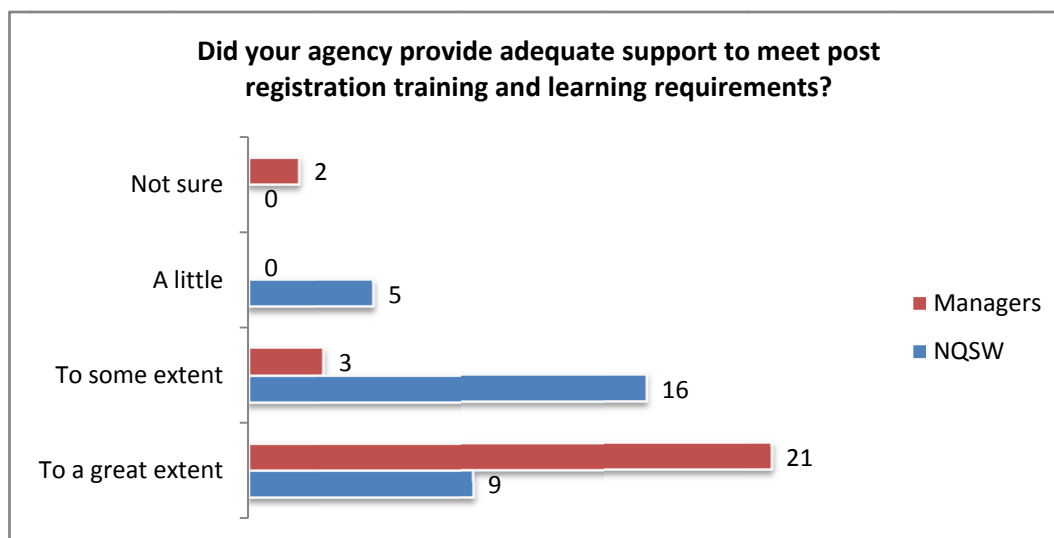
Nearly all managers agreed that agencies provide adequate support for PRTL, though they were markedly more positive about this than were newly-qualified social workers. Some of the reasons for this may be found in responses to other questions, where it was clear that for many new social workers the primary tasks and focus centred on managing the transition from student to becoming a full-time qualified worker and learning about both the job and the organisation. Managers, however, may have had a different focus and understanding of the support systems in their organisations.

Most respondents referred to the value and importance of good supervision and effective learning provision. It is of note that social workers in those agencies with established support mechanisms for newly-qualified social workers, especially where learning and development staff took an active part in making and sustaining the arrangements, made specific reference to their benefits.

The kinds of support mentioned were:

Figure 15:

Methods of support for NQSW

Method	Value
Induction	4
Training programmes	4
Active Training Team	3
Mentor/Buddy Arrangement	3
Protected Caseload	1

'We provide a pretty comprehensive induction programme and guidance on how to complete PRTL records.'

'... we provide mentoring for newly-qualified social workers that allows them to reflect on their induction programme.'

Newly-qualified social workers gave varied accounts of the extent to which their degree programmes had prepared them for PRTL. Only three of the 30 interviewees said that their programme had prepared them very much for PRTL. Five said their programmes had prepared them to some extent, 13 said a little, and nine said not at all.

Figure 16:
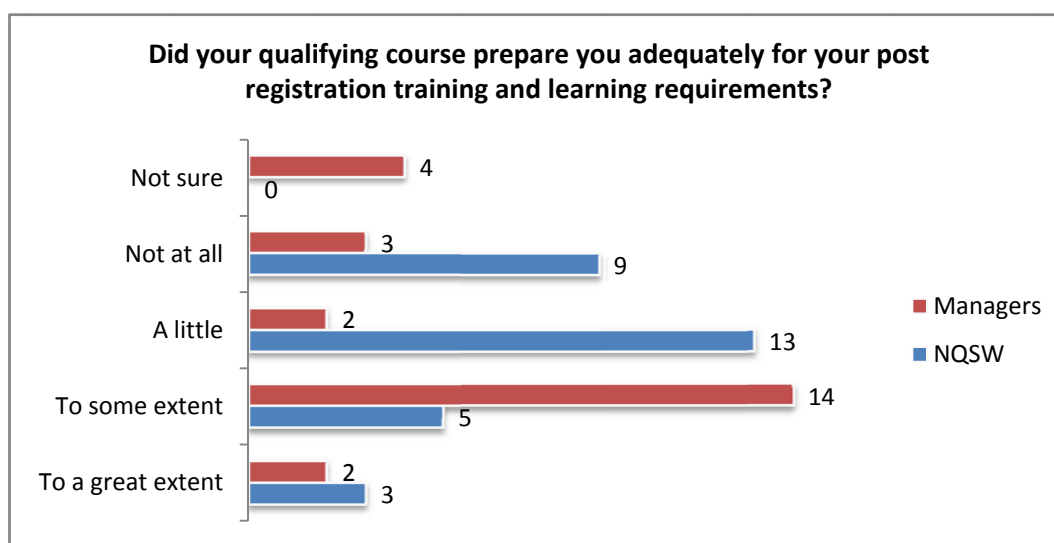
Examples of helpful input given were that *'someone from the SSSC came along', 'individual learning plans were discussed'*. Other comments made were:

'There was a big emphasis on Changing Lives and being responsible for our own professionalism.'

'We had one or two sessions on PRTL ... we got the message that you had to attend courses and add up the hours.'

Views about the extent to which managers thought that qualifying programmes prepared newly-qualified social workers for their PRTL requirements were that, overall, they did so to some extent. They did not, however, articulate clear examples of how this had been done and most of the responses were very general.

'I think there should be more built into the course to make better reference to PRTL.'

Both social workers and managers were asked how well they thought qualifying courses prepared social workers to meet post-registration training and learning requirements. The overall response from social workers was that their courses had not provided adequate preparation for PRTL; nearly one third stated that their course had provided no preparation at all, with only one tenth stating that the course had provided more than adequate preparation.

However, managers had a more favourable view of the preparation provided by the courses, but given the possibility that many of them did not have direct contact with the course teaching, and also that many indicated that they had little relatively knowledge of PRTL requirements, it is difficult to know the basis for these statements. It may be that they have considered the ability and attitude of the social worker, and have inferred adequate preparation.

Although very few of the social workers we interviewed thought that their courses provided adequate preparation, there were also several comments to the effect that this had changed in the last two years, suggesting that universities may recently have given this more attention.

The table below illustrates the extent to which newly-qualified social workers felt the SSSC's guidance was adequate to their needs. We can see that that 17 out of the 30 found that it helped a little and 11 to some extent.

Figure 17:
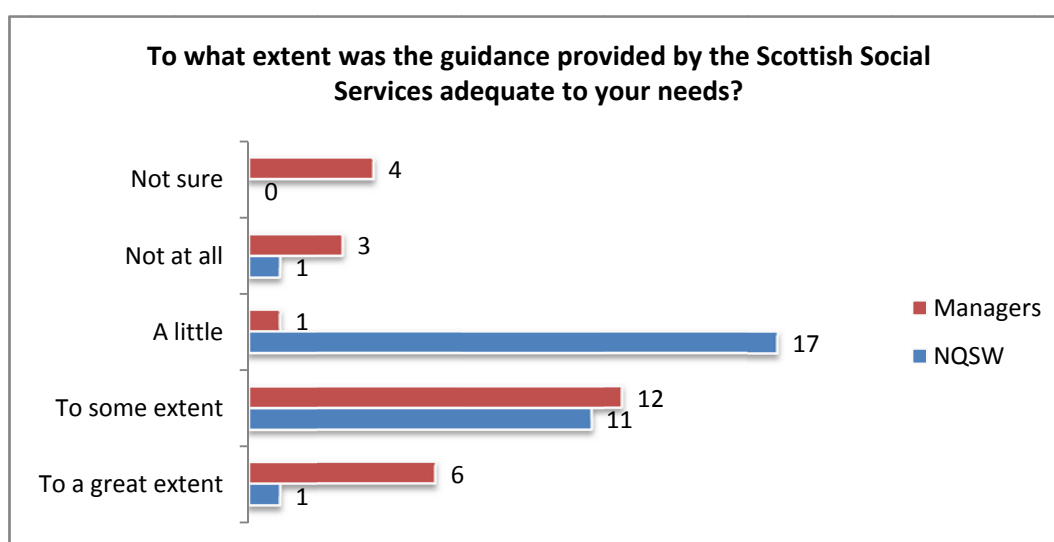
Comments about the guidance included:

> '*The IT process was a problem. It was a Read Only form*'

> '*Thought it was quite clear*'

> '*I had to dig deep into the SSSC website*'

> '*The fact that we had to do both child AND adult protection wasn't spelled out clearly enough*'

> '*It was very difficult to get hold of someone (at SSSC) to answer my queries*'

> '*It was rather vague and woolly.*'

> '*I was never sure how much detail to put in*'

> '*... some examples of successful submissions would have been helpful*'

> '*they should have put in bold "allow lots of time for this". Without word counts the sky's the limit for how much.*'

> '*It seemed to assume all newly-qualified social workers were working in a statutory role.*'

The comments about the guidance were widely varied, and it seems to be the case that where social workers were able to access the advice of others who had successfully completed their submissions this was helpful, especially about the amount of detail needed.

Managers' views were in general slightly more positive than social workers. Although most social workers saw some benefit in the guidance, over half stated that it was *'a little help'*. A common theme was that some exemplars would have made the process much easier. These responses suggest that it would be useful for the SSSC to consider the guidance and the provision of exemplars in light of these comments.

5.2.4: Arrangements for Post-Registration Training and Learning

Another section of the interview schedule sought the views of newly-qualified social workers on the arrangements for PRTL and the support offered by employers. Again views on planning and reviewing PRTL varied considerably between individuals and organisations. Mention was made by social workers of a briefing session available to them as part of the induction process. Staff supervision features strongly as the mechanism where induction and PRTL were planned and reviewed for about three quarters of those interviewed, while some reported that there was no special arrangement for these. Three types of arrangement stood out among the interviews as being the most valuable in supporting newly-qualified social workers in building and submitting their RoAs. These were:

- Meetings of a group of newly-qualified social workers

- An Employee Development Review Scheme

- The involvement of Learning and Development staff in arranging PRTL activities.

The responses to a question about the amount of time allocated by agencies for PRTL were very varied. Most of the 30 interviewed (n = 23) explained that specific time was not allocated for PRTL, although generally time requested for attendance at particular training events was given. Very few (n = 4) were allowed a specific time to complete their written submissions during work time, the remainder either fitting this around other work activities or undertaking this in their own time. Where social workers were given time, ability to use it was problematic as it was sometimes difficult to set aside the time given competing priorities and pressure of work.

Managers' responses to this question suggested that individual need determined the amount of time that was allocated, although some managers (2) were working within a given time frame.

> *'There is no set time as this depends on what the social worker wants to do in consultation with their line manager.'*

> *'We are guided by the SSSC's minimum requirements.'*

Our interviews contained a question to managers about whether or not newly-qualified social workers were actually able to use the time set aside for PRTL and then sought examples of what had helped them to use their time in this way. Only a small number answered this question as they had indicated in the previous question that there had been no specific allocation of time for PRTL:

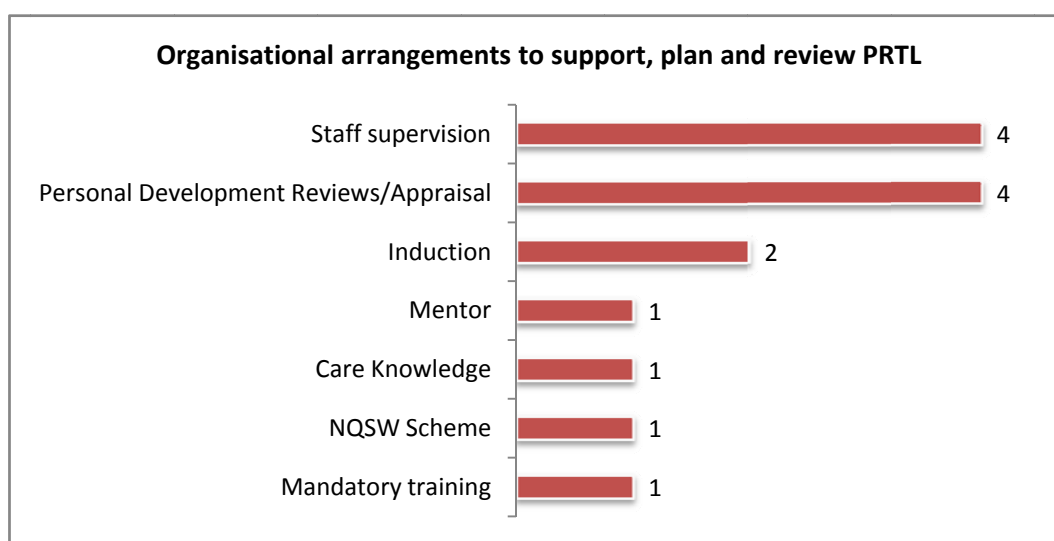*'Mostly they can use the time but sometimes there are audits ... spend more time sitting at the desk.'*

'The organisational culture is helpful.'

'PRTL is taken very seriously here. It has made the agency more accountable because training is viewed as mandatory. Now, if someone does not turn up at training the team is billed £50 for that person. This has really improved attendance at training events.'

'Their own time-management is important.'

Asked about organisational arrangements to support, plan and review newly-qualified social workers' PRTL the following responses were elicited:

Figure 18:

Organisational arrangements to support, plan and review PRTL

Category	Value
Staff supervision	4
Personal Development Reviews/Appraisal	4
Induction	2
Mentor	1
Care Knowledge	1
NQSW Scheme	1
Mandatory training	1

'Supervision and appraisal are the main mechanisms for our workers. The training manager would get feedback and use this to plan specific learning to support newly-qualified social workers and develop a training plan.'

'... I also seek to support newly-qualified social workers' learning through supervision.'

5.2.5: Resources used for learning

We asked social workers which resources they used to support their learning. By far the most commonly used were in-house resources (covering access to journals, training provision and libraries) and continuing to access university resources. Very few had used either the Learning Exchange or the Continuous Learning Framework (Scottish Government, 2008), and five had not heard of either.

Figure 19:

What kinds of resources did you use?

Resource	Value
In house resources	26
General internet usage	11
University library	9
Self directed reading	3
Qualifying course materials	2
Materials from other agencies (e.g NHS)	2
CLF	2
Learning Exchange	2
SSKS	1
Online communities	1
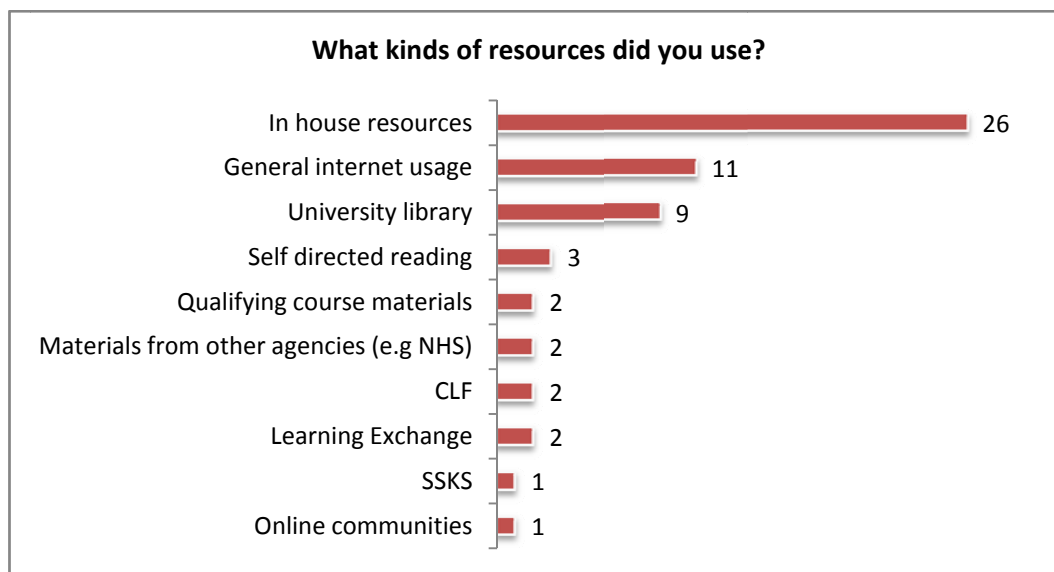
A small number used the internet to source materials and individuals made mention of IDOX and Social Services Knowledge Scotland. Two social workers referred to difficulties they experienced with their organisations' filtering systems which made accessing some materials through the internet difficult or impossible.

5.2.6: Extent to which social workers chose their learning activities

Figure 20:

To what extent did you choose your learning activities (rather than your employer)?

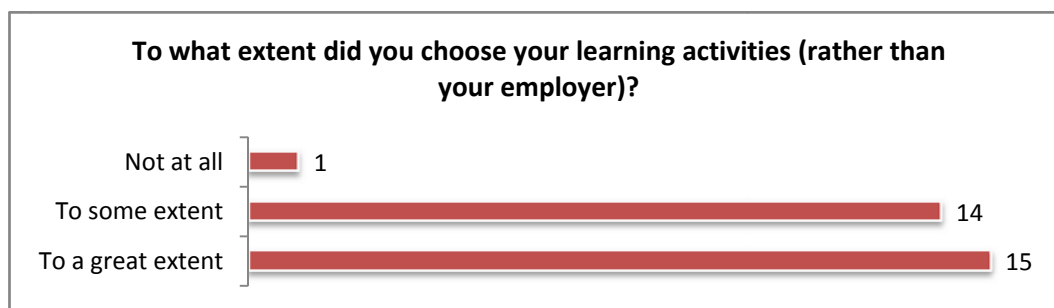| Extent	Value
Not at all	1
To some extent	14
To a great extent	15

Figure 20 indicates that the social workers interviewed exercised a significant degree of control over their learning activities, and this may be interpreted in a number of ways. It may suggest that the organisations concerned encourage and allow workers to take responsibility for their own learning, and if this is the case it may be expected that workers would report a high degree of control over which learning activities they undertake. It may also indicate that managers use an effective and collaborative approach to managing learning. An alternative interpretation might be that managers were insufficiently involved in the choices made by newly-qualified about how best to meet their professional development needs. Another theme that emerged in response to this question is that some social workers seemed to feel abandoned with the task of arranging their own PRTL activity and that their decisions about learning activities were not based on an agreed development plan.

However, many responses to this question and others suggested that the process for managing learning took place to a great extent within the context of supervision. Most (n = 21) of those

interviewed were frequently unclear about the links between organisational objectives and individual learning. This might suggest that some learning activities were not explicitly linked to organisational objectives either by managers or by the learning providers.

Our interviews showed that the over-whelming majority of newly-qualified social workers chose their own learning activities rather than their being chosen for them by their managers, although some areas were clearly accepted by social workers as being essential or mandatory and therefore not negotiable. The area specifically mentioned in this regard was child protection training.

When asked about the extent to which supervision does or does not allow them to reflect on their PRTL, respondents were given a definition of reflection to ensure that our meaning was clear. This described reflection as: *'Self-observing and reporting actions to raise awareness of underlying assumptions, reasons and feelings*.' (Gould and Taylor, 1996)

Two social workers told us that they had not experienced regular supervision in their new roles. Ten of our interviewees (n = 24) told us that their supervision tended to be case-focused, centring more on caseload management than on developmental aspects of the social workers' work.

Seven social workers told us that their supervision had allowed them to reflect on their PRTL to a great extent, 11 to some extent, five to a little extent, and seven not at all.

Comments made by others about this aspect of supervision included:

> *'It was not always a specific agenda item.'*

> *'Because the agency was new to PRTL supervision did not focus on this.'*

> *'It's an opportunity to explore, reflect and discuss interactions and interventions. This happens all the time in supervision.'*

> *'It was just at the level of how good the training was, not much more than that.'*

> *'I used supervision to talk about my needs as these arose from working with particular families ...'*

Of the 12 managers who gave examples, all of them believed that their supervision did help with reflection:
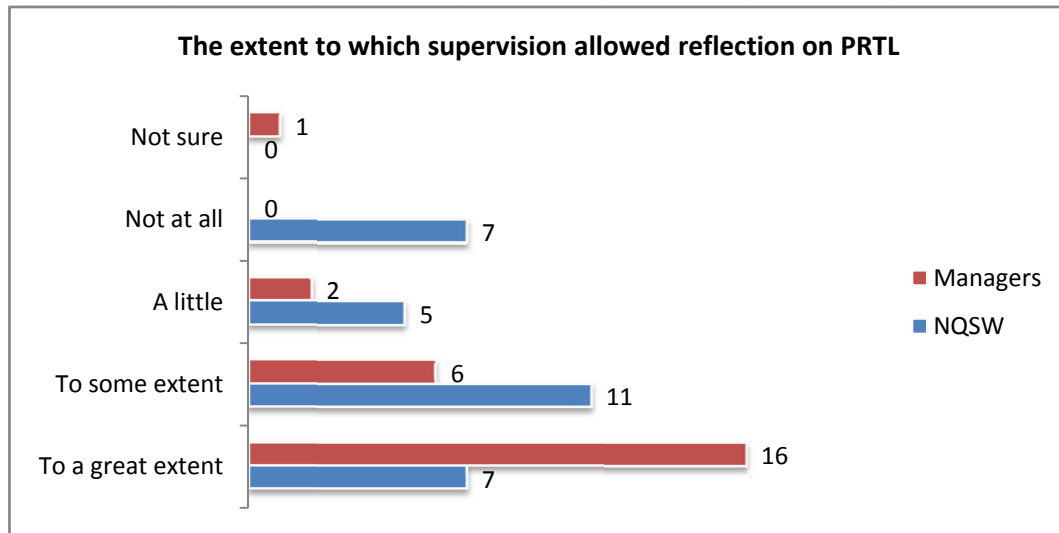
Comments made by managers about this aspect of supervision included:

> *'Supervision is structured and includes training, development, reflection and planning.'*

> *'After a child protection core group we discuss the worker's feelings, draw out observations about the group dynamics and analyse these, ask what does research say about some of the issues.'*

'Because of the business model supervision is now very task-oriented – it's about signing case records, undertaking case reviews every three months..The business model is not good at teasing out how the worker feels, especially if they feel they have not done well. ... Supervision contains not much focus on the worker at all.'

Figure 21:

The extent to which supervision allowed reflection on PRTL

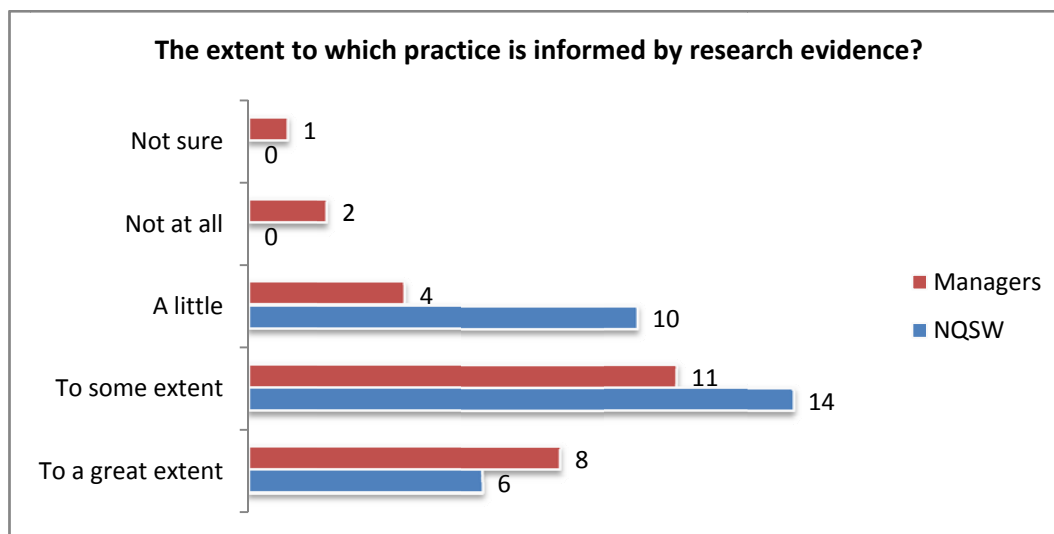| Category	Managers	NQSW
Not sure	1	0
Not at all	0	7
A little	2	5
To some extent	6	11
To a great extent	16	7

Although social workers' and managers' responses to this question indicate that in broad terms supervision does allow for reflection on PRTL, there is a difference between the two, with managers suggesting that reflection takes place to a great extent, as opposed to social workers who thought it happened to a lesser degree. This is reflected in research on different perceptions of supervision elsewhere which suggests that workload management and accountability issues sometimes take priority over reflective discussion and developmental content (Hughes and Pengelly, 1997).

5.2.7: Post- Registration Training and Learning and Practice

Articulating the place of some key elements of practice for newly-qualified social workers was identified as important for the SSSC. This part of the interview looked at these aspects of practice and began by asking social workers about the extent to which newly-qualified social workers' practice is informed by research evidence.

Figure 22:

The extent to which practice is informed by research evidence?

Response	Managers	NQSW
Not sure	1	0
Not at all	2	0
A little	4	10
To some extent	11	14
To a great extent	8	6

There was general agreement that practice was informed by research evidence, with line managers indicating that this was the case slightly more than the social workers. Amongst the social workers, there was a common view that this was something that they should do more often, but that the daily demands of caseloads precluded getting time to do so.

 Despite the positive responses to this question very few concrete examples were forthcoming. General reference was made to information on domestic violence, In Control, risk assessment, strengths focus, and assessment skills but there were no direct linkages made between research on specific areas with pieces of work or individual service users or families. There was also a lack of clarity in responses about the differences between research, theory and policy.

Newly-qualified social workers mentioned the following when talking about research evidence:

> *'I'd like to be doing more – I do a lot of home study and plan to continue doing so.'*
>
> *'Bowlby's attachment theory – we use this all the time.'*
>
> *'Not much time to follow up research during the working week.'*
>
> *'This is something I strive to do ... researching theory and new legislation.'*
>
> *'Work in a local authority is influenced by processes, systems and guidance. I did my own research on a substance misusing mother. My work is rooted in research but time constraints make this more difficult.'*

When managers were asked to give examples of newly-qualified social workers' practice being informed by research evidence, few gave specific illustrations. Phrases such as *'He uses it a lot'* , *'We cover this in team meetings'*, *'At first he didn't use it much, but this increases over time'* and *'When new stuff comes in we pass it around and generally get a good response'* were used. Two examples given were:

> *'Newly-qualified social workers are able to empower and enable service users to participate and to find ways to meet particular challenges and difficulties. They are very aware of what was in the 21st Century Review.'*

'She uses her reading to inform her assessments and reports'

Some other responses were:

'I don't really see this in practice. It's difficult to find study time during work hours.'

'I'm appalled and horrified at the lack of supporting evidence and research in assessments by newly-qualified social workers. There is a real diminishing picture in newly-qualified social workers in this regard.'

'This is dependent on individuals and the receptiveness of social workers.'

There was general agreement that practice was informed by research evidence, with managers indicating that this was the case (19 of the 26 interviewed said to some or a great extent) slightly more than the social workers (20 of the 30 interviewed said to some or a great extent). Amongst the social workers there was a common view that this was something that they should do more, but that the daily demands of caseloads often prevented them. It would, perhaps be useful, if the argument could be made and accepted that research can actually *save* time and improve outcomes for service users. It is also clear from the responses from both groups that research is often taken to be reading of any type, often around policy and procedure, rather than the more widely-accepted definition of research.

Managers and social workers were asked to what extent newly-qualified social workers provide a personalised service. The definition of personalisation used here is: *'Personalisation enables 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 ad shaping the services they receive' (Scottish Government, 2007).*

In general both managers and social workers had a positive view of the extent of personalisation offered by newly-qualified social workers.

Figure 23:
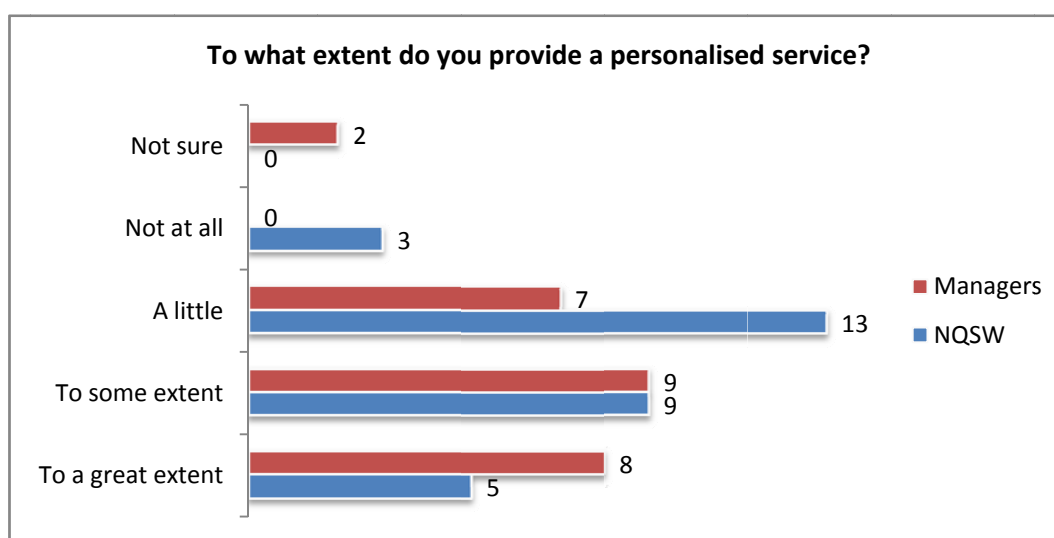
A slightly higher proportion of line managers than social workers thought that social workers were providing a personalised service to a great extent, whilst almost half of the social workers thought that they did so to a little extent.

Most of the responses from social workers suggested that giving a personalised service is still an aspiration for many staff:

> *'The care plan is a personalised service.'*

> *'It's more about what's available than what people would like ... also eligibility criteria are very tight – only high level needs are met.'*

> *'That's a hard question – I really don't know.'*

> *'I try to do what I can in my work ... but organisationally we are a long way off.'*

Others were able to talk about their work in a way which suggested they were trying hard to give an individualised service, even if was not personalised in as fulsome a way as Changing Lives (Scottish Executive, 2007) intended:

> *'I am and always have been fully committed to enabling and empowering service users to play a full and active role in the service they receive. I do this by developing good trusting relationships with parents and together assessing at what level I pitch any support. All information verbal and, if required written, should be in simple clear English (or translated if required) to ensure that service users actually understand what is being said. I also make them fully aware of their rights and responsibilities.'*

> *'We carry out an assessment ... it's done with full involvement of service users and their carers and teachers ... it's a collective thing.'*

> *'I work for a local authority so services are not individualised. My job is to advocate for service users and advise them they don't have to take the services that are on offer. They can say 'No' to one-size-fits-all'.*

> *'There are barriers and constraints but a person-centred approach underpins all my practice. I always try to involve people in planning their services.'*

Managers did not find it easy to give examples of personalisation, however, and those that were given tended to be more about delivering an individualised services rather than a personalised one. In this way they seemed to share the understanding of personalisation implied in newly-qualified social workers' comments.

> *'She considered each service user as an individual.'*

> *'We avoid an approach that depends on the concept of thresholds of need, and provide individualised services reflected in care plans.'*

> *'This isn't a very relevant question to us in practice.'*

> *'It's complicated ... you start doing that but resources restrict this ... the team practice is very much based on principles of personalisation ... but there was a major organisational conflict where the personalisation agenda was in conflict with resource and agency directives ... moving from needs led to resource-led'*

Responses that reflected greater involvement of service users in determining a service response included:

'They establish the importance of feedback and communication.'

'They are expected to do this by the department, to empower clients but they are also under a lot of constraints, especially with the statutory requirements from the Children's Hearing. The value base of most newly-qualified social workers is quite strong around choice and this fits well with personalisation.'

'Social policy has moved towards this. We have developed our own assessment process that allows for a lot of self-assessment. But what you want and what you get are not necessarily the same.'

'Our council has signed up to 'In Control' and is piloting it. Each social worker has their own spend limit to work within and has therefore some control over setting up their own service.'
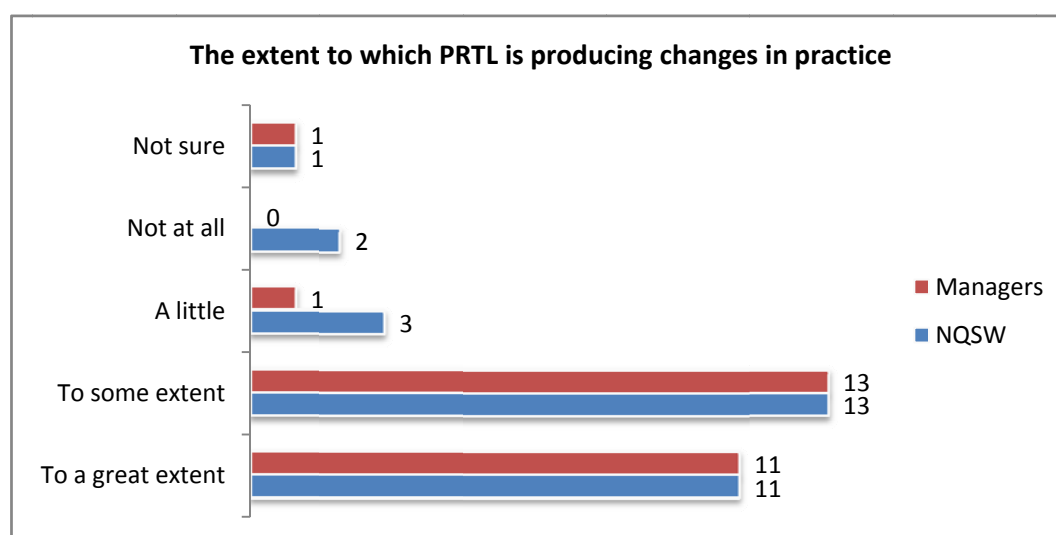
The implications of these findings on personalisation will be explored in the section on service users' and carers' views.

5.2.8: Post- Registration Training and Learning Implementation

In the final section of the interview schedule newly-qualified social workers were asked whether their PRTL is making a difference to the service provided and given the prompt that this may relate to knowledge, skills and values that may have developed in the course of undertaking their PRTL. The majority of both social worker and manager respondents (n = 24) stated that it did, either very much so or to some extent. In their comments newly-qualified social workers made mention of increasing confidence, knowledge and understanding.

Changes to practice and services

Figure 24:

The extent to which PRTL is producing changes in practice

Category	Managers	NQSW
Not sure	1	1
Not at all	0	2
A little	1	3
To some extent	13	13
To a great extent	11	11

Social workers talked of *'giving an understanding of procedures and professional issues'*, and *'reinforcing the need to reflect on practice'*. Some interviewees took this opportunity to comment on PRTL as a whole:

'I was glad when it was over ... I had less stress ... when you're newly-qualified it's the last thing you need.'

'If this requirement wasn't there you wouldn't push yourself to attend so much training. You do it because you have to.'

'... being responsible for my own training and making sure the time is set aside has given me more confidence ... when I was new and felt unsure, having the opportunity to learn and reflect was helpful ... without this I might have left children's services ... you need intensive support.'

Managers were asked the same question and then to give examples. The main features identified as practice changes related to issues such as enhanced confidence, moving from a theoretical approach to a more practical basis, improved time management and having a stronger skill base.

Particular comments made included:

'One example is a SW who had done a SW course and psychology degree ... had used this to develop and value their experience as a learner ... reflecting on being a learner and being a worker and making the relevant link ... went on to use this experience to shape how they worked with families and children.'

'In one case she found her own morality conflicted with that of the client ... in understanding another person's perception ... the learning she did on cultural understanding helped her manage this situation more effectively.'

Newly-qualified social workers and managers were asked about the extent to which they believed PRTL produced changes to the service to particular services users and/or carers.

Figure 25:
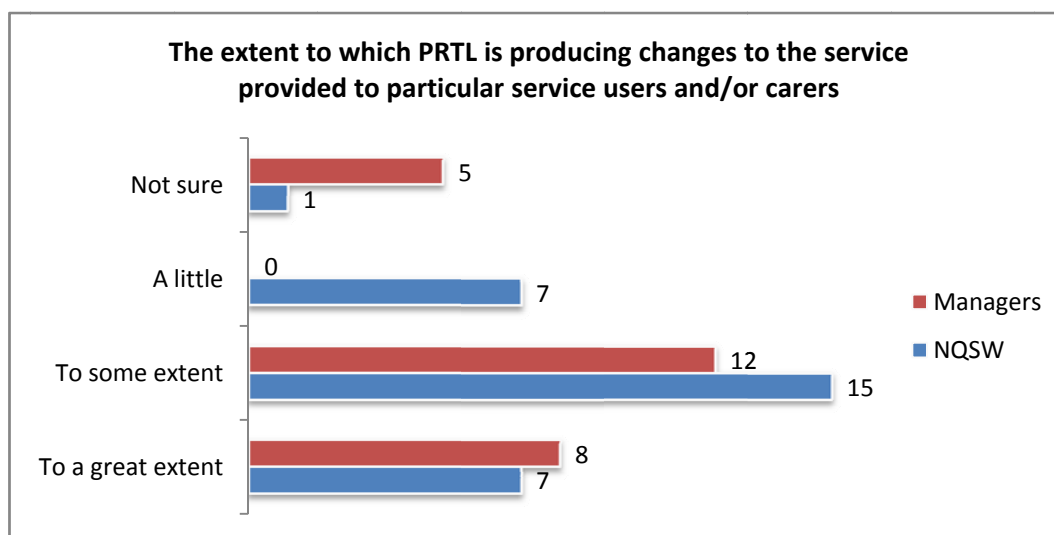
Twenty of the 26 managers, and 27 of the 30 social workers interviewed, stated that PRTL activity had led to changes in practice. The responses to the previous question "*Has PRTL produced changes in service provision?*" produced similar responses, although when asked to give examples of changes to the service provided to particular service users and carers interviewees, responses tended to be fairly general. However, some specific topics were mentioned as having been important: one talked about court skills training that enabled him to manage others' expectations of the process, another mentioned a programme on Signs of Safety that has been taken into the

daily practice of the workplace and a third referred to being able to use learning about the Independent Living Fund to obtain funding for a client and being able to use a programme on managing children's behaviour to provide advice to parents. While these respondents did not cite detailed examples of where their learning had changed the service, they did offer insights into improvements to the service received by some service users.

Mention was also made of training on vulnerable adults, and motivational interviewing techniques, both of which were seen as having practical utility within the workplace. Other comments included:

'It consolidated my learning and empowered me to effect changes in my practice.'

'The biggest thing was the discussion we had as a team about risk assessment ... there is such a thing as healthy risk ... taking risks helps clients to be aware of the dangers too.'

'The vulnerable adults training had a big impact, making me more aware of adult support and protection.'

'Kinship care ... this was new to me when I started work, and now I have looked at this for my PRTL I'm using this knowledge more to help families ... by accessing resources to help grandparents who are caring for children, and to keep families together.'

The final question to managers asked if PRTL produced changes to the services they provide and sought examples. Again the examples were more general than specific:

'If you ask about training the answer is 'yes' but I don't know if PRTL makes any difference because we have always reflected on learning and used it to change services ... it's part of the team culture.'

'Their knowledge of resources and interventions is better now, better than it was in the past. It helps the professional credibility of social work and is good for the agency. If it wasn't for PRTL we would not have created three level child protection training.'

More detailed examples included:

'We had a charitable fund to help service users. The newly-qualified social worker stopped and asked questions about how we used it. Is this promoting dependency, or is it really needs-led? Her approach prompted debate in the team about how they used the fund.'

'Workers are more thoughtful about the services they provide and aware of the importance of research ... for example, workers have used research on fostering to inform what they did with families ... also using specific assessment frameworks ... rather than a more ad hoc approach.'

5.3: Conclusions from Interviews with Newly-Qualified Social Workers and Managers

The interviews with newly-qualified social workers indicated the impact of uncertainties that existed for this group. They were participants in a new scheme and one on which their future careers depended. Some were able to see the potential positives of the process, while others saw it as a range of hoops which had to be jumped through. We saw some excellent examples of social workers, their teams and service users benefitting from the learning that took place as a result of PRTL.

We also saw how systematic some employers were, usually through their learning and development staff, in making arrangements to support PRTL, and how much these were appreciated by newly qualified social workers. Embedding PRTL in induction was a good example of one way in which this was done, and this furnished us with examples of the efforts some organisations were making towards becoming learning organisations. In addition it was noticeable that some newly-qualified social workers struggled to meet the requirements in organisations where there were no such arrangements and where managers had little understanding of what was needed.

Many of our interviewees found meeting the PRTL requirements an added strain on top of needing to adapt to a new role in a new organisation. Making the transition from student to social worker can be difficult. Our interviews with newly-qualified social workers revealed individual differences in how they responded to the transition, with some needing more support than was available to them.

We came across examples of newly-qualified social workers who qualified through 'non-traditional' routes (e.g. distance learning programmes, the Fast Track scheme) or who were employed either on fixed-term contracts or worked in locum agencies. For all of these groups there were problems associated with their PRTL, as they either did not receive a standard induction programme or were not eligible for particular training programmes.

Some interviewees relied substantially on experiential learning in their claims for PRTL, while others did not refer to it all. Interpretation of how this learning was gathered and recorded varied widely. Staff supervision has emerged as the focal point for many of the important processes surrounding PRTL. We heard about some newly-qualified social workers who did not have regular supervision and others who had supervision but where little reflection took place, either because the manager did not encourage it or because the organisational arrangements were such that supervision did not routinely include reflection neither on cases nor the worker's development.

Managers have a critical role in 'gate-keeping' access to learning and development activity, but the evidence from this study suggests that many are unaware of their significance in this area and may not be fully undertaking this role. The very high number of newly-qualified social workers who chose their own learning activity without either the knowledge or support of their managers suggests that this is a systemic problem rather than simply coincidence. To balance this, however, it is also clear from our interviews that having PRTL as a requirement on both employers and newly-qualified social workers has raised the profile of post-qualifying training and learning for this particular group.

The interviews with managers were also very revealing. Frequent changes of manager played havoc with arrangements for PRTL, with newly-qualified social workers feeling that they needed to steer the process themselves. Some managers had very little involvement in the arrangements for PRTL. This is disappointing to hear and must have contributed substantially to the isolation experienced by some newly-qualified social workers. It was clear that managers felt they were giving more support on meeting PRTL requirements than was experienced by newly-qualified social workers. This difference is of interest and could usefully be fed back to managers.

Our attention was drawn to the very high volume of training made available to newly-qualified social workers. At the same time we were made aware of the difficulty some managers had in engaging with the training agenda. In some cases the training appeared to be happening without clear contextualisation and with few, if any, links to practice.

The nature of organisational learning structures and processes and the contribution of learning and development staff was of key importance to the success or otherwise of PRTL arrangements. There were examples of excellent practice in integrating individual learning and development with wider learning goals and strategies, though there were many other organisations where these were less well developed.

The contribution of qualifying programmes to PRTL has been experienced by our interviewees as highly variable. It would appear that more emphasis on this would be very helpful to beginning social workers, especially as some will be working in organisations without highly developed systems for supporting PRTL, although this was by no means the only group who would benefit.

6: INTERVIEWS WITH SERVICE USERS AND CARERS

6.1: Methodology

In this section we report on a series of interviews with groups representing service users and carers. We would have liked to interview clients of the social workers involved in this study but this proved impossible in the timescale. Working with representative groups, however, has certain advantages in research terms. Service user and carers themselves state that:

> *'User involvement is too often based on the participation of an individual or individuals'*

while

> *'working through organisations provides the basis for broader involvement facilitated by people who are better placed to represent a range of service users' perspectives.'*

(Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2008, 1,)

Participation on a purely individual basis tends to narrow down the scope for service users and carers to comment and can reduce the potential impact of their views. By enabling representative groups to provide a critical commentary on our emerging findings we hoped to give them greater opportunity to comment on key research themes and allow them a say in how some of the material was interpreted. There are a number of supports in the literature for involving service users and carers in research in this way. The Department of Health, for example, emphasises that service user involvement in research means:

> *'... more than asking people to share their views on a particular topic or issue. Service users can also be involved in planning or making decisions about the research itself, in undertaking research and in evaluating research.'*

(Department of Health, 2006, 1)

This is supported by Bradburn, et al. (2004) who encourage researchers to consult with people who use services *'about the analysis and interpretation of research results'* (Bradburn, et al., 2004, 34). Involving service users about these areas can have a number of benefits, including improving the relevance of research, bringing benefits to the service users involved and ensuring that research meets policy targets (Department of Health, 2006).

Two Groups were involved: the University of Dundee Service User and Carer Group and the Tayside Carers Support Project National Schizophrenia Fellowship Scotland. The University of Dundee Service User and Carer Group is involved in the teaching and assessment of social work students. The Tayside Carers Support Project provides support to carers who have a relative or a friend with a serious mental illness. A series of interviews took place as follows. Individuals are referred to by pseudonyms.

1: A focus group comprising three carers from the University of Dundee Service User and Carer Group (Ann, Karen and Adam).

2: An individual interview with a service user from the University of Dundee Service User and Carer Group (Colin).

3: An interview with two service users from the University of Dundee Service User and Carer Group conducted on behalf of the research team by a staff member from Fife Council. These service users wished their views to be expressed collectively (Janet and Bruce).

4: An interview with the Carer Involvement Facilitator from the Tayside Carers Support Project NSF Scotland.

All interviews took place face to face. In interviews 1, 2 and 4 the process took the following form. The background, context and aims of the evaluation of PRTL for newly-qualified social workers were outlined. Then some initial findings on personalisation from the evaluation were presented. These findings focussed on newly-qualified social workers' views on the extent to which they had been able to implement personalisation. Service users and carers were invited to comment on the findings. Then we used three questions to focus their critical commentary on both the comments of the social workers and our emerging understanding of their significance. The questions were:

- To what extent do you think service users and carers select and shape the services they receive?
- What difference does the individual social worker make to the service received?
- What could social work managers do to help service users and carers select and shape the services they receive?

In interview (3) the service users responded to the three questions without having the opportunity to hear the outline of the emerging research findings. Their views are included here because they nevertheless help to throw light on the issues raised by social workers' views on personalisation. See *Appendix 5: Research Outline for Service Users and Carers* and *Appendix 6: Presentation to Carers Focus Group*

In the following discussion we briefly recapitulate our findings in relation to newly qualified social workers' views on personalisation. We then summarise the views and interpretations offered by service users and carers in relation to two themes – the influence of the individual social worker and the meaning of personalisation.

6.2: Findings from Interviews with Service Users and Carers

6.2.1: Newly-Qualified Social Workers' Views on Personalisation

As we saw earlier in this report, social workers generally felt that they implemented personalisation 'to some extent' or 'a little'. Those who felt they did provide a personalised service emphasised their own individual responsiveness and personal commitment to the values of personalisation. There were also, however, a number of statements that pointed to barriers and limitations to personalisation. These were located by social workers in the systems and processes around them in their organisations.

We invited service users and carers to comment upon this finding and our preliminary interpretations of it. We focussed on the respective weight given by social workers to their personal influence on one hand and the constraints of the organisational context on the other. We pointed to the possibility that some social workers might be overestimating their personal

influence and underestimating the significance of organisational constraints. There were other social workers, however, who seemed to underestimate their personal influence especially those who felt they did not provide a personalised service at all. Finally, it seemed that the majority of newly qualified social workers occupied the middle territory where they saw themselves implementing personalisation 'to some extent' or 'a little'. This would suggest that most actively grapple with the concept of personalisation and the tension between personal influence and organisational constraint that it clearly involves for them.

6.2.2: The Influence of the Individual Social Worker

The responses of service users and carers to these findings provided strong support for the notion that the attitudes and efforts of individual social workers made a great difference to the service provided.

> *'It makes a huge difference. It makes you feel jubilant, you feel there is hope ... the social worker brings hope. When I was at my lowest ebb the Care Manager was my guardian angel'* (Adam)

> *'Our care manager was brilliant, first rate...'* (Ann)

> *'I've seen many social workers and know the difference it can make to quality of life'* (Karen)

> *'This makes a massive difference. Carers are always saying 'I've got a really good worker' and praise the people that are really good. The person and their personality are so important. It's about how that person chooses to do their job. This can make a huge difference either way.'* (Carer Involvement Facilitator)

> *'It makes a huge amount of difference ...'* (Ann)

The positive attributions to social workers echo other findings on what service users and carers look for from social workers [Levin, 2004, 35, for example]. They include:

Genuine interest in people

> *'… they have a genuine interest in people. Some think it might be an easy way to make money but with no humanity and understanding of what they're dealing with. It's not about money and ambition. It's about listening and listening intently and not being judgemental.'* (Colin)

> *'Good eye contact ... take their time to listen to the service users' needs. Understanding the Service Users needs.'* (Janet and Bruce)

Responsiveness

> *It's about being available and responsive to carers. Carers need to feel that they can phone them up and they'll respond when they have a problem'* (Carer Involvement Facilitator)

Trust and Dependability

> *'Trust is really important especially in mental health ... trust and continuity. Once you have got that trust it can be difficult to build it all up again with a new person. Sometimes*

workers move on quite quickly which makes continuity much more difficult.' (Carer Involvement Facilitator)

'*Good time keeping'* (Janet and Bruce)

Willingness to Advocate for the User or Carer

'*... (it depends) on how much this individual social worker is willing to fight your cause. Some are willing to pull out all the stops, for example to get you a taxi service.' (Ann)*

'*the Care Manager organised respite care and upped it when needed, she always found the money to get the resources.'* (Adam)

Overall, therefore, the comments of service users and carers support the expressed intention of social workers in this study to *'include people and their views', '…offer opportunities to decide and give opinions on care plans'* and *'encourage families to attend meetings and have their say'*. As one of the carers interviewed here said, *''Social workers can really empower you and make you feel you are a partner'* (Ann).

The value of the personal service was underlined by one service user who suggested that newly-qualified social workers should be protected, particularly in their first years of practice.

'*There are limits on what the social worker can do depending on the attitude of the service users. If you've had a bad social worker or you're just bloody minded or your expectations are unrealistic. A newly-qualified social worker can get a person like that and this can put doubts in their head about their ability. You need to warn social workers about that. They tell lawyers 'don't expect to win every case' and the same should go for social workers so they don't expect to win every case. All they can do is their best and try not to take it personally. It is important not to put social workers in positions where they have a lot of responsibility too early. They need nurtured and protected in their first years.'* (Colin)

6.2.3: Service Users' and Carers' Views on Personalisation

While the views of service users and carers supported some aspects of social workers' views they also qualified them in important ways. When asked *'To what extent do service users and carers shape and select the services they receive?'* carers did not refer to the individual social worker but to the extent to which carers linked up and joined forces with other users and carers.

'*This depends on users and carers' knowledge of what's available and what links and networks you have to other service users and carers. The National Schizophrenia Fellowship managed to change the decision to centralise mental health services in Dundee. This was because of our power as a vocal and organised group of service users and carers. We were able to influence decisions and had real power. We were prepared to use the complaints system and challenge decisions. Most people don't complain, they sit back and accept decisions.' (*Karen)

'*Social workers tell us about lots of things but in a vague way without the details. There is a lack of good communication about what's going on and what could help. Usually networks of users and carers are much more effective.'* (Ann)

These comments bring us back to a consideration of the concept of personalisation itself. Leadbeater & Lownsbrough (2005) identify three strands to personalisation and each of these strands refers to systemic features of service design and delivery rather than any changes to the practice or attitude of individual workers. Indeed, they explicitly state that the person-centred ideals of social workers can be frustrated by systemic limitations.

> *'Many professional social workers feel de-motivated and demoralised because their scope for using their judgement and discretion has been so circumscribed by rules and lack of resources. Social work is formally committed to the delivery of a set of goals … which embrace the ideals of person-centred support … yet the system works to a completely different logic to control risk and resources.'* (Leadbeater and Lownsbrough, 2005, 20)

The three strands of personalisation as defined by Leadbeater & Lownsbrough are as follows:

> *1: Personalisation as prevention through generating 'a distributive capacity for preventative solutions and self-management'.*

> *2: Personalisation with complex cases where users are provided with 'tools to help plan and visualise what they want and budgets to implement their decisions'*

> *3: Personalisation applied to 'the experience of using and consuming services' where services are tailored to individual requirements. This tends to refer to features such as opening times, reliability of delivery and so on.'*

> (Leadbeater and Lownsbrough, 2005, 35)

The comments from service users and carers tend to support this more systemic understanding of personalisation. When carers talk about the effectiveness of carer networks in distributing information about services this is reminiscent of personalisation as prevention. When carers and users stress the importance of including them at the planning and design of services this resonates with the second and third strands of personalisation as outlined by Leadbeater and Lownsbrough:

> *'(Managers should) create more consultation with users and carers and commission users and carers to design services … but make sure they are 'live' service users. There are some people who say they are service users but haven't used services for years.'* (Karen)

> *'(social work managers) need more awareness of personalisation at an individual level and then actively influence a different way of commissioning and delivering services.'* (Karen)

> *'There are social work planning teams in (my local authority) that are a mixture of managers and representatives from disability groups, parent of disabled children. It's about creating opportunities for influence at that level.'* (Ann)

In order to make best use of any opportunities to get involved in this way, however, users and carers suggested that they may need some help. Two service users mentioned the help they had received from their local authority, including assertiveness training:

> *'There were lots of different things we did, like going on an assertiveness course, which helped service users deal with different situations. After the course we did feel more confident to express our needs.'* (Janet and Bruce)

This was echoed by a carer when he pointed out that not all carers participate in carers' networks and consequently often receive a poorer service:

'You don't see the ones who just accept what happens. Most people don't know about the service user and carer groups and might not even realise they are 'a carer'. Even the knowledgeable ones can be intimidated by formal meetings.' (Adam)

The Carer Involvement Facilitator highlighted the support carers may need with new initiatives like direct payments:

'A lot of carers need more information on direct payments and can be quite wary of it, don't fully understand how it will work. It seems difficult ... more forms, more responsibility. There is a cost to taking more control and it is not as simple as it sounds. There will be a lot of additional work for carers and this is not often recognised.' (Carer Involvement Facilitator)

6.3: Conclusions from the interviews with Service Users and Carers

In this section we have shown how we included service users and carers as active participants in the research process. We did this by eliciting their commentary on our emerging findings in relation to newly-qualified social workers' views on personalisation.

Service users and carers provided strong support for the social workers' sense that, by their own efforts, they could make the service more relevant and responsive to the needs of service users and carers. Indeed, so important is the 'human resource' in this context that one service user made a special plea for newly-qualified social workers to be nurtured and supported during their first years in practice.

Carers and people who use services, however, seemed to be working with a different understanding of personalisation than the one used by social workers. Social workers' understanding of personalisation emphasised individual responsiveness on the part of the social worker, albeit limited by organisational constraints. Service users and carers, however, seemed to have a more systemic understanding of personalisation. They emphasised formal and informal carer and service user networks and the inclusion of carers and users in the design and planning of services. They also made a number of important points about the kind of help service users and carers may need to participate fully in personalisation at this level.

7: CONCLUSIONS

The aims set for the study by the SSSC were:

- To identify whether submissions show *evidence of reflection on practice* over a specified period of time.

- To analyse the *types of learning* utilised in submissions of PRTL from newly-qualified social workers (e.g. study, training courses, seminars, reading, teaching or other activities).

- To conduct interviews with newly-qualified social workers and managers of newly-qualified social workers to ascertain *levels of support* offered, tools and resources utilised (e.g. CLF) and unmet support needs.

- To conduct interviews with users of services and their carers to begin seeking *evidence on the extent to which the user and carer experience influences practice.*

- To identify *the use of research-based evidence* informing newly-qualified social workers' practice.

The conclusions from the study as a whole are collected together under each separate aim.

7.1: Evidence of Reflection on Practice

The SSSC's guidance documents on PRTL (SSSC, 2008 and 2009) refer to reflection in several places and in several different ways. There is no specific information given about how much reflection is enough, although the presentations to newly-qualified social workers by SSSC staff did include the statement that a number of submissions were rejected on the basis that they were: *'overly descriptive at the expense of reflection'.* Without knowing which of our sample were successful and which were not, it is not easy to see if there were variations between the Advisors when deciding whether or not to accept a submission. If decisions about accepting a submission for PRTL are made on the basis of insufficient reflection, it seems important that newly-qualified social workers and employers are given guidance about how much is enough. Furthermore, different terms are used in a way that is potentially unhelpful. These include: *reflection on practice, reflection on learning and a reflective approach*. Again, examples would help to make clear what is sought here.

Questions identified in the body of the report are, perhaps, useful here. They are:

- How much 'description at the expense of reflection' would be deemed unsatisfactory?

- Is it enough to say, as some newly-qualified social workers did 'this training has given me these skills, this knowledge and consolidated my values'?

- Is it enough for a newly-qualified social worker to say 'I have increased my confidence in this area as a result'?

- What proportion of the recording needs to show evidence of reflection on practice?

Notwithstanding the definitional issues referred to above, we did see some evidence of reflection in the RoAs, though not in all, by any means. There were excellent examples of both reflection on

learning and reflection on practice. The interviews with both social workers and managers suggested that there is an expectation by the majority of managers and social workers that reflection is a recognised and important activity within the workplace. It was also clear that staff supervision is a place where both parties expect reflection to take place. The differences between the perceptions of newly-qualified social workers and managers on how much this happens routinely is of interest and possibly worthy of further investigation.

7.2: Types of Learning

Our examination of the RoAs and our interviews gave us useful insights into the types of learning that were regarded by newly-qualified social workers as PRTL. The range of types was very wide, and it is clear from newly-qualified social workers that they benefited a great deal from their learning experiences. Many of them could have improved the extent and manner in which they exemplified how their learning had impacted on their practice as there was a tendency to be general rather than specific in their answers. Managers made similar assertions about the benefits to practice, though they seemed unable to give specific examples. We did not doubt that learning did indeed inform practice, but were unable to find convincing evidence about precisely where and how this had happened. This may be as a result of one or more of several phenomena.

Firstly some training programmes do not make explicit what they expect participants to be able to do differently as a result of the training. Secondly, training often occurs where there is little clarity between staff and their managers about the organisation's expectations of participants once they have completed the programme. This study indicates that newly-qualified social workers tend to select their own learning activities. This may, in turn, suggest that the linkage between learning and practice is not part of the routine communication between manager and practitioner.

It is also well-known that unless participants in a learning programme have the opportunity to practise new learning very soon after the learning event, the chances of them retaining and using learning are very small indeed (Burke and Hutchins, 2007; Tamkin et al, 2002). This draws attention to the essential involvement of managers in the learning of their staff prior to a learning event, so that expectations are shared and agreed and opportunities to practice discussed and put in place prior to the programme itself. Thirdly, there is a very great deal of training taking place in social services organisations, which will have implications for both participants, their managers, colleagues and service users. Relating to the second point above, if managers were to be involved to the extent that research on learning transfer suggests that they should be, they would have little time for anything else. The question arises, then, about whether it would be better for staff to do less training but for the organisation to approach it rather more systematically in order to ensure that learning 'sticks' and is transferred into practice.

Learning from experience is a valued and central part of how practitioners develop their repertoires of interventions and approaches. Our study suggested that newly-qualified social workers appreciate and value this type of learning too. It may be useful if the SSSC made clearer their own expectations in this regard, so that it is more widely recognised as a legitimate learning activity for PRTL purposes. It would also be helpful if Advisors clarified what is enough or too much of this type of learning.

Some RoAs contained excellent examples of experiential learning and they were used to good effect in identifying the learning that took place and how it was subsequently applied. We did not, however, find this routinely. Training programmes were the single most commonly cited type of learning. While other types were cited they were considerably lower in frequency and extent than training courses. It seemed reasonable to be asking whether this is what either the SSSC or employers really want for their staff or whether there is merit in supporting and encouraging a more inquiring approach to self-directed study. This was illuminated to some degree by newly-qualified social worker' responses to our questions about the resources they used. Readily-available sources such as SSKS and the Learning Exchange were relatively rarely used. Why was this and what could be done about it? This is a significant question given the emphasis on e-learning in current educational strategy for social workers especially as it might be expected that newly-qualified social workers would be more willing and able to use e-learning than others.

In relation to the stipulations by the SSSC on learning about protecting service users and the public, there are several ways in which this is described within the guidance. At points the main issue seems to be risk assessment and management and in others it appears to be protection. While these issues are related, they are not exactly the same. To some extent this was evident in the way in which learning about either risk or protection was variously interpreted by registrants, and presumably by Advisors. These are critical areas for social work practice and it is important that there are no misunderstandings about what is intended.

There is a very marked difference between the amount of learning reported in relation to adult protection and that reported in relation to child protection which is not explained by reference to the setting in which social workers were employed. This cannot be what was intended by the SSSC when the requirements were drawn up and merits further inquiry.

7.3: Support for PRTL

Our interviews and analysis of RoAs showed that patterns of support for newly-qualified social workers and their PRTL were varied. Some organisations had a highly organised programme for newly-qualified social workers with a number of elements and backed with rich resources and supports. In others, newly-qualified social workers seemed to struggle almost entirely on their own.

Clearly the size of organisations and the number of newly-qualified social workers employed at any one time have a significant impact on the range and quantity of resources employers are able to devote to supporting this group. However, we found no examples of employers who had co-operated with neighbouring employers as a way of pooling and sharing resources, despite the prompts contained in the SSSC guidance to employers.

Views from newly-qualified social workers about the extent of their employers' support varied, though in the main it was rated positively. Disappointingly, some managers had very little idea of what PRTL involved, its purpose or where they fitted in to the process. This must have been very hard for the newly-qualified staff they managed.

Overall, newly-qualified social workers appreciated the help given to them by their employers. In particular, group activities for newly-qualified social workers were very much valued by their members, and it seemed that they offered a different and important dimension to the process.

In general, the support for PRTL was good. Both social workers and managers evaluated the impact of PRTL positively and stated that it made a difference to practice and that this made a difference to service users. Its benefits for individuals, service users, teams and organisations were understood and valued. The amount of effort that was directed towards supporting it varied, but was mostly enough. The involvement of learning and development staff in the process seemed to have a very positive impact and led to a more systematic and systemic approach.

The resources most used for PRTL were, usually, those available in-house. While these may have been excellent, it is a pity that wider sources were not used more. A few individuals made mention of use of the internet. Books were mentioned more often than research articles, which suggests that either they were seen as more widely available or were seen as more accessible in terms of their style and language, as this is commonly cited as the reason for their infrequent use (Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2004).

7.4: Evidence on the Extent to which Service Users' and Carers' Experience Influences Practice

Our interviews with service users and carers were revealing in a number of ways. It was interesting that their understanding of personalisation differed from that shown in our interviews with social workers, and was much closer to the definition we chose for the study[2]. This definition is explicit in requiring the involvement of service users and carers in designing and delivering services. The interviews with social workers and managers suggested that there is still some way to travel before we could say that social services routinely offer a personalised service. Limitations mentioned by our social workers tended to centre on organisational constraints and lack of time.

Comments from service users and carers in our interviews emphasised the significance of the social worker's conduct and style. This is entirely congruent with the work of Trotter (1999) where very straightforward behaviours such as turning up on time, returning phone calls, following matters through etc not only improved relationships between social workers and service users, but improved outcomes for service users even in what were seen as intractable and involuntary child protection and criminal justice situations.

While a good relationship between social workers and service users and carers does not, of itself, guarantee that service users and carers are empowered to influence the services they receive, it could be seen as 'necessary but not sufficient'. Without it there is little likelihood that service users and carers will feel confident enough to seek to influence their service and little possibility of

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[2] *'Personalisation enables 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, 2007)*

the kind of partnership between them that facilitates the careful negotiation that needs to take place. The data gathered in this study suggest that it would be helpful if both newly-qualified social workers and their managers could appreciate that personalisation is about systemic changes to service design and delivery rather than changes to individual practice alone. Interestingly, this more systemic view was the one held by the service users and carers interviewed for this study.

In essence, we heard about good practice where service users and carers did feel that they had an influence but we did not see convincing evidence that this is routinely the case for many service users and carers.

7.5: Use of Research-based Evidence to Inform Newly-Qualified Social Workers' Practice

We were able to explore this issue through our scrutiny of the RoAs and our interviews with newly-qualified social workers and their managers. We did find a few examples of individuals who used research as a source of data to inform their practice. These examples were relatively rare however. We noticed that research was often confused with self-directed study and reading. We found very few examples of research carried out by newly-qualified social workers.

In many ways this was hardly surprising as few of the managers interviewed made explicit reference to research and many of them dismissed it as something for which they had very little time and even, on occasion, which they felt had very little relevance to their working world. The reasons for this are well-rehearsed (Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2004) and are unlikely to be overcome without a strategic approach led by government and accepted as a priority by social services organisations. Currently, those few practitioners and managers who do regard research evidence as a useful tool often operationalise their interest in research as individuals, rather than as a result of organisational policy or practice within their organisations. There are, we know, some organisations which have made a decision to become more evidence-based and have set up a range of activities to support this. However, our study has shown that they are very much in the minority.

7.6: In Conclusion

This study has illuminated many of the issues surrounding PRTL for newly-qualified social workers. The SSSC's requirements for PRTL are relatively new, and an evaluation at this point is useful in throwing a spot-light on some of the areas that need to be examined with a view to change and in affirming those areas that are working well.

The groups set up specifically for newly-qualified social workers were the single most positively-regarded activity employers undertook to support PRTL. We heard a little about the plan by Skills for Care (England) to support action learning for all newly-qualified social workers by training action learning facilitators throughout England. This promotes organisational support for newly-qualified social workers in a very visible and systematic way and we wondered if this might be a useful step that might be considered in Scotland.

Overall, the PRTL requirements have engendered a sense that social workers' learning does not stop when they have qualified. It is clear that for the process to work well, a productive

partnership between the SSSC, universities, employers, managers, trainers and newly-qualified social workers themselves needs to be further developed and sustained so that all parties can be sure that their energies are directed in the right way.

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9: APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Schedule used with Newly-Qualified Social Workers.

'This research is being conducted on behalf of the Scottish Social Services. The aim is to help the SSSC review current arrangements to support the post- registration training and learning of newly-qualified social workers. We're interviewing a representative sample of NQSW and their managers. All responses will be anonymised and treated in confidence.'

1: Personal and agency details; 'First we'll need some basic information about you.'

1.1 Name	1.6 Date of Qualification
1.2 Agency and LN area:	1.7 Date Registered:
1.3 Post Held	1.8 Name of manager and schedule code
1.4 Length of Time in Post:	1.9 Client group
1.5 Qualifying University:	1.10 Setting

2. Understanding

'This section is about your understanding of the nature and purpose of post registration training and learning.'

2.1 What does PRTL mean to you?

3. PRTL activity

'This section gathers information about the type of learning activities you undertook as part of PRTL'

3.1 What did you do to meet the PRTL requirements?

3.5 How was this activity linked to organisational objectives?

3.2 What did you do to meet the special requirements for adult and child protection?

3.6 Did you receive induction?

3.3 How did you identify your learning needs?

3.7 To what extent was PRTL incorporated into your induction?

If so, please illustrate

4. Support Needs

'This section is about your support needs in relation to your post registration training and learning'

4.1 What were the main challenges you faced in meeting your post registration training and learning requirements?

4.2 How did you deal with these challenges?

4.3 Did your agency provide you with adequate support in helping you meet your post registration training and learning requirements?

Can you give examples of the ways in which your agency did or did not provide support?

4.4 Did your qualifying course prepare you adequately for your post registration training and learning requirements?

Can you give examples of the ways in which your course did or did not prepare you for PRTL requirements?

4.5 To what extent was the guidance provided by the Scottish Social Services adequate to your needs? Can you give examples of the ways in which the guidance was or was not helpful?

5. Arrangements for PRTL

'This section focuses on the way your agency supports your post registration training and learning.'

5.1 What arrangements are in place from your agency to support, plan and review your post registration training and learning?

5.2 How much time was allocated to you by your agency for your PRTL?

5.3 Were you able to use this time in practice?   Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes, what helped you to be able to use the allocated time?

If not, what were the reasons you were not able to use this time?

5.4 What kinds of resources did you use?

Prompt: 'such as the Learning Exchange, the Continuous Learning Framework, in house learning resources, and University libraries'

5.5 To what extent did you choose your learning activities (rather than your employer)?

5.6 To what extent does your supervision allow you to reflect on your PRTL? Definition of reflection: 'self-observing and reporting actions to raise awareness of underlying assumptions, reasons and feelings.'

Can you give examples of the ways in which supervision helps or doesn't help with reflection?

6. Practice

'This section is about some key elements of practice'

6.1 To what extent is your practice informed by research evidence?

If yes, please provide an example:

6.2 To what extent do you provide a personalised service? Definition 'Personalisation enables 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.'

If so, please provide an example

7. PRTL implementation

'This last section is about whether your PRTL is making a difference to the service provided.'

7.1 Is your PRTL producing changes in the way you practice?

Prompt:' these changes may relate to the knowledge, skills and values developed in the course of your PRTL.'

Can you give examples?

7.2 Is your PRTL producing changes to the service you provide to particular service users and/or carers?

Can you give examples?

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule used with Managers

This research is being conducted on behalf of the Scottish Social Services. The aim is to help the SSSC review current arrangements to support the post- registration training and learning of newly-qualified social workers. We're interviewing a representative sample of NQSW and their managers. All responses will be anonymised and treated in confidence.'

1: Personal and agency details

'First we'll need some basic information about you.'

1.1 Name	1.4 Length of Time in Post:
1.2 Agency and LN area:	1.5 Name of NQSW and schedule code:
1.3 Post Held	1.6 Length of time supervising NQSW

2. Understanding

'This section is about your understanding of the nature and purpose of post registration training and learning.'

2.1 What does PRTL mean to you?

3. PRTL activity

'This section gathers information about the learning activities undertaken by the newly-qualified social worker as part of their PRTL'

3.1 How did you identify their learning needs, and

3.2 How were learning activities selected?

3.3 How was this activity linked to organisational objectives?

3.4 Did they receive induction?

3.5 To what extent was PRTL incorporated into their induction?

If so, please illustrate

4. Support Needs

'This section is about the support needs of newly-qualified social workers in relation to their post registration training and learning'

4.1 What were the main challenges faced by the NQSW in meeting their post registration training and learning requirements?

4.2 How did they deal with these challenges?

4.3 Did your agency provide adequate support to meet post registration training and learning requirements?

Can you give examples of the ways in which your agency did or did not provide support?

4.4 Did their qualifying course prepare them adequately for their post registration training and learning requirements?

If yes, can you give examples of how they had been prepared?

4.5 To what extent was the guidance provided by the Scottish Social Services adequate to your needs?

Can you give examples of the ways in which the guidance was or was not helpful?

5. Arrangements for PRTL

'This section focuses on the way your agency supports post registration training and learning for newly-qualified social workers.'

5.1 What arrangements are in place from your agency to support, plan and review the PRTL of newly-qualified social workers?

5.2 How much time was allocated to them for their PRTL?

5.3 Were they able to use this time in practice?

If yes, what helped them to be able to use the allocated time?

If not, what were the reasons they were not able to use this time?

5.4 To what extent did their supervision with you allow them to reflect on their PRTL? Definition of reflection: 'self-observing and reporting actions to raise awareness of underlying assumptions, reasons and feelings.'

Can you give examples of the ways in which their supervision helps or doesn't help with reflection?

6. Practice

'This section is about some key elements of the newly-qualified social worker's practice'

6.1 To what extent is their practice informed by research evidence?

If yes, please provide an example:

6.2 To what extent do they provide a personalised service? Definition 'Personalisation enables 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.'

If so, please provide an example

7. PRTL implementation

'This last section is about whether PRTL for NQSW is making a difference to the service provided.'

7.1 Is their PRTL producing changes in the way they practice?

Can you give examples?

7.2 Is their PRTL producing changes to the service they provide to particular service users and/or carers?

 Can you give examples?

Appendix 3: Extract from Record of Achievement

Length	Type of Learning & Source	Learning
	Self-directed Study	**What?**
2 days	Jones, K., Cooper, B. And Ferguson, H. (2008) *Best Practice in Social Work,* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan	Read press coverage of Baby B and Brandon Muir and reflected on my own and best practice in the light of these inquiries
	Watson, D. And West, J (2006) *Social Work Process and Practice, Approaches, Knowledge and Skills,* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan	**How I put this learning in to practice** • Considered the role of inquiries and whether the resources involved lead to improvements in practice • Have a greater appreciation of the need to communicate effectively, share appropriate information with other professionals while respecting individual's right to be treated with respect, dignity and privacy
	Scottish Executive (2006a) *Changing Lives 21st Century Social Work Review,* Edinburgh: Scottish Executive	• Press coverage of these inquiries forced me to step back and appraise my practice and form an opinion on whether preventing all child abuse-related deaths is an attainable objective
	HM Government (2009) *The Protection of Children in England: A progress report* – Lord Laming	• Tried to learn how to better use statutory powers to work with service users who are reluctant to change and revise plans to reflect changing needs/circumstances and work within agreed standards of social work practice
	Dundee HMIE Report – *Joint Inspection of Services to Protect Children and Young People in the Dundee City Council Area June 2009)*	• I concur with report which states 'while it would be unreasonable to expect that the sudden and unpredictable outburst by an adult towards a child can be prevented ... it is entirely different from the failure to protect a child or young person already identified as being in danger of deliberate harm. The death of a child in these circumstances is a reproach to us all'.

		• I have learned importance of working chronologies to allow single incidents over a period of time to be viewed together, to provide strong evidence of consistent neglect or increasing concern about a child's safety and well-being. To this end I am more careful in my note-keeping and my reading over previous case notes and files when I am taking over a new case. • I have incorporated Martin Calder's Diamond Assessment Framework into my repertoire of tools so that I consider Risk Factors alongside Parenting Capacity, Child's Development Needs and Family and Environmental Factors from an early stage. • More understanding of effectiveness of interventions and the specific risk factors they might address e.g. Poor Parental Supervision could be addressed by home visiting; pre-school education; parent support and training; family therapy and home-school partnership work
		How this learning has contributed to confidence and professional development as a social worker: • I have had to defend my profession in the light of public criticism in press reports such as Baby Peter and Brandon Muir – such public scrutiny at this early stage in my career made me question my own ability and professional competence • I had to manage my own conflicting emotions of working in an environment which both promulgates best practice and requires ongoing engagement in child protection cases but having my application to undergo more formal specialist training in Child Protection refused on the basis that I do not as yet have 2 years post-qualifying experience This learning has encouraged me to identify good practice in my own work and in the work of others around me and be more critical of my own and others' practice. This inspired me to re-read the work of Ferguson and to try to prioritise time for self-reflection and during supervision and be more open to adopting a more critical approach to practice aimed at improving outcomes for children and families I work with.

Appendix 4: Example of letter sent to Newly-Qualified Social Workers

Dear Colleague,

Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) for Newly Qualified Social Workers

As a newly qualified social worker who has this year submitted their Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) Record of Achievement I would be grateful if you would consider assisting us in research the SSSC has commissioned to review the outcomes of the PRTL process.

We are currently engaging consultants to evaluate how newly qualified social workers are evidencing the impact their PRTL has on their practice. The research will involve looking at anonymised PRTL Records of Achievement to assess:

- the types of information presented
- the types of learning situations utilised for PRTL
- the levels of reflection on practice
- the level of support required by newly qualified social workers and being offered by employers
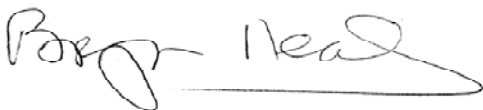- how much service user experience influences practice

The research will also involve telephone interviews with a sample of newly qualified social workers and their managers to explore what levels of support are offered and required, what works best and what would be most helpful to them. Through understanding the requirements of newly qualified social workers, their managers and employers we can refine and improve what we ask for in the future and your views would be extremely helpful.

If you do **NOT** wish to be interviewed (by telephone), please contact ldadmin@sssc.uk.com or complete and return the attached form by February 12th.

The interviews are likely to take approximately 30 minutes and will take place during February 2010.

Thank you for considering this request. If you have questions at this point please send them to ldadmin@sssc.uk.com.

Yours Sincerely

Bryan Healy

Workforce Intelligence Manager

Post Registration Training and Learning of Newly Qualified Social Workers

Name:

Job title

NQSW/ Manager (Delete as appropriate)

I am not willing to be contacted by the commissioned researchers to discuss the needs of newly qualified social workers in relation to PRTL

Signed……………………………………

Contact telephone number…………………………………

Contact email address…………………………………

Please return to:

Education and Workforce Development Admin

SSSC

Compass House

11 Riverside Drive

Dundee

DD1 4NY

Appendix 5: Research Outline for Service Users and Carers

Background

I am one of a group of researchers undertaking a project for the Scottish Social Services Council on learning undertaken by newly qualified social workers. I would like to ask your views about some of our findings so far and include your views in the research.

We asked the new social workers if they gave opportunities for service users and carers to decide what kinds of service they receive. I'd like to tell you about what they said. I would be very interested to hear your views on this as you have a lot of experience and knowledge in helping social work students to work with service users and carers. Some of your comments may be included in the final research document which will go to the Scottish Social Services Council. The SSSC will use the research to improve the learning and practice of newly qualified social workers.

Questions

- To what extent do you think service users and carers select and shape the services they receive?

- What difference does the individual social worker make to the service received?

- What could social work managers do to help service users and carers select and shape the services they receive?

Confidentiality

Any comments made to me in the course of the research will remain confidential and anonymous. Any individual quotations will be referred to as coming from a Member of The University of Dundee Service User and Carer Group.

Neil Henery, 10nd March 2010

Appendix 6: Presentation to Carers Focus Group

Slide 1: Post Registration Training and Learning

- Social work students register with the Scottish Social Services Council when they qualify as social workers

- In their first year they have to complete 24 days (144 hours) of learning activities and record this in Record of Achievement.

- The Record of Achievement must demonstrate a reflective approach to learning

- Submitted to the SSSC at the end of first year in practice

Slide 2: The Research

Commissioned by the Scottish Social Services Council

To evaluate arrangements for the post registration training and learning (PRTL) of newly qualified social workers (NQSW)

It involves:

Analysis of NQSW's Records of Achievement

Interviews with NQSW's who have submitted Records of Achievement and interviews with their line managers

Interviews with Service User and Carer Groups

Slide 3: Outcomes of Research

To find out:

- how to improve the evidence for reflection on practice.

- what learning activities are being used for PRTL purposes

- how to improve SSSC guidance for Newly-qualified social workers and their managers

- how Newly-qualified social workers understand and implement personalisation of services in practice

- how Newly-qualified social workers are using research based evidence to inform their practice

Slide 4: Personalisation

'From being a recipient of services, citizens can become actively involved in selecting and shaping the services they receive.'

Slide 5: Do you provide a personalised service?
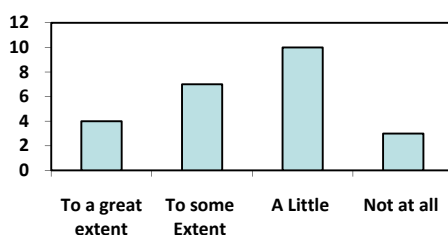
Slide 6: The Individual Service

'I try hard to include people and their views

'(we offer)…many opportunities to decide and give opinions on care plans.'

'I encourage families to attend meetings and have their say'

'I always try to work with clients and involve both children and families in the process and get their views… I would always involve them in making choices'

Slide 7: Limitations

'we seem to prescribe what we already have instead of let the service user choose what they want to do. There are only certain things we can offer them'

'it is getting worse now due to budget cuts. We have less flexible services and less of them.'

(I am)…person centred but the resources limit what you can do.'

Slide 8: Responses to Personalisation

Denial: 'every client is different and I work towards what they need'

Demoralisation: 'my work is crisis based and quite intensive - not sure how much I can 'indulge' in that kind of practice'

Critical Engagement: 'I'd like to think we personalised more but we seem to prescribe what we already have instead of let the service user choose what they want to do.'

Slide 9

To what extent do you think service users and carers select and shape the social services they receive?

Slide 10

What difference does the individual social worker make to the service received?

Slide 11

What could social work managers do to help service users and carers select and shape the services they receive?