

Careers of Practice Teachers
in the
London and South East Region (CCETSW)

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May 1998
CCETSW

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who in various ways has contributed to this study. Special thanks are due to the 438 Practice Teachers who took the time and trouble to respond so fully to the postal questionnaire. Margot Rogers of Hounslow Social Services, Margaret Delpy of Sutton Social Services, Eleanor Grant of Welcare, and Jennifer Stone of Kent Social Services gave generously of their time to contribute to this research. Sue Lewis and Lily Robertson of CCETSW provided invaluable help, support and encouragement throughout the project.

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March 1998

Since the development of the Practice Teaching Award in 1989, much emphasis has been placed on improving the quality of practice learning, with considerable attention being paid to both to the learning opportunities offered to pre-qualifying social work students and the conditions within agencies providing practice placements. Research on Practice Teachers has concentrated, for the most part, on those aspects which enable or deter them from carrying out these functions effectively, how practice teachers can be enabled to provide good quality learning experiences for students and how agencies can support them in providing this function and retain them in the role of practice teaching.

The experience of those who have gained the Practice Teaching Award (PTA) as career social workers, probation officers and related professionals has not as yet been fully explored. Did they think that undertaking the Practice Teaching Award would help their career development? How have their careers developed since undertaking the PTA? Would they advise others to undertake the Practice Teaching Award? What are their future career aspirations? Do these include pursuing post qualifying awards in social work?

CCETSW (London and South East) commissioned this research with the aims of identifying issues and patterns in the careers of those who have undertaken the Practice Teaching Award in the region since 1991 and detecting some of the factors which impact upon Practice Teaching Award holders' opportunities and motivation to continue practice teaching and related activities and their subsequent pathways and opportunities for continuing professional development. It is intended that the findings will:

- ! inform the work of practice teaching programmes, post qualifying consortia, employers, practice teachers and CCETSW in developing strategies to support and maintain practice learning opportunities in agencies, and
- ! assist in the integration of the PTA with pathways to the Post Qualifying Award (PQSW) in Social Work and a framework for continuing professional development for practice teachers.

The focus on continuous professional development is timely, given the forthcoming publication of CCETSW (1998) *Assuring Quality in Post Qualifying Education and Training* which will set out revised requirements for post qualifying awards. It is hoped that the results of this study will assist in the integration of the PTA with pathways to post qualifying awards. It also accords well with the recent revised requirements for the Practice Teaching Award (CCETSW (1996) *Assuring Quality for Practice Teaching*), which now requires candidates for the Practice Teaching Award to reflect on and pursue their own continuing professional development (Element E1).

The research process entailed two methods of data collection and analysis. First, in the period from October - December 1997, all known and traceable Practice Teaching Award holders in the London and South East region were asked to complete a detailed

questionnaire on their career development and experience of practice teaching. 438 Practice Teaching Award Holders responded (a 50% response rate). The second phase of the project comprised of structured interviews with four selected employing agencies to supplement the data derived from the questionnaire results.

It should be noted that the data does not permit any conclusions to be drawn on the effect of undertaking the Practice Teaching Award on subsequent career development in comparison to other career social workers or probation officers who have not undertaken the PTA as no control group was used.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

2.1 Deciding to undertake the Practice Teaching Award

- ! The decision to undertake the Practice teaching award is made primarily by candidates, who are then supported by their agencies.
- ! Reviewing their reasons for undertaking the PTA, Award Holders cited consolidating their own social work practice; contributing to the professional development of others within social work; consolidating, developing and accrediting Practice Teaching skills to meet agency requirements and using the Award as a platform for career advancement as key motivating factors. A key theme to emerge was that the Award was seen as providing an opportunity to develop supervisory skills which might assist a move to management or to become a senior practitioner with staff supervisory responsibilities.
- ! Practice Teachers and agencies confirmed that, having gained the PTA, it is expected but not required that Award Holders go on to practice teach.

2.2 Careers as Practice Teachers

- ! Three quarters of the respondents (75%, 323 people) stated that they had worked as practice teachers since gaining the award.
- ! Only 27% teach regularly on a yearly basis. 22% of respondents to the Practice Teacher survey had gone on to act as Practice Assessors.
- ! Reasons given for stopping practice teaching were for the largest group, changes in the Practice Teacher's work role which meant that they were unable to continue practice teaching, though they would have liked to have continued. These changes were usually associated with promotion to a more senior post. Changes in the training for probation officers figured also in these results. Other key reasons for stopping practice teaching were inadequate work load relief and organisational changes.
- ! Key factors which might encourage Practice Teachers to take students again were seen to be adequate workload relief; practice teaching designated as part of the Practice Teacher's job and financial incentives.
- ! Strategies that have been developed to support and maintain Practice Teachers within agencies include financial incentives and practice teacher support groups, with a certain limited amount of other professional development opportunities being provided. Agencies noted that work load relief continues to be a problem especially in times of resource restraint.

2.3 The effect of gaining the PTA on subsequent careers.

- ! Respondents identified that the achievement of the practice Teaching Award had helped them clarify career decisions. For some it 'confirmed' their commitment to social work practice. For others, the Award affirmed their belief in their potential to manage others. Others 'discovered' or validated talents in training. It also promoted professional development and further study.
- ! Over half of the Practice Teacher respondents indicated that they had changed their job at least once since gaining the PTA. A further 15% of the sample had moved again, and 3% of the sample had made a third career move. Almost half of these new posts might be seen as movement up a bureaucratic

occupational hierarchy (promotion). Half of those who moved jobs considered that having the PTA had influenced the outcome of their job application.

- ! The majority felt positive about advising others to do the Practice Teaching Award

2.4 Professional Development in Social Work

- ! 42% of the sample had either gained or were registered for additional academic qualifications following their primary professional qualification in addition to the Practice Teachers Award. These programmes of study generally led to qualifications in management, social policy, advanced practice or education and training.
- ! Very limited achievement of the PQSW was evident and no respondent had gained the AASW.
- ! 23.5% of the sample had gained the ASW. The majority of respondents (88.3%) completed this award prior to undertaking the Practice Teachers Award.
- ! 34 people stated that they had registered for the PQSW and 34 people for the AASW.
- ! Of those who had not considered working towards PQSW or AASW, nearly a half indicated that they had insufficient information or knowledge about the Post Qualifying Framework
- ! Of those that stated that they were informed about the PQ framework and had decided not to pursue this, only 23 people thought they might consider doing an award at a later date.
- ! The main impression given by these results, taking account of busy work lives, is that these respondents did not see the value or relevance of working towards post qualifying awards as they were not yet recognised by employers. The PQ Awards therefore did not seem to have the potential of promoting career advancement.
- ! For agencies, the PQ Awards were found to be 'not very high in their order of priorities' at a time of restructuring and budget cuts. An early innovative scheme to integrate the Award structure into a professional development and career management strategy for practice teachers had proved difficult to sustain and had produced few awards.

2.5 Future career aspirations of Award Holders

- ! A fairly equal division between management, training and advanced practice aspirations was found. Continued interest in activities related to practice teaching, particularly practice assessing, was noted.

3. RELEVANT LITERATURE & RESEARCH

- 3.1 The broad definition of a career developed by Arnold J. (1997) as "*the sequence of employment related positions, roles, activities and experiences encountered by a person*"(p.16) has been used to guide this research project. Arnold argues that careers "*are defined in personal terms; have a subjective element; concern sequences of employment related experiences; are not necessarily confined to employment itself; can include employment in different occupations; do not necessarily involve high status occupations and do not necessarily involve promotion*" (p.17).
- 3.2 The theme of continuous professional development is also embedded into the analysis of results. Reid and Barrington's (1997) propositions are applied in examining organisational and individual approaches to continuous professional development. Reid and Barrington suggest that commitment to continuous professional development can be seen in organisations where "*the management of learning on an ongoing basis through the promotion of learning is an integral part of work itself*" (p204) and where individuals are enabled to take responsibility for, direct and manage their own learning.
- 3.3 This piece of research may be placed in the context of growing research and policy interest in the careers of workers in the health and personal social services.

The major work in this area has been the series of studies conducted by the National Institute of Social Work since 1992 which examine the structure, characteristics and dynamics of the statutory social services workforce and focuses on issues such as recruitment, training, work histories and current work experience.(Balloch et al, 1995; McGinn et al.1996; McConkey, 1995; Buglass, 1995; Levin & Webb, 1997). A number of findings of these research projects have bearing on this research on Practice Teachers.

- 3.4 McGinn et al (1996) work on "*Work histories of Social Services Staff*" noted that women's access to seniority is improved by increased qualifications. It is relevant to ask if achieving the Practice Teaching Award acts as a gateway to promotion. McGinn also found that staff who changed jobs usually did so from preference and few had cited dissatisfaction as a reason. She found, however, that departmental re-organisation had increasingly dictated career moves. If practice teaching could be seen as a form of job change, would it be seen that those who undertook the award did so by personal choice, rather than being required to do this by their agency? McGinn also found that social workers' most common reason for dissatisfaction on leaving a job shifted from pay or conditions, before 1990, to culture and values of the workplace in the 1990s. This finding might be perceived to have relevance to reasons why practice teachers had chosen to stop working in this area, as might factors related to re-organisation.
- 3.5 Balloch et al (1995) found that the social service workforce was highly motivated to study and undertake training, with 16% studying for a work related qualification in the past twelve months. This proportion rose for specific groups in the work force. One third of women managers and men social workers were studying for a

qualification. Balloch also found that social workers had the most difficulty in obtaining funding for training from their employer and about a quarter funded themselves. Furthermore, social workers noted that they has problems in taking time off for training and most had to catch up on their work afterwards. This finding has relevance to this research in relation to Practice Teachers' uptake and perceptions of being able to achieve Post-qualifying Awards.

- 3.6 Existing research on Practice Teaching and Learning was also examined for themes relevant to this study. In looking at why candidates decided to undertake the Practice Teaching Award in career terms, The Social Services Inspectorate Report (1993) *Practice Placements for Social Work Training in London* found that "*Practice Teaching retained a high status and was seen as beneficial for career development because of the management experience provided*" (p.7.para.8) by both staff and managers. This report linked this perception of the value of the Award to the fact that "*there was no shortage of people willing to come forward to be practice teachers*" (p.17.para.8).
- 3.7 Other research has examined factors which affect practice teaching in agencies, particularly in the light of retention of Award holders in the Practice Teaching Role. High levels of motivation and commitment of Practice Teachers to do the job has been highlighted in several studies (for example, Connolly and Davies, 1993). However problems have been noted frequently in terms of organisational support of practice teachers. The Social Services Inspectorate (1994) *Practice Placement Study* noted that "*the management of Practice Teaching was a loose concept*" and pointed to considerable inconsistency in the range of workplace arrangements to support practice teachers. This Study also noted that "*the concept of workload relief was seen as unrealistic*" (p.25). Inadequate workload relief for practice teaching has been noted by most researchers in this area (for example - Thompson and Marsh, 1991; Connolly and Davies, 1993; CCETSW Northern Ireland, 1997). The recent CCETSW Northern Ireland research, which surveyed 214 Practice Teachers, points to "*difficulty with easement*" as being the major factor in Practice Teaching Award Holders deciding not to take a student. In this research, Practice teachers were asked to record how their agencies might encourage them to continue practice teaching. "*30% stated payment, 225 stated fixed easement; 20% stated easement and payment; 12% stated easement or payment*" (para 3.3). These figures can be compared to a certain extent with the current study as a similar question was asked of respondents.
- 3.8 The expected length of career of a Practice Teacher, in this role, after gaining the Practice Teaching Award is starting to generate agency interest. The SSI *Practice Placement Study* (1994) noted that "*no authority appeared to have a workforce recruitment strategy which identified the target number of practice teachers required and set out the process whereby this would be maintained*" (p.24). There is some localised evidence of progress from situation. Such an example is Norfolk Social Services Department where Practice Teachers are contracted to take more students, and provided with a support framework which includes a framework for continuous professional development. Evaluation of this strategy by Black (1998) point to greatly increased practice teacher retention.

- 3.9 A further local example of developing a support framework and policies to promote retention is provided by West Sussex Social Services department (Harlock & Edwards (1996, 1998). This agency provides regular support groups for Practice Teachers and a Practice Teachers' Development Group Newsletter. It encourages Practice Teacher participation in the local DipSW programme and promotes post qualifying awards. It claims a "*high level of success at its keeping Practice Teachers*" (Garner, 1998).
- 3.10 It is only recently that subsequent pathways and opportunities for continuing professional development of Practice Teachers has been started to be examined. CCETSW regulations (1996) require that programmes develop a system of regular three-yearly surveys of candidates' progression following qualification and of employers' views of the appropriateness of qualification for employment.(p.33). A recent example of such a survey is one conducted by the Anglia programme in July 1997 (Boswell, 1998, unpublished). The results of this survey of 60 PTA holders indicated that half of the Award holders had progressed to more senior positions. Eight of this group had achieved the PQSW and four had registered for the Advanced Award. This survey revealed the degree of involvement of PTA holders in the training both of social workers and practice teachers. 24 of the group had acted as mentor/assessor for the Practice Teaching programme. These PTA Award Holders were all working in Norfolk, and had benefit of the afore mentioned support scheme.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 CCETSW's specification for this research project required that the following instruments were used:

- (a) a questionnaire survey of Practice Teachers in the London and South East region, to be designed, distributed, collected and analysed in consultation with CCETSW staff
- (b) 4 structured interviews with Practice Teacher programmes and employing agencies selected in consultation with CCETSW staff to supplement the data derived from the questionnaire.

4.2 Questionnaire survey

The project aimed to survey all Practice Teaching Award holders in the South East Region, which is estimated by CCETSW to be 1400 approximately people.

CCETSW's Registry holds the names of all PTA holders linked to the programmes from which they obtained their award. No central record is held of Practice Teaching Award Holders addresses as PTA certificates are distributed by the programmes themselves.

Two main methods were employed by CCETSW to find out contact addresses of PTA holders.

1. Requesting the total number of 14 Practice Teaching Programmes in the region to provide the names and addresses of all those who completed each programme (summer 1997).
2. Contacting approved agencies and requesting names or co-operation in distributing the questionnaire to Award Holders in the agency

4.2.1 Addresses secured from Practice Teaching Programmes

Eleven programmes responded to CCETSW's (London and South East) request by providing names and addresses of a total of 798 Award holders. It is probable that a substantial number of addresses so provided are not current addresses and this may have affected the response rate. One programme contacted Award holders to ask them to contact CCETSW if they wanted to be included in this project. This produced two direct requests for questionnaires from Award Holders. Two programmes did not reply. It would appear from the results that this lack of response may have affected the representativeness of the sample. (See Appendix 1, Table 1: Practice Teaching Programme taken by respondents). Practice teachers who attended programmes in the shire counties are rather over represented compared with those who attended London based programmes. A feature which emerged from the analysis was a perceived under-representation of those who took their PTA whilst working in voluntary agencies.

4.2.2 Addresses and assistance rendered by agencies

Addresses and/or offers to help distribute questionnaires was provided by 16 agencies. This method also would have appeared to have influenced the nature of the sample. 33 of these respondents had taken their Practice Teaching Award programme outside

the London and South East region (see Appendix 1, Table 1).

4.2.3 Administration of Questionnaires and Response rate

The questionnaire was designed, piloted, revised and approved by CCETSW by mid October 1997 (see Appendix 2). Questionnaires were sent to 840 named individuals and batches of questionnaires were sent to the 16 agencies for distribution on 18.10.97 with a return date of 31.10.97. Additional questionnaires were distributed by CCETSW following this date, in response to requests from agencies. In total, it is estimated that approximately 900 questionnaires were distributed. 374 questionnaires were returned (a 41.5% response rate). Confusions arising from this complexity of distribution will undoubtedly have caused a certain margin of error in estimating the response rate.

Non-returns were identified and reminder letters sent to those who had not returned questionnaires in mid December 1997. This produced a further 64 responses.

In total, 438 questionnaires were returned, a final estimated rate of 49% of those surveyed and 29% of those estimated to have gained the PTA within in the region.

4.2.4 Analysis of the Questionnaire Data

The questionnaires were analysed using both SPSSxPC and Ethnograph software. An Interim Report was provided to CCETSW in December and subsequent discussion with the CCETSW advisers was used to clarify interpretations and select the sample of employing agencies for structured interviews to supplement the data derived from the questionnaire.

4.3 Structured interviews with employing agencies

Three statutory agencies (Social Services) and one voluntary were eventually selected for interview. All were accredited Practice Learning Agencies. Two London Social Services Departments were specifically selected because of their geographical proximity to the two Practice Teaching Programmes which had not responded to CCETSW's request for addresses of Practice Teachers. A voluntary agency was selected as this sector was perceived to be under-represented in the questionnaire sample. Finally, the Social Services department in the county which produced the largest number of results was selected as it was considered that this might provide examples of good practice. Interviews were conducted with the designated staff member responsible for Practice Learning, using a semi-structured interview schedule in February 1998.

4.4 Analysis and presentation of findings - Structure

A career history format is used to present the findings of the study. The presentation of findings starts by looking at decisions to undertake the PTA. Careers as Practice Teachers is then examined followed by consideration of the Effect of gaining the Practice Teaching Award on subsequent careers moves. The findings section concludes by looking at professional development within Social Work and the future career aspirations of Award holders.

5.0 DECIDING TO UNDERTAKE THE PRACTICE TEACHING AWARD

5.1 Do individual career aspirations contribute to the decision to undertake the PTA? Do agencies view the Award as part of a career management strategy?

The survey of practice teachers attempted to find out why respondents had decided to undertake the Practice Teaching Award, and how and in what way they thought the Award would help their career development. Agencies were asked on what basis they promoted and selected candidates to proceed for training.

5.2 All the practice teachers in the survey gained their Award by going through either an approved training programme (taught route) of 150 hours education and training (58% of respondents), or a 'portfolio' route which required a minimum of the supervision of two assessed placements in the previous two years and reports from an assessor, who has directly observed the practice teacher's work, and from the Practice Teacher (42% of respondents). (CCETSW Paper 26.3 revised edition *Improving Standards in Practice Learning*, June 1991, CCETSW (1996) *Assuring Quality in Practice Teaching*).

5.3 Social Work Qualifications prior to the award

Most of the respondents can be characterised as career social workers or Probation Officers. 91% of respondents were qualified in social work (CQSW, CSS, DipSW). 6% had qualified for work in the social work/probation field prior to the development of the CQSW (1964-71) or held equivalent non- U.K. qualifications. 3% of the sample were not social work trained.

5.4 Experience of Practice Teaching and Working with Social Work Students prior to gaining the PTA

Only 13% of respondents stated that they had not had direct experience of working with social work students prior to undertaking the Practice Teaching Award. Over half had acted as Practice Teachers with full responsibility for assessment (see Table 1). A question that might be asked was whether some of these respondents had sought to gain the Practice Teaching Award to validate their substantial previous experience of working with social work students and demonstrate existing competence (as in the PQ framework), rather than seeing the PTA as starting point in a career sequence of practice teaching. This may contribute to accounting for why almost a quarter of respondents did not go on to act as a Practice Teacher after gaining the Award¹. An alternative explanation may be that taught programmes will generally require

¹ A similar observation was also made by the Social Services Inspectorate (1993) *Practice Placements for Social Work Training in London* Department of Health Page 9, paragraph 14.

candidates to demonstrate experience or potential to help others learn and it may be that by engagement in the range of activities prior to applying for the PTA course, respondents were rehearsing for the intended job and preparing themselves to meet the criteria of the programme. Table 1 shows responses to a question which asked respondents to indicate all types of experience they had had of working with students prior to undertaking the award.

TABLE 1 Range of Experience of Working with Social Work Students prior to Undertaking the PTA

Types of Involvement with Students	Number	Per Cent
Workplace (on-site) supervisor/ Link person	116	26.5%
Contributing to the learning experience of a social work student being supervised by another member of the agency	141	32.2%
Practice Teacher (with full responsibility for assessment)	230	52.5%
Long arm/ free lance Practice Teacher	24	5.5%
College tutor/ teacher/ lecturer/ trainer	24	5.5%
No experience of working with social work students	56	12.8%

Respondents were also asked to indicate other relevant work experience which contributed to their being ready to undertake the PTA. 10 people (2.3%) had acted as NVQ assessor; 96 people (22%) noted experience of supervising or managing other staff and 11 people (2.5) stated that they had teaching experience.

5.5 Work setting and post at the point of applying to do the Practice Teaching Award

Slightly over half, (58%), of respondents described themselves as practitioners at the point of applying to do the Practice Teaching Award. A further 22% described themselves as senior practitioners. Managers accounted for 11% of applicants and a further 6% saw the main focus of their job as being training. Table 2 shows the description given of the post held at this time. It is interesting to note that for some respondents the title for their post did not automatically reflect what they saw as the main focus of the post in respect of training or management.

11% of respondents stated that they were working part time at the point of applying to

do the course. 88% were working in statutory settings, 11% stated they worked in voluntary settings and 4 people (1%) described themselves as working in the private sector. The majority (70%) described their work setting as being a 'field' setting. 11% stated that they worked in a day centre type provision and a further 8% in a residential setting. 9% of respondents were working in health or education settings, with the remaining 2% working in centralised facilities such as student units.

TABLE 2 Post held when applied to do the Practice Teaching Award

Post held when applied to do the PT Award	Numbers	Percent
Probation Officer	93	22.4%
Social Worker	123	29.6%
Senior Practitioner	92	22.2%
Case Manager	16	3.9%
Management Post	74	17.8%
Training job	8	1.9%
Practice Teaching (main job)	9	2.2%
TOTAL (23 missing responses)	415	100%

5.6 Practice Teachers' expectations of gaining the Practice Teaching Award

An open ended question, "*At that time, how, and in what way, did you think that undertaking the Practice Teaching Award would help your career development?*", was used to tap into respondents' personal expectations of gaining the PTA. Considerable diversity of motivations and expectations of gaining the award emerged from the analysis. These were grouped into four main themes; consolidation of own social practice; contributing to the social work profession; meeting agency requirements; and a platform for career development.

5.6.1 Consolidating own social work practice

These respondents saw the process of gaining the award as a means of developing and updating their own social work skills, knowledge and practice, as well as providing an opportunity to evaluate their practice. The process of undertaking the award for some was seen as a way of meeting other social workers and combatting the isolation of their work setting. Examples included:

"I felt the course would enhance my performance...explore myself and ...make me a highly effective professional practitioner" (Q.887)

"I felt it would keep me in touch with current social work issues and thinking, given that I was working in relative isolation at the time" (Q.323)

"I have always been committed to good practice that is fully informed by theory...I felt that maintaining knowledge of theory would ensure my own practice maintained a theoretical base" (Q.361)

"To provide up-to-date knowledge. To provide an opportunity to evaluate my own work, To provide an opportunity for discussion with other social workers as I am the only social worker in my place of work which is a multi-disciplinary setting" (Q.645)

Practice teaching was also seen as motivating and challenging.

"I saw practice teaching as stimulating and thought this would contribute to job satisfaction" (Q.100)

5.6.2 Contributing to the professional development of others within social work

"I did it because I wanted to give something back to the profession" ((Q.749)

A strong commitment to the social work profession emerged as a motivating factor for many respondents. These saw their involvement with Practice Teaching as promoting social work practice, and providing a good service to developing professionals. Examples include:

"I was interested in Practice Teaching because I feel supervision and teaching is an important part of the social worker role" (Q.822)

"The Practice Teacher Award met a desire to contribute to the development of my profession" (Q.891)

"I saw it as a professional responsibility of all social workers to contribute to social work education and training at an appropriate stage" (Q.100)

For some, their experience as workers in particular areas prompted them to wish to ensure that new practitioners had the opportunity of specific training

"We felt it would be beneficial to the social work profession to offer opportunities for social workers to receive more input about alcohol problems than they can currently obtain through their training, particularly in view of the level of alcohol problems they will inevitably face in the field" (q.718)

5.6.3 Consolidating, developing and accrediting Practice Teaching skills to meet agency requirements

"I had to have the qualification in order to practice teach" (Q.3)

For many of those respondents who had already been engaged in Practice Teaching, the decision to undertake the PTA was prompted by a need to gain formal recognition and accreditation of their work, often in order to continue to practice teach or because their post required them to be qualified. For some gaining the award was the required agency pathway to become a senior practitioner. Others noted that gaining the award was a condition of appointment (specialist post). Most of these respondents viewed this positively and saw the training programme as an opportunity to develop and consolidate their practice teaching skills. Examples of response include:

"I required it to continue ...practice teaching. I felt it would enhance my professional credibility and I wanted to be sure that having a relevant qualification would give me more confidence and validate my experience" (Q.56)

"A requirement of the Senior Practitioner role.... I felt that my practice experience was very sound, but that the academic aspects of a formal training course would increase my confidence in my ability to perform all aspects of the Practice Teacher role" (Q.221)

5.6.4 A Platform for Career Development - the Practice Teaching Award as a path for career advancement

"I thought it might give me an edge when applying for new positions" (Q.688)

The majority of respondents indicated that they viewed gaining the PTA as a career stage. It provided a method of gaining a qualification, skills or experience which would enable them to progress their career and sustain their motivation. Respondents placed different emphases on particular aspects of the training. For some, gaining the academic and professional qualification was important:

"Nationally recognised qualification to add to my others a recognised qualification looking at supervision, therefore chance to increase chances of promotion to management/ senior practitioner" (Q. 607)

"I also hoped that it would assist me to gain a place on an MA course" (Q.661)

Only three respondents noted that the PTA might be a pathway to gaining other post qualifying social work awards.

A key theme to emerge was that the Award was seen as providing an opportunity to develop supervisory skills which might assist a move to management or to become a senior practitioner with staff supervisory responsibilities.

"I felt it would assist with the movement into management by supervising students and learning about staff management through the award programme ((Q.9)

"Give me the opportunity to apply for senior practitioner posts having "supervised" people in a professional capacity (Q.656)

For others, the award offered a pathway into specialist practice teaching or training.

"I was, and remain interested in the development of students and staff and training and I felt the Award would be a step in the right direction" (Q.37)

"I thought that practice teaching would help me in aiming for a career in training or teaching" (Q.796)

A relatively small number of respondents specifically stated that they saw no future career benefit from doing the award. These respondents generally saw themselves as committed to practice teaching, and did not want any further "advancement", or cited the fact that there were no opportunities for "advancement" in their workplace.

"I didn't do it to help my career development. My interest was in encouraging practice teaching and placements in the child and Family Consultation Service in which I work" (Q.114)

"I did not take the award as part of my career development. I took it because I am very interested in education/teaching" (q.244)

- 5.6.5 In summary, many of the responses to the question of Practice Teachers' expectations of gaining the PTA included a number of the strands highlighted above. It might be speculated whether those who saw the PTA as a means of effecting a career change were more likely than to go on to achieve a career move. It would be difficult to derive any reliable information on this from this survey, as whilst it would be possible to link these pieces of data, no reliable conclusions can be drawn. This question required respondents to look back to their motivation to undertake the award, it may be that they have developed post hoc rationalisations for deciding to do the award. The only way to test this out further would be to survey candidates' aspirations at the time of taking the award and then follow this up later. Perhaps the real value of this question relates to candidates' perceptions of the award itself and what they felt it might be able to achieve for them or for others.

One of the key impressions to emerge from the analysis of Practice teacher's expectations of gaining the Award was, that for the most part, the decision to undertake the Award was a personally motivated choice rather than required by their

employing agency. Even those Practice Teachers for whom achievement of the award was linked to posts or being able to continue practice teaching, expressed their decision to undertaking training as a personal decision. For example:-

"I wanted to continue supervising students and my agency had decided that only accredited practice teachers would be eligible to do to" (Q.404)

It might have been helpful to have asked Practice Teachers specifically to what extent was their application to undertake the PTA part of a personal career management strategy planned and entered into jointly with their employing agency. No indication of such collaborative planning emerges from the data collected.

5.7 **Agencies' perceptions of the process of selecting candidates for Practice Teaching Award programmes**

Each of the four agencies interviewed had clearly formulated selection policies to guide them in the process of deciding which candidates to support and sponsor in their applications for training. These were generally framed in terms of the *Rules and Requirements for the Practice Teaching Award (1996)* requirements. Two agencies limited their sponsorship to those who are social work trained (*SS1 & VA*). Two agencies (*SS1 & VA*) stated that they targeted black practitioners and one agency (*SS3*) targeted workers in residential and adult services. Two agencies (*SS1 & VA*) noted that they preferred the candidate to have had experience of working with a student prior to applying for the Award. All the Practice Learning Co-ordinators circulate information about courses and make personal contact with teams and individuals.

In practice, three of the four agencies interviewed (*SS1, SS2 and VA*) noted that applications to do the PTA are generally candidate initiated and led. One (*SS1*) noted *"any one who can"* can apply to do the award, another (*SS2*), *"all who want can apply"*. Applications are not specifically cross-referenced with appraisal and personal development plans, though management support is required.

The fourth agency (*SS3*) interviewed had adopted a different approach in relation to practice teaching. Practice Teaching had been linked to promotion to senior practitioner grade in the Children and Families division partially in order to solve placement finding problems. A career development strategy had been devised for successful candidates, which included attendance on an Advanced Child Care course, linked to the Advanced Award in Social Work. This strategy had generated many applications for the PTA and more rigorous selection procedures had to be applied. The Head of Training and Development of this agency noted that this strategy produced applications from *"bright mobile people who see the PTA as a way to promotion"*. A disparity was noted in that those working in Adult and Residential Services did not have the same opportunities for promotion.

5.8 Practice Teachers' perceptions of their agency's expectations of their achieving the award.

Given that agencies generally are required to allow Practice Teaching Award candidates 150 hours to work towards study for the PTA, (a figure which generally represents one month 's full time work), the responses to the question " *Did your agency require you to take further students as a condition of gaining the Practice Teaching Award?*" were rather surprising.

Slightly less than half (49%) of respondents stated that this was required, with 47% stating that it was not required and 4% did not know. A variety of answers were given to the subsequent question from those who answered that they were required to take students, the most frequent response being one over a year's period (68%). Most respondents in replying to this question noted that this was an expectation not a requirement.

5.9 Agency expectations of Practice Teachers of their achieving the award.

Interviews with the four agencies bore out the impression of that the agencies expected, but did not require, Award Holders to take students following qualification. One statutory agency (*SS1*) had had an agreement whereby a Practice Teacher was required to take one student in a three year period. This arrangement had had to be "*scrapped*" as it was not enforceable. The Co-ordinator noted that there was no space in the agency for students, "*terrific*" pressure on staff, and "*never-ending cuts*". Three of the Practice Teachers in this agency had recently been made redundant.

Another statutory agency (*SS3*) expected the PTA holders would take two students over two years and that senior practitioners would take four students a year. In practice, this had also proved difficult to enforce, with managers not always agreeing to the placement of students in the team. This agency had recently been required to cut its budget by ,27 million, resulting in redundancies, jobs not being replaced and key members of staff being given notice that their jobs were formally at risk. In this climate of uncertainty and change, it was noted as being difficult to require practice teachers to take students. This agency has recently cut its commitment to Diploma in Social Work programmes to provide placements from 105 placements per year to 80 placements per year.

The other statutory agency (*SS2*) had a verbal agreement with those undertaking training that they would practice teach at least two students (including the student taken while training). This agreement was normally met, the exception being if the Practice Teacher left the borough, or gained promotion.

Finally, the voluntary agency (*VA*) interviewed noted that Practice Teachers were expected to teach one or two students per year. This was not set out formally and the Co-ordinator noted that she was "*amazed at the endurance*" of their Practice Teachers, many of whom work part time. The only formal written notice given to Practice Teachers in this agency is that should they have to attend their training or any meetings relating to practice teaching outside their working days, they are **not** able to

claim time off in lieu.

6.0 CAREERS AS PRACTICE TEACHERS

6.1 Working as Practice Teacher

Three quarters of the respondents (75%, 323 people) stated that they had worked as practice teachers since gaining the award. Respondents were asked to indicate how many students they had taught per year since gaining the PTA. In total these respondents stated that they had taught 1054 students. Table 3 shows the total number of students taken by Practice Teachers after gaining the PTA. Approximately a quarter of practice teachers did not take any more students once they were qualified, though a further quarter of the sample had taken at least one student after qualifying. The main exception to the pattern is accounted for by group placements.

Table 4a shows the average number of students taken per year since qualification, which again highlights the group who have not taken any (indicated in the first hatched column). This table does not reflect the length of time since qualification as this differs from practice teacher to practice teacher, but does indicate that there are patterns - practice teachers who average one or less frequently two students per year and those who take a student every other year, for example.

The attrition rates for the Practice Teacher respondents in the sample are shown in Table 4b, which also takes into account the number of years respondents were qualified as Practice Teachers. In the first year after qualification, 33% of Practice Teachers did not take a student. By the second year this had risen to 50% and by six years after qualifying, almost all eligible respondents had stopped taking students. It should be noted also that 85% of respondents overall gained their Practice Teaching Award in the period from 1993 to 1997. 16 people (3.7%) gaining their Award in 1997 and might therefore not be expected to have taken a student at the time of this survey. Table 5 indicates that at least 28% of these respondents did not see themselves as Practice Teachers at the moment (no student 1997 and no intention to take a student in 1998). A further 45% described themselves as not taking a student each year, leaving only 27% teaching regularly on a yearly basis.

6.2 Reasons for Stopping Practice Teaching

Those who indicated that they had stopped Practice Teaching (3 above) or were intending to stop Practice Teaching in the forthcoming year were asked to explain why. The results are shown in Tables 6A, B and C. Relatively few Practice teachers indicated that they had stopped teaching due to adverse experiences. Inadequate workload relief features fairly highly as a reason for stopping. However this needs to be set against the numbers of those who would like to have continued practice teaching, but for the fact their work role has changed. The impact of organisational restructuring is shown in Table 6C. In a separate question relating to Probation Officers, 79% of Probation Officers who responded (60 people) indicated that they hoped to use their Practice Teaching experience in the new arrangements for the training of Probation Officers

TABLE 5 Practice Teachers' description of their current activity as a Practice Teacher

		Numbers	%
1	I practice teach regularly. I have taken a student(s) in 1997 and expect to take a student(s) in 1998	113	27%
2	I have taken a student in 1997, but I do not intend to take a student in 1998	78	18.6%
3	I have not taken any students in 1997 and I do not intend take any students in 1998	118	28.2%
4	I have not taken a student in 1997, but I hope to take a student in 1998.	110	26.3%
	No response: 19	419	100%

TABLE 6A Reasons relating to the experience of Practice Teaching and personal factors

Reasons	Response rate (n)
I do not want to continue practice teaching because it "is not for me"	5
My experience of working with students has not been positive	5
My experience of working with DipSW Programmes has not been positive	16
I did not (do not) get adequate work load relief to enable me to practice teach	51
Age Factors (approaching retirement)	8
Maternity Leave/ Family reasons	5

TABLE 6B Reasons related to changes in work role and job

Reasons	Response Rate
My work role changed to one where I could not take students, though I would not like to have continued	19
My work role changed to one where I could not take students, though I would have liked to have continued	113
Changes in the training of Probation Officers means that practice teaching opportunities are not available to me	29
Now works as Practice Assessor	7
Worked as a Free Lance - now feels out of date with practice	2
Re-training in another field	4
Left social work	2

TABLE 6C Reasons related to your workplace

Reasons	Response Rate
Changes in the structure of my organisation has produced an environment which is not conducive to taking students	48
There was/is inadequate support for Practice Teaching in my work situation	20
There are insufficient learning opportunities for students in my work situation	9
There are insufficient resources (including space) for students in my work situation	13
Too busy	2
More than one Practice Teacher in the team - only one student allowed	12

6.3 Factors which might encourage Practice Teachers to take students again.

All Practice Teachers were asked to indicate what factors might encourage them to take students in future. These responses are shown in Table 7. Respondents were asked to choose the most important reasons to them.

Perhaps predictably, adequate work load relief was the most popular response (28% of responses). The second most favoured response was - "*Practice Teaching designated as part of my job*". (20% of respondents selected this). This might be seen as a more positive alternative to adequate workload relief. It may also indicate the value Award Holders place on the job of practice teaching. The findings that 17.5% of respondents considered that financial incentives would motivate them to

consider taking students might also be interpreted as a answer to the seemingly insoluble problem of workload relief. Financial incentives might be seen to demonstrate agency recognition of the extra work involved in the role. It was interesting to note that 9.5% of respondents would like their work linked to gaining another award. It will be seen in the Professional Development section below that a substantial number of these respondents seem to place a high value on gaining additional qualifications. 27% of the sample had already obtained additional qualifications since qualifying as social workers and 25% were registered for awards currently. It was also intriguing to note that few selected the need for other structures in the agency to support practice teaching. Does this finding reflect the quality of the structures already in place in agencies?

TABLE 7 Factors which respondents felt would encourage them to take students in future

	Incentives/ Encourage to take more students	Num%
1	Adequate work load relief	110 28%
2	Practice Teaching designated as part of your job	80 20%
3	Financial incentives	70 17.5%
4	If Practice Teaching was linked to support from your agency to gaining a PQSW or other award (i.e. NVQ Assessor)	38 9.5%
5.	If other structures were set up your in your agency to support practice teaching (e.g. a support group)	4 1%
6	My current work/ life circumstances / inclinations are such that it is unlikely that I will ever take a student again	45 11%
7	Selected more than one of 1-5 above	52 12%
	N=399 No Response=39	399 100%

6.4 Involvement in activities related to Practice Teaching

Being involved in activities related to Practice Teaching might be taken as an indication of levels of involvement in the role of a Practice Teacher. Table 8 presents these findings. Practice Teachers were asked to indicate all types of activity they had undertaken.

One of the interesting findings was the number of respondents who were involved in research. Many of these respondents mentioned that they had done research as part of their course at Sussex University and a couple noted that they hoped their work would be published in the near future.

The involvement of the respondents in the training of new Practice Teachers was evident. 22% (96 people) has been engaged as Practice Assessors. This was the most frequent response in this category. In terms of PQ developments, 25 of the respondents have already gone on to act as Mentors for candidates for these awards. Later in the questionnaire almost a quarter of respondents expressed a degree of interest in this form of work as a future career aspiration.

TABLE 8 Involvement in Activities related to Practice Teaching

		YES
1	Do you hold or have you held a specialist role in your agency relating to Practice Teaching?	20%
2	Do you belong to the National Organisation of Practice Teachers? (NOPT)	7%
3	Have you attended any conferences for Practice teachers outside your agency?	17%
4	Have you conducted any research or written any articles on Practice Teaching (including within your agency)?	10%
5	Have you been a member of a DipSW Programme Practice Assessment Panel?	20%
6	Have you acted as a Practice Assessor for candidates for the Practice Teachers Award?	22%
7	Have trained or taught on any Practice Teachers Programme since gaining the Practice Teachers Award?	9%
8	Are you, or have you, acted as a Mentor to a candidate for the PQSW or AASW?	6%

6.4 Agency Policies and Practice to Support and Retain Practice Teachers

6.4.1 Workload Relief

All four agencies interviewed recognised that workload relief for Practice Teaching was and will continue to be a problem, particularly at a time of resource restraint. The commitment to 4 hours per week during placements was always difficult to achieve. To compensate for this, the four agencies interviewed had each developed different types of incentive schemes.

6.4.2 Financial Incentive Schemes

Three of the four agencies have, or did have, financial incentive schemes (*SS1*, *SS3* & *VA*). One statutory agency (*SS1*) gave candidates ,400 during training and a further sum, approximately ,200 for each student taken. Another of the statutory agencies (*SS3*) had given Practice Teachers ,250 per student in the past, but was no longer able to do this. This agency also linked practice teaching to an incremental point on the pay scale. The voluntary agency (*VA*) gave Practice Teachers one-quarter of the daily placement fess (approximately ,250 per placement) and an increment on the pay scale

following achieving the PTA.

6.4.3 **Support for Practice Teachers**

Each of the four agencies had different approaches to Practice Teacher support. The agency (SS2), which offered no financial incentives, had a very well developed **Practice Teacher Support** Group, run by the Practice learning Co-ordinator. This meets every six weeks, and is supplemented by additional training for Practice Teachers and a seasonal party for practice teachers in December. Additionally, a pilot support group exists for Black Practice Teachers. The Practice Learning Co-ordinator also noted that the Acting Director was interested in and supported practice teaching in the Borough. She considered that the Practice Teachers were "*very loyal*". She considered that the main reasons why Practice Teachers stopped working was due to promotion or moving away from the borough. She noted that Practice Teaching has been recognised in the agency as motivating staff, stimulating teams, improving service delivery and had been noted in the agency's work in Investing in People. It was also linked to the staff appraisal scheme.

The voluntary agency (VA) offered separate supervision for Practice Teaching and telephone support if needed. A plan was aired to develop a Practice Teachers' Support group in the future. The Co-ordinator felt that because of the flattened occupational hierarchy in the organisation, and consequently limited opportunities for promotion, there was not major problems with retention of Practice Teachers. The agency had "lost" four practice teachers recently, one due to retirement, one due to ill health, and two due to job changes. This agency actively encourages Practice Teachers to work towards Masters degrees and additional qualifications.

One agency (SS1) offered supervision to all new Practice Teachers with the part-time Practice Learning Co-ordinator and additional consultancy and training when required.

Finally one agency (SS3) had had a complex and well developed support and development scheme for Practice Teachers. This included an Area Support Group, line manager support and training provided by partnership colleges. Additional personal support was provided by the Head of Training and Development. The Head of Training and Development noted however, that many of these systems were not living up to their potential due to the changes and restructuring within the organisation. Not all Practice Teachers were invited to support groups. There was low attendance at training days offered by colleges. She noted, however, that retention of Practice Teachers was not difficult. She considered that at a time of uncertainty, many people would prefer to practice teach than practice ("*a flight to Practice Teaching*"). Practice Teachers were praised for their work. "*It keeps them sane*". On the other hand she noted that Practice Teachers were "*absolutely exhausted*" and that the sickness rate had gone up.

6.4.5 **Agency encouragement to Practice Teachers to become involved in related activities**

Only one of the four agencies (VA) interviewed employed a specialist Practice Teacher (part-time). None of the agencies directly supported NOPT noting that it was

too expensive, though details were circulated to relevant staff.

Practice teachers were generally only permitted to attend conferences and training if these were free, though two agencies (*SS2 & VA*) noted that they might make an exception to this policy in the case of black practice teachers.

All the agencies promoted Practice Teacher involvement in activities related to their partner Diploma in Social Work Programmes. These activities included selecting students for the programme, interviewing prospective students and serving on Practice Assessment Panels. In one agency "*excellent practitioners*", who might be, but were not necessarily, practice teachers were also encouraged to teach on the Diploma in Social Work Programme.

7.0 THE EFFECT OF GAINING THE PRACTICE TEACHING AWARD ON SUBSEQUENT CAREERS

7.1 Practice Teachers' Perceptions on whether the achievement of the Practice Teachers Award helped clarify any decisions about career development aspirations and choices

The majority of respondents answered an open ended question about whether the achievement of the PTA helped them make decisions about their careers (88%, 387 people). Of those that responded, 64% (246 people) gave answers which indicated that they felt it had made a positive difference to their career aspirations and choices. Key themes that emerged from the analysis of these responses are as follows.

"The award helped me to be more positive about advancing my career generally, rather than thinking of it as just a job" (Q.849)

7.1.2 The achievement of the award had prompted respondents to consider training as a career move (14.2%, 55 people).

Examples of responses include:

"It made me realise that I wanted to move into education and training field" ((Q.80)

"It made me aware that I am very interested in the teaching aspect of social work, I am in the process of setting up a programme which I will submit to our training department for approval" (Q.153)

"Yes. The desire to pursue a career in Training and Staff Development. I have enrolled to do a Train the Trainers Course this month (Q.676)

"Yes. I decided to become a free-lance Practice Teacher, assessor/trainer and lecturer on probation teaching courses and to be a freelance tutor" (Q.331)

7.1.3 The achievement of the award confirmed interest in and commitment to Practice Teaching and related activities (13.1%, 51 people).

These responses were often similar in some respects to those above. Respondents commented on the fact that the achievement of the PTA had affirmed their skills and abilities. They also wrote about the next steps they would like to take in the Practice teaching field. Examples of such responses are:

"I have been a Practice Teacher for 18 years. The Award helped me feel more confident about my teaching and confirmed me in my interest in continuing as a Practice teacher. I get a lot of personal satisfaction from Practice Teaching - which means a lot in a climate where we as social workers get little positive encouragement" ((Q.244)

"It confirmed my role and tasks within it. I enjoy being a Practice Teacher -

it's a rewarding experience even if the necessary paperwork drives me mad!"(Q.348)

"I would like to become more involved in being a practice assessor for candidates for Practice Teachers and be a member on a Practice (DipSW) Assessment Panel" (Q.699)

"I would like to ... teach on a Practice Teachers Programme" (Q.791)

7.1.4 The achievement of the award helped enhance supervisory skills which respondents wanted to or had developed further in management of other staff (11.4%, 44 people).

Examples of such responses include:

"It gave me a lot of confidence and convinced me that I wanted to become a team manager" (Q.100)

"It showed me that I am able to manage others in a positive way and therefore a management job may not be a conflict for me" (Q.291)

"Yes, I moved into a management/ supervisory role. I gained considerable confidence and insight into what this would involve from my role as a Practice teacher" (Q.709)

"Yes, ...I became an active team manager during the course. I went on to become a Principal officer and the course partly contributed to preparing me to take on the role" (Q.734)

7.1.5 The achievement of the Award helped a move to a senior practitioner post (4%, 16 people)

One of the main groups of respondents to the survey came from the agency which linked practice teaching to this post. These responses were not unexpected.

7.1.6 The achievement of the Award prompted further study

10 people noted that gaining the award had reawakened interest and confidence in academic and professional study and that they had gone on to register and take other awards and qualifications.

7.1.7 The achievement of the Award made no difference to career aspirations and choices. (35%, 141 responses).

The greatest number of these respondents simply answered "no" to the question posed. The responses of those who elaborated provided an indication of some personal disillusionment about policy changes in agencies. The main group of such responses came from some of those who worked in the Probation Service, though it should be noted that other probation officers felt that the PTA had prepared them for the new probation training arrangements. Others commented about the fact that changes in their life circumstances had put their career "on hold". Such changes included ill health; having children and moving to part time work; and taking on

caring responsibilities.

"I guess it probably would have if I had not become pregnant. I now plan to work on only a part-time basis, which will inevitably impact on my career development aspirations and choices" (Q.661)

7.2 Career Moves since gaining the Award

Over half of the Practice Teacher respondents indicated that they had changed their job at least once since gaining the PTA (57.3%, 251 people). A further 66 people (15% of the sample) had moved again, and 13 people (3% of the sample) had made a third move. These sets of job moves are charted in Tables 9 a, b & c. 20% of respondents (48 people) who moved jobs indicated that these new jobs were on a part time basis. It is perhaps noteworthy that almost half of these new posts might be seen as movement up a bureaucratic occupational hierarchy (promotion), which might be seen by some as an indicator of career advancement. Half of those who indicated that they had made a job move indicated that they had undertaken some form of additional training (130 people). 17% of this group specifically stated that they had taken management training courses.

Respondents were asked to estimate the value of the PTA to them in making a career move. 36 people stated that the PTA was required for their new post. 77% (162 people) felt that the PTA had increased their confidence in feeling ready to apply for a new job, and 50% felt that it had influenced the outcome of their job application.

TABLE 9 (a) Type of First Job Move since gaining the PTA

Type of Job Move	Percent in this category / Numbers (Total =251)
Promotion to Management	27.9% (70)
Promotion to Senior Practitioner	22.7% (57)
Moved to training job	10.4% (26)
Became Student Unit Co-ordinator	2.4% (6)
Moved to a specialist role at same grade	15.5% (39)
Moved at same grade	16.7% (42)
Moved from specialist to generic role	1.6% (4)
Other moves, including retirement, VSO and out of social work, and freelance	2.8% (7)

TABLE 9 (b) Type of Second Job Move since gaining the PTA

Type of Job Move	Percent in this category / Numbers (Total =66)
Promotion to Management	45.5% (30)
Promotion to Senior Practitioner	9.1% (6)
Moved to training job	10.6% (7)
Became Student Unit Co-ordinator	3.0% (2)
Moved to a specialist role at same grade	10.6% (7)
Moved at same grade	12.17% (8)
Moved from specialist to generic role	0.2% (1)
Other moves - out of social work, and freelance	1.1% (5)

TABLE 9 (c) Type of Third Job Move since gaining the PTA

Type of Job Move	Numbers (Total =13)
Promotion to Management	5
Promotion to Senior Practitioner	1
Moved to training job	1
Moved to a specialist role at same grade	1
Moved at same grade	1
Moved from specialist to generic role	1
Other moves - out of social work, and freelance	3

7.3 Other Factors influencing Career Development and Progression

The Practice Teacher questionnaire tapped in to this in two main ways, First, respondents were asked to indicate if there had been any relevant changes in their life circumstances which were related to their professional development. 75 people answered this question. Many of their answers showed the effects of ordinary life changes and family responsibilities on working life. These ranged from getting married (1); children being born (20); child care becoming their main job (4); moving to part time work (7); children getting older allowing more time for work (2); divorce (2); family ill health (2) bereavement of a parent (2) and preparing to retire and retiring (8). A number of respondents had suffered health problems. These ranged from long term and serious illness (9), physically exhausted (1), serious accidents (4), early menopause (1) to stress related illnesses (8).

When asked later in the questionnaire if they considered that are any other factors (positive and/or negative) which may have affected their chances for career development and progression 136 people responded at some length, Their answers generally reflected what they perceived to be negative factors which blocked or impeded their progression. Many of these answers provided a snapshot of some of the effects of policy changes on individuals. Examples of these are:

- a) Changes in the training of probation officers stopping officers being able to use their PTA (14 people)
- b) Restructuring in organisations, changes in social work and deletion of posts (19 people)
- c) Lack of management posts and resources to advance staff (28 people)
- d) Opportunities in voluntary organisations are limited (1)
- e) No career progression for Practice Teachers (8 people)

Others stated that they had been blocked or not encouraged for a variety of reasons

- a) Undervalued by management (6 people)
- b) No encouragement from manager to advance their career (7 people)
- c) Blocked from training generally and training for management (4)
- d) Not being social work trained (3)
- e) In too specialist a post (2)
- f) having the PTA (5) (*question 20*)

Some noted that their advocacy activities had worked against them

- a) Fighting to support practice teaching (2 people)
- b) Acting as a Union Representative (2 people)

Others cited personal factors and possibly discriminatory factors adversely affecting their career opportunities

- a) Ethnicity (1)
- b) Having a criminal record (1)
- c) Hitting an age barrier (9)
- d) Being a part time worker (12)
- e) Being geographically limited due to caring responsibilities (14)
- f) Single parenthood (1)
- g) "*Old boy/old girl*" network (1)
- h) Health reasons (2)
- i) Not good at interviews (1)

A smaller number cited positive factors which had helped their career progression. Interestingly they almost all saw this as a result of their own personal agency. These few people cited their own qualifications, experiences and motivation as accounting for their progression (17 people). Seven people noted that their experience in the training field had been particularly helpful.

7.4 Advising Others to do the Practice Teaching Award

Finally, to try to tap into the value Practice Teachers placed on the PTA, respondents were asked to complete an open ended question which asked:

"Thinking of your own career development, and your aspirations, would you advise other people to do the Practice Teaching Award?"

Key reasons for advising or not advising others to do the PTA are summarised in broad categories in Table 10. The reasons given for this advice were varied. Many of these reasons appear to show something of the experience of the respondent. The general overall impression is positive.

72% of respondents answered this question affirmatively and many pointed out that they already had advised others to do the award. This response was particularly made by those with managerial responsibilities.

"I have [encouraged others to do the award] Three other people from my agency have since qualified as Practice Teachers. I encourage other managers to look at the possibility, explaining the many benefits of having students on placements"(Q.705)

The majority of positive respondents saw the award as assisting in the Practice Teachers own professional development and promoting good practice: for example

"It helps to keep up to date professionally " (Q.209)

"The course made me rethink my own practice... It helped me acknowledge and appreciate my own practice skills as well as to develop supervision skills and to re-examine the social work process" (Q.613)

Awareness of benefits students brought to the team, and development of teaching skills and knowledge featured highly in these positive responses. A clear commitment to contributing to the social work profession was also evident.

" Yes I would because we need to keep the profession alive. We owe it to the profession to add good workers to the work force. We also have a responsibility to the students out there to teach them well. We most importantly have a responsibility to our clients" (Q.363)

"It provides for the future of our Service and Society" (Q.412)

Some noted that the award had helped career progression: for example

"Yes. Essential for career progression to senior practitioner and enhancement of supervisory/ teaching skills" (Q.452)

However many of the respondents qualified their answers. They wrote at length and with feeling about the problems of inadequate work load relief, for example:

"Yes - but only if they are given guaranteed work load relief. I speak from personal experience. It is virtually impossible to have a full caseload, a second year student and undertake the Award at the same time - with no work load relief" (Q.87)

"I usually spend many hours of my private time writing students' reports and am not compensated in time or financial reward. After every student placement I feel I do not want to take on another for a long time" (Q.358)

A number suggested that financial incentives might help: for example

"Yes - I feel very lucky to have been seconded to the Award and feel very proud about having gained it - I earned it! Undertaking the programme and gaining the award have challenged and stretched me in a way that I feel had made me a better practitioners. But I feel that we can not live on the experience we gain - when I have spent 2-3 weeks completing a second year placement report running up lots of hours in my own time that are not currently being paid for - a payment would boost me very much and make me feel valued and feel part of a holistic training environment" (Q.169)

Others (21%, 84 people) expressed more serious reservations. Concern was noted about the future of the profession, for example *"Social Work- What social work! (Q.316). "Staff where I work have decided that they no longer want to be called social workers but project workers" (Q.36)*. The changes in the training of probation officers had also led to much uncertainty. For others the amount of work involved outweighed the benefit of the award. These responses are summarised in Table 10.

21 people (5%) of respondents stated that they would not advise others to do the Award. Nine people (2%) stated they were not sure what to advise at the moment.

TABLE 10 A **Reasons for advising others to do the PTA**

Reasons for advice to do PTA	Numbers of response / percentage of total responses
Assist own professional development	52 (14%)
Helps promote good practice	47 (12.6%)
Contribution to Social Work Training	20 (5.4%)
Promote self development	31 (8.3%)
Enjoyable, challenging, personally rewarding, motivating	41 (11%)
Helps career progression	31 (8.3%)
Helps develop supervisory skills	37 (9.9)
Helps achieve PQSW	6 (1.6%)
Financially rewarding	2 (0.5%)

TABLE 10 B **Reasons for being cautious or not advising others to do PTA**

Reasons for advice	Numbers of response / percentage of total responses
Very hard work	17 (4.6)%
Few social workers in Community Care Management	2 (0.5%)
Uncertainty about probation training	25 (6.7%)
Only if person really see Practice teaching as a career move and has potential	22 (5.9%)
Only if workload relief and support	22 (5.9%)
Not sure of the value of the award	4 (1%)
	TOTAL RESPONSES - TABLES 10B and 10 B = 372 people

8.0 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIAL WORK

8.1 Gaining additional qualifications

One of the interesting features to emerge from this questionnaire was the fact that 186 people (42%) of the sample had either gained or were registered for additional academic qualifications following their primary professional qualification in addition to the Practice Teachers Award. Many had also attained additional vocational qualifications.

8.2 Vocational Qualifications related to Social Work

- (a) Approved Social Worker Award (ASW): 103 people (23.5%) of the sample had gained the ASW. The majority of respondents (88.3%) completed this award prior to undertaking the Practice Teachers Award. Three respondents recorded that they had taken the ASW in the same year as the PTA and 9 subsequent to gaining the PTA.
- (b) Respondents were asked to indicate if they had gained the PQSW. 21 people claimed to have gained this award. The true figure here may be under half this number - 2 people in 1996 and 6 people in 1997. Others claimed to have gained this award before 1994 and it may be that this is being confused with post qualifying awards for CSS diplomates. None of the respondents stated that they had gained the Advanced Award in Social Work.
- (c) A further 19 people had gained NVQ awards (13 of whom had gained the D32-D36 series, and a further 4 L4 and L5 Management).

8.3 Academic Awards gained since gaining Professional Qualification

These are presented in Tables 11A & 11B.

TABLE 11A Academic Awards Gained

Title of Award	Numbers who gained the award
BA/BSc	17
MA/ MSc	23
PG Certificate	6
PG Diploma	10
Other Certificate	42
Other Diploma	31
TOTAL	129

TABLE 11B Titles of Awards Gained

Title of Course of study	Numbers of respondents
Child Protection/ Family and Child Care related studies	18
Community Care Management	1
Teaching certificate	4
Management qualifications	49
Social Policy / Social Admin	22
Social Work/ Advanced Social Work	14
Mental Health	9
Therapy/ Counselling/ related studies	7

8.4 Current Registration for Awards

108 people stated that they were currently registered for awards and working towards achieving these. This group included 11 people who stated that they were registered for an MA which included an AASW. The largest group of awards that respondents are working towards are management qualifications (30 people), followed by those pursuing Masters degrees in Social Work Education and Training combined with the AASW (Kingston University) (7 people); Social Work (7 people) Inter-professional Studies (4 people). Two people stated that they were working towards a Mentoring Certificate. Only 10 people noted that they were able to transfer credits from the Practice Teaching Award to their current or previously gained qualification.

8.5 Levels of awareness of the post qualifying framework, including perceptions regarding the desirability of achieving the PQSW and the AASW and the feasibility of achieving these awards.

8.5.1 34 people stated that they had registered for the PQSW and 34 people for the AASW. Those who had registered for the AASW were more likely to be aged under 50 (15% of those aged between 31-40 and 15% of those aged between 41-50 had registered compared with 5.3% of those aged over 50) The same pattern held for the age groups registered for the PQSW.

PQ consortia	Numbers registered
Advance	3
Essex	1
Kent	9
GLPQ	27
Surrey & Sussex	21
TOTAL	61 (7 did not state PQ consortia)

8.5.2 Those Practice Teachers who has not registered for post qualifying awards (372 people) were asked to indicate why they had not considered working towards these awards. These findings are shown in Table 12. Only a small number of respondents (34 people) admitted that they had not heard of the Award structure. Almost a third of respondents however stated that they were not sure about the award structure and requirements. Comments such as the example following were not uncommon

"I have tried unsuccessfully to obtain correct information and periodically try again and then give up" (Q.890)

A further 45 people of the sample indicated that they did not know how to register for the Awards. In total, 53.7% of those who responded to the question about the PQ Awards may be said to have had insufficient information about the awards. These findings point to a concerning lack of knowledge about the PQ framework amongst PTA holders who may be better placed than many to work towards completing their PQSW and who as social work educators might be expected to have a general understanding of both pre and post qualifying award structures in social work.

Further analysis of these results showed that one third of the respondents who either did not know or knew little about the award structure could be identified as working for Probation Services and this may be accounted for by the recent changes in probation training.

TABLE 12 Reasons for not Pursuing Post Qualifying Awards In Social Work

1	Never heard of these awards	34 people (9.3%)
2	Have heard a little about these awards but I am not sure of the Awards structures and requirements	116 people (32%)
3	I do not know how to go about registering for these awards	45 people (12.4%)
4	I am informed about these awards, but have decided not to pursue this	167 people (46.3%)
	TOTAL NUMBERS TO WHICH THIS QUESTION APPLIED (8 missing responses)	362 people (100%)

8.5.3 167 people (46.3%) of the sample stated that they were informed about the PQ framework, but had decided not to pursue these awards. 154 of these respondents provided reasons why they had made this decision. These findings are shown in Table 13. The main impression given by these results, taking account of busy work lives, is that these respondents did not see the value of working towards post qualifying awards. These findings bear out the comments made elsewhere in the results about the pressures of work, but they do not accord with the general impression of this group as being highly motivated to pursue their own development. Lack of agency support may partially affect this, as these awards are intended to be candidate driven. Yet, as has already been noted, this group of respondents saw themselves as choosing themselves to work towards the PTA. It may be that award holders do not, as yet, see the awards as linked to career progression. Rather they seem to be choosing academic course linked to their planned future career. In addition it would not appear also that having the PTA has acted as a spring board to help Award holders gain the awards.

TABLE 14 Reasons given for not pursuing the Post Qualifying Framework in Social Work

Reasons for not doing PQ Awards	Numbers of responses Total = 154
Not "relevant"	18
May do later	23
Too Old	16
Prefer Academic Qualification	19
Lack of post security, job changes	24
Not relevant to probation	5
Too low level - has MA	6
No agency support	9
Too tired, work load too high, why study in own time? Studied enough - 'wants a life'!	26
Feels GLPQ disorganised	2
Mentor already	1
No PQ course nearby/ Not able to get APL	2
Too expensive	3

8.6 Agency Perceptions of the Post Qualifying Award Framework

- 8.6.1 None of the four representatives of the agencies interviewed considered that the Post Qualifying Award Framework was being taken up to any significant degree in their agency. The general comment was that it was difficult to promote interest in the Awards or provide realistic workplace support for candidates.
- 8.6.2 Three agencies (*SSI*, *SS2* & *VA*) stated that no policy existed in their agency of linking posts to the achievement of Awards. Efforts had been made in each of these agencies to ensure that staff knew about the Award Framework. In terms of targets for registration and completion of Awards, one of these two statutory agencies stated that they had exceeded their target (*SSI*) for registration, but their completion targeted was "forgotten or ignored". The representative of the other statutory agency (*SS2*) stated that both these sets of targets were "not known and not met". The voluntary agency (*VA*) had not set any targets in relation to Awards. No staff in these three agencies were known to have achieved either the PQSW or the AASW.
- 8.6.3 The Practice Learning Co-ordinator in one of these agencies (*SSI*) had arranged a presentation for managers by a member of GLPQ. A small amount of sponsorship money was available in this agency for those who wanted to undertake training courses. This co-ordinator saw the PQ Awards as being highly relevant, noting that "*In 10 years time people without the Awards are going to be at the bottom of the heap*". She noted however that there was not enough time for staff to work on their portfolios due to pressure of work.
- 8.6.4 The other statutory agency (*SS4*) had an accredited in house training programme for staff working with children and their families and the Practice Learning Co-ordinator provided information to those who enquired about the Awards. She noted however that "*PQ Awards are not very high in the order of priorities*" for the agency.
- 8.6.5 The voluntary agency (*VA*) likewise provided staff with information about the Awards. The Practice Learning Co-ordinator stated that she actively discouraged candidates from embarking on the full Portfolio route to the awards as she considered this would be very difficult to achieve. She thought that the Awards were relevant to practice and stated that she encouraged staff "*who loved learning*" to consider taking a course which might lead to an Award.
- 8.6.6 One agency (*VA*) had developed Post Qualifying training programmes with colleges and linked these to staff training. Two staff members had achieved the AASW and two the PQSW. Practice teachers were encouraged to take up additional qualifications and register for post qualifying awards. The Head of Training and Development noted however, that "*Everything has stopped due to re-organisations and cuts*". Targets for completion were "*meaningless*". She further noted that Practice Teachers who had attended Post Qualifying training had not had the time, space or energy to complete their portfolios and gain Awards. The revision of the PQ Framework (*Assuring Quality for Post Qualifying Awards* (1998)) would create extra work and confusion. Her plan was now to work with smaller groups of people to try to help them gain Awards under the new requirements. In her view, the posts should

be linked to Post Qualifying awards. She also considered that candidates for the Practice Teaching Award should have achieved the first 40 consolidation credits prior to being supported to undertake the Award.

- 8.7 It would seem that this sample of agencies found it difficult to give priority and time to the Post Qualifying Framework in a time of resource cuts and major organisational changes. However, all those interviewed appeared to retain a sense of its potential for the development of the social work profession.

9.0 FUTURE CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF AWARD HOLDERS

9.1 Respondents were asked to rank in order of importance their career aspirations as shown in the Table 15 below. This table shows numbers of first choice answers followed by total number of respondents expressing an interest in this field of work. Some respondents indicated a double first choice. This accounts for some disparity in the figures.

TABLE 15 Future Career Preferences and Aspirations

	Career Aspiration	First Choice	All interested
1	Management	115	205
2	Training/ Teaching	114	247
3	Research	35	138
4	Advanced Practice	105	196
5	Practice Teaching - specialist post	61	161
6	Practice Assessing	64	193
7	NVQ Assessing	33	120
8	Mentoring for AASW and PQSW	20	104

9	<p>Other Aspirations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 		
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It was interesting to note a fairly similar division between management, training and advanced practice aspirations. It would appear that these three strands have been reflected in much of the results of the survey. It would seem that Award holders' decision to undertake the Practice Teaching Award and the meanings they give to having achieved the Award are in some ways determined by their current career aspirations.

Those whose goal is management see the award as providing them with an

opportunity to rehearse for this role or build on established skills and practice and they see the Award as having helped them move up the occupational hierarchy.

Those whose commitment is to their practice with service users and/or offenders see Practice teaching as a way in which their practice can be refreshed, enhanced and improved. They are also keen to share the experience of working with service users/offenders with developing professionals.

It may be that the exposure to teaching and learning on the Practice Teachers Award programme affects these choices. Respondents wrote about "discovering" their ability to teach and train and seem almost surprised by their abilities. This experience did not "confirm" career aspirations in the same way as those wishing to practice or manage, rather it prompts them to consider different possibilities in the teaching and learning field. For many who undertook the PTA the Award led them to resume study and learning. They have registered for courses and programmes of academic study to further their professional development.

It is therefore surprising that Practice Teachers' awareness of the Post Qualifying Award framework in social work was so low and that the majority of those who were aware of the framework had decided not to pursue these awards. This must lead to questions about the relevance of these awards to social workers' career development and perceptions of their achievability. Perhaps the success of the Practice Teaching Award programme is that it is generally candidate initiated, supported to some degree by agencies and CCETSW and is widely recognised as a way of developing skills and abilities. The Post Qualifying Awards are intended to be candidate directed. However it may be that these rewards will remain unattractive to candidates until such times as they are recognised by agencies and are seen to have value in realising career aspirations.

This study has provided an insight into Award Holders' perceptions of the value of achieving the PTA to their subsequent careers. It has also given clear indications of understanding of their agency's expectations of their work as practice teachers after gaining the award. Agency strategies to promote, support and maintain practice teaching and promote career development in a time of resource cuts and organisation restructuring are highlighted, and the perceived costs and benefits to agencies are identified.

Motivation to undertake the PTA emerges as high in the study. On the issue of motivation to continue practice teaching, the study points to the importance of agencies devising a realistic way of recognising the additional work involved for practice teachers in providing good quality social work placements. It may be time to acknowledge that, though desirable, work load relief is not really achievable. Other structures need to be developed to recognise the work Practice Teachers do. Financial rewards might provide a short term incentive for Award Holders to continue working, and would provide recognition, but in the long term might be counter productive. Asking already over-stretched workers to continue to extend their working day might lead to increased stress levels and a reduction in the quality of service provided. It might also raise difficulties for agencies with other workers who are asked to provide AASW assessing and PQ mentoring currently without remuneration. Designating practice teaching as part of job descriptions of a larger number of staff might be more desirable, but would obviously have resource implications.

A future might be envisaged where managing, teaching, enabling and assessing others learning is more widely integrated into job roles throughout agencies. In such a context, NVQ assessing, Practice Teaching and Mentoring might form part of a continuum of professional development. In the short term, developing the identity of qualified Practice Teachers within agencies may enhance motivation. This may require a re-balancing of support provided in agencies to Practice Teachers, with more direct attention being paid to those trained as well as to those candidates in training. Well designed and maintained support structures linked to career management and professional development may go a long way to create 'loyalty' to the role, as the study sample of agencies reveals.

The findings also raise some critical questions about Award holders' estimation and understanding of the post-qualifying award structure within social work. Few have chosen to pursue this option. However, the results show substantial activity by Award holders to achieve other accredited, more traditional academic qualifications since gaining their professional qualifications. At a time of organisational uncertainty, Practice Teaching Award Holders seem to be equipping themselves to be able to make other career choices. It would appear that the Post Qualifying Awards in Social Work are not yet perceived to be recognised by employers as having value in career enhancement terms. It may continue to prove difficult to motivate social workers to register for and complete Post Qualifying awards until these are fully recognised and supported, and their achievement rewarded by employing agencies.

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APPENDIX 1 PRACTICE TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE: SAMPLE AND RESPONSE RATE

1. Sample and Response Rate

TABLE A Questionnaires returned by 5.1.98 by method of distribution

Method of Distribution	Numbers of Quest'res sent	Numbers returned	Percent of distribution method	Response rate using this method
Sent to Named Individuals	840	392	88.5%	47%
Sent to agencies to distribute	Not Known - estimated to be 60	46	11%	Not Known
Total number of questionnaires returned by 5.1.98:		438		
Estimated Total Number of Questionnaires distributed:		900		
Overall Response Rate			49%	
Percentage of estimated number of practice teachers who have completed PTA programmes in London and the South East (1400):				29%

2. **Sex/ age and ethnicity of Practice Teacher respondents.**

- a) Sex ratio of the sample was 70.5% female: 25.4% male (24 non responses (5.5%))
- b) 11% described themselves as black; and 83.6% as white. (24 people (5.5%) did not answer this question)
- c) Age profile

AGE GROUP	NUMBER/ PERCENT n=438/100%
24 - 30	8 (1.8%)
31 - 40	125 (28.5%)
41 - 50	187 (42.7%)
51 - 64	97 (22.1%)
65+	2 (0.5%)
NO RESPONSE	19 (4.3)

- d) 21 people (4.8%) described themselves as disabled.

TABLE B Practice Teaching Course taken by respondents

Practice Teaching Programme as identified by respondents	Number of respondents	Per cent of total
Anglia	1	0.2%
Bedfordshire	9	2.1%
Berkshire	16	3.6%
Blackfriars/Southbank	12	2.7%
Bromley	18	4.1%
Brunel/Wandsworth	4	0.9%
CAAPITALS	16	3.7%
Croydon	9	2.1%
Goldsmiths	4	0.9%
Hackney/North London	41	9.4%
Havering	11	2.5%
Kent	75	17.1%
Kingston	13	3.0%
LSE	12	2.7%
Middlesex	33	7.5%
Northampton	1	0.2%
Portsmouth	1	0.2%
Sheffield	2	0.5%

Southampton	54	12.3%
Sussex	53	12.1%
UEA	3	0.7%
Not Stated	50	11.4%
TOTAL	438	100%

