

**“Could Newly Qualified Social Workers contribute to Enabling Others’ Learning?”**

**Report of a study which explored the possibility of introducing the concept and practice of beginning to enable others’ learning at Newly Qualified Social Work (NQSW) stage of professional development.**

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The School of Social Work, Kingston University and St George’s University of London, and the Department of Social Work, London South Bank University were commissioned by Skills for Care in London to undertake this small scale pilot study.

The following individuals and groups have contributed to this study

Questionnaire design: Jane Lindsay - School of Social Work, Kingston University/ St George’s University of London

Survey distribution: Jane Lindsay; Skills for Care London: Skills for Care (Surrey and Sussex), Martyn Higgins and Jill Yates, Department of Social Work, London South Bank University: Alix Walton, Royal Holloway University: and training officers from London Boroughs and Surrey County Council.

Feedback Service User and Carers Research Engagement Group (London Southbank)

Literature review: Jane Lindsay, Kate Leonard, Jo Rawles and Martyn Higgins

Data entry (SPSS): Anna Matczak and Jane Lindsay

Data Analysis: Jane Lindsay

Report writing and production: Jane Lindsay

Reviewers: Ali Rusbridge, (Skills for Care London), Martyn Higgins, Kate Leonard, Jo Rawles and Jill Yates.

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**1. Executive Summary & Recommendations**

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1.1 The current reform agenda for social work creates a “once-in-a-generation” opportunity to change the structures which underpin the professional development of social workers and specifically the means whereby their learning in practice settings is supported and assessed. The Social Work Taskforce (2009) advocates that “Social work needs a culture in which professionals and employers take seriously their responsibility for developing the current and future generation of workers (DoH & DCSF (2009) 1.28 p.20 and 3.5 p38 ). It positions practice educators in the upper echelons of the social work career framework and calls for the opportunity for agencies to gain “Advanced Teaching Organisation status”. This small-scale study, undertaken in south-east England, examines the question of whether introducing the concept and practice of “taking responsibility developing the current and future generation of workers” at an early stage in a social worker’s professional career would embed this ethos as a professional practice for all social workers and help to promote practice education as a career destination. It focuses on newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) who are already the target of concerted policy initiatives to promote their early professional development.

1.2 In May 2010, one hundred people (of whom 48% were in the NQSW phase of professional development, 10% managers, 25% were in training and development roles and 8% were in Higher Education) responded to a survey which sought their views on when social workers should be introduced to the concept of developing others and at what point in their professional career should social workers start taking on this responsibility. Questions were also asked about what types of enabling others’ learning activities might be included at the NQSW stage, what might be the advantages and disadvantages of NQSWs taking on such activities; how they might be supported in and evidence learning how to promote others’ development.

1.3 **Key Findings**

**The concept of “enabling other’s learning and development” could be introduced at an early stage in social workers’ professional development** Though there was considerable divergence in views, over two-thirds of respondents agreed that this was desirable. The majority considered that social workers should start taking on this work by the time they had consolidated their initial professional qualification.

“**NQSWs are closer to student-level in some respects having only just left that sphere themselves. I think I have a greater understanding of course commitments and demands. You lose this, I feel, the further you are removed ... or you reflect with tinted glasses.” (NQSW)**

**NQSWs feel they have something to offer** **and can understand students’ perspectives:** The majority of NQSWs think they could take on some enabling others learning activities related to social work students (such as contributing to induction programmes for students, providing support for students in their teams, offering a shadowing opportunity for a student, or providing an opportunity for a student to observe them practising and having a professional discussion with a student). Most felt that they could understand student perspectives having recently been a student themselves. Managers tend to agree. Those in training and development roles were less convinced that NQSWs could or should take on such roles. NQSWs tend to be less sure about providing support to qualified workers.

**NQSWs felt enabling others to learn could be personally and professionally useful.** Starting to contribute to others’ learning was seen by the majority of NQSWs to offer potential advantages such as helping to reinforce and consolidate their own learning, be personally rewarding and motivating and a way of enhancing their sense of professional responsibility. It might also help them feel valued by students and the agency. Again training officers tend to disagree.

**Taking on this work might be stressful, but might have more advantages than disadvantages.** Most NQSWs felt that they were under considerable pressure undertaking the NQSW programme and agreed this might be stressful. However, over two-thirds of the NQSWs and their managers felt they would have time to undertake such work and saw more advantages than disadvantages in getting involved. Line manager support was seen as being critical. Training officers tended to disagree with this point, noting that NQSWs might not be ready or suitable to take on such roles and they drew attention to the possible impact on the NQSW programme itself. It is possible that some of these respondents were defining “enabling others’ learning’ narrowly in the sense of only providing a placement for a social work student. .

 **Line Manager Support is critical**. If NQSWs were to take on such tasks, the overwhelming majority considered that line manager support and supervision would be the best way to support NQSWs in learning how to undertake such work. The majority of NQSWs felt that they should be able to create a portfolio of evidence in relation to such work. Guidance on the type of tasks NQSWs could or should undertake was suggested.

 **Managing learning and development**. The findings suggested that training and development staff are more cautious about developing NQSWs to enable others’ learning than the NQSWs and their line managers. The reason for this finding would merit further investigation. It is possible that this may indicate a cautious approach born of experience in the field.

 **Career progression**. In terms of progressing to achieve a post-qualifying professional standard in “enabling others’ learning”, the majority of respondents considered this should be achievable by the point that social workers had completed two years of practice.

1.4 **Recommendations**

“**Integrate it into daily practice rather than highlight it as a necessary chore. We have enough of those already” (NQSW)**

1. **Introduce the concept of developing others at an early stage in professional training.** There is a case to be made for introducing the concept of the professional responsibility for developing the current and future generation of workers at an early stage of professional development, possibly as part of pre-qualifying training and certainly at NQSW or at the future Assessed Year in Employment phase.

**“Tasks should be clearly defined and not incorporate any formal assessments of students at this stage” (Training Officer)**

1. **Define “developing others” tasks which those at NQSW/ AYE stage should undertake**. **This could form part of NQSW/ AYE requirements**. Certain tasks which contribute to the development of others could be undertaken at NQSW/ AYE stage. The range of potential tasks should be defined and could relate for example to supporting social work students on placement or contributing to induction programmes and included as requirements to be achieved at this level. A number of appropriate suggestions are included in the findings of this study (see section 4.2 and Section 7). Social workers can collect evidence of completion of such tasks in a portfolio of evidence of continuing professional development.

**“This promotes the concept of the workplace as a learning environment, and therefore ongoing professional development” (Manager).**

1. **NQSW/ AYE workers should be supported to learn about and reflect on this work by their line managers**. At NQSW/AYE stage, formal programmes of learning may not be needed. Achievements in this area should be noted.
2. **Taking responsibility for developing the current and future generation of workers should be a single unified professional requirement for all social workers at each stage in the career framework.** Skills for Care represents the need to embed the expectation of contributing to the professional development of others throughout the social work career as part of a concerted national strategy and within the current process of rationalisation of occupational standards, model development for the AYE and proposed changes to qualifying and post-qualifying programmes for social work education. This should be a single unified professional requirement for all social workers in all fields of practice, but be differentiated in terms of expectations by professional stage and level (i.e. Social Work Student, Probationary Social Worker in their Assessed Year in Employment, Licensed Social Worker, Senior Licence Social Worker, Manager, Advanced Practitioner, Practice Educator). Some possible activities for the early professional development stages initial requirements for this level are shown in the following table. The Social Work Code of Practice (currently GSCC Code of Practice) might also be revised to include contributing to others’ learning and development as part of the professional requirements that social workers need to evidence when they re-register.

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**“Each worker has a responsibility for their learning and for supporting others “ (Training Officer)**

**2. Introduction and Literature Review**

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**2.1 Context of the Study**

In its final report, published in November 2009 the English Social Work Task Force argued that

"Social work needs a culture in which professionals and employers take seriously their responsibility for developing the current and future generation of workers (in a similar way to other professions, such as medicine) (SWTF 1.28 p.20 and 3.5 p38 ).

At what stage should social work professionals be introduced to this concept and practice? Should this form part of initial training or early post-qualified training or should professionals only start to take on such responsibilities at a later stage of their professional career?

Much attention is currently being directed at the development of newly qualified social workers (NSQWs) in England with important projects being undertaken taken within both the children’s and adults social work workforce to pilot and provide programmes of support for NQSWs that offer a comprehensive induction schedule with associated Outcome Statements for their first year of employment (Skills for Care/ Children’s Workforce Development Council). The Social Work Task Force (2009) also proposes an “assessed year in employment (AYE) would also allow social workers to increase their expertise in specialised areas of social work, building on the improved grounding provided by the degree and creating a solid platform for further career long development” (p.7). In considering career development, the Social Work Taskforce also put forward suggestions for a national career structure (para. 3.25) with the position/role of practice educator being seen as career progression destination on a similar banding to that of an advanced professional or social work manager (p.43). Might introducing the concept and practice of taking responsibility developing the current and future generation of workers at an early stage in a social worker’s professional career help to embed this ethos as a professional practice for all social workers and promote and support practice education as a career destination?

The School of Social Work, Kingston University and St George’s University of London, and the Department of Social Work, London South Bank University were commissioned by Skills for Care London to undertake a small scale pilot study to explore NQSWs’, managers’, training and staff development officers’, universities and representatives of service users and carers’ views and perspectives about the possibility of introducing the need to enable others’ learning at NQSW stage. The concept that all professionals should contribute to the learning of others underpins this investigation.

**2.2 Practice Education for Social Work**

The frameworks to support the development of English social work professionals to educate, teach mentor, support and enable others’ learning have been undergoing a period of transition and change since 2005. The much regretted demise of the GSCC (formerly CCETSW) Practice Teaching Award, which had provided a standardised national award for practice teaching[[1]](#footnote-2), with the introduction of the GSCC revised Post Qualifying framework (from 2007)), created a vacuum, filled by a wide variety of programmes of varying lengths and levels validated by universities accredited by the GSCC, often known as “Enabling Learning” programmes.

The Revised GSCC PQ Framework (GSCC, 2005) envisioned that all social workers at the first stage of professional development post-qualification (Specialist level) would meet the requirement to

“Teach and assess the practice of student social workers and mentor and support students or colleagues” (GSCC (2005) Para 49.8)

 Their practice would be assessed using the domain statements developed by the GSCC in 2003 as guidance for the assessment of practice. The nomenclature also changed during this period of transition with those responsible for teaching and assessing students being termed “practice assessors” as opposed to “Practice Teachers”. Higher Specialist and Advanced level pathways in “Practice Education” were provided in the Post Qualifying Framework (GSCC, 2005, 2007) for those who wished to specialise in this area as part of their continuing professional development.

Whilst it was generally seen as positive that all social workers undertaking Specialist level would be expected to participate in teaching and assessing social work students on placement and it was hoped that this requirement would go some way towards addressing the national short-fall in practice placements, in reality it proved difficult to incorporate modules of the same depth and standard as the former Practice Teaching Award within the confines of the Specialist level. In practice this led to a significant reduction in course hours from the former GSCC expectation of 600 hours learning for the Practice Teaching Award[[2]](#footnote-3). Universities devised modules to support trainees’ learning of varying lengths, often involving significantly less contact hours. These modules became known as “Enabling Learning” modules, referring back to the previous CCETSW post-qualifying framework (1997) which had a requirement that social workers at the Post Qualifying Award in Social Work (PQSW) demonstrate “competence in *enabling other’s learning* through management, supervision, consultation, practice, teaching or direct contributions to education and training” (PQ6, GSCC 1997). Many were dissatisfied with these arrangements (including employers, universities, Learn to Care and the National Organisation of Practice Teachers (NOPT)). In 2009, for example Surrey and Sussex *‘Learning for Change’* 2009, cited in Hall B and Graham B (2010)) noted some of the concerns about these developments

“Employers are concerned that the ‘Enabling Learning’ module on its own may not be sufficient to equip staff as practice educators for all levels of placement’. (p4)

The issues with what became known as the “Enabling Learning” requirement were recognised by Graham Ixer, Head of Social Work Education at the GSCC in 2009. In a public GSCC letter dated 22 June 2009 (GSCC 2009) he noted:

“This requirement within specialist level courses has given rise to a variety of practices and assessment strategies across the country, For example, some candidates take on full responsibility for a student social worker on a practice learning opportunity and others only contribute to the assessment of a student social worker. This variation has been viewed by many as problematic in the delivery of these courses” (GSCC, 2009)

A working group, convened by the GSCC in 2008-9 to review the “enabling learning“ requirement, offered two recommendations which were endorsed by the GSCC Council in 2009. Firstly, the “enabling learning requirement” was revised to read:

“Teach, Mentor and Support social work or other students and/or colleagues and contribute to assessment against National Occupational Standards**”** (GSCC (2005 revised 2009, viii paragraph 49)

Ixer (2009) wrote that “the broadening of the requirement will allow for greater flexibility to include not only the assessment of a social work student but alternatively assessment in respect of newly qualified social workers, PQ candidates and others, as long as assessment links to the national occupational standards” (p.1). At this point, engaging in practice education/ enabling learning/ assessment of social work students became only one of the possible means for social workers to meet the “*Teach, Mentor and Support*” requirement (GSCC (2005 revised 2009, viii paragraph 49) at Specialist level. Workers at this level are now only required to “contribute to assessment”, a statement open to wide interpretation given that all social workers should be working to National Occupational Standards and their practice should be regularly appraised.

Secondly, the GSCC accepted

“the need for a national practice educator benchmark statement to strengthen and create consistent learning outcomes for practice educators involved with social work degree students, which are currently left to local interpretation” (Ixer, 2009)

Arising from this, “*Proposals for a Practice Educator Framework*” (SKILLS FOR CARE, CWDC and GSCC 2009) was published, setting out a proposed national staged approach to support “incremental progression as a practice educator” (p.2). This specifies four domains (A, B, C and D) to assess practice educators’ competence. It clarifies the roles of the practice educator and the practice supervisor

“Practice Educator (on or off site) – has overall responsibility for the student’s learning and assessment”. “Practice Supervisor – provides day-to-day supervision of the work of the student and contributes to the assessment”. (p1)

Two stages of development are suggested with minimum expectations of achievement at each stage “commensurate with the different levels of complexity associated with different, albeit complementary roles in teaching, assessing and supporting social work students” (p.2). Stage 1 is seen, ambiguously, to

“Build on and commence from the standard associated with the ‘enabling others’ module” (p.2)

It is not clear whether this means this stage would, could or should be taken after achieving the specialist “*Teach, Mentor and Support*” requirement (GSCC (2005 revised 2009, viii paragraph 49) standard. It does appear that both Stage 1 and Stage 2 are seen as providing a pathway to support workers to meet this requirement. Using again, confusingly, the terminology associated with the defunct PQ framework of 1997, the Proposed Framework states in relation to both stages that

“Candidates at this stage [Stage 1] *should be able to meet* the requirements for enabling others or evidence the equivalence” (p 4). [[3]](#endnote-2)[[4]](#endnote-3)

“Social work qualified candidates at this stage [Stage 2] *will have achieved* Enabling Others or can evidence the equivalence. They *may be able* to acquire academic PQ credits or modules at specialist or higher specialist level depending on their programme of study” (p.7)

Of note, and again a departure from the GSCC (2005) Post Qualifying Framework, and echoing back to the former GSCC (1997) framework, when local PQ consortia of employers and HEIs planned and accredited programmes, is the statement that:

“The underpinning principle of the two proposed stages is that the practice-based learning outcomes may be evidenced in the workplace without the need for HEI accreditation and approval arrangements. It would be for local stakeholder networks to plan together formal APL/APEL arrangements and credit rating, running in parallel with the formal PQ framework” (p2)

 Considerable flexibility is suggested in the development of approaches to support workers and to assess them, placing responsibility with employers for the initiation of this process and again raising questions about how these outcomes might be standardised.

 “It is for local employers to develop suitable ways of enabling candidates to meet the learning outcomes ranging from self managed portfolio presentations to a variety of in-house, distance and open learning or HEI- based training pathways” (p4)

 As well as reflecting earlier arrangements in social work post-qualifying training, the Proposed Framework makes reference to some more recent social work continuing professional developments promoted by Sector Skills Councils, mentioning that these proposals “fit” (p1) with NQSW, might provide support to employers’ NQSW programmes, that ). It may be possible for social workers who have met the Early Professional Development outcome statements to gain accreditation against some of the Practice Education learning outcomes (p2) and that there is a “fit” with Advanced Social Work Professionals (ASWP) programmes (p1). It is suggested that

“Stage 2 proficient practice educators could also mentor, supervise and assess PQ candidates in their occupational specific subject domain” (p.6).

Fifteen practice educator demonstration projects were supported by Skills for Care in 2009 to try out this framework. Results of these pilots have yet to be published. Information available from Skills for Care website suggests that a considerable range of approaches are being tried out, with a focus on supporting those who may have already undertaken shorter “Enabling Learning” courses achieve Stage 2 in the Proposed Framework.(Skills for Care, 2010).

In November 2009, the Social Work Taskforce report called for the recognition of a role of a practice educator as “a specific and senior role within the nationally recognised career structure for social workers", "definitive standards for teaching and assessment" in practice and that

"All those who take responsibility for the supervision and assessment of a social work student in their final placement hold a current practice teaching award or have demonstrated their competence against agreed national standards" (p.24)

The view was expressed that

"Employers should ensure that they support staff to develop these skills as part of their responsibility for investing in the next generation of social workers and for supporting all social workers in their on-going learning and development" (p.24)

The Social Work Reform Board (2010) has signalled its intentions to review this work in 2010 “with a view to phasing in new requirements from September 2011” with an expectation that “all *assessors* of the 2013 intake will be expected to meet these standards” (Department of Education, 2010 p 31)

In summary, the *Proposals for a Practice Educator Framework* (2009) address the need to adopt a developmental approach to train practice educators to work with social work students, but there is a lack of clarity about certain terms used, both in the Proposed Framework and in subsequent publications, leading to potential confusion in the interpretation of what is intended. Of interest is the support indicated to the development of self-managed portfolios to evidence learning and the potential to develop educators in ways which do not include formal learning in universities. Whilst experience and time elapsed since qualification is signalled before taking on practice educator roles (two years experience for Stage 1, and three years’ relevant work experience and qualified for at least two years for Stage 2), neither the *Framework* nor subsequent Taskforce Report and Implementation Plan consider the induction of social workers in the first two years of practice to prepare to take on practice education roles.

2.3 **Comparison with other professions**

In social work, there does not seem to be the seamless and integrated approach to practice education, which can be seen in other professions such as nursing and teaching. For example, nursing has a detailed framework for supporting learning and assessing in the workplace that was recently reviewed in the light of changing policy and informed by research such as Duffy (NMC 2008). There are incremental levels of practice learning support, which form a practice education hierarchy from the role of nurses and midwives through to those with qualifications as a mentor.

2.4 **Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW)**

The development of “newly qualified social worker” or NQSW as a specific status dates from the 2008. In Building *Brighter Futures; the Next Steps*, the former Department of Children, Schools and Families announced its intentions “to pilot newly qualified social work status offering a year of supported induction for about 1,000 new children’s social workers underpinned by appraisal against outcomes statements and protected caseloads” (p.21) This was followed by a similar strategy being announced by the Department of Health for newly qualified social workers in the adults’ workforce (Working *to Put People First: The Strategy for the Adult Social Care Workforce in England* (Department of Health April 2009). The pilots for these two programmes have been developed separately by Children Workforce Development Council for children’s social workers (CWDC) and by Skills for Care (SfC) for adults’ social workers. The CWDC NQSW programme commenced in 2009 nationally and by March 2010 over 3,000 NQSWS had enrolled on the scheme (CWDC (2010) in over 140 local authorities and third sector organisations. Common elements in both schemes include a comprehensive induction programme, access to supervision and training, a professional development plan and guidance materials on outcomes which should be met in the first year of practice (11 outcomes for NQSWs in children’s services and 12 for NQSWs working with adults). The Skills for Care (2010) maps its outcomes against the GSCC Post Qualifying Framework (2005) using the earlier (2005) version of paragraph 49, viii in relation to “Enabling Learning”, not the 2009 adapted version (see paragraph 2.2). This notes that Skills for Care considers that NQSWs could collect evidence relating to this requirement dependent on role, responsibility and working. Caution would need to be exercised in relation to this mapping because Skills for Care is not at present (July 2010) using the current terminology in relation to the requirement. However it is helpful that Skills for Care have mapped PQ against NQSW standards, which may support any possible involvement of NQSWs with enabling others’ learning.

The focus on newly qualified professionals is not a new one either in social work or other professions (J M Consulting, 1999). Knowledge becomes meaningful in the professionals’ practice setting (Daley, 2001; Knight, 2006). In particular, the first year of professional practice is seen as a significant first stage of the professional work life experience although there is relatively little recent research on this subject (Bates et al, 2010). In particular, within social work there is concern whether NQSWs are prepared adequately for the realities of professional practice (Goodyer and Higgins, forthcoming).

In their seminal research, Marsh and Triseliotis (1996) identified that many social workers experienced anxiety at the point of qualification related to undertaking a new role, constraints on resources, levels of bureaucracy and access to support and supervision. Other studies have sought to explore the experience of the first year post-qualification statutory social work practice in the UK. Bradley (2008) conducted a small study of ten newly appointed (eight of whom were newly qualified) social workers’ views on the effectiveness of induction in one local authority in the north of England. Six of the 10 respondents were uncertain they would remain in their job citing the pressures of day-to-day work and the lack of a ‘family friendly’ (p. 359) perspective to the work. Those who described induction processes that were relevant and timely felt enabled through the transition from student to qualified worker. The quality of the induction was seen as dependant on the relationships and support from colleagues and managers whereas an impediment to a good induction was seen as staff shortages impacting on the time colleagues were able to spend with them on induction.

Jack & Donnellan (2010) examined the experiences of thirteen social workers employed in children and families fieldwork teams in three local authorities in the south west of England in their first 12 months of employment after qualification in a study conducted in 2007. Ten line managers and two Learning and Development staff also took part in the study. The findings indicated that all the recently qualified social workers moved from a position of feeling optimistic and confident at the start of their practice to being dissatisfied, frustrated and unhappy at the end of their first year. It is interesting to note that by the second interview all had said they did not intend to stay with their current local authority employer long term. The themes emerging from the research which formed the basis of the dissatisfaction included the “reality shock” (p. 309) of social work, feeling overburdened and emotional demands leading to exhaustion and stress. The reality shock was seen as a clash between the ideals they had of social work and the realities of the work which focused on accountability and control. Being overburdened included the workload and the demands of record keeping and IT. Both of these factors led to the emotional demands of the job being a commonly cited issue. Present within all the themes appears to be the difficulties in adjusting to the new level of responsibility with which they were now faced. A contributory factor to the satisfaction levels appeared to be the role and demands of their employing organisations which seemed to created greater levels of stress than did the anxiety caused by difficult service user contact. There was also indication that there was a mismatch between the social workers’ and the line managers' views of whether sufficient time was given for reflection in supervision. However some line managers did acknowledge that they struggled to provide the protection and support necessary to assist the social workers cope with the high emotional demands of the work. The social workers’ attitudes toward continuing professional development may also be relevant here. Both they and their line managers expressed confusion over post-qualifying training. Although they did appreciate in-house training, the study indicated that most were pre-occupied with “getting on with the job” (p.316) and did not feel ready to embark on extended courses. They were also concerned about the escalation of work when they were away on training.

Bates et al (2010) conducted an evaluative study of twenty-two graduates of the social work degree and their managers in 2006 in South West England in order to identify and track their learning and development needs through their first year of employment in statutory settings. Data were collected using a longitudinal method of data collection with questionnaires at three points during the first year of practice and interviews. They found that few line managers used the common induction standards (Children Workforce Development Council, 2006; Skills for Care, 2006) and some were not aware of these. Over half of the managers did not receive support or training in planning the induction. Just under three-quarters (n=16) of social workers had a workplace based induction. Those who reported they did not have an induction had either been seconded from their organisation to complete the degree or had previously undertaken a practice learning opportunity within the authority. The respondents stated the induction had provided them with a clear explanation of the structure, values, aims, plans and objectives of their employer. However, few received an organised induction to enable them to take on their roles in a planned way. The majority were given a few specific activities and then instructed to sort out for themselves what they would find useful. One social worker reported the reality of being a recently qualified work as follows:

“I was supposed to have a slow, gentle introduction, but basically there were a number of crises, so it was a baptism of fire” (Bates et al, 2010, p. 162)

Just over half (n=12) of social workers found the probationary process a helpful learning experience in the first questionnaire but, by the completion of the second questionnaire, this number was reduced to five (out of twenty). The interviews suggested there was confusion about the length of time and aim of the induction. The majority of line managers (twelve out of fourteen) reported the process was a useful learning experience but half noted more time would have improved the period.

Barnes (2008), Jack and Donnellan (2010) and Bates et al’s studies predate the introduction of the NQSW pilots. Their findings chart the problems the NQSW programmes were designed to address. As part of its piloting NQSW induction in 2008, CWDC (2009) set up an online survey of NQSWs and their managers: five hundred and two NQSW and forty seven employers completed the survey. There was also a series of consultations. A total of 415 NQSWs attended ten consultations throughout England and fifty-eight people representing forty seven employers attended four events. There was evidence of positive induction and support to NQSW but this was variable. Some of the key findings for NQSW were:

* Almost two-thirds were clear about how their probationary period was assessed
* Almost two-thirds said they had some time to reflect (29% reported they always or usually had time to reflect; 33% per cent said they sometimes had time to reflect but thirty-seven per cent said there was rarely or never time to reflect)
* Over four fifths always or usually had supervision sessions in advance

When compared with the earlier studies, there appears to be some indication that the introduction of NQSW schemes may be showing some promise in developing a more protected first year in employment for social workers.

**2.5 Proposals for an Assessed Year in Employment (AYE)**

The Social Work Task Force (2009) recommended the creation of an assessed and supported year in employment (AYE) as the final stage in becoming a social worker which would need to be completed successfully before a full licence to practice be issued. The Social Work Reform Board is currently developing possible models for AYE, in collaboration with Skills for Care and CWDC. It has been indicated (DoE, 2010) that this will build on the work undertaken by the NQSW pilots. It is planned to pilot the AYE in 2012, followed by legislation for the provisions for a new ‘license to practice’ with the expectation that “that all social work graduates will be required to complete the Assessed Year in Employment before receiving a Licence to Practise from 2016”. (DoE p32-3**)**

The Social Work Task Force (2009) suggested some of the components of the AYE, including noting its importance in

"Creating a solid platform for further career long development. It should also help organisations to strengthen their own culture and practice in supporting career-long learning. ….There should be room for employers to respond in innovative ways to the ambitions frothier role in improving social work education set out in this report. (p.26)

 Given that this work is being undertaken at the moment (2010), it could be seen to be timely to consider whether contributing to others’ learning and development might be introduced at this stage of development. Those in the AYE are likely to be considering their own processes of learning and development and considering how they can help service users and carers learn new ways of managing personal difficulties. Could they also consider how they might help fellow professionals learn?

**2.6 Developing the current and future generation of workers – could there be a role for NQSWs (or in future those in the AYE stage)?**

In order to consider what could be positive or problematic in NQSW taking on an enabling role it may be useful to review the positive and negative aspects reported in existing learning and development roles in social work. Relevant literature in this field relates to the role of “practice teacher”. Indications of motivation and dissatisfaction in this role may be relevant. The primary motivator for social workers to embark on practice teaching has been professional development, both in terms of consolidating practice and acquiring new skills for career progression (Lindsay & Tompsett 1998; Wilson 2000; Shardlow et al 2002). The primary motivation to continue in a practice teaching role has been the opportunity to develop and enable others (Shardlow et al 2002; Doel et al 2007; Singh 2000). How might these positive aspects translate to the circumstances of those starting their professional career? The aspect of professional development may be beneficial and welcomed by some NQSWs. However, if the experience of the respondents to Jack and Donellan’s (2010) research above was replicated more widely there may be a sense of merely wanting to ‘get on with the job’ and a feeling that the transition from student to qualified practitioner is affording them development enough. In terms of the intrinsically positive aspect that contributing to others’ development and learning brought to the participants of the research studies cited above, this may also have a positive impact on NQSWs. Jack and Donellan’s (2010) cite their NQSW respondents as considering themselves “powerless individuals” and “right at the bottom” (p314) of the organisation indicating a sense of feeling devalued. Having the opportunity to take an enabling role may enhance the NQSWs’ sense of value in their professional skills and knowledge.

Throughout the literature on social work practice teaching it is acknowledged that the vast majority of social workers do not continue in this role. Whilst several cite the main reason for this being change of job role (Lindsay and Tompsett 1998; Shardlow et al 2002) it is also evident that lack of time and capacity is a consistent reason given for dissatisfaction with the role. Shardlow et al (2002) found that lack of time was reported as an “almost universal problem” (2002 p70). If this were to be considered for recently qualified workers, it would be important that any activities linked to contributing to others’ development do not merely add to this sense of burden.

Organisational factors and support appear to be significant factors in NQSWs making a successful transition to the realities of social work practice. A “contributing to others’ development” role introduced at some point on the NQSW continuum may have a positive impact. It is acknowledged that teaching others is a highly effective way to learn and this therefore may consolidate the NQSW experience and enable the NQSWs to feel valued. However, if the organisational structures and support are not meeting the needs of the NQSW an additional role of enabling may not be perceived in a positive light but merely as an added burden. In addition it is likely to depend very much on how the “contributing to others’ development” experience is constructed and will need to take account of the fact that a significant impact on NQSWs is their adjustment to the responsibility and accountability of their role. Therefore a role where a high level of additional responsibility is required may not be appreciated by many.

**2.7 Questions for the current study**

With the above considerations in mind, this study sought to explore the views and perspectives of those who had or were undertaking NQSW pilots, their managers, training and staff development officers, local universities and representatives of service users and carers’ about the possibility of introducing the concept and practice of contributing to others’ learning and development at the NQSW stage. Questions considered included:

* Should NQSWs be expected to contribute to others’ learning?
* At what stage this concept should be introduced to newly qualified practitioners?
* What contributing to others’ learning and development tasks might NQSWs be expected to undertake?
* What might be the advantages and disadvantages of taking on such roles?
* How should this be introduced? What learning support should be provided?
* Might self-managed portfolios available for assessment form part of the process?
* At what point in their early professional development should social workers be expected to be able to meet the current Specialist level standard?

2.8 **How the investigation was carried out**

A questionnaire was designed to collect the views of a sample of NQSWs, training officers and higher education institutions. This was approved by Skills for Care and distributed both by paper and email. Universities and other relevant parties were contacted via Skills for Care mailing lists and were asked to complete and circulate the questionnaire. Training officers attending a NQSW meeting organised by Skills for Care and partnership meetings at Kingston University were asked to compete the survey. Direct contact was also made with those providing and undertaking NQSW programmes. Service user representatives were also contacted. In total, 100 questionnaires were returned. The data were analysed using SPSS software and open- ended questions were analysed thematically. The results are presented in the next section.

**2.9 Profile of respondents**

Responses were received from 18 London boroughs, Surrey County Council, East Sussex County Council, three universities, one national voluntary organisation, and from a Skills for Care representative. The response rate by institution is shown in Appendix 1. A quarter of respondents did not indicate where they worked. Almost half of respondents (48%) were in the NQSW phase of their professional development. 30% held training and development roles, 10% were managers and supervisors of NQSWs and 8% worked in higher education. Children’s and adults’ services were fairly evenly represented by NQSW respondents (as shown in Table 1b). Line managers were mostly drawn from adults social care services.

**Table 1a. Profile of respondents.**

|  | Frequency |
| --- | --- |
| I have recently undertaken an NQSW programme | 11 |
| I am currently undertaking an NQSW programme | 30 |
| I am about to start an NQSW programme | 7 |
| I am a manager/ supervisor of NQSW (s) who have or who are taking an NQSW programme | 10 |
| I am a training and development officer/manager or equivalent in an agency | 30 |
| I have a practice learning position/role/ or service user representation role in an HEI | 8 |
| Practice Teacher | 1 |
| Missing responses | 3 |
| Total | 100 |

**Table 1b. Profile of respondents by service area**

|  | Social care services for children, young people, their families and carers | Social care services for adults | Working across social care services for children and adults | Higher education | Represent people who use services and carers in higher education | Totals |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NQSW phase** | 22 | 25 | 1 |  |  | 48 |
| **NQSW manager/ supervisor** | 1 | 8 | 1 |  |  | 10 |
| **Training and Development role** | 5 | 8 | 12 |  |  | 25 |
| **Higher Education** |  |  |  | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| **Totals** | 28 | 41 | 14 | 7 | 1 | 91 |

Missing = 9

**2.10 A note about terminology**

Given the prevailing use of the term “Enabling Learning” (see 2.2 above) it was decided to use the term “Enabling Others’ Learning” to refer to the PQ Specialist level requirement. The information sheet which was provided to all respondents provided the following information and interpretation.

“In 2009 the GSCC revised the wording for paragraph 49 (viii) within the *Post-Qualifying Framework for Social Work Education and Training* (GSCC 2005) to *‘Teach, Mentor and Support social work or other students and/or colleagues and contribute to assessment against national occupational standards*’. This is the stage in a practitioner’s development **before** taking practice education programmes (see *Proposals for a Practice Educator Framework*” (SFC, CWDC and GSCC 2009)

**3. Starting Off**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**3.1 Introducing the Concept of Enabling Others’ Learning to new professionals**

The survey sought to find out views about at what stage respondents thought the concept of enabling others’ learning should be introduced to social workers and social work students. Should the professional responsibility of contributing to others’ development be part of the initial core curriculum? Would this help to develop a professional “mindset” which includes this concept? The findings are shown in Table 2 below

**Table 2. When should the concept of enabling others’ learning be introduced?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The concept of enabling others’ learning should be introduced** | **NQSWs** | **NQSW Managers** | **Training and Development** | **HEI** | **Totals** |
| During initial social work training (pre-qualifying) | 9 | 2 | 6 | 4 | **21** |
| In the first year of qualified practice (as an NQSW) | 16 | 5 | 7 | 2 | **30** |
| After completing the NQSW programme | 12 |  | 5 |  | **17** |
| After completing Consolidation | 5 |  | 5 | 2 | **12** |
| At the last stage of the Specialist level | 1 |  |  |  | **1** |
| After completing 2 years practice | 4 | 3 | 3 |  | **10** |
| **Totals** | **47** | **10** | **26** | **8** | **91** |

Missing=9

It is interesting to note that one fifth of respondents considered that the concept of enabling learning should be introduced at the pre-qualifying stage. As one person commented:

“In initial qualifying training….. I think this ought to be built into the curriculum, understood as a process not just content to be delivered” (case 26).

 At several universities it is also established practice to run a “peer assisted learning scheme” (or supplemental instruction) whereby students on second or third years of their programmes of study support first year students (e.g. Kingston University). This practice is more firmly established in universities in the United States of America. Would introducing this concept at an early stage of professional development overcome the frequently noted perception that contributing to the training and development of the next generation of social workers is a “optional extra” which is “nice if you have the time” but additional to “core business”? (Lindsay et al, 1998, 1999, 2000). This prompts the question of whether the initial social work curriculum should include elements on approaches and strategies to help others learn. This would have professional relevance both to direct social work practice with service users and carers as well as contributing to professional learning. At a time when the Social Work Reform Board is considering the rationalisation of professional occupational standards, would it be worth suggesting that this is included in any revised standards?

A further third felt this should be introduced in the NQSW period, with the majority of respondents considering that the concept of enabling others’ learning be introduced in the early stages of professional training and development. It is not possible to account for the responses of 11 respondents who considered that this should be introduced at a later stage in professional development. Some of the responses to an invitation to comment suggests that some of these respondents were thinking about “enabling learning” in the narrower sense of taking a social work student on placement rather than about introducing the concept of enabling learning.

“This is because assessing another's practice, with the potential to fail them, is an extremely complex and stressful activity. A social worker should have really consolidated their practice before they take on. It's more than enabling others (case 6)”.

Another respondent offered some interesting comments about defining what is meant by enabling learning and the idea of a staged approach to developing experience in this area.

“I think this depends entirely on what is meant by “enabling others learning”. I think it could be introduced at initial SW training level in terms of the responsibility to offer support to colleagues and engage in learning mutually. I would need to know what was being expected before saying whether I agreed it should come in at NQSW level… To sum up: define an appropriate level at either NQ or Student SW Stage and go for it; don’t do it at all if you don’t define it well (case 24).”

For others the issue of “experience” was critical. The theme of “experience” emerged at a number of points in the questionnaire with reference to the variation in perceived ability of NQSWs as the following examples from an NQSW and a training officer show:

“As a mature student working in the public sector for over 24 years, my learning needs are quite different in comparison to someone just starting work after being in education” (case 76 - NQSW).

“In my experience, NQSWs are extremely varied: some would be well able to share their experiences with (say) Social Work Students, especially in the second half of their year; others present with a level of experience and confidence that you would more expect in a Social Work Student, and the responsibility would be too burdensome (case 24 – training officer).

**3.2 Starting Enabling Others’ Learning**

Respondents were asked to consider at what stage did they think qualified social workers should be ready to start enabling others’ learning? Table 3 below charts responses.

**Table 3a: At what stage should qualified social workers be ready to start enabling others’ learning?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Qualified social workers should be ready to start enabling others’ learning** | **NQSWs** | **NQSW Managers** | **Training and Development** | **HEI** | **Totals** |
| During the NQSW period | 15 | 4 | 2 | 2 | **23** |
| After completing the NQSW programme | 10 | 1 | 7 |  | **18** |
| After completing Consolidation | 11 |  | 8 | 4 | **23** |
|  At the last stage of the Specialist level | 1 | 1 | 2 |  | **4** |
|  After completing 2 years practice | 8 | 4 | 8 |  | **20** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Totals | **45** | **10** | **27** | **6** | **88** |

Missing/ other = 12

These responses show that there is quite a divergence of opinion, which is perhaps shown better in Chart 3b. NQSWs overall feel that they could undertake this level at quite an early stage of professional development (first year of practice or shortly after this, depending on when consolidation is taken). However, for over a quarter of respondents, after 2 years qualified practice was seen as the preferred point. Those who responded in this way were clustered in certain boroughs, perhaps reflecting custom and practice in these boroughs. Given that “Enabling Learning” is the phase in the Revised Draft Practice Educator Framework before progressing to Stage One of the Framework, and that it is suggested in the Framework that it may be possible for those undertaking Early Professional Development (EPD) who have met the EPD outcome statements to gain accreditation against some of the PE learning outcomes at Stage 1 (p.3), perhaps there is a need for more discussion and information sessions about the Practice Educator Framework and clearer definitions of each of the phases.

**Chart 3b: At what stage should qualified social workers be ready to start enabling others’ learning**

Comments made by respondents again referred to perceptions of the NQSW’s “experience”. A typical example is shown below.

“This very much depends on the person’s previous experience and confidence in the area in which they are working” (case 48).

A training officer noted that NQSWs she had worked with were “ready” to start the process of enabling others learning at an early phase, noting they had accrued experience but others might not be “ready”. Perceptions of “readiness” may be another rather nebulous factor which is used in decision making about who to support to take on Enabling Learning activities.

“My recently “graduating” NQSWs are all eager to take the Enabling Others module this summer and in my opinion have a lot to offer. It should be noted though: these NQSWs have been functioning way above the standard expected at NQSW and are now more like mid-term EPDs (partly because, as the first intake, most had been in post 6-8 months before the Programme started). It may be that future “graduating” NQSWs might be less ready – though they could almost certainly take a “shadowing” placement for those universities which require this (case 24).

Another training officer (whose social work qualification was from outside the UK) noted a belief that “SWs should be willing and able to help peers at any time informally (case 94)”. This may reflect a different professional culture than exists in England, but one which is perhaps worth considering.

**4. Contributing to Others’ Learning and Development during the NQSW period**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**4.1 Activities which could be undertaken**

Respondents were asked to consider if social workers undertaking NQSW programmes should undertake enabling learning activities and if so, what activities should NQSWs be able to undertake. 85% of respondents felt that those on NQSW programmes could undertake enabling learning activities. Of the 15 people who thought that they should not take this on, 8 were NQSWs, 1 was a manager and six worked in learning and development, the latter being proportionally higher than other groups. Respondents were asked to consider what type of activities NQSWs should undertake. These are shown in Table 4 a, and Charts 4b, c, and d below. Table 4a shows the overall response by each group of workers. This is then shown in bar charts (Charts 4 b, c and d) for each group of workers by activities each deemed possible.

**Table 4a. Enabling Learning Activities which could be undertaken during the NQSW period by Workers.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Those on the NQSW programme should**  | **NQSW****N=39** | **Managers** | **Training Officers** | **HEIs** |
|  Provide a shadowing opportunity for a social work student to observe their practice for a day | 35 | 8 | 13 | 6 |
|  Be able to provide some learning support to social work students or other students in the team | 33 | 7 | 13 | 4 |
| Be able to contribute to induction programmes for social work or other students placed in the team | 31 | 8 | 15 | 8 |
|  Provide an opportunity for a social work student or other student on placement to observe them undertaking a piece of work and hold a professional discussion with the learner after observation | 31 | 6 | 10 | 5 |
| Be able to contribute to induction programmes for new social workers or other workers joining the team | 29 | 5 | 13 | 6 |
|  Engage in a professional discussion with a student social worker on placement in the team about working with a specific case | 29 | 8 | 10 | 5 |
|  Be able to provide some mentoring to social work students or other students in the team | 26 | 5 | 10 | 5 |
|  Explain selected and agreed work processes and practices to a social work student on placement and help them learn how to carry out these processes and practices (with the support of a practice educator/ workplace supervisor) | 26 | 8 | 10 | 4 |
|  Be able to provide some learning support to other workers in the team | 23 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
|  Teach a social work student on placement about selected and agreed work processes and practices to and help them learn how to carry out these processes and practices (with the support of a practice educator/ workplace supervisor) | 22 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
|  Contribute to the assessment against national occupational standards of a social work student placed within the team, assisting a practice educator or workplace supervisor | 19 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
|  Be able to provide some mentoring to other workers in the team | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

**Chart 4b. Enabling Learning Activities which could be undertaken during the NQSW period: NQSWs’ views**

N=39 out of 48 NQSW respondents

It was interesting to find that the majority of NQSWs felt that they had something to offer to social work students. Three-quarters of NQSW respondents to the survey overall (48 in total) felt that they could provide shadowing opportunities for social work students and two thirds or over felt that they could contribute in a number of ways to student placements within the team. They were less confident about providing support to other team members but almost two thirds felt that they could contribute to induction programmes provided by their team to other workers.

**Chart 4c. Enabling Learning Activities which could be undertaken during the NQSW period Managers’ views**

N=9 out of 10 manager respondents

Bearing in mind that the sample of managers and supervisors of NQSWs was much smaller than that of NQSWs, it was interesting to note that managers had for the most part, similar views to NQSWs as to what enabling learning activities could be undertaken, again considering that working with students might be appropriate.

**Chart 4d. Enabling Learning Activities which could be undertaken during the NQSW period Training Officers’ views**

N=24 out of 30 Training Officer Respondents

Half of training officers felt that NQSWs could contribute to student induction programmes. Less than half felt that NQSW could provide shadowing to a student, provide some learning opportunities for students and shadowing and contribute to team induction. A third of training officers in total felt that NQSWs could contribute to selected work tasks with students. Generally this shows that training officers and those in training and development roles are much more cautious about the type of enabling learning activities NQSWs can engage in. Their views appear to contrast with the views of NQSWs themselves and their managers.

**4.2 Other ideas about how NQSWs might contribute to Enabling Others’ Learning**

Respondents were asked in an open-ended question to offer other suggestions about how NQSWs might contribute to others’ learning. 22 people responded. Five people referred to making a decision about NQSWs contributing to the learning of others based on the individual level of experience or skills of the NQSW. The following extracts were typical of these responses

“Not every NQSW has the experience or knowledge to support others in this way and this should be recognised” (case 76).

“The amount of support a NQSW should be expected to provide trainee SW’s should depend on their own experience and learning” (case 91).

Four people reiterated views about it not being desirable for NQSWs to take on enabling learning at this stage of their professional development and highlighted the pressure on NQSWs at this stage of their career (three of these were training officers and one was an NQSW). The following extracts were typical of these responses

“I’m not unsympathetic to the idea, but it needs to be planned with extreme care and caution. Firstly, the NQSWs barely have enough time to complete their own Programme alongside their casework. Secondly, their own understanding of processes and practices is in some cases very uncertain: they could conceivably be passing on imperfect understandings (I am dubious about the effective value of a “practice educator/workplace supervisor”, who will not be present at all occasions). Thirdly, I think this – if introduced ineptly – could place unwanted pressure and anxiety on to NQSWs, who in some cases are anxious enough already… NQSWs can’t be allowed more time out than they have already” (case 24- Training Officer).

“Enabling others is best done after a period of practice which has helped to capture the “solid” in “consolidation”. In an ideal world this activity should be carried out by someone senior within the team” (case 62 Training Officer).

“Should be part of EPD” (case 80 Training Officer).

“Students deserve practice tuition and assessment by experienced practitioners” (case 47 NQSW).

The majority of respondents however were much more positive about the potential of developing NQSWs to contribute to other’s learning and the impact that this might have on practice generally. Some took the view that contributing to others’ learning should form part of standard and routine organisational practice in line with learning (or “training” (SWTF, 2009) organisation ideals. The following extracts illustrate this.

“Learning as a routine aspect of collaborative working practices should be the aim. It is the culture and climate of the organisation that counts here. I think the main thing is to avoid a narrow knowledge transmission model of learning in and for practice” (case 26 HEI respondent).

“Integrate it into daily practice rather than highlight it as a necessary chore. We have enough of those already” (case 50 NQSW respondent).

Some NQSWs spoke strongly about what they felt they could offer students and perhaps indicated some of their frustrations as well.

“NQSWs are not just NQSWs they have skills, competencies and in most cases vast knowledge from previous employment. They are very good people to mentor students as they have full understanding of the processes and skills relevant to their area of employment. We are trusted with ensuring that children are safe and our professional opinions are counted then. This is a very good research area and I hope your findings go towards removing the disempowering title of NQSW” (case 27 -NQSW).

“NQSWs are closer to student-level in some respects having only just left that sphere themselves. I think I have a greater understanding of the course commitment and demands. You lose this, I feel, the further you are removed … or you reflect with 'tinted glasses' (case 66 -NQSW).

Some NQSW respondents elaborated on what they might be able at this stage of development.

“I think that NQSWs can offer support to other students as they have recently been in the same position. I do not think that NQSWs should offer advice about specific actions in regards to cases, but they are able to relate to the emotional concerns and insecurities that the student may be feeling” (case 31 NQSW).

“I think it’s important to enable others’ learning and to be a part of this process for our own learning and development, although one would have to consider the level of knowledge they hold and the piece of work with the student would have to reflect this” (case 90, NQSW).

Other suggestions about how NQSWs could contribute included:

**a) Sharing (Students and NQSW)**

* Sharing insights with Social Work Students in group reflective discussions
* Sharing their skills and experience in areas of specialist practice with other NQSWs on the NQSW programme

**b) Presenting**

* Presenting a piece of research or a case discussion or feedback from a conference at a Team Meeting (suggested by 4 people)
* NQSWs could disseminate within their team knowledge from their graduate training e.g. gained from their dissertation or an area of practice they have a particular interest in. This would develop their enabling others’ skills including presentation and training skills

**c) Mentoring**

* Be-friending, mentoring and shadowing
* One-to-ones
* After 5-6 months, an NQSW could buddy a new Student, showing them round the office and local area, explaining simple work processes (e.g. simple IT – not replacing training) etc.

**d) Joint working**

* Do joint working with team member or student depending on the allocated casework
* Co-work with students on more complex cases
* An NQSW in their second half of the year could perhaps take a Student on a visit, but only if the NQSW’s own competence had been confirmed by their Supervisor

**e) Contributing to Inter-professional learning**

* Could contribute to learning of other members of MDTs, either trainees or others who need to know about the SW service, e.g. in a hospital setting

**4.3 Weighing up advantages and disadvantages of NQSWs starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning activities**

The survey sought to ascertain if respondents could identify what might be the advantages and disadvantages of NQSWs starting to undertake enabling others’ learning activities. Respondents were first asked to consider whether they thought there were no advantages to NQSWs taking on enabling learning activities. Then they were given a range of suggestions about possible advantages and disadvantages to consider. They were also asked to offer further suggestions about advantages and disadvantages in open-ended questions and finally, they were asked to weigh up whether in their view there were more advantages to disadvantages to NQSWs taking on such a role.

**Table 5: First consideration: Views on advantages versus disadvantages.**

| **I can see no advantages to NQSWs starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning activities** |
| --- |
|  | **agree** | **not agree** | **Total** |
| NQSW phase | 6 | 42 | 48 |
| NQSW manager/ supervisor | 1 | 10 | 11 |
| Training and Development role | 6 | 21 | 27 |
| Higher Education | 0 | 8 | 8 |
| **Total (**Missing= 6 responses) | 13 | 81 | 94 |

Table 5 shows that the majority of respondents thought initially that there were no disadvantages in NQSWs starting to undertake enabling learning roles. Respondents from in Higher Education all felt there were advantages. Conversely, almost a quarter of training officer respondents could not see any advantages as the following comment illustrates:

“At this stage there is no real advantage to a NQSW to contribute as they will already be overwhelmed by their own current status. The advantage would be for the organisation/HEI who may feel they have more capacity to meet the national shortage of placements currently in London” (case 33- in a training and development role).

**Table 6a: Advantages of NQSWs taking on Enabling Learning Activities (Showing agreement with statement)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The advantages of those on NQSW programmes starting to undertake some Enabling Other’s Learning activities** | **NQSW****N=48** | **Managers****N=11** | **Training Officers****N=27** | **HEIs****N=8** |
|  NQSWs can provide effective support to students because they understand their perspectives, having recently been a student themselves | **38** | **7** | **16** | **8** |
|  Contributing to others’ learning can help to reinforce and consolidate the NQSW’s own learning | **37** | **7** | **17** | **6** |
|  This could be personally rewarding and motivating for the NQSW | **37** | **8** | **13** | **6** |
|  This could enhance the NQSW’s sense of professional responsibility | **36** | **7** | **14** | **7** |
|  NQSWs learn how to contribute to responsibilities undertaken by all team members (e.g. induction)  | **32** | **7** | **18** | **8** |
|  This could motivate the NQSW to want to develop in this area | **32** | **6** | **12** | **7** |
|  This could help NQSWs feel valued by students and the agency | **30** | **7** | **9** | **6** |
|  NQSWs learn that all professionals have a responsibility to enable others’ learning | **29** | **5** | **16** | **5** |
|  This could support the ethos of team learning and development | **28** | **7** | **16** | **8** |
|  This could be supportive to practice educators and workplace supervisors | **24** | **6** | **10** | **4** |
|  This could engage the interest of practice educators and workplace supervisors in contributing to the NQSW programme | **23** | **6** | **10** | **5** |

These findings are shown in an alternative way in Chart 6b.

**Chart 6b: Advantages of NQSWs taking on Enabling Learning Activities (Showing agreement with statement)**

These results suggest that almost 80% of all NQSWs respondents (n=48) consider that their recent experience of being a student equips them well to provide support to students. Further, three-quarters of NQSWs see enabling learning activities potentially helping to reinforce and consolidate their own learning, being personally rewarding and motivating and enhancing their sense of professional responsibility. As these four NQSWs commented:

“NQSWs are fresh from university, with new learning, new ideas and are motivated. (Most of the time!)**.** Most importantly they can relate to students and the stress involved in training as a social worker. They can offer empathy and understanding in the role of a student as they have recently been in their shoes. Although experienced social workers can offer vital guidance in relation to practice, they are not able to relate to the student in regards to their emotions and insecurities as they enter their new career” (case 31 NQSW).

“NQSWs could contribute to what another SW student might want to know as they have been there before” (Case 96 NQSW)

“It could help increase the confidence of NQSWs” (case 32 NQSW).

“NQSWs have lower case loads and so should have more time to offer students” (case 47 -NQSW).

One NQSW saw enabling learning activities as potentially contributing to the achievement of the NQSW requirements, and saw this as an advantage:

“Tasks may contribute to the NQSW portfolio by demonstrating required competences in practice through enabling others. This would avoid duplicating tasks or creating additional requirements whilst undertaking the NQSW” (case 38 - NQSW).

Another NQSW noted that this could promote a learning environment

“I consider the opportunity of sharing and reflecting on professional experiences will generally promote a learning environment / promote discussion / breakdown negative professional barriers by helping professionals to understand others’ roles” (case 91. NQSW).

The NQSWs’ views were shared by the smaller proportion of managers and members of HEIs who responded as one manager commented

“This promotes the concept of the workplace as a learning environment, and therefore ongoing professional development” (case 36 - manager).

Another manager commented that an advantage might be that undertaking enabling learning activities might “help them prepare for professional leadership” (case 3 - manager). NQSWs were less sure of the impact of this on practice educators and workplace supervisors, perhaps because of their stage of professional development. Training officers were generally more cautious. Two thirds of the total number of respondents in this category felt NQSWs could learn how to contribute to responsibilities undertaken by all team members (e.g. induction) with slightly over half considering that NQSWs could provide effective support to students because they understand their perspectives, having recently been a student themselves and that contributing to others’ learning might help to reinforce and consolidate the NQSW’s own learning, help them learn that all professionals have a responsibility to enable others’ learning and could support the ethos of team learning and development. One training and development professional commented.

“Most of the above statements should be covered by the degree and organisational practice and procedures. Each worker has a responsibility for their learning, supporting others (case 62-Training).

The questionnaire then asked respondents to consider disadvantages to taking on Enabling Learning activities having considered the potential advantages to NQSW involvement. A reverse question was asked to that shown in Table 5, the results of which are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Second consideration: Views on advantages versus disadvantages.**

| **I can see no disadvantages to NQSWs starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning activities** |
| --- |
|  | **agree** | **not agree** | **Total** |
| NQSW phase | 9 | 38 | 48 |
| NQSW manager/ supervisor | 4 | 7 | 11 |
| Training and Development role | 2 | 27 | 29 |
| Higher Education | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| **Total (**Missing= 5 responses) | 19 | 76 | 95 |

 Table 6 shows that 76% of all respondents could see some disadvantages to NQSWs taking on enabling learning roles. Almost all the training and development officers felt there were some disadvantages to NQSWs taking on this role. 80% of NQSW and two thirds of managers also saw some problems. Proportionately, those employed in Higher Education were least likely to see disadvantages.

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or not with two potential disadvantages and identify in an open-ended question any other ideas they might have about the disadvantages of NQSWs contributing to Enabling Others’ Learning. These results are shown in the following two tables and chart.

**Table 7a: Views on the statement that “NQSWs are under considerable pressure undertaking the NQSW programme. This might be stressful**”

| **Groups** | **agree** | **not agree** | **total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NQSW phase | 35 | 12 | 47 |
| NQSW manager/ supervisor | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| Training and Development role | 21 | 8 | 29 |
| Higher Education | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| **Total** | 67 | 28 | 95 |

Missing = 5

**Chart 7b: Views on the statement that “NQSWs are under considerable pressure undertaking the NQSW programme. This might be stressful**”

These responses show that almost three quarters of NQSWs feel that taking on enabling learning activities during the NQSW phase might cause them stress. This view is also held by relatively similar proportions of training officers and higher education respondents. Interestingly the proportion of managers who considered this might be stressful was lower.

 **Table 8a: Views on the statement that “NQSWs would not have time to undertake this additional work”**

| **Groups** | **agree** | **not agree** | **total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NQSW phase | 16 | 31 | 47 |
| NQSW manager/ supervisor | 3 | 8 | 11 |
| Training and Development role | 15 | 14 | 29 |
| Higher Education | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| **Total** | 39 | 56 | 95 |

Missing = 5

**Chart 8b: Views on the statement that “NQSWs would not have time to undertake this additional work”**

Interestingly, only about a third of NQSWs and their managers felt that NQSW would not have time to undertake this work. This view was in contrast to the perceptions of those in training and development and higher education roles, perhaps indicating that the latter, not being based in teams, are less able to estimate this factor.

26 people made additional responses to the open-ended question which asked respondents to provide other ideas about disadvantages of NQSWs contributing to Enabling Others’ Learning (13 Training and Development officers, 2 from Higher Education and 11 NQSW).

 Those in training and development roles expressed concerns which could be grouped as related to four key themes. First, **training officers questioned if NQSWs were ready** to enable others’ learning (6 responses). They noted too that NQSWs may be completely new to the service in which they are working and need to learn about this service. The following are examples of such responses

“NQSWs are developing confidence and are not ready yet to enable others (case 7).

“It is perhaps too early in their practice to support students” (case 17).

“NQSWs might be learning about their own team and might be in a team or service that they are relatively new to (case 77).

“Given the pressures of front line work, the difficulty of transitioning from student to professional, the fledging professional identity I would not be in favour of NQs undertaking enabling others on a formal basis. Yes, they can contribute to enabling, but they have too much learning to do in their first year as is. The experiences of NQs here are that they already feel overwhelmed by the work and the transition and adding additional burdens to their development at this stage seems foolhardy. I’m not even convinced that the Consolidation module is appropriate at the NQ stage, given that they have less than a year of learning/experience to consolidate after their initial qualifications (case 94).

Secondly, **they questioned if NQSW were suitable** to take on this role as the following excerpts show;

“NQSW’s are still learning. I believe that experienced and trained practitioners should have responsibility for enabling the learning of student social workers. The NQSW’s ability would have to be assessed in order for them to undertake some activities and this would need to be done by their supervisor’s (case 42).

“The possibility of NQSWs transferring misunderstanding or incomplete understandings and in some cases negative culture and outlook” (case 24).

Thirdly they drew attention to **the possible impact of this on the NQSW programme**.

“This would need to be built in to the programme, with time allowed for it. Otherwise it is just another pressure. Many students do not get the workload relief they are led to expect and this could be considered another burden” (case 36).

“I would be concerned if the NQSW process was complicated as the clear objective is to have qualified registered workers to deliver frontline services without the prospect of a long their, probably increased costs to individuals and organisations” (case 62).

“The NQSW learning and achievement must be to the highest standard” (case 63).

Finally, as one pointed out, if enabling learning activities were to be introduced at NQSW stage, the remit should be very clear.

“Tasks should be clearly defined and not incorporating any formal assessments of students at this stage” (case 88).

From the Higher Education perspective, concern was expressed also about the need for NQSWs to develop in practice first, as the following excerpts show.

“They are still learning and developing their practice and developing professional identity and need to develop and consolidate their learning rather than educate others” (case 1).

“NQSWs need to understand their own area of work thoroughly before taking on responsibilities for others' learning” (case 25).

From the NQSW perspective, four people saw as a potential disadvantage the fact that NQSW are in an early stage of learning the professional role themselves as the following excerpts show:

“NQSWs do not have the expertise to offer in-depth practice teaching to students” (case 47)

“NQSWs are still going to be learning themselves and additional pressure to teach others may be stressful also it may be confusing for the student if the NQSW misleads them as they are still unsure themselves” (case 86).

“Each NQSW will have varying abilities to provide support based on their health, personal circumstances and ability. This needs to be reflected in any plans for them to enable others” (case 76)

“It may not be a disadvantage but being an NQSW I am also in the process of learning whilst working on a case load” (case 90).

One highlighted that if enabling others’ learning tasks formed part of the NQSW requirements, this might help.

“If tasks can be used as evidence of competence to the NQSW requirements these disadvantages do not apply” (case 38).

Others saw the management of their work and time to be an issue. This is shown in the following excerpts.

“Caseloads might be a limitation” (case 84).

“It may add pressure to the limited time I often feel that I have” (case 90).

“In my opinion, if NQSWs were provided with the time to undertake the Enabling Others’ Learning Activities, it would be a positive learning experience for them and those they were supporting. However, the reality from my own experience is that this would not happen and the responsibilities would be undertaken in the NQSW’s own time which could negatively impact on their professional and personal lives. In my opinion, providing the relevant support was in place, I consider the advantages of NQSW’s starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning Activities COULD outweigh the disadvantages (case 91).

Finally all respondents were asked to weigh up the **advantages** of NQSWs starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning activities outweigh the **disadvantages.** Results are shown in Table 9a and Chart 9b below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 9a. Might the advantages of NQSWs starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning activities outweigh the disadvantages?**  | MPj04373300000[1] | Totals |
| **More disadvantages** | **Not sure** | **More advantages** |  |
| NSQW phase | **10** | **7** | **30** | **47** |
| Managers | **5** | **2** | **4** | **11** |
| Training and development roles | **15** | **1** | **13** | **29** |
| Higher Education | **2** | **1** | **5** | **8** |
| Totals | **32** | **11** | **52** | **95** |

**Chart 9b Might the advantages of NQSWs starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning activities outweigh the disadvantages?**

Table 9a and Chart 9b shows that in this survey, NQSWs and those employed in Higher Education considered that on balance, there were people who considered that there were advantages of NQSWs taking on Enabling Learning roles than disadvantages. Eleven respondents were not sure. Managers and training officers were less convinced.

**5. How might NQSWs be supported in Learning about Contributing to Others’ Learning and Development?**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

5.1 Bearing in mind the proposals set out in the *Proposals for a Practice Educator Framework* (2009) about developing employment based means of supporting learning and development. Respondents were asked next to consider how NQSWs should be supported in learning how to take on this role if NQSWs were to start to take on Enabling Others’ Learning Activities. Table 10 shows the aggregate results of this question.

**Table 10 Supporting NQSWs in learning how to undertake some Enabling Other’s Learning activities**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Supporting NQSWs in learning how to undertake some Enabling Other’s Learning activities** | **Required** | **Desirable** | **Not needed**  | **Total** |
|  Line manager support and supervision  | 79 | 8 | 2 | 89 |
|  Mentoring and support session(s) provided by agency | 46 | 27 | 7 | 80 |
|  Practice educator support in team  | 46 | 32 | 7 | 85 |
| Evaluation session provided in agency for all NQSWs | 45 | 22 | 4 | 71 |
|  Learning/ training session(s) provided in agency by practice educators | 43 | 27 | 9 | 79 |
|  Self-directed reading and learning material | 39 | 36 | 7 | 82 |
| Learning/ training session(s) provided in agency by NQSW lead | 38 | 32 | 10 | 80 |
| Learning/ training session(s) provided in agency by training department practice learning lead or equivalent | 34 | 25 | 10 | 69 |
| Training/ Learning session (s) provided by university | 32 | 34 | 13 | 79 |
|  Learning session provided by representatives of people who use services and carers | 27 | 42 | 5 | 74 |

This table shows clearly that in the NQSW phase, line manager support is seen as the most critical in helping NQSWs to start taking on Enabling Learning activities. 40 of the 43 NQSW respondents saw this as the most important factor. NQSWs also saw practice educator support as the next most important factor. This was echoed by other groups of respondents.

Respondents were asked to indicate in an open-ended question if they had any other ideas about supporting NQSWs to learn about how to contribute to Enabling Others’ Learning**.** One NQSW raised a pertinent point which would clearly need to be taken into account.

“I think it depends on the individual and their own process of learning and development” (case 90 - NQSW).

Respondents were also asked to consider if NQSWs were to start to take on Enabling Others’ Learning Activities, if they thought that this experience should contribute to the creation of a portfolio of evidence towards meeting the requirement at PQ Specialist level to ‘Teach, Mentor and Support social work or other students and/or colleagues and contribute to assessment against national occupational standards’.

**Table 11 If NQSWs were to start to take on Enabling Others’ Learning Activities, should this contribute to the creation of a portfolio of evidence towards meeting the requirement at PQ Specialist level**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes** | **Not sure** | **No** | **Totals** |
| NSQW phase | 33 | 7 | 3 | 43 |
| Managers | 8 | 1 | 2 | 11 |
| Training and development roles | 14 | 7 | 6 | 27 |
| Higher Education | 2 | 4 | 2 | 8 |
| Totals | 57 | 19 | 13 | 89 |

Missing=11

There is a perception that workers are rather weary of portfolio construction, it was interesting to note that almost two-thirds of those who responded felt that a building a portfolio of evidence might be constructive. Over three-quarters of NQSW respondents were in favour of this approach. One NQSW elaborated on this, as shown below.

“Each NQSW should be given the opportunity to complete a portfolio, in their own time, to demonstrate that they have reached the required standard” (case 76).

**6. At what point in their early professional development should social workers be expected to be able to meet the initial “Enabling others’ learning” standard?**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6.1 Finally, respondents were asked to consider at what point in their early professional development should social workers be expected to be able to meet the initial “Enabling learning” standard to ‘Teach, Mentor and Support social work or other students and/or colleagues and contribute to assessment against national occupational standards, before moving on to Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Practice Educator Framework (practice teaching). This question also generated lengthy responses in free text from nine NQSWs, six training officers and one higher education respondent.

A range of views were expressed by those NQSWs who chose to comment. These comments showed NQSWs showed that they were able to make connections with their previous learning and also recognise the differences between NQSW’s readiness to take on this work and other constraints, as the excerpts reproduced below show.

**Starting “enabling” at NQSW level**

“I had a clear idea from my first student placement that I would be enabling others’ learning. NQSW is a good place to start working towards this” (case 37).

“I think enabling others is a fundamental part of social work, however, not all parts of Enabling Others PQ specialist requirements can be met at this level. NQSW already enables others as part of the practice “(case 44).

“I do think that each NQSW is different and will have different things to offer. Some come from a social care background and so have previous experiences which influence future practice. Such people have a lot to offer. However some NQSW have limited experience prior to training, and so may not be able or feel confident enough to enable others” (case 31).

“It should be remembered that many NQSW’s have relevant learning and experience from previous education and employment that they bring and apply to their new role, and this can contribute to their team’s knowledge base. All NQSW’s are different and some may feel able and happy to contribute in this way, but it may be an added stress for others “(case 69).

Others offered points and suggestions about the timing of when NQSWs should be expected to meet this standard, as shown below.

 **Once they have completed their NQSW year**

“NQSWs have far too much to learn as it is in their first year. The first year must be protected. SW students have heavy literature base when studying. The first year of practice should be “supported time” to put this in to practice, and to learn the policies and procedures of the organisations they are in, in order to be proficient at the job they are doing. They need space for thinking – not more schemes. This scheme should only be introduced to students once they have completed their NQSW year – otherwise all the pieces of work/schemes are done with half effort (as no time to dedicate to them) and the SW ends up feeling that they are completing a paper exercise and no one wins (case 30).

**After completing consolidation**

“There is a growing expectation on social workers to continue learning throughout their careers. Whilst life-long learning is positive I do not feel that anyone has taken into account the added pressure this places on newly qualified workers who are already having to cope with practising in a stressful field of employment. I think it would be beneficial if qualified workers completed the NQSW programme directly after qualifying, followed by undertaking the Consolidation module. After this I think consideration be given to implementing Enabling Others as I don’t believe you can be a productive practice teacher until you have gained a level of autonomy and confidence” (case 28).

**Ability and knowledge – not “time qualified”**

“It is my experience that when social workers qualify they have varying levels of pre-qualifying experience and it is my opinion their ability and knowledge to ‘enable others’ should be based on this, not the amount of time they have been qualified” (case 91).

Training officers who chose to write comments expressed a range of views also. For some, the NQSW period might be a suitable time to take this on, for others; this should be at a much later stage in social workers professional career. Most of those who chose to comment also recognised constraints and differences between workers as the comments reproduced below show.

**Starting at NQSW level**

“Enabling others is a key social work task. It should not be limited to social workers with a number of years experience. Enabling others tasks have positive effects on the enabling practitioner in terms of consolidating learning and developing supportive and challenging strategies. NQSWs can bring a lot of relevant, current academic knowledge to these roles. If they are ready to support families and individuals with highly complex needs then they are ready or should be enabled to develop their skills in enabling others” (case 71).

“NQSW has more advantages in theory but not feasible with workload” (case 61).

 **It depends on the social worker.**

“After 1 year of practice – YES, (strong NQSWs); After 18 months of practice – YES (less confident NQSWs); After 2 years of practice -YES (weaker NQSWs) (case 24).

 **Between 18 and 24 months**

“Formal assessment involvement after 18-24 years-if manager agrees” (case 19).

 **Over 2 years**

“I’m frustrated with the amount of work we are piling on social workers that takes them away from their core tasks of supporting children and families. I agree that a spirit of enabling and supporting should be developed right from initial training, to develop the idea of a learning culture, but I think putting workers with 2 or fewer years of experience formally in charge of enabling learning is a serious mistake” (case 94).

“All teams should contribute to the learning of students in some way however students need to feel that they are being assessed by an experienced and qualified assessor. If we are to raise the standard of social work students, assessors need to have the appropriate training and experience. I think that the concept of enabling others should be introduced to social work students but that they don’t undertake this role until they have consolidated their learning and have 2-3 years experience” (case 42).

The comments above are a selection from those who chose to write comments. They are not representative of the full survey, but they do illustrate the range of opinion on this matter. 92 people did however complete the survey question, which gives a fuller picture of respondents’ views on this issue. These results are shown in Table 12a and illustrated in Chart 12b

**Table 12a: At what point in their early professional development should social workers be expected to be able to meet the initial “Enabling learning” standard?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **After 1 year of practice** | **After 18 months of practice** | **After 2 years of practice** | **After 3 years of practice** | **Not sure** | **Totals** |
| NSQW phase | 10 | 15 | 15 | 1 | 5 | 46 |
| Managers | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Training and development roles | 5 | 7 | 12 | 3 | 0 | 27 |
| Higher Education | 3 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Totals | 21 | 25 | 35 | 5 | 6 | 92 |

Missing =8

**Chart 12b: At what point in their early professional development should social workers be expected to be able to meet the initial “Enabling learning” standard?**



This finding shows that whilst there is considerable difference in opinion, there is a general belief that this standard could be met at a fairly early stage in social workers’ professional careers, with 81% of respondents overall considering that it could be achieved by the end of the second year in practice. This would appear to be earlier than is current practice, but is certainly in line with the Revised Draft Practice Educator Framework (GSCC/SFC 2009).

**7. Possible Ways Forward: The Professional Responsibility for Developing the Current and Future Generation of Social Workers.**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

“**There are two contrasting ways of thinking about enabling others: conventionally as part of the move to being a practice educator and more generally in relation to changing the culture of Social Work agency practice in support of a new professional confidence. Time to bring the two together I think” (case 26).**

7.1 This study has pointed to the need to clarify professional expectations, responsibilities and requirements of social workers in relation to developing others including those seeking to enter the profession (social work students) and registered social workers at all stages of professional practice. Though the current post-qualifying framework for social work (GSCC, 2005) includes requirements relating to contributing to the development of others at each level (Specialist, Higher Specialist and Advanced) and offers a practice educator pathway at the later two levels, insufficient attention has been paid to introducing and defining this requirement in the early stages of professional practice (initial training for social work, newly qualified phase). Instead, attention has been focussed more narrowly on when and how a social worker should be ready, able and equipped to provide a placement to a social work student. Taking professional responsibility for developing other social workers should not be limited to this conception. It can and should include more than this if the ideal of the workplace as a community of learners is to be achieved (Wenger, 1998). The expectation of developing others in their learning really needs to be embedded throughout the social work career as part of a concerted national strategy (Waterhouse et al, 2008). Some interesting suggestions about supporting the learning of others in team settings were suggested by respondents to this study. A rather apposite point was made by one respondent (quoted above) which perhaps throws some light on the divergence of opinion found in the results and points to a way forward.

7.2 In considering the early phases of professional development, the majority of NQSWs who were respondents to this study were keen to be involved in contributing to others’ development. They considered in particular that they have something to offer student social workers. They also felt that they can contribute to other developmental roles in their work settings. Starting to contribute to others’ learning was seen by the majority of NQSWs to offer potential advantages such as helping to reinforce and consolidate their own learning, be personally rewarding and motivating and a way of enhancing their sense of professional responsibility. Such activities could be incorporated into existing practices and with NQSWs (and future AYEs) being enabled to develop in this area by line manager support and supervision. A portfolio of evidence supplemented by professional reflection, linked to professional development planning could be used to assess achievement and support decisions about professional progression in relation to such work. Guidance on the type of tasks NQSWs could or should undertake was suggested.

7.3 There is a need to embed the expectation of contributing to the professional development of others throughout the social work career as part of a concerted national strategy and within the current process of rationalisation of occupational standards, model development for the AYE and proposed changes to qualifying and post-qualifying programmes for social work education. This should be a single unified professional requirement for all social workers in all fields of practice. This could also include revising the GSCC Code of Practice to include contributing to others’ learning and development and as part of the professional requirements that social workers need to evidence when they re-register. Figure 1 offers some preliminary suggestions about how this might be taken forward.

**Figure 1: Preliminary suggestions as to what taking Professional Responsibility for Developing the Current and Future Generation of Social Workers could include at early stages of professional development.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage of Development** | **Possible Developing the Future Generation of Social Workers (Social Work Students) activities** | **Possible “Contributing to the Professional Development of Others” Activities** | **Supporting the worker’s learning and development in this area** | **Assessment of progress and development planning** |
| Social Work Student | * Year 1: Peer Support
* Year 2: mentoring Year 1 students
* Year 3: mentoring year 1 and 2 students.
* Supporting other students on placements (e.g. Final placement student provides some support for first placement student in same placement setting)
 | * Presentations to the team when on placement
* Presentations/ posters of research projects undertaken as part of studies
 | * Professional responsibility to develop others defined at early stage of initial social work programme.
* Specific targeted support for mentoring schemes
* Practice educator/ university educator support and feedback
 | * Requirement included in new occupational standards and code of practice and possibly assessed within programme
* Requirement included in professional development planning
* Achievements and special contributions (e.g. mentoring) formally recognised (e.g. in references)
 |
| NQSW (in future “probationary’ social worker, Graduate Social Worker completingan assessed first year in employment | * Provide a shadowing opportunity
* Provide some learning support
* Contribute to induction programmes
* Provide observation opportunity
* Hold a professional discussion
* Provide some mentoring
* Explain selected and agreed work processes
* Sharing insights
* Be-friending
* Do joint working with team member or student
 | * Be able to contribute to induction programmes for new social workers or other workers joining the team
* Engage in a professional discussion
* Sharing their skills and experience with other NQSWs
* Presenting a piece of research or a case discussion
* Present or feedback from a conference at a Team Meeting
* Disseminate research to team
* Do joint work with team member
* Contribute to learning of other members of MDTs
 | * Line manager support and supervision
* Possible input from practice educator
* Guidance material
 | * Requirement included in standards, code of practice and formally assessed
* Portfolio of evidence and reflective analysis of development in this area
* Requirement included in professional development planning – assessment of progress to progress to Stage 1 of Practice Educator framework or action plan to address areas of development
 |
| Early Professional Development (In Future -Licensed Social Worker) | As above and* Stage 1 of Proposed Practice Educator Framework or equivalent
 | As above and* Support and mentor NQSW/ probationary social workers
 | As above and * Learning programme to support development in this area
 | * As above and assessment of progress to progress (Stage 2 PE, supervision of others – Senior Licensed SW etc)
 |

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**APPENDIX 1: Respondents by Borough and County**

| **Borough and County** | **Number of Reponses** | **Borough and County** | **Number of Reponses** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Barking | 1 | Kingston | 4 |
| Barnet | 2 | Sutton | 5 |
| Bexley | 4 | Tower Hamlets | 1 |
| Brent | 4 | Wandsworth | 4 |
| Camden | 1 | East Sussex | 1 |
| Croydon | 4 | Surrey County Council | 11 |
| Ealing | 3 | University of Sussex | 1 |
| Greenwich | 1 | Kingston University | 5 |
| Harrow | 4 | RHUL | 1 |
| Islington | 4 | Skills for Care/ Freelance | 1 |
| Sutton | 1 | Adult Social Services | 3 |
| Lambeth | 1 | Children’s Social Services | 1 |
| Lewisham | 6 | Children’s Hospital  | 1 |
| Newham | 1 | Learning and Development | 1 |
| NSPCC | 3 | Missing | 20 |
|  |  | Total | 100 |

**APPENDIX 2: Information Sheet**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **http://imail.sghms.ac.uk/attach/FHSCS_RGB_new.gif?sid=V5nup6XQ5Ko&mbox=INBOX&charset=escaped_unicode&uid=9037&number=2&filename=FHSCS_RGB_new.gif** | London  South Bank University logo |

**Exploring the possibility of introducing enabling others’ learning at Newly Qualified Social Work (NQSW) stage of professional development.**

**Information sheet**

**What is this project about?**

The School of Social Work, Kingston University and St George’s University of London, and the Department of Social Work, London South Bank University have been commissioned by Skills for Care London undertake a small scale pilot study to explore NQSWs’, managers’, training and staff development officers’, universities and representatives of service users and carers’ views and perspectives about the possibility of introducing the need to enable others’ learning at NQSW stage. The concept that all professionals should contribute to the learning of others underpins this investigation

**What do we mean by “enabling others’ learning**”?

We are using the term “Enabling Others’ Learning” to refer to the PQ Specialist level requirement. In 2009 the GSCC revised the wording for paragraph 49 (viii) within the *Post-Qualifying Framework for Social Work Education and Training* (GSCC 2005) to *‘Teach, Mentor and Support social work or other students and/or colleagues and contribute to assessment against national occupational standards*’. This is the stage in a practitioner’s development **before** taking practice education programmes (see *Proposals for a Practice Educator Framework*” (SFC, CWDC and GSCC 2009)

**How is the investigation being carried out?**

The main way that data are being collected is by questionnaire. We are using a range of ways to contact interested parties, including contacting agencies working with Kingston University and London Southbank University to ask for their help in distributing the questionnaires; contacting people directly at NQSW events and sending the questionnaire to universities and other parties via Skills for Care mailing lists. The data will then be analysed and the findings presented in a report to Skills for Care. You will not be personally identified in any report on findings. Boroughs, agencies and institutions who have responded will be listed. It is hoped that a summary of the findings will be published in the Skills for Care Electronic Newsletter.

**What are the timeframes for this project?**

This project has a very quick timeframe. The project must be completed by the end of May 2010. We hope that you will participate and return the questionnaire to us immediately and no later than **15th May 2010.**

**Any questions?** Please contact us

Jane Lindsay (Kingston University) at J.F.Lindsay@Kingston.ac.uk

Martyn Higgins (London Southbank University) higginm2@lsbu.ac.uk

**Appendix 3: Questionnaire**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **http://imail.sghms.ac.uk/attach/FHSCS_RGB_new.gif?sid=V5nup6XQ5Ko&mbox=INBOX&charset=escaped_unicode&uid=9037&number=2&filename=FHSCS_RGB_new.gif** | London  South Bank University logo |

**Questionnaire** e**xploring the possibility of introducing enabling others’ learning at NQSW stage of professional development.**

**Section A: About you**

1. Please indicate the statement which best applies to you

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Please tick |
| 1. I have recently undertaken an NQSW programme
 |  |
| 1. I am currently undertaking an NQSW programme
 |  |
| 1. I am about to start an NQSW programme
 |  |
| 1. I am a manager of NQSW (s) who have or who are taking an NQSW programme
 |  |
| 1. I am a training and development officer/ manager or equivalent in an agency
 |  |
| 1. I have a practice learning position/ role in an HEI
 |  |
| 1. I am a representative of people who use services or carers
 |  |
| Other – please state |

2. Please indicate the statement which best applies to you

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Please tick |
| 1. I work in social care services for children, young people, their families and carers
 |  |
| 1. I work in social care services for adults
 |  |
| 1. I work across social care services for children and adults
 |  |
| 1. I work in higher education
 |  |
| 1. I represent people who use services and carers in higher education
 |  |
| 1. I represent people who use services and carers in social services
 |  |
| Other- please state |

3. The agency/ institution I work for/ with is …………………………………………………………(Please state name)

**Section B: Introducing Enabling Others’ Learning to new professionals**

4. At what stage do you think the concept of enabling others’ learning should be introduced to workers? *Please indicate the statement which you most agree with*.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The concept of enabling others’ learning should be introduced** | Please tick |
| 1. During initial social work training (pre-qualifying)
 |  |
| 1. In the first year of qualified practice (as an NQSW)
 |  |
| 1. After completing the NQSW programme
 |  |
| 1. After completing Consolidation
 |  |
| 1. At the last stage of the Specialist level
 |  |
| 1. After completing 2 years practice
 |  |
| Other- please state |

5. At what stage do you think qualified social workers should be ready to start enabling others’ learning?

*Please indicate the statement which you most agree with*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Qualified social workers should be ready to start enabling others’ learning** | **Please tick** |
| 1. During the NQSW period
 |  |
| 1. After completing the NQSW programme
 |  |
| 1. After completing Consolidation
 |  |
| 1. At the last stage of the Specialist level
 |  |
| 1. After completing 2 years practice
 |  |
| Other- please state |

6. Please consider the NQSW period (during the time NSQWs are undertaking an NQSW programme. Do you think that NQSWs would be able to undertake any enabling others’ learning tasks during this period? *Please indicate all the statements which you agree with*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Those on the NQSW programme should ……………** | **Please tick** |
| 1. Not take on any enabling learning activities
 |  |
| 1. Be able to contribute to induction programmes for social work or other students placed in the team
 |  |
| 1. Be able to contribute to induction programmes for new social workers or other workers joining the team
 |  |
| 1. Be able to provide some learning support to social work students or other students in the team
 |  |
| 1. Be able to provide some learning support to other workers in the team
 |  |
| 1. Be able to provide some mentoring to social work students or other students in the team
 |  |
| 1. Be able to provide some mentoring to other workers in the team
 |  |
| 1. Provide a shadowing opportunity for a social work student to observe their practice for a day
 |  |
| 1. Provide an opportunity for a social work student or other student on placement to observe them undertaking a piece of work and hold a professional discussion with the learner after observation
 |  |
| 1. Explain selected and agreed work processes and practices to a social work student on placement and help them learn how to carry out these processes and practices (with the support of a practice educator/ workplace supervisor)
 |  |
| 1. Teach a social work student on placement about selected and agreed work processes and practices to and help them learn how to carry out these processes and practices (with the support of a practice educator/ workplace supervisor)
 |  |
| 1. Engage in a professional discussion with a student social worker on placement in the team about working with a specific case
 |  |
| 1. Contribute to the assessment against national occupational standards of a social work student placed within the team, assisting a practice educator or workplace supervisor
 |  |
| **Have you any other ideas about how NQSWs might contribute to Enabling Others’ Learning?** |

7. What do you think might be the **advantages** of NQSWs starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning activities? *Please indicate all the statements which you agree with*

| **The advantages of those on NQSW programmes starting to undertake some Enabling Other’s Learning activities** | **Please tick** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. I can see no advantages to NQSWs starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning activities
 |  |
| 1. NQSWs learn how to contribute to responsibilities undertaken by all team members (e.g. induction)
 |  |
| 1. Contributing to others’ learning can help to reinforce and consolidate the NQSW’s own learning
 |  |
| 1. NQSWs can provide effective support to students because they understand their perspectives, having recently been a student themselves
 |  |
| 1. NQSWs learn that all professionals have a responsibility to enable others’ learning
 |  |
| 1. This could help NQSWs feel valued by students and the agency
 |  |
| 1. This could be personally rewarding and motivating for the NQSW
 |  |
| 1. This could enhance the NQSW’s sense of professional responsibility
 |  |
| 1. This could motivate the NQSW to want to develop in this area
 |  |
| 1. This could support the ethos of team learning and development
 |  |
| 1. This could be supportive to practice educators and workplace supervisors
 |  |
| 1. This could engage the interest of practice educators and workplace supervisors in contributing to the NQSW programme
 |  |
| **Have you any other ideas about advantages of NQSWs contributing to Enabling Others’ Learning?** |

8. What do you think might be the dis**advantages** of NQSWs starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning activities? *Please indicate all the statements which you agree with*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The advantages of those on NQSW programmes starting to undertake some Enabling Other’s Learning activities** | **Please tick** |
| 1. I can see no disadvantages to NQSWs starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning activities
 |  |
| 1. NQSWs are under considerable pressure undertaking the NQSW programme. This might be stressful
 |  |
| 1. NQSWs would not have time to undertake this additional work
 |  |
| **Have you any other ideas about disadvantages of NQSWs contributing to Enabling Others’ Learning?** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 9. In your view, might the **advantages** of NQSWs starting to undertake Enabling Others’ Learning activities outweigh the **disadvantages**? (*Please circle)* | MPj04373300000[1] |
| **More advantages** | **More disadvantages** |

**Section C: Your Views on how NQSWs might be supported in learning about Enabling Other’ Learning Roles**

10. If NQSWs were to start to take on Enabling Others’ Learning Activities, how should they be supported in learning how to take on this role? *Please tick the activities you feel would be required or desirable or not required.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Supporting NQSWs in learning how to undertake some Enabling Other’s Learning activities** | **Required** | Desirable | **Not needed**  |
| 1. Line manager support and supervision
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Practice educator support in team
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Learning/ training session(s) provided in agency by practice educators
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Learning/ training session(s) provided in agency by NQSW lead
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Learning/ training session(s) provided in agency by training department practice learning lead or equivalent
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Self-directed reading and learning material
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Mentoring and support session(s) provided by agency
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Training/ Learning session (s) provided by university
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Learning session provided by representatives of people who use services and carers
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Evaluation session provided in agency for all NQSWs
 |  |  |  |
| **Have you any other ideas about supporting NQSWs to learn about how to contribute to Enabling Others’ Learning?** |

11. If NQSWs were to start to take on Enabling Others’ Learning Activities, do you think this experience should contribute to the **creation of a portfolio of evidence** towards meeting the requirement at PQ Specialist level to *‘Teach, Mentor and Support social work or other students and/or colleagues and contribute to assessment against national occupational standards*’.

YES/ NO/ NOT SURE (Please circle)

**AND FINALLY!**

12. At what point in their early professional development do you think social workers be expected to be able to meet the initial “Enabling learning” standard to *‘Teach, Mentor and Support social work or other students and/or colleagues and contribute to assessment against national occupational standards,* **before moving on to Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Practice Educator Framework (**practice teaching). (*please tick*)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| After 1 year of practice | After 18 months of practice | After 2 years of practice | After 3 years of practice | Not sure |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Any further comments you would like to make? Please use the space below to share your views.**

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!** Please return to J.F.Lindsay@Kingston.ac.uk by 15/5/10

1. Final awards made in 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. 60 PQ (professional) credits @ 10 hours per credit (CCETSW (1997) See GSCC (undated) *The PQ Handbook. Guidance on the Awards in the Post-Qualifying Framework*. <http://www.gscc.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/3D2C50E0-E9E9-41DE-A329-4A62C8986AD1/0/PQsection5.pdf> Accessed 27/7/10 Page 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The proposed framework specifies requirements for Stage 1 including that Practice educators who are undertaking Stage 1 are required to support a social work student for at least 70 days. Those who have attained stage 1 may not undertake the final assessment of a social work student but may contribute to it; must be Registered Social Workers, have two years relevant experience and have been qualified for two years. Other non social work professionals should have an equivalent qualification and experience. Evidence of competence in relation to Domains A, B and C is required. Assessment processes for practice educators are articulated for each of the two stages of the proposed framework including the number of direct observations of practice required. People undertaking the assessment of practice educators at stage 1 and stage 2 must themselves be qualified stage 2 practice educators (or above). (Adapted from p.5 of the Proposed Framework) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
4. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)