



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**  
Social Care **Wales**



Noddir gan  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
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# **Quality assurance of social work education and training annual report**

Academic year: 2018 to 2019



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# 1. What we do

A part of Social Care Wales's role is to make sure the social care workforce is suitably trained and fit to practise so the public can have confidence that social care workers are highly-skilled to do their jobs.

We know that high-quality learning equips and supports people, so they have the right knowledge, skills, understanding and approach to practise. As the regulator of social work education and training in Wales, we set and promote standards for social work education and training. These are described in *The Framework for the Degree in Social Work in Wales 2018* and *The Approval and Visiting of Post Qualifying Courses for Social (Wales) Rules 2018*<sup>1</sup>.

We also have a responsibility to make sure a sufficient number of social workers are being trained. We work with employers and universities to assess how many social workers we'll need in the future and use this information to decide how many training places are needed.

## Our approach to regulating social work education and training

There are five principles that underpin our approach to the regulation of social work education and training:

**Consistent** We are consistent in the way we interpret and apply the rules and requirements that set the standards for professional social work training.

**Transparent** We have a transparent system for approving and quality assuring programmes. We will share the outcome of regulatory activity with learning providers within the stated timeframes and publish an annual quality assurance report.

**Continuous improvement** Our quality assurance processes will focus on how approved programmes can demonstrate continuous improvement and a commitment to improving quality. We will also regularly review the processes by which regulation is carried out to make sure they remain fit-for-purpose and reflect best practice.

**Proportionate** We do not want to place an unnecessary burden on programme providers to meet regulatory requirements. To avoid duplicating work, we will use the programmes' own quality assurance systems where possible.

**Inclusive** We involve students, employers, people who receive care and support, and carers in the quality assurance of approved social work programmes. This helps us make sure we consider a range of perspectives when we scrutinise programmes.

## Our work

Our work involves approving, monitoring, reviewing and inspecting programmes at qualifying and post-qualifying levels. All courses must be provided to the required standards, so they result in confident and competent practitioners.

We currently approve:

- **8** social work degree programmes provided at **7** universities. These include:
  - **5** undergraduate programmes (one of which is a distance-learning route)
  - **3** master's level programmes
- **11** post-qualifying social work programmes.

In **2018-19**, we:

- made a quality assurance visit to all the programmes we approve
- set **6** conditions and made **20** recommendations to programmes at qualifying level
- set **3** conditions and made **15** recommendations to programmes at post-qualifying level
- received **2** applications asking to make minor modifications to programmes

1. Available at: [socialcare.wales/learning-and-development/regulation-of-social-work-education-and-training](https://socialcare.wales/learning-and-development/regulation-of-social-work-education-and-training)

- received **1** new approval application (post-qualifying programme)
- did not receive any complaints or cause for focused investigation
- published the revised rules and requirements for providing the social work degree in Wales
- published the revised requirements for the Consolidation Programme.

## 2. Data analysis

As part of our annual monitoring, approved programmes must provide us with information about several aspects of their programme management and provision. While this informs our annual monitoring activity, it also allows us to make sure we are providing enough social work education and training places to meet the future needs of the social work workforce.

### a. Qualifying training

#### Intake

In **2018-19**, **287** places were offered by approved social work qualifying programmes, with **86** per cent of those places taken up. There were **248** new students, a slight decrease on last year's **251** new students.

**Figure 1** provides a breakdown of the take up of places by programme and compares it to that of 2017-18.

Social work degree intake numbers are influenced by several factors, including the:

- number and quality of applicants
- selection criteria
- the capacity of programme partners to provide practice learning opportunities
- the approval numbers we set.

*Figure 1*

Social Work qualifying programmes intake							
Programme	Route	2017-18			2018-19		
		Approved places	Intake	Percentage of approved places taken up	Approved places	Intake	Percentage of approved places taken up
Bangor University MA	2-year FT	21	19	90%	21	22	105%
Cardiff University MA	2-year FT	50	40	80%	50	44	88%
Cardiff Metropolitan University UG	3-year FT	39	29	74%	39	25	64%
Cardiff Metropolitan University / Bridgend College UG	3-year FT	16	15	94%	16	16	100%
Glyndŵr University UG	3-year FT	36	33	92%	36	35	97%
Open University Wales UG		40	40	100%	40	38	95%
Swansea University UG	3-year FT	30	29	97%	30	30	100%
Swansea University MSc	2-year FT	20	20	100%	20	19	95%
University of South Wales UG	3-year FT	35	26	74%	35	19	54%
<b>Total</b>		<b>287</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>86%</b>

## Student social worker demographic profile

**Figure 2** provides an overview of the demographic data we hold about the student social workers who are registered with us. It compares the two most recent cohorts of students.

*Figure 2*

Category	2017-18 cohort	2018-19 cohort
<b>Average age</b>	32 years	31 years
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	88.4%	86%
Male	11.6%	14%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
BAME	6.4%	6.4%
White	93.6%	93.6%
<b>Disability</b>	3.8%	3.4%
<b>Sexual orientation</b>		
Heterosexual	94.0%	93.4%
Homosexual/ Bisexual	6.0%	6.6%
<b>Welsh language ability</b>		
Some/fluent	52.1%	52.1%
None	47.9%	47.9%

There was a slight increase in the number of men registering as a student social worker in 2018-19. But overall there hasn't been much difference in the demographic profile of students in recent years.

In 2019, we launched a national attraction and recruitment campaign for social care and early years, which plans to run over the next few years. We will be working with a range of partners to make sure we have a joined-up approach to promoting social work as a career of choice and encouraging greater diversity in the people applying to social work qualifying training. So far, our work has involved developing a clear description of the social work job role and video case studies for the [WeCare.Wales](https://www.wecare.wales) website.

### Financial assistance for qualifying training

We support the education and training of qualifying social workers by providing financial assistance in the following ways:

- a social care workforce development grant that's paid to regional partnerships. Two of the grant's seven national priorities are funding the qualifying and post-qualifying training of social workers
- practice learning opportunity funding that's paid to local authorities that host students
- a grant to promote and enable people who receive care and support, and carers, to take part in the education of social workers
- bursaries and a travelling allowance to help some students study in Wales.

Of the **248** newly-enrolled students, we gave bursaries to **199**. The remaining students were not eligible for a bursary because:

- they were being financially supported by their employer
- they were from outside Wales
- they were repeating first year studies.

**Figure 3** provides information about the allocation of bursaries in 2018-19.

**Figure 3**

Bursary allocation 2018-19		
	Total bursaries	New bursaries
	492	199
Undergraduate	339	118
Percentage	68.9%	59.3%
Master's degree	153	81
Percentage	31.1%	40.7%

### Practice learning

Qualifying social work training is provided through a partnership between the higher education institute, local authorities, community representatives – including people who receive care and support, and carers – and other partners. The social work degree has a blended learning approach where 50 per cent of a student's learning takes place in an academic setting and 50 per cent in practice.

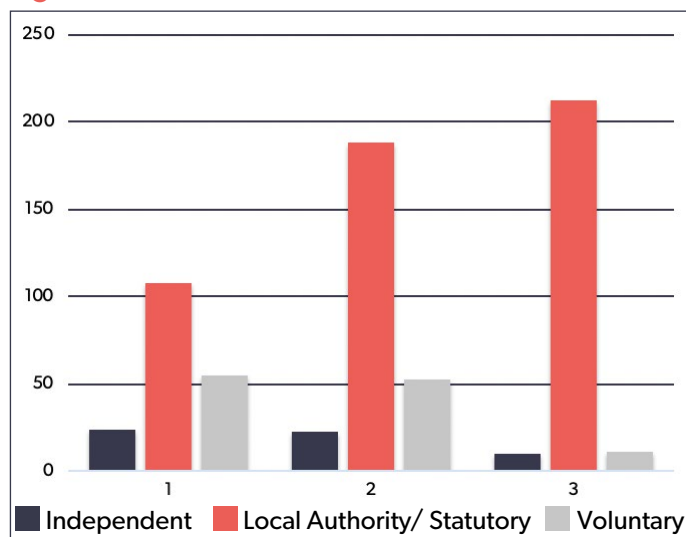
Given the mixed academic and practice-based approach to qualifying training, effective partnerships are essential. All the universities are in partnership with at least three local authorities and all the local authorities are in partnership with at least one university.

Practice learning enables students to develop, practise and be assessed for their competence in carrying out social work tasks. Social work in Wales is a varied profession provided by a range of settings, so it is important that practice learning opportunities are relevant and broadly representative of where social work takes place.

In 2018-19, **684** practice learning opportunities were provided. **Figure 4** outlines the provision of practice learning opportunities by sector across the three levels of qualifying training. The comparative lower number of Level 1 practice learning

opportunities is due to one programme combining Level 1 and 2 practice learning requirements into a 100-day practice learning opportunity. And for distance learning students, an option to undertake a portfolio route to show their Level 1 competencies.

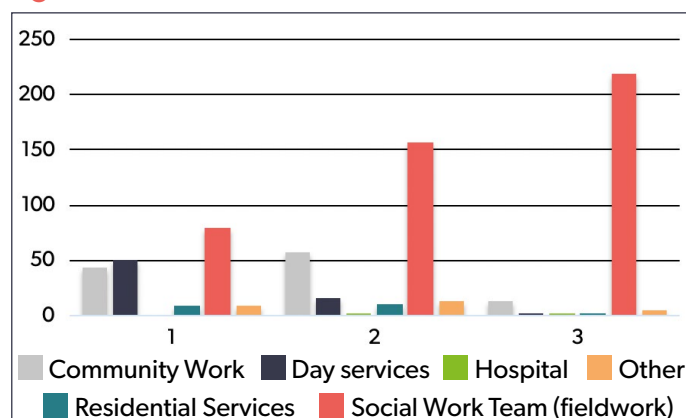
**Figure 4**



Our rules require that all students carry out at least one of their longer (Level 2 and Level 3) practice learning opportunities in local authority social services. The information displayed in Figure 4 shows that this requirement continues to be fulfilled by programme partnerships. It is also important that students develop an understanding of the work of the voluntary and independent sectors, and the different approaches to working with individuals, groups and communities. The table shows that 42 per cent of practice learning opportunities provided at Level 1 were in independent / voluntary sector organisations, with 29 per cent offered at Level 2 and 9 per cent at Level 3.

**Figure 5** provides a breakdown of where practice learning opportunities were provided by service setting.

**Figure 5**



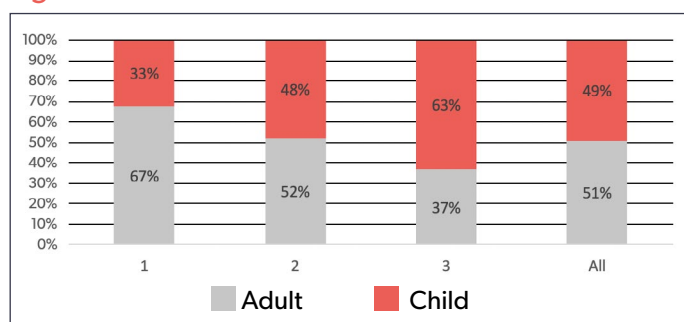


In terms of service setting, most of the longer practice learning opportunities take place in social work teams. This pattern is similar to last year and reflects the continued success of social work teams in providing placements for Level 2 and Level 3 students.

The 2017-18 *Social Worker Workforce Planning*<sup>2</sup> report highlighted that of the **176** newly qualified social workers who joined local authority social services, **64 per cent** went into children's services and **36 per cent** joined adults' services.

**Figure 6** shows the provision of practice learning opportunities by service area and that opportunities for placements in children's services are well-represented, particularly at Level 3. That said, there is proportionate placement provision in adults' and children's services across all practice learning opportunities.

**Figure 6**



## Welsh medium study

Every programme must have a Welsh-language action plan to promote and embed opportunities for students to learn and be assessed through the medium of Welsh. **Figure 7** provides information about students studying through the medium of Welsh on social work qualifying programmes (all levels) in 2017-18.

**Figure 7**

University	Students who speak Welsh	5+ credits studied through medium of Welsh	40+ credits studied through medium of Welsh
Glyndŵr	18	4	1
Bangor	42	Yr. 1=16.5 Yr. 2=16.5	Yr. 1=16.5 Yr. 2=16.5
Swansea	154	154*	77
Cardiff Metropolitan	32	0	0
University of South Wales	63	2	1
Cardiff	22	0	0
The Open University	168	89	1

\*Students completed Social Work – Language Awareness E-Learning module (MOOC) as part of a larger module of learning

Source: HESA

In addition to Bangor University which offers students the opportunity to carry out their social work qualifying training through the medium of Welsh, students studying through the Open University can complete stage 1 of their training through the medium of Welsh.

## Attrition from programmes

Attrition from programmes is low. Across all levels of training, **five per cent** of students between September 2018 and August 2019, left the course and the Register in the same period. **Figure 8** shows how many students left their course and the reason why.

**Figure 8**

Reason for leaving	Number	Per cent
Personal	29	48.3%
Academic	19	31.7%
Health	10	16.7%
Conduct/Suitability	2	3.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Fitness to practise

Programmes must tell us when fitness to practise issues arise that need to be investigated. In 2018-19, **19** students were referred to us under our fitness to practise rules. This is an increase from the previous year's **10**. Of the **19** referrals made, **15** were closed following initial investigation and **one** student received a fitness to practise officer warning.

The referrals\* related to:

- plagiarism (5)
- blurred professional boundaries (1)
- attitude / behaviour (7)
- a duty of candour breach (1)
- breach of trust (2)
- professional judgement (2)
- falsifying documents (2)
- failure to follow procedures (2)
- physical abuse (1)
- safeguarding (1)
- dishonesty (1)
- financial dishonesty (1)
- health (3).

**\* some referrals involved more than one allegation about the student.**

Members of our fitness to practise team visit all the degree programmes as part of the student induction to qualifying training and run more workshops as requested. Feedback from the universities highlights how useful these sessions are in developing students' awareness and understanding about the *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care*, as well as professional conduct and behaviour. We plan to highlight the practice guidance about the social worker role, duty of candour, maintaining professional boundaries and using social media responsibly during our 2019-20 visits to programmes.

3. *The Code of Professional Practice for Social Care* | Section 6.

Available at: [socialcare.wales/fitness-to-practise/codes-of-practice-and-guidance#section-29491-anchor](https://socialcare.wales/fitness-to-practise/codes-of-practice-and-guidance#section-29491-anchor)

4. *The First Three Years in Practice* | Social Care Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales

Available at: [socialcare.wales/learning-and-development/social-work-qualifications#section-936-anchor](https://socialcare.wales/learning-and-development/social-work-qualifications#section-936-anchor)

## b. Post-qualifying training

Every social worker must complete 90 hours of post-registration training and learning in each registration period to keep their professional registration. The *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care* states that social care workers must "be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and developing knowledge and skills"<sup>3</sup>.

Carrying out regulated post-qualifying training is one way of meeting these requirements.

We have **11** approved post-qualifying programmes in Wales, which include:

- **4** practice assessor qualifying training programmes
- **1** Approved Mental Health Professional programme
- **1** team manager development programme
- **5** Continuing Professional Educational and Learning (CPEL) programmes made up of:
  - **2** Consolidation Programmes
  - an Experienced Practice in Social Work programme
  - a Senior Practice in Social Work programme
  - a Consultant Social Work programme

According to the data we received as part of our annual monitoring of approved programmes, approximately **541** social workers enrolled on programmes for the 2018-19 academic year. This included those undertaking single learning modules, as well as those enrolled on full programmes.

Social workers who qualified after 1 April 2016 must successfully complete the Consolidation Programme in their first period of registration when practising as a social worker. Undertaking the Consolidation Programme is an essential element of The First Three Years in Practice<sup>4</sup> framework. The programme also

benefits those who are returning to practice after a break and for social workers who are working in the UK for the first time.

In 2018-19, **272** candidates enrolled on the Consolidation Programmes, with **242** successfully completing their programme of study in this period and **7** candidates failing the programme.

We have commissioned an independent evaluation of the impact of the CPEL programmes on professional practice. Year 4 of this longitudinal study<sup>5</sup> focused on the data for the Consolidation and Experienced Practice in Social Work programmes.

Some of the main findings were:

- social workers report that, on average, their understanding, skill and confidence in almost all areas improves over the course of the programme
- in most areas, this improvement in understanding, skill and confidence is sustained or improves further one year after the programme has ended
- on average, social workers agree that the CPEL programmes make 'a little' or 'moderate' contribution to improvements in their understanding, skill and confidence
- managers of social workers largely endorse this view
- the likelihood of social workers undertaking the next programme or recommending the CPEL programmes to others dips slightly over time, although it averages at 'mainly agree'.

A review of the CPEL framework began in 2017-18 as part of a re-tendering exercise of these national programmes (this does not include the Consolidation Programmes). This has now been incorporated into a wider review of the workforce development needs of social workers in Wales.

### 3. Annual monitoring themes

Our annual monitoring measures how social work education provision is performing against a set of indicators to assess the strengths and potential risks in specific programmes. These indicators are:

- the programme meets published standards<sup>6</sup>
- the programme continues to develop and focus on improvement
- having and making use of systems for evaluation and scrutiny
- the confidence of students and partners.

Our feedback to programmes can include:

- setting **conditions** to make sure programmes continue to meet our requirements for approval
- making **recommendations**, which contribute to the improved quality of programmes.

As part of our annual monitoring activity for 2018-19, we set **six** conditions and made **20** recommendations to approved qualifying degree programmes. We also set **three** conditions and made **15** recommendations to approved post-qualifying programmes.

The conditions we set mainly involved putting the revised requirements for the degree in social work and Consolidation Programme in place.

The recommendations we made included:

- evidencing feedback from external scrutiny in the programmes' internal quality assurance systems
- reviewing processes for gathering student feedback to improve the 'student voice' in programme development
- providing advice about regulatory requirements to new external examiners

- reviewing and developing Welsh language and co-production action plans
- updating student information in programme handbooks
- telling us about activities to improve programmes or project work being carried out.

We asked programmes to provide a written response to the annual monitoring by a set date or to make specific evidence available in the next cycle of annual monitoring that shows, for example, the outcomes of the activities to improve the programme.

6. These are grouped under partnership working, resource provision, learning and assessment, policies and procedures, and quality assurance.

## 4. Summary

Overall, approved programmes are committed to providing high-quality programmes of learning, in partnership with employers. There is also a desire to promote the involvement of people who receive care and support, and carers, in a meaningful and empowering way.

Making sure enough social workers are being trained to meet future workforce needs is an important element of our work. The 'WeCare Wales' recruitment and attraction campaign provides an opportunity to promote social work as a career of choice and consider ways in which we can encourage greater diversity among those applying for social work training. This must form part of a long-term plan that engages partners, such as Careers Wales, Job Centre Plus, employers and university marketing departments, in a joined-up approach.

The review of social work education, which took place in 2017-18, recommended a number of changes to strengthen:

- consistency in recruitment
- professional skills development
- preparation for practice-based learning
- use of research in professional practice.

Social work qualifying programmes will be introducing these changes in time for their September 2020 intake. The changes made to the Consolidation Programme as a result of the review were being introduced for October 2019 intakes. Over the coming year, we will be working closely with the relevant approved programmes on the changes they need to make to meet the new requirements.