

# **Quality assurance of social work education and training annual report**

Academic year: 2017 to 2018



Gofal Cymdeithasol Cymru  
Social Care Wales

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### Contact details

Social Care Wales  
South Gate House  
Wood Street  
Cardiff  
CF10 1EW  
Tel: 0300 3033 444  
Minicom: 029 2078 0680  
Email: [info@socialcare.wales](mailto:info@socialcare.wales)

Twitter: @SocialCareWales  
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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 2013* and *The Approval and Visiting of Post Qualifying Courses for Social Workers (Wales) Rules 2012*.

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 qualifying social workers we'll need in the future and use this information to decide how many qualifying training places are needed.

## Our approach to quality assurance

Our work involves the approval, monitoring, review and inspection of 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 including the four programmes that form part of the Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) framework<sup>1</sup>.

## In 2017-18, we:

Made **8** annual monitoring visits to qualifying programmes

Completed a desk-based analysis of annual monitoring documentation submitted by **11** post-qualifying programmes

Attended **1** university programme quality review

Received **4** requests to make minor modifications to approved programmes

Set **2** conditions and made **15** recommendations to approved qualifying degree programmes

Made **19** recommendations to approved post-qualifying programmes

Did not receive:

- any new approval applications
- any complaints or cause for focused investigation

Began a review of the rules and requirements for the provision of the social work degree in Wales

Reviewed the learning outcomes for the Consolidation Programme<sup>2</sup>

Began a review of the CPEL framework as part of its re-commissioning arrangements

## 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 2017-18, 287 places were offered by approved social work qualifying programmes, with 88 per cent of those places taken up. There were 252 new students, a slight decrease on last year's 260 new students.

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

- the number and quality of applicants
- the recruitment and selection policies of the programme
- the plans of the university

Figure 1

Social work qualifying programmes intake						
Programme	Route	Approved Places	Percentage of approved places taken up in 2016-17	Approved Places	Intake 2017-18	Percentage of approved places taken up in 2017-18
		2016-17		2017-18		
Bangor University MA	2-year FT	22	100%	21	19	90%
Cardiff University MA	2-year FT	50	94%	50	40	80%
Swansea University MSc	2-year FT	20	100%	20	20	100%
Cardiff Metropolitan University UG	2-year FT	39	90%	39	29	74%
Cardiff Metropolitan University Bridgend UG	3-year FT	16	81%	16	15	94%
Glyndŵr University UG	3-year FT	36	92%	36	34	94%
Open University in Wales UG	3- to 6-year distance learning	40	85%	40	40	100%
Swansea University UG	3-year FT	30	93%	30	29	97%
University of South Wales UG	3-year FT	35	80%	35	26	74%
<b>Total</b>		<b>288</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>88%</b>

- the capacity of programme partners to provide practice learning opportunities (PLOs)

- the approval numbers we set.

Figure 1 provides a **breakdown of student enrolment by programme** and compares it to the take-up of places in 2016-17.

Some programmes have experienced a decline in applications and take-up of places in recent years. This corresponds with a reduction in secondments by employers, fewer bursaries available from England and applicants having a greater choice of programmes to choose from. For other programmes, recruitment has remained strong. On average, across all programmes there were just over three and a half applications for every place available.

We commissioned Data Cymru to carry out an analysis of the social work workforce in Wales for the 2016-17 financial year and to then predict the workforce needs for the next three years<sup>3</sup>. It found that newly-qualified social workers joining the service increased by 11 per cent, with 165 people joining in 2016-17 compared to 149 in 2015-16. Of these, 59 joined adults' services and 106 started in children's services. It predicted that the social work workforce will increase by six per cent in the three years up to 2019-20.

Data provided by newly-qualified social workers as part of their registration requirements<sup>4</sup> shows that 87 per cent of those students who graduated in 2018 have registered to work in Wales<sup>5</sup>. Nine newly-qualified social workers who qualified outside Wales have also registered to work in Wales. Overall, 173 newly-qualified social workers have registered with us. Of these, 117 have taken up a social work post with a local authority social services and 82.7 per cent have obtained a job in social care.

Some programmes have highlighted a widening lack of diversity in their student profiling. Figure 2 provides an overview of the **demographic data we hold on the student social workers who are registered with us**, comparing the two most recent cohorts of students<sup>6</sup>.

**Figure 2**

Category	2017-18 student cohort	2018-19 student cohort
Average age	32 years	32 years
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	88.1%	88.4%
Male	11.9%	11.6%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
BAME	6.2%	6.4%
White	93.8%	93.6%
<b>Disability</b>		
	3.3%	3.8%
<b>Sexual orientation</b>		
Heterosexual	95.9%	94%
Homosexual/ Bisexual	4.1%	6%
<b>Welsh language ability</b>		
Some/ fluent	49.6%	52.1%
None	50.4%	47.9%

There hasn't been much variance in the demographic profile of students in recent years. We will be launching a national attraction and recruitment campaign for social care and early years in 2019. The intention is that this project will run over the next few years and we will be working with a range of stakeholders to ensure a joined-up approach in

promoting social work as a career of choice and to encourage greater diversity in people applying to social work qualifying training.

We have also commissioned an independent review of the funding of social work education and training; part of its remit is to look at whether there are issues of access to qualifying training.

### Financial assistance for qualifying training

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

- Bursaries and a travelling allowance to help some students study in Wales
- Practice learning opportunity funding that's paid to local authorities hosting students
- A grant to promote and enable people who use care and support and carers to take part in the education of social workers.

In 2017-18, the value of this financial support was £3,659,000.

Of the 252 newly-enrolled students, 195 students were given bursaries by us. Of the remaining 58 new students:

- 15 were from outside Wales and therefore not entitled to a bursary
- 43 were financially supported by their employer and therefore not entitled to a bursary.

The bursaries were allocated as follows:

Bursary allocation 2017-18		
	Total bursaries	New bursaries
	516	195
Undergraduate	366	121
Percentage	71%	62%
Master's degree	150	74
Percentage	29%	38%

## Practice learning

Qualifying social work training is provided through a partnership between the higher education institute, local authorities, community representatives including people who use 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.

Figure 3 provides an overview of the practice learning opportunities (PLOs) provided in each region over the last five years. Although there is a fall in the number of PLOs, they correspond to the enrolment figures for this period. Additionally, the difference in PLO provision across the regions reflects the programme and employer location.

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; it is therefore important that PLOs are relevant and broadly representative of where social work takes place.

Figure 4 outlines the provision of PLOs by sector across the three levels of qualifying training. The comparative lower number of Level 1 PLOs is due to one programme combining Level 1 and 2 practice learning requirements into a 100-day PLO from 2017-18, and for distance learning students, an option to undertake a portfolio route to show their Level 1 competencies.

Our rules require all students to carry out at least one of their longer (Level 2 and Level 3) PLOs 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 45.5 per cent of PLOs provided at Level 1 were in independent / voluntary sector organisations, with 34 per cent then offered at Level 2 and 8.2 per cent at Level 3.

In terms of service setting, most of the longer PLOs 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.

Figure 3

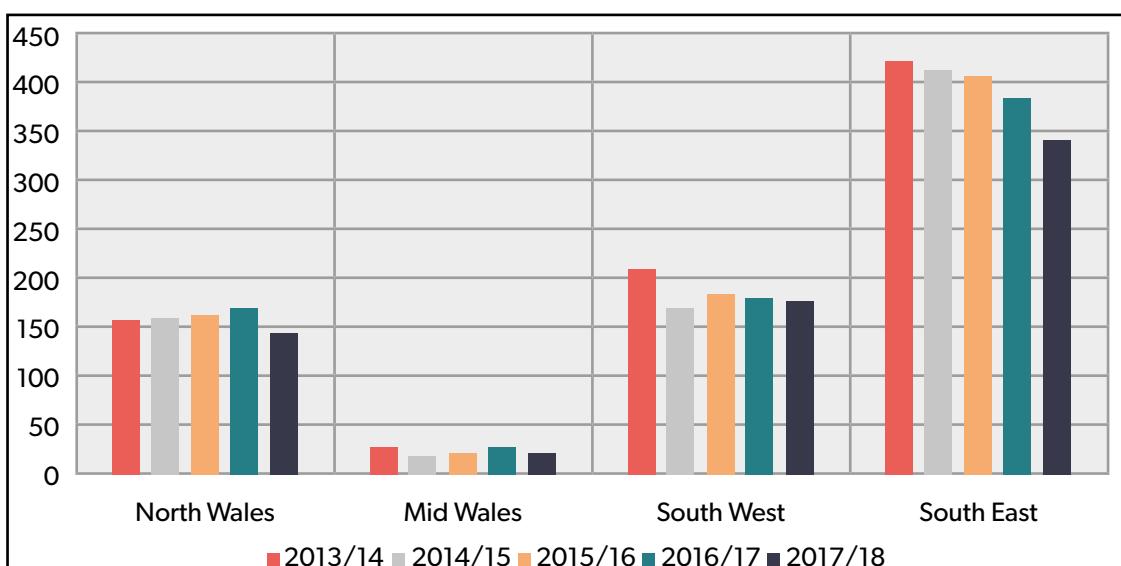


Figure 4

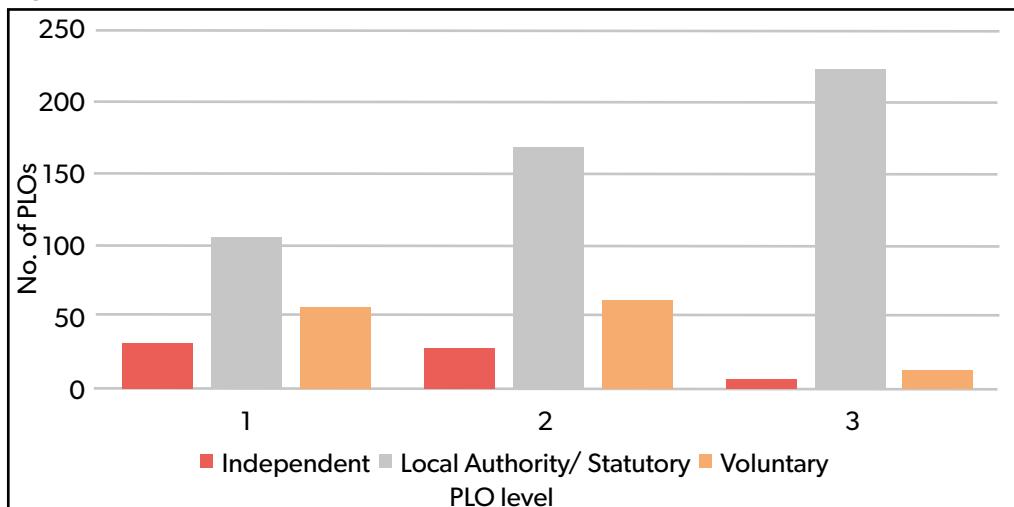


Figure 5

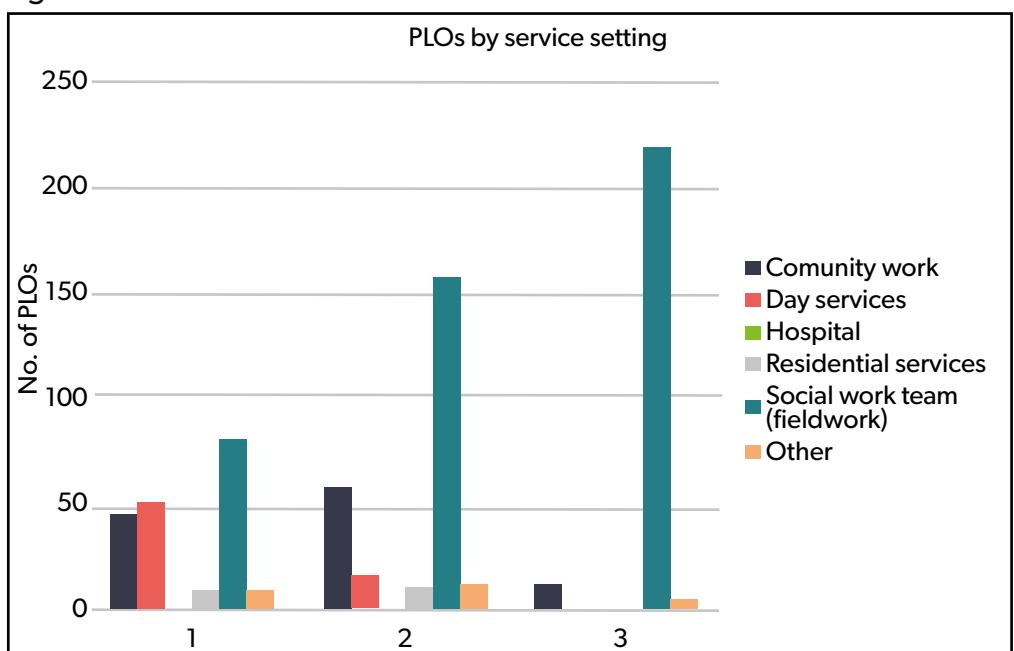
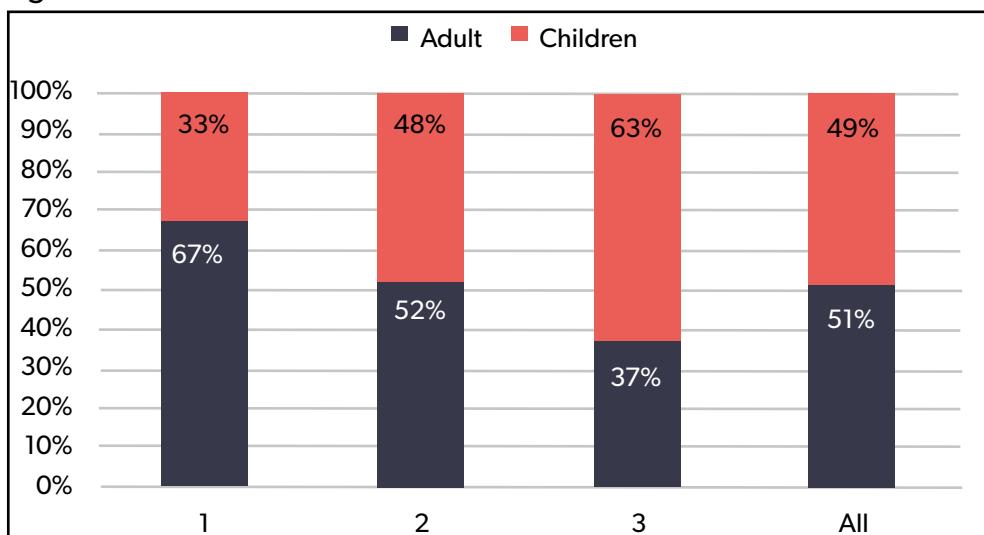


Figure 5 provides a breakdown of where PLOs were provided by service setting.

Figure 6



The 2016-17 *Social Worker Workforce Planning report* highlighted that 66 per cent of new starters went into children's services. Figure 6 shows the provision of PLOs by service area and that opportunities for placements in children's services are well-represented, particularly at Level 3. That said, across all PLOs there is proportionate placement provision in both adults' and children's services.

## Welsh medium study

Every programme must have a Welsh-language action plan to promote and embed opportunities for students to learn through the medium of Welsh. We and the programme providers have worked with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to develop an academic plan to increase the opportunities for, and take up of, studying through the medium of Welsh. As a result, three programmes have benefitted from financial support to increase the level of Welsh-speaking staff.

### Figure 7 provides information about students studying through the medium of Welsh on social work qualifying programmes (all levels).

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

Figure 7

University	5+ credits studied through medium of Welsh	40+ credits studied through medium of Welsh
Glyndwr	0	0
Bangor	Year 1= 17 Year 2= 19	Year 1=16 Year 2= 19
Swansea	122*	0
Cardiff Metropolitan	0	0
University of South Wales	0	0
Cardiff	0	0
The Open University	68	4

\*Students completed Social Work – Language Awareness e-learning module (MOOC) as part of a larger module of learning. Source: HESA 2016-17.

## Fitness to practise referrals

Programmes must tell us when fitness to practise issues arise that need to be investigated. During 2017-18, 10 students were referred to us under our Fitness to Practise Rules. This is a significant reduction from the previous year's 24. Members of our fitness to practise team visit all the degree programmes as part of the student induction to qualifying training. Feedback from the universities highlights how useful these sessions are in developing students' awareness and understanding of the *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care* and professional conduct and behaviour.

Of the 10 referrals made, six were closed following a case conference and one student received an officer warning. The referrals related to:

- issues of suitability following failed PLOs
- plagiarism
- blurred professional boundaries.

## b. Post-qualifying training

Every social worker must complete 90 hours of post-registration training and learning in each registration period to maintain 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”. Carrying out regulated post-qualifying training is one way of meeting these requirements.

### We have approved 11 post-qualifying programmes, 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 697 students took part in post-qualifying training activity via the approved programmes during the 2016-17 academic year. This equates to approximately 1 in 8 of the social work workforce who are registered with us. Three hundred and twenty-one students completed their programme of study in this year. This included those undertaking single learning modules, as well as those enrolled on full programmes.

As the social care workforce regulator, we introduced a requirement that all newly-qualified social workers who qualified after 1 April 2016 must complete the first part of the CPEL framework, 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* framework.

Figure 8 provides combined information about the **Consolidation Programmes for the period September 2016 to August 2017**.

**Figure 8**

Category	Numbers
New enrolments	262
Passed	154
Failed	8
Withdrawn	23
Referred/ Continuing	76

The steady increase in the numbers of students registering and completing the Consolidation Programme shows that it has become well-established. Some employers have made completing the programme a requirement as part of their internal workforce development and career pathways. 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.

The CPEL programmes are being independently evaluated in relation to their impact on:

- professional practice
- retention and career development
- improved outcomes for people who use care and support, and carers.

Emerging findings note that the programmes contribute to the improved understanding, skills and confidence of practitioners<sup>7</sup>. However, the number of students leaving the Experienced Practice in Social Work, Senior Practice in Social Work and Consultant Social Work Programmes before completing them remains high in comparison to other post-qualifying programmes. Several factors are believed to contribute to this including the self-directed/distance-learning mode of the programmes and work commitments/workload pressures.

A review of the CPEL framework began in 2017-18 as part of a re-tendering exercise of these national programmes. This will consider all available evidence to make sure the next phase builds on the strengths of the current framework, while responding to the current workforce needs.

### 3. Annual monitoring themes

The purpose of our annual monitoring is to measure the performance of social work education provision against a set of indicators to assess the strengths of and potential risks in specific programmes. These indicators are:

- the programme meets published standards<sup>8</sup>
- the programme continues to develop and focus on improvement
- having and making use of systems for evaluation and scrutiny
- student and partner confidence.

Our feedback to programmes can include setting conditions to make sure the requirements for approval continue to be met and recommendations, which contribute to the improved quality of programmes. As part of our annual monitoring activity for 2017-18, we set two conditions and made 15 recommendations to approved qualifying degree programmes. We also made 19 recommendations to approved post-qualifying programmes.

These largely referred to:

- evidencing in internal quality assurance systems, feedback from external scrutiny
- consideration of the employer's role in contributing to evaluation processes
- updating student information in programme handbooks and on websites
- outlining the requirements for making an application to approve changes to a programme as part of programme developmental activity
- keeping us informed of programme developmental activity.

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



## 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. Some qualifying degree programmes have developed innovative ways of shared learning, which are beneficial to students and people who receive care and support/carers alike.

A number of programmes across qualifying and post-qualifying levels are experiencing a reduction in student numbers. This needs to be monitored in respect of future programme viability; making sure appropriate numbers of social workers are being trained to meet workforce planning needs and that there is sufficient access to post-qualifying learning opportunities to support continuing professional development.

The national recruitment and attraction campaign we are leading 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 qualifying training. This must form part of a long-term strategy 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, has recommended a number of changes to strengthen:

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

The revised rules will be implemented, with social work qualifying programmes introducing the changes in time for their September 2020 intake. The changes to the Consolidation Programme will be introduced by September 2019. Over the coming year, we will be working closely with approved programmes about the modifications they need to make to meet the new requirements.



## 5. Glossary

**1.** The CPEL framework provides social workers with a structure for practice-based continuing professional development. You can find more information at [CPEL Framework for Social Workers | Social Care Wales](#)

**2.** The Consolidation Programme forms the first part of the CPEL framework. It helps social workers consolidate their learning from qualifying training as they develop in social work practice roles.

**3.** *Social Worker Workforce Planning 2016-17: A National Report on the Social Worker Workforce in Wales | Data Cymru*

**4.** Registered social workers are responsible for making sure the employment information we hold about them is up-to-date.

**5.** Figures as at 31 October 2018. Because the final exam boards for the programme have different schedules, some graduates had not completed the registration process at the time of this report.

**6.** For more information, please take a look at our annual data profiles: [socialcare.wales/collections/current-registration-data-reports](#)

**7.** *Executive Summary for the Independent Evaluation of the CPEL Framework: Year 4 Report | Social Care Wales*

**8.** These are grouped under partnership working; resource provision; learning and assessment; policies and procedures; and quality assurance.