

Independent Evaluation of the CPEL Framework: Year 4 Summary Report

September 2018 – draft 1



1 Introduction

This is the Year 4 summary report of the independent evaluation of the Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) Framework for social workers. It forms part of a five-year longitudinal evaluation. The evaluation considers: (a) how the CPEL Framework helps to improve the quality of social work practice, (b) how it helps to improve career progression and career development, (c) how it improves retention of social workers, (d) how it helps to improve outcomes for service users and carers, and (e) the level of take-up, attendance and completion of the CPEL Framework programmes.

A full report, exploring the data in more detail, is available on request from Social Care Wales.

2 Methodology

The approach consisted of an analysis of 915 impact measurement tools received over the four year period. We had a particular focus on understanding 'distance travelled' by social workers over time. This involved an analysis of subsets of these impact measurement tools (please see the main report for further detail). This Year 4 report also analyses a small amount of new qualitative data received via impact measurement tools from social workers and managers. Unfortunately, information was not available about take-up and attrition rates so this is absent from the Year 4 report.

The report comments on the CPEL Framework as a whole and the individual programmes within it, i.e.: Consortium Y De Consolidation Programme (CYD Programme); Porth Agored Consolidation Programme (PA Programme); Experienced Practice in Social Work Programme (EP Programme); Senior Practice in Social Work Programme (SP Programme); and Consultant Social Work Programme (CSW Programme).

3 Key Findings

The Year 4 report analyses a range of additional data that builds on the analysis from Year 3. It contains three new pieces of analysis, i.e.:

- The Year 4 evaluation contains a larger sample of longitudinal data from social workers. The data is focused on the CYD and the EP programmes and looks at any

changes experienced between starting a Programme (time 1) and 12 months after completion (time 3).

- The Year 4 evaluation includes new data about the views of managers of social workers who completed the PA Programme.
- The Year 4 evaluation is the first to include an analysis of distance travelled for the SP Programme. This is based on responses from managers of social workers (as the sample of social workers' responses was too small to conduct an analysis).

Overall, the Year 4 analysis reinforces the key messages from previous evaluations, i.e.:

- Social workers report that, on average, their understanding and skill and their confidence levels in almost all domains improves over the course of their involvement in the Programme.
- For most domains, this improvement in understanding and skill and in confidence levels is sustained or improves further one year after their involvement in the Programme has ended.
- On average, social workers agree that the CPEL Framework makes 'a little' or 'moderate' contribution to improvements in their understanding, skills and confidence.
- Overall, managers of social workers endorse this perspective.
- There is a general dip in views about career retention, career progression and career satisfaction over the immediate course of their involvement in the CYD Programme, though overall rates are relatively high.
- The likelihood of undertaking the next Programme or recommending the CPEL Framework to others dips slightly over time, though it averages at 'mainly agree'.

Unlike previous evaluations, we were not provided with updated data relating to uptake and engagement. As a result, this has not been explored in the Year 4 evaluation report.

The section below explores some of the highlights from the Year 4 evaluation, focussing on new analysis and/or new tranches of data that haven't featured in previous reports.

4 Highlights from new analysis for Year 4

4.1 Consortium Y De Consolidation Programme

The Year 4 evaluation examined the extent to which social workers experienced an improvement in knowledge, skills and confidence between the start of their involvement in the CYD Programme (time 1) and 12 months after completion (time 3).

Social workers reported an improvement in understanding, skills and confidence between time 1 and time 3. Figure 1 shows that, on average, understanding and skills increased from 2.6 out of 5 to 3.9 out of 5 (an increase of 48%). Confidence levels increased from 57 out of 100 to 80 out of 100 (an increase of 41% - see Figure 3). In both aspects, social

workers reported that the CPEL Programme had a 'low' to 'moderate' contribution (1.9 out of 4 for understanding and skills, and 1.8 out of 4 for confidence, see Figure 2 and Figure 4). On average, social worker managers were more positive about the contribution of the CPEL Programme to these improvements.

Regarding participants' perception of their career prospects, social workers reported a small positive increase of 2% (from 2.4 out of 5 to 2.5 out of 5 – see Figure 5). Social workers and managers found that the Framework had had a moderate impact on improving retention, progression and satisfaction among social workers (see Figure 6).

The results were less positive regarding social workers' desire to engage with the Framework, with social workers reporting decreases of 20% in their desire to engage further with the CPEL Framework between time 1 and time 3. That said, social workers still "mainly agreed" that they were interested in undertaking the next Programme or that they would recommend it.

Understanding and skills

Figure 1: Distance travelled in social workers' understanding and skills (time 1 to time 3) for CYD Programme (SW n=4)

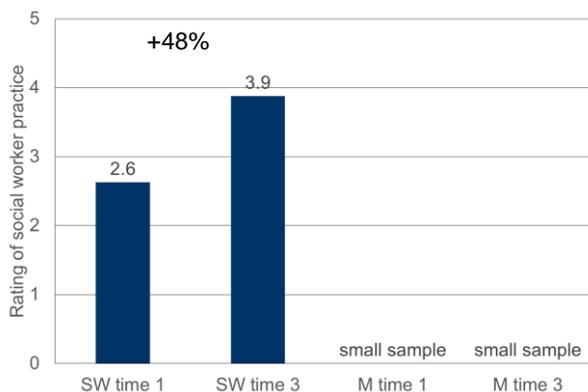
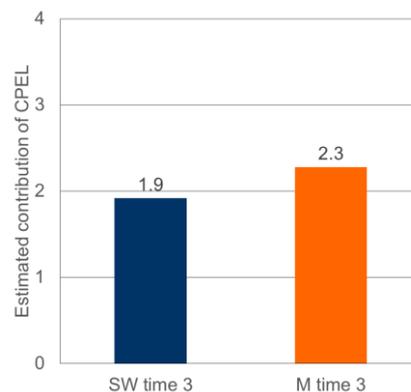


Figure 2: Estimated contribution of CYD Programme to distance travelled (time 3). (SW n=4, M n=3.)



Confidence

Figure 3: Distance travelled in social workers' confidence (time 1 to time 3) (SW n=4)

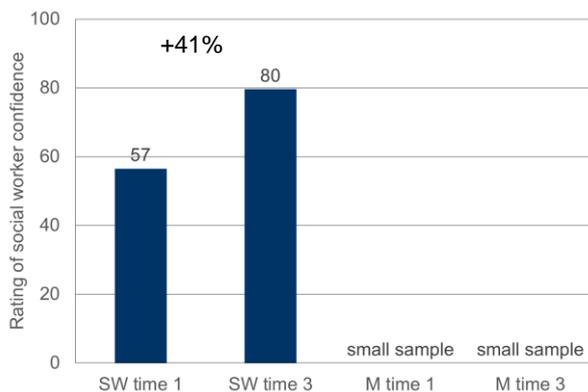
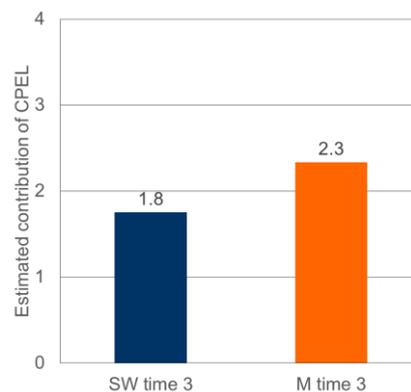


Figure 4: Estimated contribution of CYD Programme to distance travelled (time 3). (SW n=4, M n=3.)



Retention, career progression and satisfaction

Figure 5: Distance travelled in social workers' career retention, progression and satisfaction (time 1 to time 3) (SW n=4)

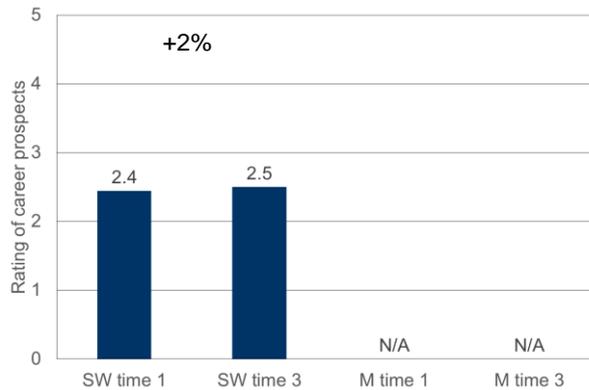
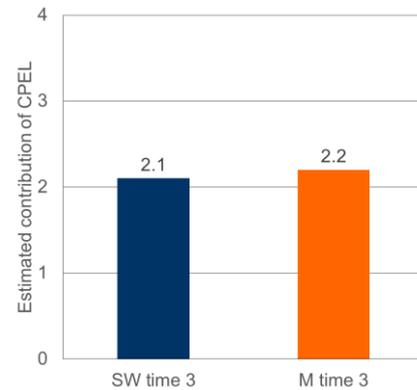
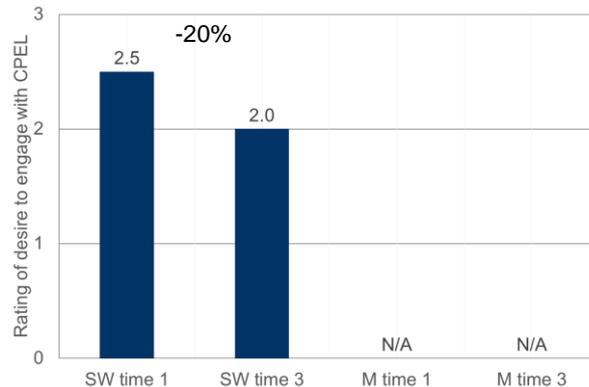


Figure 6: Estimated contribution of CYD Programme to distance travelled (time 3) (SW n=4, M n=3.)



Desire to engage with the CPEL Framework

Figure 7: Distance travelled in social workers' desire to engage with the CPEL framework (time 1 to time 3). Ratings: SW n=4.)



4.2 Porth Agored Consolidation Programme

Some new data was collected about the relative contribution of the PA Programme to any improvements social workers may have experienced between starting the Programme (time 1) and completing it (time 2). For instance, on average, social workers reported the PA Programme to have been of high impact (3.0 out of 4) on their understanding and skills and relatively high impact (2.8 out of 4) on their confidence. They found the Programme to be of moderate-to-high impact (2.5 out of 4) on their career prospects (i.e. their likely retention in social work, career progression and satisfaction). That said, the evaluation was not able to measure the scale of improvements achieved by social workers over the course of their involvement in the PA Programme because sample sizes for distance travelled were too small.

4.3 Experienced Practice in Social Work Programme

Social workers on the EP Programme reported 19% increases in their understanding and skills from time 1 to time 3 (from 3.7 out of 5 to 4.4 out of 5 – see Figure 8). Social workers reported the Framework to have had a moderate impact on these improvements at time 3 (see Figure 9). For confidence, social workers reported a 24% improvement between time 1 and time 3 (from 71 out of 100 to 88 out of 100 – see Figure 10). They also reported that the Framework had made a moderate contribution to these improvements (see Figure 11).

Social workers reported only a small improvement in career prospects between times 1 and 3 (Figure 12). They reported the Programme to have been less than ‘moderately impactful’ on these changes over time (Figure 13).

Desire to engage with future programmes in the Framework remained static between time 1 and time 3 and were relatively high (at 2.3 out of 3 – see Figure 14).

Understanding and skills

Figure 8: Distance travelled in social workers’ understanding and skills (time 1 to time 3) (SW n=3)

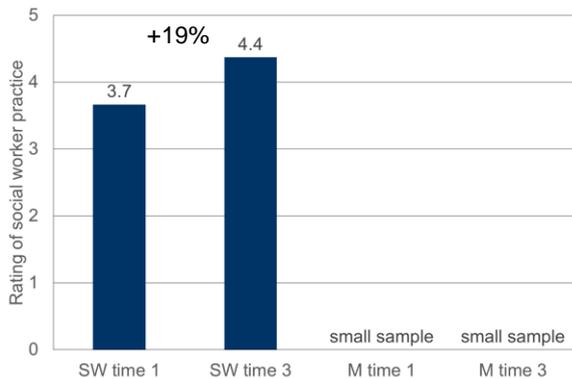
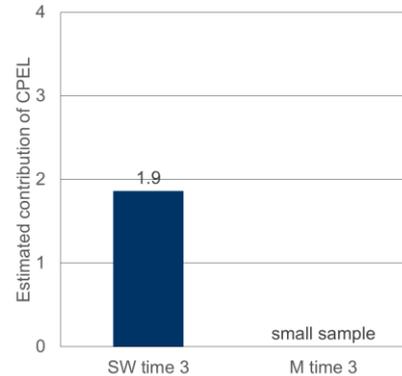


Figure 9: Estimated contribution of EP Programme to distance travelled (time 3). (SW n=4)



Confidence

Figure 10: Distance travelled in social workers’ confidence (time 1 to time 3) (SW n=3)

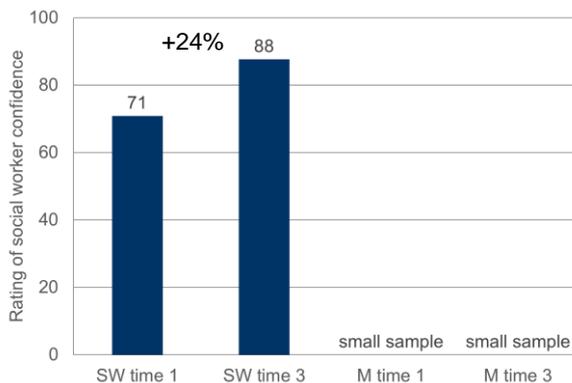
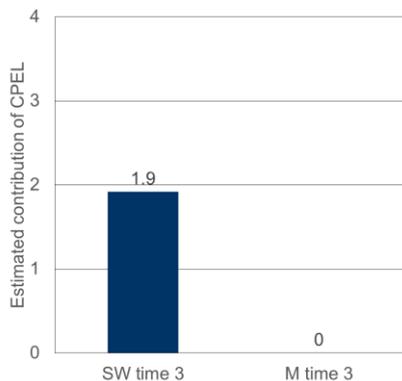


Figure 11: Estimated contribution of EP Programme to distance travelled (time 3). (SW n=4)



Retention, career progression and satisfaction

Figure 12: Distance travelled in social workers' career retention, progression and satisfaction (time 1 to time 3) (SW n=3)

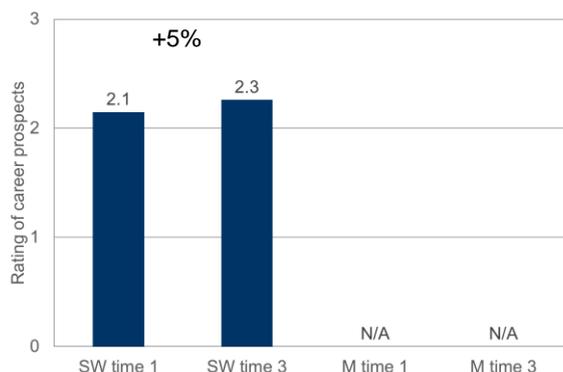
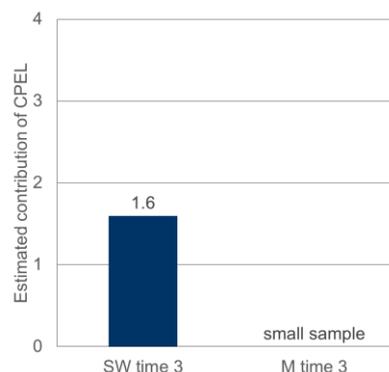
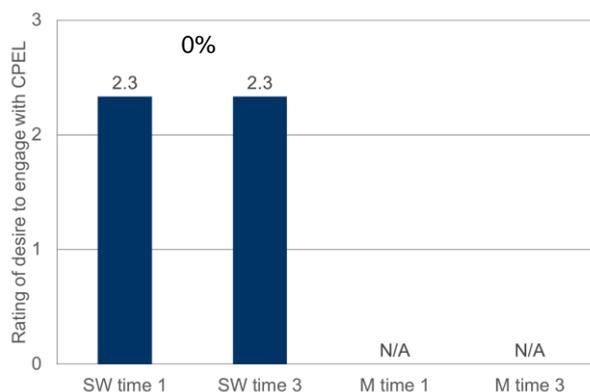


Figure 13: Estimated contribution of EP Programme to distance travelled (time 3) (SW n=3 to 4.)



Desire to engage with the CPEL Framework

Figure 14: Distance travelled in social workers' desire to engage with the CPEL framework (time 1 to time 3). (Ratings: SW n=3.)



4.4 Senior Practice in Social Work Programme

Figure 15 shows that managers observed a 9% improvement in social workers' understanding and skills between time 1 and time 2. This was from a very high base of 4.0 out of 5, increasing to 4.4 out of 5. Managers reported that the Programme had a moderate-to-high contribution to these improvements (Figure 16). A similar picture was reported in relation to social worker confidence, with a 6% increase over time and a relatively high contribution for this improvement being attributed by managers to the Programme (see Figure 17 and Figure 18). Sample sizes were too small to draw conclusions about career retention, progression and satisfaction or about desire to engage with the next Programme in the CPEL Framework.

Understanding and skills

Figure 15: Distance travelled in social workers' understanding and skills (time 1 to time 2) (M n=5)

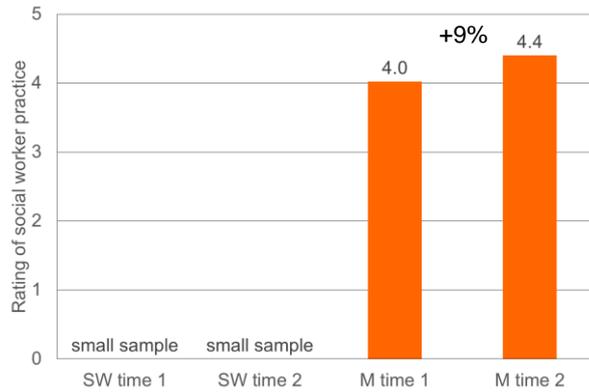
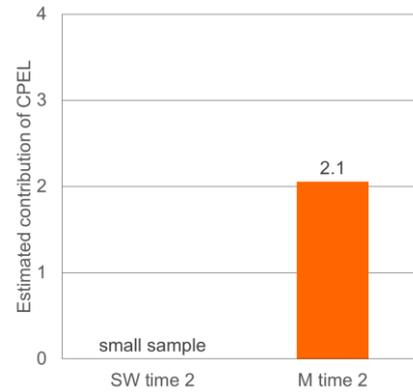


Figure 16: Estimated contribution of SP Programme to distance travelled (time 2) (M n=4 to 5)



Confidence

Figure 17: Distance travelled in social workers' confidence (time 1 to time 2) (M n=5)

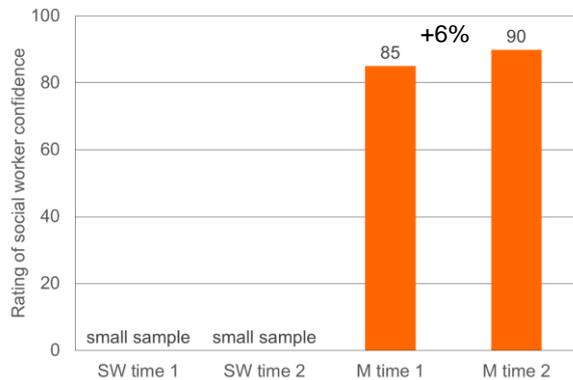
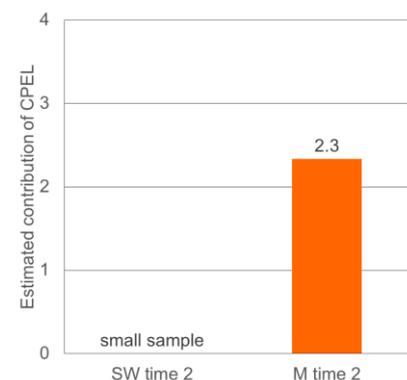


Figure 18: Estimated contribution of SP Programme to distance travelled (time 2). (M n=5)



4.5 Consultant in Social Work Programme

The sample size was too small for any analysis of distance travelled and relative contribution of the CSW Programme.

4.6 Additional qualitative information

A small amount of qualitative data was provided by social workers and managers as part of their responses to impact measurement tools. These are explored in full in the main report. A summary is provided here.

Individuals mentioned three strengths of the Framework which were not included in previous years' evaluations:

- In previous years, the focus on independent, practice-based research has been raised by social workers, managers and wider stakeholders. This was also highlighted by respondent to the tools in Year 4, but individuals also praised the opportunities programmes provided to tailor studies through module selection and by tailoring assignments to be relevant to their own roles and interests.
- Two social workers (who were engaged with the PA and SP programmes) were also positive about how engaging with CPEL had increased their access and engagement with up-to-date research.
- One social worker also praised the one-to-one support which they had received (an aspect which has not been identified as a strength in previous reports). However, others suggested that, while the existing one-to-one support was welcome and useful, there ought to be more.

Additionally, two social workers (who had engaged with the EP and SP programmes) suggested an area for future development. Both social workers described how the programmes had failed to engage them. The social worker who had completed the EP Programme commented that they had not found the EP Programme engaging in contrast to the Consolidation Programme, which they had found useful.

5 Recommendations

The Year 3 report put forward five recommendations. These are detailed in Figure 19 below, along with commentary based on evidence from the Year 4 evaluation and the commentary of Social Care Wales and providers regarding their ongoing work to develop the CPEL Framework.

Figure 19: Recommendations outstanding from the Year 3 report with commentary from the Year 4 evaluation

Recommendations retained in Year 3	Comment from Year 4
<p>Recommendation 1: Promote stronger partnerships between CPEL Programme providers and employers to explore possible solutions to issues raised by social workers about workload, balancing CPEL and case work, and obtaining adequate study time and support.</p>	<p>Social Care Wales and providers continue to work to strengthen partnerships and identify ways to support social workers to balance work and study.</p> <p>However, the challenge of balancing CPEL and case work, and the need for more support from employers is a theme that was raised by social workers and by managers in their responses to the time 2 and time 3 impact measurement tools in Year 4.</p>

Recommendations retained in Year 3	Comment from Year 4
	<p>The issue extends beyond “partnership working” and is likely to require a range of approaches. However, working with employers to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the time requirement for social workers to complete their studies and to identify ways to make the programmes as practical as possible for busy social workers continues to be an aspect of this approach.</p> <p>We suggest that this recommendation is retained.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Review communication about the CPEL Framework and programmes by both providers and Social Care Wales. This communication should aim to promote a more in-depth understanding of the Framework, its purpose, how employers and managers can support it, and what might be expected of social workers, managers and employers who engage with it.</p>	<p>Year 4 responses continued to raise concerns regarding the lack of support from employers and the need for clearer expectations about what was involved in participating in a programme for both social workers and employers prior to enrolment. A possible option to consider which was raised as part of Year 3 is some form of learning contract, e.g. for social workers, social worker managers/employers to sign. We suggest that this recommendation is retained in Year 4.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: Consider whether additional taught or contact time can be built into the programmes, or whether peer learning opportunities can be better promoted to prevent social workers from feeling overwhelmed by the amount of independent study required.</p>	<p>Additional face to face time has been added to the longer modules of the EP and SP programmes. However, this continued to be a theme in Year 4, with social workers suggesting more face-to-face time with tutors as well as peer learning would help them engage better with their studies. Evaluators recognise that adding additional face-to-face resource may affect the way in which programmes are commissioned, but suggest that this continues to be considered in Year 5 of the programme.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Introduce more robust and consistent mechanisms across CPEL Programmes to monitor key data relating to applications, acceptance, take-up, completion, withdrawal, and deferment. Data should be collected and analysed in a way which enables Social Care Wales to easily track each cohort</p>	<p>Evaluators have been made aware that the data provided to Social Care Wales by some providers may be sufficient for the organisation’s internal needs. However, enrolment and monitoring data was not provided to the evaluators in a timely way for the Year 4 evaluation, suggesting that systematic data collection and analysis</p>

Recommendations retained in Year 3	Comment from Year 4
through their engagement with CPEL Programmes.	mechanisms are still under development. We suggest that this recommendation is retained in Year 4.
Recommendation 8: Develop clear communications with employers regarding the cost of offering places on CPEL Programmes. This would enable employers to more effectively judge the value for money offered.	No evidence was collected during Year 4 regarding CPEL's communications. If this has not yet been implemented, we suggest this recommendation is retained.