



**Report on the 5 Yearly
Periodic Review of the
Degree in Social Work
March 2009**

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Section 1 — Introduction

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) is a non-departmental public body established on 1 October 2001 by the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. The Act requires the NISCC to promote high standards of conduct and practice among social care workers and high standards in their training.
- 1.2 As the regulator of social work education and training, the NISCC is responsible for setting standards of social work education, ensuring these standards are being met, and that social workers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to deliver quality services that meet the needs of users of services and their carers. The NISCC is responsible for the approval, annual monitoring, review and inspection of the Degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland.
- 1.3 Reviews of courses are conducted at least every five years after approval and enable an in-depth consideration of the strengths of the courses, areas for development, and whether requirements continue to be met. This is the first Review of the Degree in Social Work since its introduction in 2004.
- 1.4 In undertaking its function of regulating social work education and training, the NISCC works to the following four principles:

Continuous Improvement

The NISCC focuses on the continuous improvement of social work education and training and the consequent outcome for services. Constructive dialogue between NISCC staff and providers is encouraged so that any ongoing or development issues can be dealt with as they arise.

Efficiency and effectiveness

The NISCC works in partnership with providers and other key stakeholders as appropriate to implement these arrangements and to avoid duplication of effort where possible.

Consistency

The NISCC is consistent in its approach to all providers and in the interpretation of the Rules, Standards and Requirements.

Transparency

A summary of quality assurance reports are made available to key stakeholders and the public.

- 1.5 This report presents an analysis of quality assurance activities undertaken during the periodic review of the Degree in Social Work at the Collaborative Partnership at Queen's (CPAQ) and at the Collaborative Management Board at the University of Ulster/Further Education (UU/FE CMB). It includes the Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership (NIDSWP). The Review took place from May 2008 to November 2008. It draws on information obtained as a result of annual monitoring returns provided between 2004 and 2008 and includes recruitment and results information from the courses for the same period. During October and November 2008 the NISCC Review Team met with a range of stakeholders including university staff, practice teachers, users of services and employers. Two days were spent with each of the course providers and with the NIDSWP. Discussions were conducted with the Chairs and Course Directors of the collaborative partnerships, and with tutors, module coordinators, students and service users/carers. There were discussions with a range of members of the NIDSWP including the Chair and professional officer. Focus groups took place with practice teachers, employers and newly qualified social workers. (See section 6 for further details).
- 1.6 The scope of the Review was determined by the NISCC in collaboration with the DHSSPS, sponsoring body and was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Rules for the Approval of the Degree in Social Work (Chapter 9). A Review Team was set up by the NISCC to undertake this first formal Review of the Degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland. A Project Group was established to steer and oversee the work of the Review Team. (See Appendix 6 for Terms of Reference of Project Group). The Review Team was responsible for carrying out the Review, ensuring the work was within the Terms of Reference for the Review and in accordance with the NISCC Quality Assurance Framework.

Section 2 — Background to the Degree in Social Work

- 2.1 The Degree in Social Work was introduced as the threshold level for qualification for social work practice across the United Kingdom in 2003. The first degree courses in Northern Ireland were validated in 2004. The Northern Ireland Framework Specification and associated NISCC requirements/standards were developed to specify what should be taught and assessed as part of the Degree to promote consistency across courses in Northern Ireland and to ensure course content was relevant to the needs of service users, carers and employers in relation to professional social work practice. The Degree in Social Work is provided as a three year undergraduate course (UGR) and as a two year relevant graduate course (RGR). Collaborative working between education and practice learning providers was introduced to social work education and training by the predecessor social work qualification of the Diploma in Social Work. The NISCC continues to require that social work course provision should be provided collaboratively by academic and agency partners. On completion of the Degree, all new social work graduate entrants to employment are required to successfully complete their first year in practice (Assessed Year in Employment) in compliance with the requirements for registration as set out in the NISCC (Registration) Rules 2004: Part 11 7(3). There are two course providers – The Collaborative Partnership at Queen’s (CPAQ) and the University of Ulster/Further Education Collaborative Management Board (UU/FECMB). The Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership (NIDSWP) was created to improve consistency across the provision of social work education in Northern Ireland including practice learning.
- 2.2 The policy context for both social work and social work education has been undergoing major reform during the period 2005 to 2008. The Review of Public Administration aims to rationalise the number of local authorities and public bodies in Northern Ireland. The subsequent reconfiguration of the Health and Social Care Trusts has impacted on the supply of practice learning opportunities. Equally the Agenda for Change which is the most significant reform of NHS pay and conditions since the creation of the Health Service is a key issue for staff, affecting job roles and staff morale.

Section 3 — Aim and Objectives of Periodic Review

Aim: To assess the effectiveness of the degree in social work in preparing students for social work practice in all sectors and settings and ensure that :

Objectives

- 3.1.** The academic and practice learning components of the Degree in Social Work continue to be based on the Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work and the NISCC Rules for the Approval of the Degree in Social Work, and meets service provider requirements and assists students to meet the required learning outcomes
- 3.2.** The supply, quality and delivery of practice learning opportunities support the development of competent and confident social work practitioners who can take responsibility for their own practice and continuous learning and are 'fit to practise' in designated social work posts across all sectors following graduation.
- 3.3.** The Degree Partnership is efficient and effective in planning arrangements for the delivery of the Degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland.
- 3.4.** Newly qualified graduates are well prepared to cope with the demands of the workplace across service user groups in all sectors and settings, namely statutory and voluntary, criminal justice, youth justice and education welfare.
- 3.5.** Arrangements are in place to facilitate diverse entry to the Degree in Social Work.

Section 4 — Review Findings

Objective 1

The academic and practice learning components of the Degree in Social Work continue to be based on the Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work and the NISCC Rules for the Approval of the Degree in Social Work, and meets service provider requirements and assists students to meet the required learning outcomes.

4.1 Collaborative Partnership at Queens (CPAQ)

Collaborative Arrangements

4.1.1 CPAQ includes a range of partners from university and social services agencies. Details of the partners are set out in Section 6. CPAQ is responsible for the total quality of the course i.e. both the academic and the practice elements. Efforts are currently being made by CPAQ to extend agency partner membership to include not only social work trainers but also practitioners. They hope that this will help to raise the quality of course provision and ensure better links between theory and practice at all levels of course provision. Student representatives are encouraged to attend meetings and to bring issues of concern. A current issue of concern to students is the lack of equity perceived in practice learning assessment. Solutions to this are currently under consideration by the course provider through standardisation meetings with practice teachers. These developments in collaboration have clear benefits for social work education and show that the principle of partnership continues to evolve.

Teaching and Assessment

4.1.2 The curriculum has been designed around the six key social work roles as set out in the Framework Specification and the Practice Learning Requirements. The curriculum for the 2 year Relevant Graduate Route (RGR) is completed in 12 modules and the 3 year Undergraduate Route (UGR) is completed in 18 modules. The RGR students begin with a preparatory semester which includes social science, theory, methods and skills, and is followed immediately by 85 days in practice learning. The UGR students spend the first year in academic learning. Their first practice learning opportunity takes place in year 2. Course design aims to foster the integration of theory and practice and the application of learning into practice. Efforts are made to achieve this by involving practitioners in teaching, particularly in the teaching of assessment. Skills development is continued by the practice teacher during practice learning. However the student experience of this is variable and dependent on opportunities available to them. Tutors reported that teaching about the application of theory to practice can be problematic where students have limited experience in year 1. Feedback from newly qualified social workers and line managers indicates that more needs to be done to contextualise theory into practice in the classroom. In addition there needs to be a greater emphasis on skills development, especially assessment and analysis in the first year. This will be commented on in greater detail at 4.4. Whilst the curriculum has been developed around the Framework Specification and the 6 key social work roles, students found it difficult to understand the key roles and the links with practice until their first practice learning experience. Practice teachers felt that they needed to do a lot of work with the student on this and suggested that the key roles should be more clearly specified in course teaching.

- 4.1.3 Feedback from those consulted during the Review indicated a highly regarded student centered staff team, supportive, thoughtful and responsive to students and user stakeholders with diverse skills and expertise. The increase in student numbers has led to large lectures, particularly in year 3 when relevant graduates merge with undergraduates. Students felt that this was well handled and balanced with a range of other teaching methods such as smaller seminar and tutorial groups. There are currently 3 staffing vacancies. Recruitment to fill these is underway. All staff delivering the social work curriculum are qualified social workers. A joint appointment with the Probation Board for Northern Ireland has improved the criminal justice teaching and led to the development of some innovative work with service users. A range of practitioners contribute to the taught curriculum. Research is an important university activity. The range of research in which teaching staff are engaged is impressive and beneficial to the development of evidence based practice.
- 4.1.4 Service user/carers input is well structured and managed by the Teaching in Social Work Consultative Group (TSWCG). Input focuses on skills development (preparation for practice), the application of social work values to practice and policy and legislation relating to carers. Some innovative work is currently being developed with offenders and also with victims of the troubles which will result in the production of a DVD. These will be used to help students develop skills in challenging prejudice. Users/carers who met with the Review Team indicated that they were well prepared and supported. A certificate in presentation skills attracting 20 CATS points is available to them. A partnership approach between users/carers and tutors was evident as was the commitment to ongoing development of user involvement. Students were enthusiastic about this input, and felt it was particularly beneficial in preparation for practice learning. CPAQ are to be commended on the achievements made in developing user/carer participation in the curriculum. CPAQ should build on these achievements by widening user participation in a coordinated and systematic manner to include users in the design, delivery and evaluation of the academic and practice curriculum.
- 4.1.5 The Queen's on Line (QOL) is an impressive system which supplements student learning. Lecture notes are available one week in advance of lectures, of particular benefit to students with disabilities. A range of reading materials including core texts and other resources is included. Online discussion groups, available to students in practice learning are well utilised although some students reported problems in accessing the online resources from their practice learning site. Access to QOL by practice teachers would be beneficial in keeping practice teachers informed about student academic teaching. The University staff are trying to achieve this but have not yet been successful because the system requires all users to be registered with the university. This would be an effective tool in bridging the gap between teaching in the classroom and in practice and in developing and strengthening collaboration between the academic and practice curricula.
- 4.1.6 The Review Team are satisfied that the teaching on child protection and mental health meets the standards set. Physical, emotional and sexual abuse is examined – covering definitions, theories and prevalence. Service users contribute, offering insights into impact, recovery and survival. There is input from the Childcare Centre at Queen's and from PBNI and social work practitioners. MASRAM (Public Protection Arrangement) is

addressed in keeping with the recommendations from the Toner Report.¹ Feedback from employers and newly qualified social workers suggest that this input would be greatly enhanced by more emphasis on application to practice e.g. skills development and input from practitioners about current protocols. Line managers emphasised that the Review of Public Administration has caused major changes in Family and Childcare and in Mental Health and they felt that tutors are not sufficiently in touch with these developments. Whilst practitioners regularly contribute to teaching and this is highly valued, there is currently no systematic regional process for engaging contributions from practitioners. It is important that tutors are well informed about changes in social work practice. Whilst, the NISCC Rules have not required registration of academic staff, registration would be beneficial to staff delivering the curriculum, keeping them current with developments in social work practice. NISCC has been proactive in encouraging the registration of teaching staff and although a majority of staff have registered, it is disappointing that some staff teaching social work have not yet registered. In reviewing the Rules for the Approval of the Degree in Social Work, NISCC will consider making this a requirement. Discussions with tutors during the Review meetings indicated difficulties for them in teaching assessment where students do not have adequate opportunities to apply and develop theories learnt in the classroom in practice. Teaching on Adult Services spans a 12 week period, covering older people, mental health, learning disability and physical disability. Teaching covers policy context, underpinning theory, skills and practice using person centred approaches. Students are encouraged to understand the user perspective and Service Users contribute to the teaching. Further resources are made available to students via the internet. The teaching in Criminal Justice has been improved by the joint appointment of a lecturer from PBNI. Court work is taught incorporating both theory and skills with opportunities for report writing and court room simulation. This is highly valued by students. Two members of staff were closely involved in the Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability and contribute to the teaching on Mental Health.

- 4.1.7 Assessment is by a combination of coursework and examination. An assessment handbook is available to students with clear information on the assessment structure and submission dates. Robust systems are in place to manage failing students in both academic and practice settings. Where there is cause for concern with regard to the conduct or practice of a student, University Fitness to Practise procedures are in place to deal with this. Referral through the university procedure also requires referral to NISCC. (Appendix 1 contains details of when this procedure has been invoked). In addition a regional policy and procedures on Premature Endings and Termination of Practice Learning have been in place since March 2008. Assessment requirements for practice learning (both formative and summative) have been agreed regionally and this information is made available to students by the NIDSWP in a handbook which is annually reviewed.
- 4.1.8 Assessment of practice learning is the responsibility of the practice teacher. The practice teacher is responsible for gathering and verifying evidence of the student's practice during the practice learning period. A summative assessment is made in a Professional Development Report, compiled by the student. The result is pass or fail and does not contribute to degree classification. Students, practice teachers and line

¹ Outcomes from the Independent Review Report of Agency Involvement with Mr. Arthur McElhill, Ms Lorraine McGovern and their children. June 2008

managers consulted during the Review raised issues about the weightings given to the reflective practice and evidence based practice assignments and the sequencing of these two assignments which are required to be handed in at the end of the PLO. These factors shorten the student's experience of practice learning as they are preoccupied with course assessment in the latter part of the PLO. The sequencing of practice learning assignments and the weightings given is currently under consideration by course providers. Course Providers should report on how sequencing has been revised in their annual quality assurance report for 2009/10 to NISCC.

- 4.1.9 A Practice Assessment Panel quality assures the assessment process. Annual refresher and standardisation events for the panel take place. The External Examiners have commended this system and the contribution it makes to ensuring equity in assessment and also to ongoing course review and development.

Conclusion

- 4.1.10 NISCC is satisfied that CPAQ continues to meet NISCC Rules for the Approval of the Degree in Social Work.

4.1.11 Recommendations

- 1. The key roles which are set out in the Framework Specification should be more clearly specified in course teaching. (4.1.2)**
- 2. CPAQ should build on the achievements made in user participation in teaching by widening this to include users in the design, delivery and evaluation of the academic and practice elements of the curriculum. (4.1.4)**
- 3. Theory into practice should be contextualised better in the classroom and there needs to be a greater emphasis on skills development especially assessment and analysis in the first year. (4.1.6)**
- 4. The module on child protection should be enhanced by more emphasis on application to practice e.g. skills development and input from practitioners about current protocols. (4.1.6)**
- 5. All staff teaching social work at CPAQ should register with NISCC. NISCC will review the requirement for the registration of teaching staff.(4.1.6)**
- 6. Course Providers should report on how the sequencing of practice learning assignments and the weightings given has been revised, in their annual quality assurance for 2009/2010 report to NISCC. (4.1.8)**

4.2 The University of Ulster/Further Education Collaborate Management Board (UU/FECMB)

Collaborative arrangements

- 4.2.1 The UU/FE CMB includes a range of partners from university, further education colleges and social services agencies. A detailed list of partners can be found in Section 6. The Partnership operates on two levels. The Collaborative Management Forum operates at a strategic level and includes both academic and agency staff. Issues raised by the University and/or partner institutions about the delivery and development of the degree are considered. This Forum also promotes best practice in Learning and Teaching in relation to the Degree and considers student feedback. It is accountable to the Faculty of Social Science's Learning and Teaching Committee.

4.2.2 The Collaborative Operational Forum is a formalized system for managing standardisation of the curriculum across all sites delivering the Degree. An annual system for the review and evaluation of all modules is in place and annual opportunities are also available for updating tutors on new developments in practice. Great efforts have been made to develop channels for communication and standardisation of teaching and assessment to ensure that students are not disadvantaged across sites. The External Examiners have commented on the strength and effectiveness of the collaborative arrangements. The Partnership is to be commended on achieving this level of consistency and strong collaborative relationships across such a wide range of organisations all of which have undergone recent major organisational change.

Teaching and Assessment

4.2.3 The curriculum is designed around the six key social work roles as set out in the Framework Specification and the Practice Learning Requirements. The 2 year Relevant Graduate Route (RGR) is delivered at Magee Campus. The 3 year Undergraduate Route (UGR) can be pursued at all of the college sites. The final year must be completed at either the Magee Campus or the Belfast Metropolitan College. (Section 4.8.2 contains detailed breakdown of numbers at each site). The RGR students begin with a preparatory semester which includes social science, theory, methods and skills, and is followed immediately by 85 days in practice learning. The UGR students spend the first year in academic learning. Their first practice learning opportunity takes place in year 2. All students must complete and pass the preparation for practice module before progressing to practice learning.

4.2.4 The University of Ulster at Magee has a full staffing complement of 14.5 staff. There are 13.5 staff currently in post and in addition there are 3 temporary part-time staff. All staff delivering the social work curriculum across all of the sites are qualified social workers.

4.2.5 The increase in student numbers has led to large teaching groups particularly in year 3 when students from the smaller colleges join at either the Magee Campus or the Belfast Metropolitan College. Some students expressed dissatisfaction about how this was handled and felt that the large lecture groups (110) were not conducive to student learning. Students were also concerned that many of the lecture theatres can not accommodate the larger numbers and that this has a detrimental effect on the learning experience. A range of other teaching methods are employed such as seminar groups (18-20) and tutorial groups (5-6) for skills development and application to practice. The UU/FE CMB should review the management of class sizes particularly in year 3 with reference to the impact on the effectiveness of teaching about practice.

4.2.6 Good progress has been made in developing the participation of users/carers. Service users are involved at a range of levels, representation on the Management Forum and course committees in each provider site. A range of innovative approaches to their involvement in the taught curriculum are in place across most sites. Belfast Metropolitan College has developed a range of service user contributions across the curriculum. This includes a week which focuses on the theme of homelessness. Visits are made to a range of service providers which help to challenge student perceptions of homelessness. The visits are well managed and welcomed by providers and service users as an opportunity to raise awareness about the reasons for homelessness and its impact on the individual. Service users have an opportunity to talk about their experiences. A range of service users contribute to the curriculum at Magee, South Eastern Regional College and South West College. Students and service users have

commented that this is a very powerful method of improving self awareness and understanding. Service users who attended the Review meeting felt that they had been well prepared and supported in their role with students. Young carers who made a presentation at Magee were formally thanked for their input by the presentation of an award. The UU/FECMB should build on these developments using a more strategic, coordinated approach across academic and practice learning, and ensuring that every student from year 1 across all campuses benefits particularly in skills work. User involvement should be widened to include involvement in the design, delivery and evaluation of the academic and practice curriculum.

- 4.2.7 A range of teaching methods such as seminar and tutorial groups, using case studies, and in some instances service user participation are used to foster the integration of theory and practice and the application of learning into practice. Tutors reported that teaching about the application of theory to practice can be problematic particularly where students have brought limited practice experience to year 1. Feedback from newly qualified social workers and line managers indicates that more needs to be done to contextualise theory into practice in the classroom and that in addition there needs to be a greater emphasis on skills development especially assessment and analysis in the first year. This will be commented on in greater detail at 4.4. Whilst the curriculum has been developed around the Framework Specification and the 6 key social work roles, students found it difficult to understand the key roles and make the links with practice until their first practice learning opportunity. Practice teachers felt that they needed to do a lot of work with the student on this and suggested that the key roles should be more clearly specified in course teaching.
- 4.2.8 An Intranet system which includes access to electronic journals and other extensive learning material including lecture notes is available to students at the Magee Campus. Further Education Colleges have their own intranet systems to augment library resources. Tutors advised that library resources in Further Education Colleges have been improved to the standards required for Degree Provision. Work is ongoing to ensure access to the Magee system for all Degree registered students. Currently only year 3 students can access the Magee system. The University of Ulster has advised that all social work students will have access to the intranet system at Magee by September 2009. The UU/FE CMB should also ensure that all lecture notes are available on the intranet system to students in advance of lectures. This is currently inconsistent and seems to be dependent on the tutor or teaching site. This would improve access for students with a disability. Access to the intranet system for practice teachers should also be developed. This has been introduced in South West College and practice teachers have welcomed this development. This would be an effective tool in bridging the gap between teaching in the classroom and in practice and would further develop collaborative working.
- 4.2.9 The Review Team are satisfied that the teaching on child protection and mental health meets the standards set. Physical, emotional and sexual abuse is examined – covering definitions, theories and prevalence. Practitioners contribute, offering insights into aspects of practice. MASRAM (Public Protection Arrangement) is addressed. Feedback from employers and newly qualified social workers indicates that this input would be greatly enhanced by more emphasis on application to practice e.g. skills development and input from practitioners about current protocols. Line managers emphasised that there have been major changes in Family and Childcare and in Mental Health and it was

felt that tutors are not sufficiently in touch with these developments. Whilst practitioners regularly contribute to teaching and this is highly valued, there is currently no systematic regional process for engaging contributions from practitioners. It is important that tutors are well informed about changes in social work practice. Whilst the NISCC Rules have not required registration of academic staff, registration would be beneficial to staff delivering the curriculum, keeping them current with developments in social work practice. NISCC has been proactive in encouraging the registration of teaching staff and although a majority of staff have registered, it is disappointing that some staff teaching social work have not yet registered. In reviewing the Rules for the Approval of the Degree in Social Work, NISCC will consider making this a requirement.

- 4.2.10 Assessment is by a combination of coursework and examination. Clear information on the assessment structure is provided to students. Robust systems are in place to manage failing students in both the academic and practice settings. Where there is cause for concern with regard to conduct or practice of a student, University Fitness to Practise procedures are in place to deal with this. Referral through the university procedure also requires referral to NISCC. In addition a regional policy and procedures on Premature Endings and Termination of Practice Learning have been in place since March 2008. Assessment requirements for practice learning (both formative and summative) have been agreed regionally and this information is made available to students by the NIDSWP in a handbook which is annually reviewed.
- 4.2.11 The practice teacher is responsible for gathering and verifying evidence of the student's practice during the practice learning period. A summative assessment is made in a Professional Development Report, compiled by the student. The result is pass or fail and does not contribute to degree classification. A second marker system has been introduced to ensure parity with academic assessment and equity in the marking of practice learning. This is a regional system and applies to the marking of all practice learning across Northern Ireland. Students, practice teachers and line managers consulted during the Review raised issues about the weightings given to the reflective practice and evidence based practice assignments and the sequencing of these two assignments which are required to be handed in at the end of the PLO. These factors shorten the student's experience of practice learning as they are preoccupied with course assessment in the latter part of the PLO. The sequencing of practice learning assignments and the weightings given is currently under consideration by course providers. Course Providers should report on how sequencing has been revised in their annual quality assurance report for 2009/2010 to NISCC.
- 4.2.12 A Practice Assessment Panel quality assures the assessment process. The External Examiners have commented that the practice assessment arrangements are rigorous and thorough, that there has been an improvement in the standard of practice teacher reports and that overall, the standards are very good. Annual standardisation events for the practice assessment panel and moderation days for cross college marking are organised. Markers comments are evaluated and a sample is seen by the externals.

Conclusion

- 4.2.13 NISCC is satisfied that the UU/FE CMB continues to meet NISCC Rules for the Approval of the Degree in Social Work.

4.2.14 Recommendations

- 7. The key roles which are set out in the Framework Specification should be more clearly specified in course teaching. (4.2.7)**
- 8. The UU/FE CMB should review the management of class sizes particularly in year 3 with reference to the impact on the effectiveness of teaching about practice. (4.2.5)**
- 9. The UU/FE CMB should build on the achievements made in user participation, using a more strategic, coordinated approach in both the academic and practice components of the curriculum, ensuring that every student from year 1 across all campuses benefits particularly in skills work. Users should be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of the academic and practice curriculum. (4.2.6)**
- 10. Access to the intranet for practice teachers should be developed across all sites. (4.2.8)**
- 11. Theory into practice should be contextualised better in the classroom and there needs to be a greater emphasis on skills development especially assessment and analysis in the first year. (4.2.7)**
- 12. The module on child protection would be greatly enhanced by more emphasis on application to practice e.g. skills development and input from practitioners about current protocols. (4.2.9)**
- 13. The UU/FE CMB should ensure that all lecture notes are available to students in advance of lectures to improve access for students with a disability. (4.2.8)**
- 14. All staff teaching social work at UU/FE CMB should register with NISCC. NISCC will review the requirement for the registration of teaching staff.(4.2.9)**
- 15. UU/FE CMB should report on how the sequencing of practice learning assignments and the weightings given has been revised, in their annual quality assurance report for 2009/2010 to NISCC. (4.1.8)**

Objective 2

The supply, quality and delivery of practice learning opportunities support the development of competent and confident social work practitioners who can take responsibility for their own practice and continuous learning and are 'fit to practise' in designated social work posts across all sectors following graduation.

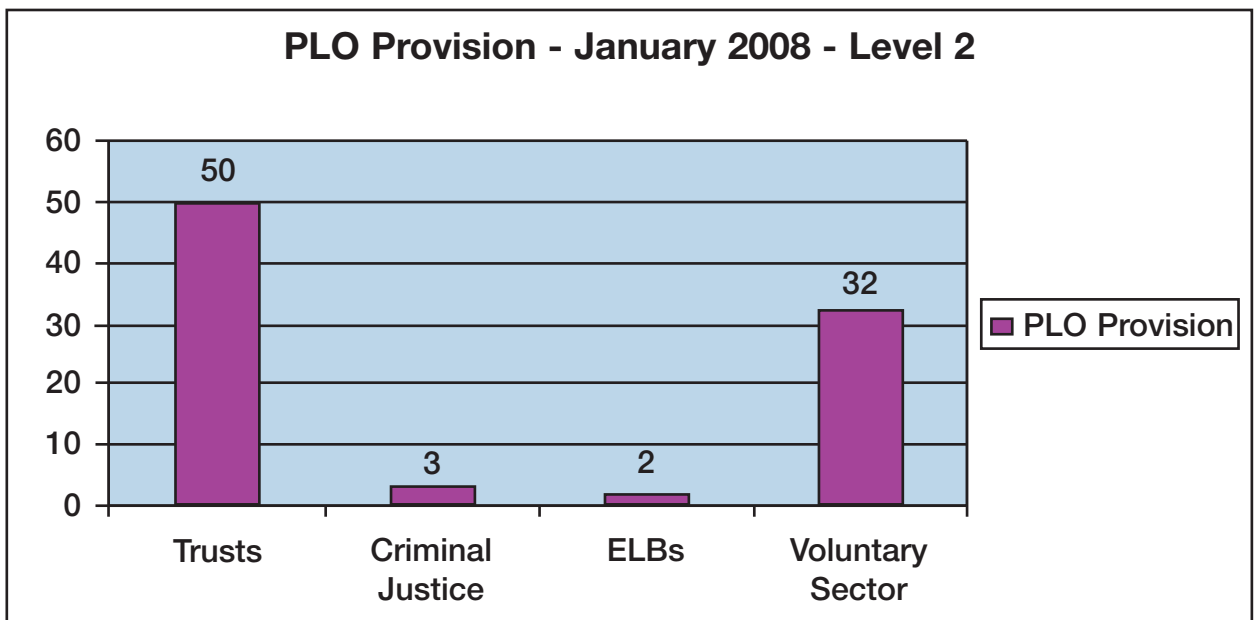
4.3 Practice Learning Opportunities

Supply and Quality of Practice Learning

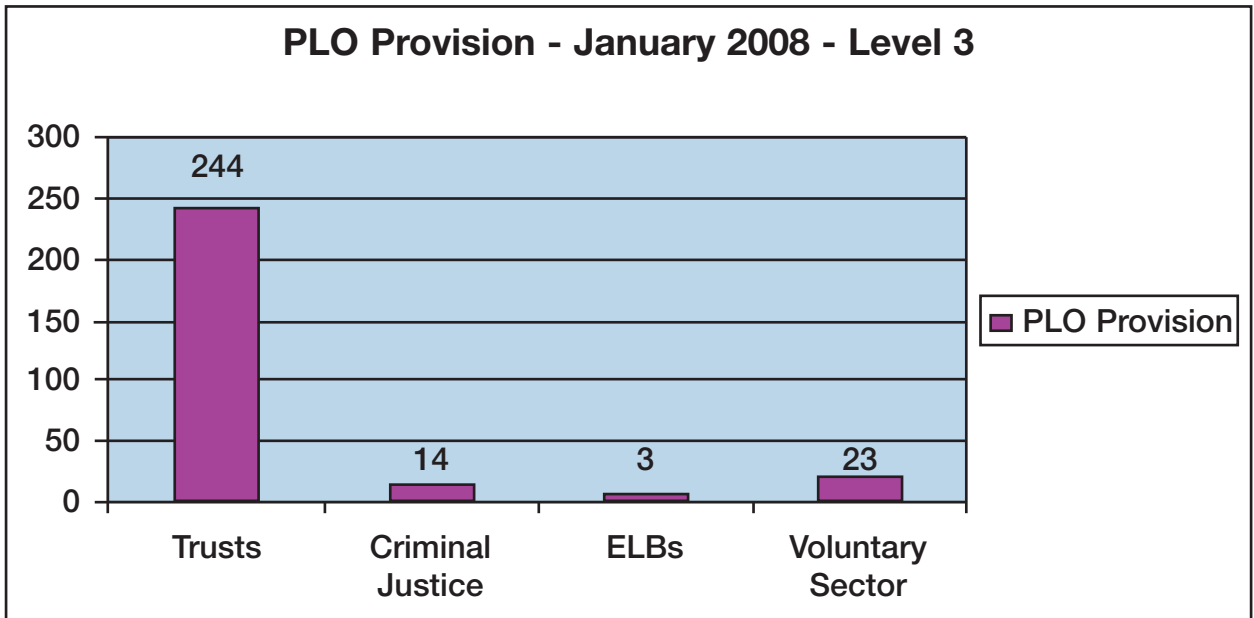
- 4.3.1 Practice Learning is a core element of the Degree and comprises 50% of the curriculum. The Practice Learning Requirements specify that course providers must structure the course to facilitate a progressive and incremental approach to practice development. 240 days in total will normally be undertaken in practice learning. Level 1 is the foundation and preparation for direct practice. 25 days must be spent in preparation for direct practice. Students must be assessed as competent at this point before progressing to practice in the work place. Level 2 is defined as 'application' learning in and through direct supervised practice. Students spend 85 days in practice. Level 3 is**

defined as 'integrated application' where students are expected to have developed critical analysis of application and integration of knowledge, skills and values. Students spend 100 days in practice. In addition there are 30 days to be used flexibly for individual practice development. Practice Learning must also be structured to allow students to gain experience of a range of social work.

4.3.2 Practice Learning Opportunities (PLOs) are provided by the main social work employers in the statutory and independent sectors including Health and Social Care Trusts, the Probation Board, Youth Justice, Education Welfare and a range of voluntary and community organizations. 3 student units are funded by DHSSPS within the voluntary sector. The allocation of practice learning is managed centrally by the NIDSWP. Practice Learning sites are quality assured by NISCC through the Designated Practice Learning Provider Scheme. Practice Learning Providers are to be commended on achieving the increased numbers of PLOs required by the move to the Degree in Social Work. (Further Information on Practice Learning from the statistical returns reports is set out in Appendix 5)

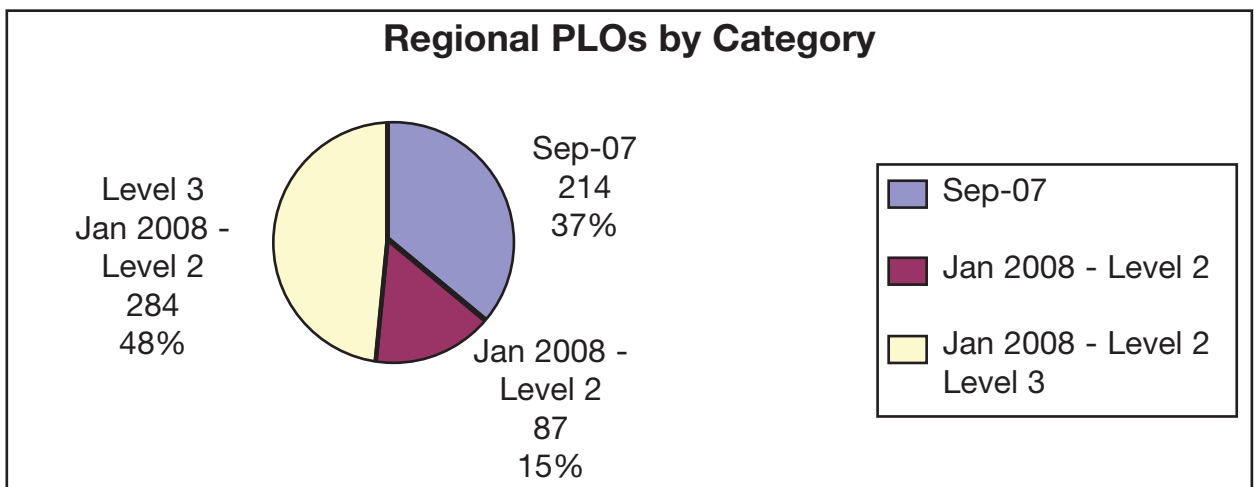


Total number of Degree in Social Work Level 2 PLOs in January 2008 was 87.



Total number of Degree in Social Work Level 3 PLOs in January 2008 was 284.

4.3.3 Whilst there has been a sufficient supply of PLOs to meet demand since the introduction of the Degree, some of the students consulted during the Review complained that where there was no social worker on site, it was difficult to understand the social work process. This view was echoed by line managers and training managers. Some DPLPs provide extended learning opportunities in compensation. NISCC will continue to monitor PLOs through annual monitoring of DPLPs. The practice teachers consulted during the Review felt that the quality of practice learning at level 3 varied, that the PLOs for some students at this level were not good enough and that all level 3 students should have a PLO with a social worker on site. Students on both the 2 year and 3 year routes, i.e. two thirds of students require practice learning in January and this puts enormous pressures on the allocation system (Appendix 5). A range of issues concerning both the supply and quality of practice learning opportunities have been identified which require further exploration. NISCC should continue to work with NIDSWP to develop systems to monitor both the quantity and the quality of practice learning opportunities.



The above chart illustrates the imbalance between September and January PLOs when 37% of PLOs take place in September with 63% of PLOs taking place in January. This is indicative of activity each year.

4.3.4 Practice teachers and Training Managers were concerned that the differential in the standards required for each practice learning opportunity was not set out clearly and that an opportunity was missed to build on previous learning. The NISCC Practice Learning Requirements provide a structure of 3 levels to facilitate an incremental approach to practice learning development. These are Foundation at Level 1, Application at Level 2, Integrated Application at Level 3. Course Providers must structure the learning to facilitate a progressive and incremental approach to practice development. Statements of Differential for Levels of Practice Learning is contained in the Regional Practice Learning Handbook, however practice teachers and students reported confusion about where to locate these and how to interpret the differences in level 2 and level 3. Communication about the differences in the levels would be improved by clearly specifying different outcomes for each level of PLO linked to the practice foci. Course Providers should clearly specify the different outcomes for level 2 and level 3 PLOs. Feedback also suggested that achieving the Practice Learning Requirement of 'group care' is often difficult. It increases the pressure on agencies to find suitable Practice Learning Opportunities at a time when many residential facilities in the Trusts are closing. NISCC should review the Practice Learning Requirements.

Profile of PLO Sites

4.3.5 The table below is derived from the statistical returns gathered from the Designated Practice Learning Providers (DPLPs) for the year 2007/2008. This was the first set of such data gathered and work is in progress by NISCC in collaboration with the NIDSWP to ensure more accurate and reliable data in the future. (See 4.3.3) The table below is indicative of PLO settings rather than a precise description since there is considerable variation in the interpretation of prescribed settings. Some 27 descriptors were given by DPLPs which makes analysis of the data provided very difficult. The % of PLOs provided in family and children's services in the table below include a range of day care, fieldwork and residential services including disability and domestic violence. PLOs in Criminal justice and education welfare are also given. PLOs provided are specific and 'Others' includes all settings other than family or children's work, namely adult services.

PLOs Provided	September 2007 Level 2	January 2008 Level 2	January 2008 Level 3
Family and children's services	40%	37%	41%
Criminal justice	1%	7%	5%
Education welfare	0%	2%	1%
Others	59%	54%	53%

Statutory Family and Child Care PLOs are limited because there are not enough sites available in the academic year to meet the demand from students for PLOs in this service user group. The current sequencing of PLOs concentrates most provision in January each year. This fact has a significant impact on the availability of PLOs in this service user group. It is recommended that Course Providers should review the sequencing of PLOs. The Placement and Allocation Committee of the NIDSWP is confident that, the majority of students will normally have one PLO in work with families

and children across a range of settings during their training. The DPLPs are themselves working to extend the range of experiences for students within PLOs.

- 4.3.6 It is acknowledged that the majority of newly qualified social workers in the statutory sector are employed in Family and Child Care services and that a minority of students will not have a PLO experience in Family and Child Care services during their course.
- 4.3.7 The introduction of NISCC Standards for Practice Learning was welcomed by training managers. (The Standards for Practice Learning for the Degree in Social Work. NISCC April 2006). They felt that the standards positively raised the profile of Practice Learning and facilitated a relationship with operational management in the Trusts, ensuring that Practice Teaching has now become an operational issue and subject to organisational quality processes. The NISCC has agreed some flexibility in incremental compliance with the standards and this was welcomed. However, there continue to be difficulties in achieving compliance in some key areas, in particular the requirement for staff providing practice learning and/or workplace assessment which is set out in Part 4 of the standards. The split between the assessor and educator role is not accepted and it is felt that both these roles are currently effectively undertaken by qualified practice teachers. It is also felt that the requirement that practice teachers who only take one student per year should have their assessments overseen by an experienced assessor creates unnecessary additional work for training teams and smaller agencies (standard 3.7.2).
- 4.3.8 Training managers and tutors valued the apprenticeship model provided by singleton practice teachers. Whilst they may only take one student per year, many will have invaluable experience built upon over many years. (See Appendix 5 for statistical breakdown). Training Managers felt that the criteria for Practice Assessors for Degree students at level 3 i.e. 'assessors will normally be expected to work with a minimum of 2 students each year in order to remain eligible to assess at level 3' appears to contradict the criteria 'have experience of assessing a minimum of 3 social work students in the preceding 2 years'. (Standard 4.3.3). Designated Practice Learning Providers also have difficulties with progressing work in 'brokering and sustaining a range of practice learning opportunities across organisational boundaries (standard 3.2.5) as they could not guarantee standards in an external organization. (Appendix 5). Tutors and practice teachers felt that 2 tripartites (standard 2.4) was generally sufficient to plan and monitor student progress. Where a student is having difficulties in the workplace, additional tripartites can be arranged according to need. (Standard 2.4.5). The NISCC has produced guidance to help address these difficulties and will continue to work with agencies in addressing them in the development of the Regional Practice Learning Strategy. However, in view of the difficulties experienced by staff in meeting the standards, it is recommended that the Practice Learning Standards should be reviewed by NISCC.
- 4.3.9 Students reported that induction to the workplace is widely provided and ensures a good introduction to the agency. There is variation in the length of induction from 1 week to 4 weeks which some students felt took away from valuable face to face contact with service users.
- 4.3.10 The Review of Public Administration and Agenda for Change are impacting on the supply of practice learning opportunities. Services are being reconfigured and sites which have previously offered PLOs may not be available in the future. There are diminishing numbers of singleton practice teachers prepared to take a student. The

development of new opportunities demands a lot of work from practice teachers and training managers. Often training teams have to be creative by developing a core site, with supplementary experiences added to ensure the student's needs are met. (Appendix 5 for profile of PLO sites).

4.4 Preparation for Practice

- 4.4.1 The Practice Learning Requirements specify that 25 days must be spent in preparation for direct work. The Preparation for Practice module is a key module which has been regionally developed and is jointly delivered by agency and academic staff at CPAQ and at UU/FECMB. It is assessed in college. All students must pass this module before proceeding to their first practice learning opportunity. The module is evaluated annually by the NIDSWP and adjustments made to the delivery. The module achieves a standardised introduction to basic communication skills for all students. There are differences in the process of assessment by the course providers, but outcomes and methods of assessment are the same. Whilst the module has been highly evaluated by students, the practice teachers, students and newly qualified workers who were consulted during the Review felt that it would be a better use of the first year to develop skills incrementally from the start of year 1 and to have more exposure to service users and to practice in this first year. It was suggested that this could be done by shadowing workers or by observation. They felt that 'preparation for practice' (skills teaching) should be extended to cover all of year 1 and not just the 25 days. Course Providers, in collaboration with NISCC should review the curriculum in year 1 and evaluate whether adjustments can be made to extend the skills teaching throughout year 1 to ensure better integration of theory and practice. It is acknowledged that there would be wide ranging implications as a result of such a modification. This would require a review of the Practice Learning Requirements.
- 4.4.2 'Tuning in' is a skills development exercise used in the preparation for practice module. Practice Teachers continue the student's skills development by getting them to work on tuning in exercises during their first PLO. All of the students consulted during the Review commented on the wide variation in practice teachers' expectations about how this exercise should be done. Course Providers should develop guidelines for practice teachers on expectations particularly in relation to the written aspects of this exercise.
- 4.4.3 Generally, students welcomed the opportunity to focus on skills development in the classroom and felt well prepared for practice. Where service users were involved in the module, this was very highly rated.

4.5 Flexible Learning Days

- 4.5.1 The Practice Learning Requirements stipulate that in addition to the 185 days of direct, supervised practice, 30 days should be used for individual practice development. Each course provider has developed guidance on how the days should be used and assessed. In addition, guidance is provided in the Practice Learning Handbook. There appeared to be a lack of consistency in expectations about the learning to be achieved in the development of individual practice and a wide variation in perception amongst students and tutors about their purpose. Some students were enthusiastic and motivated and described innovative ways of finding new and useful learning experiences whilst other students admitted that fulfilling them was a chore to be squeezed in between academic and practice assessments.

The NISCC should work with Course Providers to review the use of Flexible Learning Days. These days could be used more effectively to develop practice particularly in year 1 and this could bridge the gap in student practice experience.

4.5.2 Recommendations

- 16. NISCC should work with DPLPs to monitor F&CC sites and sites where no social worker is present. (4.3.3:4.3.5)**
- 17. NISCC should work with NIDSWP to develop systems to monitor the quantity and quality of PLOs. (4.3.3)**
- 18. Course Providers should provide clearer information to practice teachers and students about the different outcomes for level 2 and level 3 PLOs.(4.3.4 : 4.3.8 : 4.4.1)**
- 19. Course Providers should review the sequencing of PLOs. (4.3.5)**
- 20. NISCC should review the Practice Learning Requirements and the Standards for Practice Learning. (4.3.4 : 4.3.8)**
- 21. Course Providers, in collaboration with NISCC should review the curriculum in year 1 and evaluate whether adjustments can be made to extend the skills teaching throughout year 1 to ensure better integration of theory and practice. (4.4.1)**
- 22. Course Providers should develop guidelines for practice teachers on the ‘tuning in’ exercises required during the first PLO. (4.4.2)**
- 23. The NISCC should work with Course Providers to review the use of Flexible Learning Days. These days could be used more effectively in year 1 to bridge the gap in student practice experience. (4.5.1)**

Objective 3

The Degree Partnership is efficient and effective in planning arrangements for the delivery of the Degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland.

4.6 The Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership

- 4.6.1 The Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership (NIDSWP) is a regional strategic partnership, charged with responsibility for planning social work training arrangements across Northern Ireland. (Rules for the Approval of the Degree in Social Work 5.4) Its membership is comprised of agency and academic representatives from each of the course providers. (For details of membership see Section 6).
- 4.6.2 The chair is appointed by the NISCC. There are two staff – an administrator and a professional officer. It is funded annually by DHSSPS and is accountable to the NISCC. A business plan and report is submitted to NISCC annually. Following the NISCC response, the business plan is developed. The planning cycle has been interrupted at various points over the last four years due to staffing absences. From January 07 to September 07, the Partnership was without a chair. During 07/08, the professional officer was also absent for 5 months. A new professional officer has been in post since 1st October 2008. This is a 6 month temporary appointment.
- 4.6.3 It was clear to the Review Team that the NIDSWP has achieved a good working relationship with all those involved in the delivery of the degree across Northern Ireland. The most tangible evidence of its effectiveness is in the partnership working in its

committees and their achievements. The Review Team found a high level of satisfaction amongst all of the participants in the Review with the regional consistency achieved:

- the centralised admissions system – agreement on personal statement, joint marking system, single interview for all courses, bank of questions jointly agreed, system for annual review including service users (see appendix for detailed breakdown of admissions);
- the allocation of practice learning opportunities;
- the preparation for practice module developed and delivered jointly by academic and social services staff;
- the assessment of practice learning;
- the systems for review and evaluation of regional arrangements;

4.6.4 The NIDSWP has played an important role in ensuring a sufficient supply of practice learning opportunities to meet the increased demand during a very difficult time of major change in social services.

4.6.5 The Practice Learning Handbook developed by the NIDSWP includes a range of standardised procedures such as a disabled student protocol, Premature Endings and Terminations, and is an excellent tool for ensuring consistency in procedures across practice learning. This is vital given the emphasis on practice learning in the Degree and the reliance on practice teachers to assess student practice. It is a major achievement to have attained this level of consistency and the NIDSWP is to be commended on these achievements.

4.6.6 The NIDSWP has struggled to develop efficient operational structures since its establishment. Since 2006, efficiency has been improved by the creation of 4 committees with remits linked to the business plan. These are the Audit and Governance Committee, Degree Delivery Committee, Admissions Committee, Practice Learning and Allocation Committee. These committees have worked to develop the regional arrangements previously described.

4.6.7 However, there are some fundamental problems about how the NIDSWP operates. It is an organisation which deals with complex issues and there have been difficulties in establishing and maintaining the legal and organisational structure since its establishment. The members consulted during the review felt that the NIDSWP was restricted in the role it has been given by NISCC i.e. to take a lead in planning social work training arrangements. For example, the NIDSWP does not have the authority to make decisions about intake numbers to the Degree in Social Work. It does not have any authority over the course providers to implement decisions it makes in relation to course provision. Decisions are made by consensus or compromise. Outcomes are often achieved as a result of negotiation and goodwill. Decision making is cumbersome and inefficient. Currently there is no part-time route to the degree in Northern Ireland. A part-time route would widen access to the degree. The NIDSWP has been tasked to develop this route since 2005. No additional places have been allocated for the part-time route. Course Providers must make adjustments to the full time routes to facilitate it. A route is planned for entry by 2010. The time taken to achieve this illustrates the difficulties faced in decision making and in progressing work.

4.6.8 The notion of “partnership” is not clearly defined and understanding of their role is open to interpretation by members. Much of the work is taken forward by a small number of

the members. Membership of the NIDSWP is by NISCC appointment and reflects the University and Agency stakeholders engaged in the delivery of the Degree and with authority from their organisation to commit resources. Members must be signed up members of a collaborative partnership in course provision in addition to signing up to NIDSWP. Representative membership by the voluntary sector is problematic. The sector plays an important role in the delivery of practice learning but representation of smaller stakeholders is an issue because there is no collective forum in the voluntary sector with the authority to agree resources. Not all members of the NIDSWP have signed up to its membership which is a NISCC Requirement. There are a range of reasons for this including changes in personnel. The Review of Public Administration has led to numerous changes in member organisations and of personnel particularly during 2007 and 2008. In view of the problems identified by the Review in the operation of the NIDSWP, NISCC should re-examine the role and remit of the NIDSWP. Options should be identified for future regional co-operation and co-ordination. NISCC should review the Rules for the Approval of the Degree in Social Work.

4.6.9 Some work is ongoing to take forward plans to ensure the formal and systematic input and feedback from service users, carers and students. No formal feedback has been sought from employers on their views on how well students are prepared for work. Options should be explored as to how feedback from service users and employers can be sought to ascertain how well students are prepared for employment.

4.6.10 Recommendations

24. Regional systems for admissions and practice learning should be maintained and developed. (4.6.3)

25. The role and remit of the NIDSWP should be re-examined. Options should be identified for future regional co-operation and co-ordination. (4.6.7 : 4.6.8)

26. NISCC should review the Rules for the Degree in Social Work. (4.6.8)

27. Options should be explored as to how feedback from service users and employers can be sought to ascertain how well students are prepared for employment. (4.6.9)

Objective 4:

Newly qualified graduates are well prepared to cope with the demands of the workplace across service user groups in all sectors and settings, namely statutory and voluntary, criminal justice, youth justice and education welfare.

4.7 Fitness to Practise

4.7.1 Feedback from employers and newly qualified social workers on the effectiveness of the degree in preparing graduates for the workplace is not sought by degree providers or the NIDSWP. A survey of the Implementation of the Assessed Year in Employment was undertaken by the South Eastern Trust in 2007.² The focus of this research was on the implementation of the Assessed Year rather than the effectiveness of the Degree. NISCC also reviewed the first year of operation of the Assessed Year in Employment. (Review of the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) Overview of Outcomes of Monitoring Nov. 2008) The information in this section comes from those who attended the Review focus

² An Exploration of the Implementation of the Assessed Year in Employment from the perspective of Newly Qualified Social Workers and their Line Managers by Roslyn Dougherty September 2007

groups i.e. line managers, practice teachers, newly qualified social workers and governance leads and Trust training managers.(See Section 6 for more detailed information about the focus groups).

- 4.7.2 In general, all of the participants consulted during the Review commented that the introduction of the Degree in Social Work has raised the standards of social work training considerably and that the degree is a major improvement on its predecessor qualification, the Diploma in Social Work, in preparing graduates to practise. Practice teachers felt that attitudes to professional development have improved. One governance lead remarked that the current AYE social workers are exceptional and show a clear evidence base in their practice. Degree level training was welcomed. However a small number of participants from Family and Childcare queried whether the Degree prepared students well enough for this specialist area of work. A similar concern was also expressed by practice teachers in the voluntary childcare sector. They felt that it was imperative for students to have practice experience in Family and Childcare before employment in this sector and that more students should have practice learning experiences in Children's Services. This view was not supported by all who attended the focus groups. Newly qualified graduates who did not have experience in Family and Childcare did not feel confident about applying for a job in this field. However NISCC has developed opportunities for graduates to develop their skills in this area through the NI PQ Framework. Following graduation, the PQ Framework does provide opportunities for newly qualified social workers to develop their knowledge and skills in specific areas of social work. NISCC continues to be committed to a generic qualification in social work.
- 4.7.3 The gap in previous experience did not appear to be as critical for those working in adult services. Line managers in this sector felt that competent, newly qualified staff with a range of work and life experience could quickly close the gaps. Concern was expressed by some practice teachers about the lack of relevant experience of prospective social work students and the impact of this on classroom and workplace learning. They felt that the selection process should be reviewed to include a requirement of relevant experience. NISCC should investigate whether the issue of relevant experience does have an impact on student learning.
- 4.7.4 Groups of students and newly qualified social workers from both the relevant graduate route and the undergraduate routes were consulted during the Review. Those who studied on the shorter route felt under pressure particularly in year 3, but appreciated the opportunity to become qualified in two years. Newly qualified workers who had taken the 3 year route felt that year 1 was too basic, academic and was not related well enough to practice. They felt that year 3 was the most relevant, and the curriculum was packed at this point. No comments were made by employers about differences in competence arising from qualifying route. Recent research undertaken by Queen's University and the University of Ulster indicates no difference in outcomes achieved by either the 2 year or 3 year route.
- 4.7.5 Some gaps were noted in the delivery of the curriculum particularly in relation to recent developments in social work practice such as, social care governance/family group conferencing/partnership working/professional development and multidisciplinary working. Newly qualified workers and employers felt that students should be better prepared in college for the Assessed Year in Practice. Course Providers should ensure that the Summary of Learning (Transcript) is completed for the employer as a record of

student progress. “When we came face to face with reality, we had a massive learning curve; teaching did not prepare us for the demands of practice and the lack of resources”. They expressed criticism about the lack of preparation for job interview. (See Appendix 4 for detailed statistical breakdown of staff in Assessed Year in Practice).

4.7.6 Recommendations

- 28. NISCC should work with Course Providers to ensure systematic feedback from employers on how well the Degree in Social Work prepares students to practise. (4.7.1)**
- 29. NISCC should consider funding research to identify if there is any correlation between relevant experience and the impact on learning. (4.7.3)**
- 30. The NISCC should explore the gaps in the curriculum with course providers and develop a plan to deal with these. (4.7.5)**
- 31. Course Providers should ensure that the Summary of Learning (Transcript) is completed for the employer as a record of student progress.**

Objective 5

Arrangements are in place to facilitate diverse entry to the Degree in Social Work

4.8 Diverse Entry to the Degree in Social Work

In this section of the report a range of statistics will be presented with an analysis of their significance for the Degree in Social Work. This section of the report will have been referenced earlier in the report to illustrate findings and/or recommendations.

Areas which will be included in this section will be:

- Number of Target places
- Applications
- Number of non NI students enrolled by intake year
- Regional gender profile of enrolled students
- Regional age profile of enrolled students
- Regional disability profile of enrolled students
- Regional enrolment of Trainee Social Workers
- Regional profile of academic achievement on entry
- Number of enrolled students with a degree on entry to the UGR
- Number of enrolled students with “A” Levels on entry to the UGR
- Number of enrolled students with a HND/HNC on entry to the UGR
- No. of enrolled students with Access qualifications on entry to the UGR
- No. of enrolled students with HND/HNC or Access qualifications on entry to the UGR.

4.8.1 Number of Target Places

The Degree in Social Work replaced the Diploma in Social Work in 2004 and is provided in Northern Ireland by two collaborative partnerships across 6 learning sites, namely the 4 FHE Colleges, now FE Colleges, and the University of Ulster at Magee and Queen’s

University Belfast. CPAQ provides a 3 year undergraduate course, UGR, and a 2 year relevant graduate course, RGR. The qualification is a Bachelor of Social Work, BSW. The UU/FE CMB provides a 3 year undergraduate course, UGR, and a 2 year relevant graduate course, RGR. The qualification is a Bachelor of Social Science (Honours) in Social Work, BSc (Hons) SW.

The 2 year Relevant Graduate Route (RGR) is delivered at Magee Campus. The 3 year Undergraduate Route (UGR) can be pursued at all of the college sites. The final year must be completed at either the Magee Campus or the Belfast Metropolitan College. The colleges were amalgamated and renamed as FE Colleges in August 2007. The current names are outlined below.

Since the first intake to the Degree in Social Work in 2004, there has been some variation on the intake numbers within the partnerships in response to application demands in a given year. The table below outlines the target number for each learning site.

Course	Target intake
QUB UGR	80
QUB RGR	50
UU MAGEE UGR	55
UU MAGEE RGR	40
BIFHE/Belfast Metropolitan College	30
NWIFHE/North West Regional College	15
ETCFHE/South West College	15
NDAIFHE/South East Regional College	15
Total	300

4.8.2 Applications

Degree in Social Work – Number of Applications (not applicants)

Course	Target intake	Sept 2004 intake	Sept 2005 intake	Sept 2006 intake	Sept 2007 intake	Sept 2008 intake
QUB UGR	80	939	936	1,034	1,001	832
QUB RGR	50	275	275	317	287	230
UU MAGEE UGR	55	653	801	805	822	674
UU MAGEE RGR	40	181	258	254	236	217
BMC	30	No UCAS figure	354	506	525	455
NWRC	15	No UCAS figure	198	204	197	-
SWC	15	No UCAS figure	166	203	173	157
SERC	15	No UCAS figure	143	175	185	131
Total	300	2,048 + FHE colleges	3,131	3,498	3,426	2,696

It should be noted that in 2007 UCAS reduced the number of choices for students from 6 to 5 thus reducing the number of applications by 1/6 automatically which would account for a 13% drop in applications. This is approximately 550 applications. In addition to this it is estimated that applications dropped by a further 2%, 75 applications, which is in keeping with honours degree applications generally to universities across the UK. This is accounted for because of the impact of the introduction of top up fees in 2006. The above figures indicate that there has been a strong demand for places on the social work courses and this high demand continues to be the case.

Applications in 2004 did not achieve the maximum intake. This was mainly because the Further Education Colleges did not use the UCAS system for this first intake to the new Degree in Social Work.

Sept 2004 intake	Sept 2005 intake	Sept 2006 intake	Sept 2007 intake	Sept 2008 intake
274	298	296	298	300

4.8.3 Number of non Northern Ireland resident social work students enrolled by intake year

Year	UU/FE	QUB	Total
2004	3 ROI	0	3
2005	4 ROI	0	4
2006	3 ROI	0	3
2007	6 ROI	1 GB 1 ROI	8
2008	5 ROI	0	5
Total	21	2	23

It is evident from the above table that the vast majority of students studying social work in NI are already resident in NI prior to the commencement of the course.

4.8.4 Regional gender profile of enrolled students

Course	2004 Intake		2005 Intake		2006 Intake		2007 Intake		2008 Intake	
	Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem
QUB RGR	5	57	5	52	4	48	7	43	7	43
QUB UGR	12	57	12	60	10	67	14	66	13	67
UU RGR	3	35	8	32	4	36	4	36	4	36
UU UGR	6	44	7	47	11	41	8	46	12	48
NWRC	0	11	4	11	5	10	4	11	-	-
SWC	2	12	3	12	1	14	0	14	3	15
BMC	1	21	5	25	5	25	6	24	7	28
SERC	0	8	3	12	1	14	2	13	3	14
Total	29	245	47	251	41	255	45	253	49	251
Overall Total	274		298		296		298		300	

2004 = $29/274 = 10.6\%$ males enrolled

2005 = $47/298 = 15.8\%$ males enrolled

2006 = $41/296 = 13.9\%$ males enrolled

2007 = $45/298 = 15.1\%$ males enrolled

2008 = $49/300 = 16.3\%$ males enrolled

The above figures indicate a steady rise in the number of male enrolled students, apart from the 2006 intake. The 16.3 % figure for 2008 is quite close to the current number of male social workers in the general social work workforce, namely 17 %.

4.8.5 Regional age profile of enrolled students

Course	2004 intake		2005 intake	
	18-25	25+	18-25	25+
QUB RGR	34	28	32	25
QUB UGR	51	16	30	42
UU RGR	17	23	16	24
UU UGR	25	24	31	23
NWRC	N/A		2	13
SWC			4	11
BMC			12	18
SERC			5	10
Total			132	166

In 2004 the FE sector institutions recruited by direct entry and UU do not have the required information.

Course	2006 intake		2007 intake	
	18-25	25+	18-25	25+
QUB RGR	20	32	15	35
QUB UGR	44	33	47	33
UU RGR	18	22	23	17
UU UGR	33	19	21	33
NWRC	5	10	2	13
SWC	8	7	1	13
BMC	19	11	8	22
SERC	5	10	2	13
Total	152	144	119	179

Course	2008 intake	
	<21	21+
QUB RGR	0	50
QUB UGR	29	51
UU RGR	16	24
UU UGR	19	40
NWRC	-	-
SWC	3	15
BMC	6	25
SERC	1	16
Total	76	211

The age profile of enrolled students is difficult to analyse as the course providers use different age bandings. In respect of the relevant graduates, the majority is, of course, over 21 years but many are under 25 years. With regard to the undergraduate route, most students are over 25 years indicating that they are mature entrants, generally holding a degree, HND/HNC or Access qualification. The students under 21 years are in the main the A Level holders. (Table Regional profile of academic achievement on entry, page 33)

4.8.6 Regional disability profile of enrolled students

Obtaining statistics on students with disabilities is very difficult because not all disabled students are willing to disclose that they have a disability, particularly those with an unseen disability such as dyslexia. Furthermore disclosing a disability and being on the Disability Register are not always synonymous. It is estimated that approximately 5% of students are registered disabled regionally.

Ethnic Minorities

Statistical data available indicates that the enrolled student cohorts are predominantly NI residents with a small number of students coming from the Republic of Ireland. Most, if not all students, are white, although accurate data on this aspect of enrolment is not available.

Northern Ireland has a growing ethnic minority population. For example, the Chinese community is a large group with several generations of Chinese people having settled here, yet this is not reflected in Social Work Applications. Specific targeting of ethnic minority groups should be undertaken to ensure their representation in social work.

4.8.7 Regional enrolment of trainee social workers

Year	UU/FE	QUB	Total
2004	26	14 (Est)	40 (Est)
2005	30	19 (Est)	49 (Est)
2006	23	17	40
2007	24	18	42
2008	19	16	35

The Review of the Social Work Degree Trainee Scheme Report, (Lernihan U. 2005), was commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety to review the Regional Social Work Degree Trainee Scheme. This Review gathered statistical data on the recruitment process and intakes from the first 3 years of the Scheme (2003,2004,2005). The Review concluded that the Scheme had been successful in attracting more mature recruits into social work training. Comparable data was gathered for the 2006 and 2007 trainee intakes providing a comparative analysis of the trainee profile 2003 – 2007 and a comparative analysis of the trainee profile against the social work student profile as a whole. (Regional Social Work Degree Trainee Scheme, Statistical Analysis 2006 & 2007. DHSSPS October 2008)

The following is a summary of the key messages of this report:

- The Scheme attracts a large number of applicants each year.
- Females outnumber males on the trainee scheme by approximate 3:1. There are a higher percentage of male recruits to the Trainee Scheme compared to the percentage of male entrants to the Degree in Social Work. This translates into approximately 11 male trainees per annum, which represents approximately 25% of the average number of males studying the degree each year. There has been a small decrease in the number of male trainee recruits and a slight increase in the number of male students as a percentage of the total student population.
- An average of 85% of trainees are aged 25+. 25-29 is the most popular age range for trainees, although there was a noticeable increase in the 30-34 age group in 2007. There has been a consistent increase in the numbers of over 25s recruited on to the Degree since it commenced. Approximately 60% of all students aged 25+ in 2007 and 40% under 25. This compares with 38% aged 25+ in 2004 and 62% aged under 25.
- The majority of trainees (77%) hold a primary or higher degree. There was a noticeable increase in the number of A Level holders in 2007.
- Excluding the relevant graduate (2 year) route, 23% of students studying the 3 year degree hold a Degree; 34% A Levels and 43% other qualifications, suggesting the Degree is successful in attracting entrants from a range of education backgrounds.
- The majority of trainees have between 3-6 years relevant work experience. No comparable data is available for the whole student population.

- Approximately 60% of trainees have previous work experience in social care in either the statutory or voluntary sectors. No comparable data is available for the whole student population.
- A growing number of trainees earned over £16K in their previous post, resulting in an increase in the percentage of trainees who take a drop in salary to commence study for the Degree in Social Work. Given that over 51% of the Degree student population are aged 25+, it could be assumed that these students also give up an income to commence study on the Degree in Social Work.

4.8.8 Regional profile of academic achievement on entry

Course	2004 Intake					2005 Intake				
	Degree	A Level	HND/HNC/	Access	Dip He/BTEC	Degree	A Level	HND/HNC	Access	Dip He/BTEC
QUB RGR	62	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	57	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
QUB UGR	13	46	3	4	1	27	21	9	4	11
UU RGR	38	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
UU UGR	1	15	8	22	3	9	20	0	20	5
NWRC	3	0	3	5	0	2	4	1	12	
SWC	4	2	3	2	3	4	2	3	4	2
BMC	3	12	0	2	5	1	14	1	12	2
SERC	5	1	0	1	1	1	5	1	7	1
Total Exc RGRs	29	76	17	36	13	44	66	15	59	22

Course	2006 intake					2007 intake				
	Degree	A Level	HND/HNC	Access	Dip He/BTEC	Degree	A Level	HND/HNC	Access	Dip He/BTEC
QUB RGR	52	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
QUB UGR	29	26	11	5	6	30	28	10	5	7
UU RGR	40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
UU UGR	10	20	5	11	6	14	19	2	16	3
NWRC	2	1	2	9	1	1	2	1	9	1
SWC	7	4	1	3	0	2	3	0	3	6
BMC	9	7	2	9	3	8	8	6	7	1
SERC	6	2	1	6	0	4	3	1	7	0
Total Exc RGR	63	60	22	43	16	59	63	20	47	18

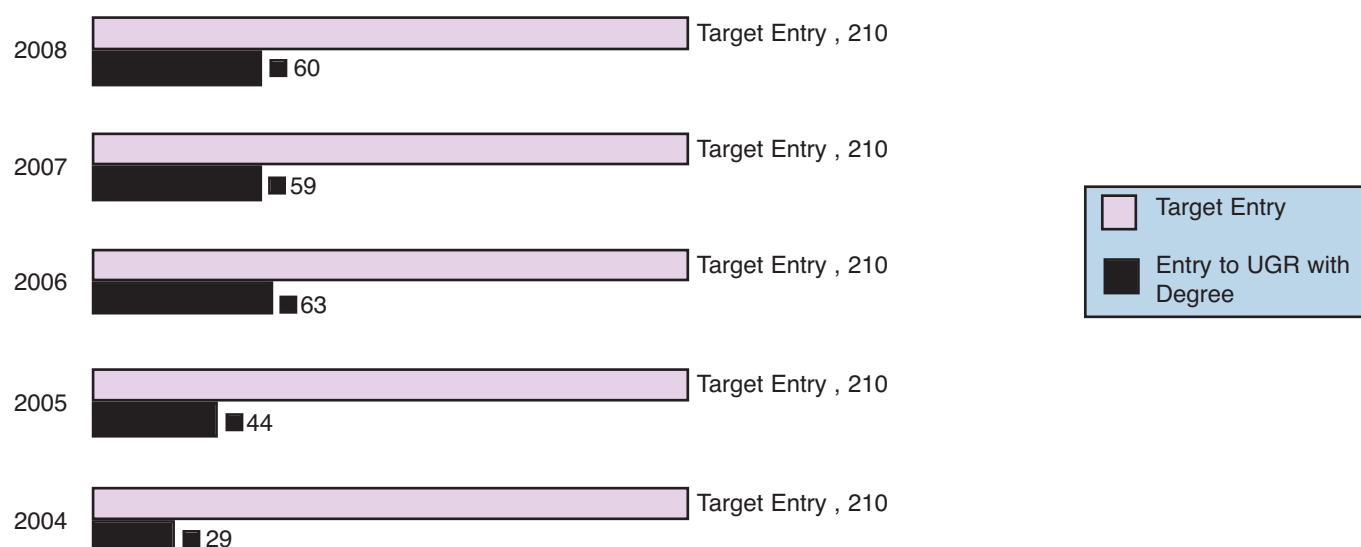
Course	2008 intake				
	Degree	A Level	HND/ HNC	Access	Dip He/ BTEC
QUB RGR	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
QUB UGR	28	27	9	13	3
UU RGR	40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
UU UGR	15	19	2	18	6
NWRC	-	-	-	-	-
SWC	6	2	5	5	-
BMC	8	7	9	7	4
SERC	3	2	4	6	2
Total Exc RGR	60	57	29	49	15

The profile of academic achievement on entry is outlined in the tables and charts below for degree holders on the 3 year courses, HND/HNC and Access qualification holders. NWRC did not recruit for the 2008 intake.

4.8.9 Number of students already holding a degree on entry to the 3 year undergraduate courses

Sept 2004 intake	Sept 2005 intake	Sept 2006 intake	Sept 2007 intake	Sept 2008 intake
29/210 (Intake 274)	44/210 (Intake 298)	63/210 (Intake 296)	59/210 (Intake 298)	60/210 (Intake 300)

No. of Students on UGR with Degree on Entry

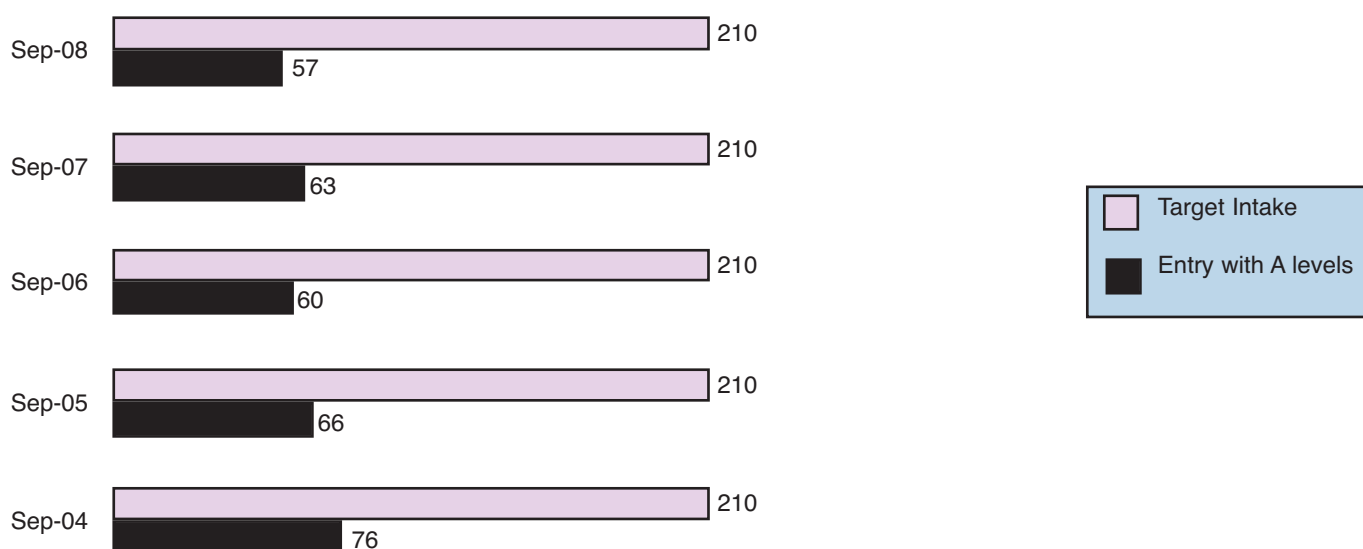


Regionally 210 places are available for the undergraduate courses across 6 locations at the UU/FE CMB and CPAQ. These figures illustrate that students already holding a degree obtaining a place on the Degree in Social Work has increased from 2004 to 2006 and has now leveled off at approximately 29% of all UGRs. At this point there are no exact figures for those who have a relevant degree such as sociology or psychology who gain entry to the UGR course. This information is not readily available from the admissions departments in the universities but anecdotally this is felt to be quite a significant number of degree holders.

4.8.10 Number of students with “A” levels on entry to the 3 year undergraduate courses

Sept 2004 intake	Sept 2005 intake	Sept 2006 intake	Sept 2007 intake	Sept 2008 intake
76/210 Intake 274	66/210 Intake 298	60/210 Intake 296	63/210 Intake 298	57/210 Intake 300

No. of Students on entry to UGR with A levels



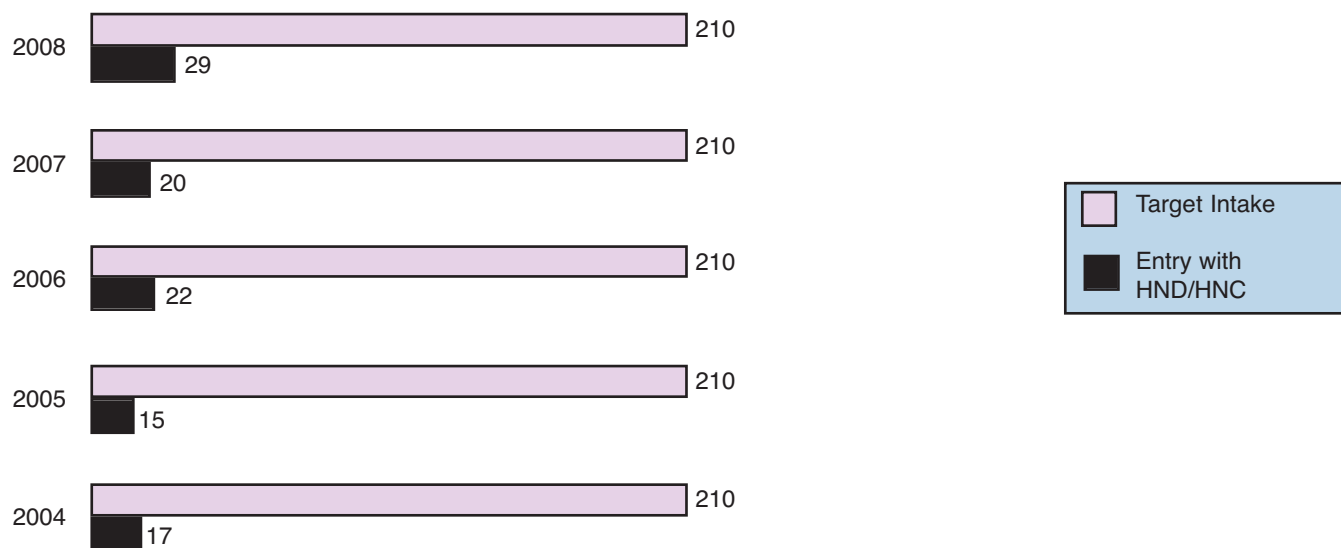
Regionally 210 places are available for the undergraduate courses across 6 locations at the UU/FE CMB and CPAQ. The figures and chart above illustrate that students with “A” Levels on enrolment account for an overall average of just over 30 % of the intake to the Degree since 2004, with the figure remaining steady year on year, with an average of 60 places out of 210. This clearly demonstrates that younger applicants are in a position to gain entry to a profession which has traditionally been the reserve of older, more experienced, individuals.

It has not been possible to provide any accurate data about the correlation between the numbers of younger applicants overall and those who actually obtain places on the degree, although anecdotal evidence suggests that younger, less experienced applicants find difficulty in achieving the satisfactory scores at interview. Furthermore the correlation between young male applicants and those who obtain places has not been explored at this point. **NISCC should consider funding research to identify if there is any correlation between relevant experience and the impact on learning. (4.7.3)**

4.8.11 Number of students with HND/HNC qualifications on entry to the 3 year undergraduate courses

Sept 2004 intake	Sept 2005 intake	Sept 2006 intake	Sept 2007 intake	Sept 2008 intake
17/210 Intake 274	15/210 Intake 298	22/210 Intake 296	20/210 Intake 298	29/210 Intake 300

Students with HND/HNC on entry to UGR

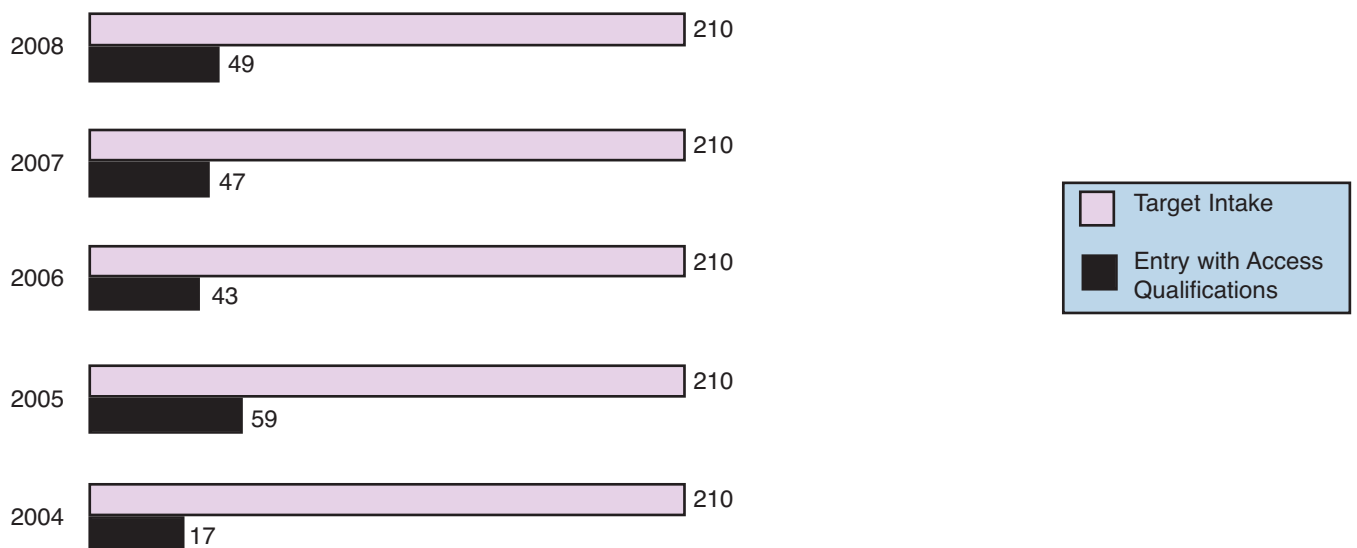


Regionally 210 places are available for the undergraduate courses across 6 locations at the UU/FE CMB and CPAQ. The figures and chart above illustrate that students with HND/HNC on enrolment account for an average of just over 10 % of the intake to the Degree since 2004, with the figure increasing year on year overall.

4.8.12 Number of students with access qualifications on entry to the 3 year undergraduate courses

Sept 2004 intake	Sept 2005 intake	Sept 2006 intake	Sept 2007 intake	Sept 2008 intake
36/210 Intake 274	59/210 Intake 298	43/210 Intake 296	47/210 Intake 298	49/210 Intake 300

Students with Access Qualifications on Entry to UGR



Regionally 210 places are available for the undergraduate courses across 6 locations at the UU/FE CMB and CPAQ.

The term 'Access Courses' as used by QUB and UU refers to Foundation Studies courses, as well as Access Courses. Access courses in Northern Ireland are accredited by either QUB or UU. Both universities accept the accreditation of the other. Those accredited by QUB are termed 'Certificates in Foundation Studies' and those by UU are termed 'Diplomas in Foundation Studies'. Both are awarded 120 points credit value and may be taken over one year full time or two years part-time study. These are accepted as university entrance level by the UU and QUB, and other universities.

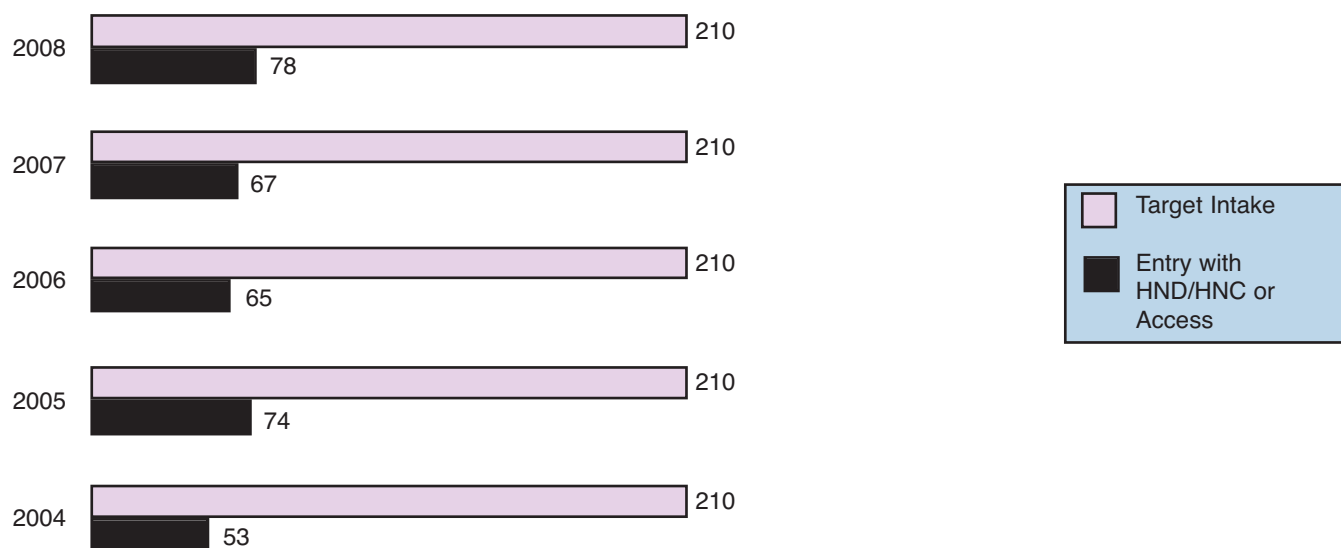
QUB receives applications from students who have achieved a 75% average mark in Access qualifications and have GCSE mathematics or equivalent. An Access course which includes mathematics may be accepted. The Certificate in Foundation Studies course offered through South East Regional College at Newtownards and Bangor, and validated by QUB, offers students the opportunity to register for GCSE mathematics and/or English Language concurrently. This opportunity is likely to be available at other colleges. QUB has also validated a course 'Access to University' based at Castlereagh College, which has been offered as a full time fast track option for a time limited period. Castlereagh College has been integrated into the BMC. UU requires all degree applicants to have GCSE Mathematics and English or equivalent. For Access students they require an overall average mark of 70%. Work is on-going on the development of NVQ Level 4 as an equivalent qualification for entry to the degree. This will further enhance career opportunities for existing social care employees and will also widen participation in the degree.

The figures and chart above illustrate that students with Access courses on enrolment account for an average of just over 22 % of the intake to the Degree since 2004, with the figure generally increasing year on year overall.

4.8.13 Number of students with HND/HNC or access qualifications on entry to the 3 years undergraduate courses

Sept 2004 intake	Sept 2005 intake	Sept 2006 intake	Sept 2007 intake	Sept 2008 intake
53/210 Intake 274	74/210 Intake 298	65/210 Intake 296	67/210 Intake 298	78/210 Intake 300

Students with HND/HNC or Access on Entry to UGR



Regionally 210 places are available for the undergraduate courses across 6 locations at UU/FE CMB and CPAQ.

It can be seen from the above figures and chart that an average of 32% of students have enrolled for the degree from 2004 to 2008 with either HND/HNC or Access courses. This illustrates that a wide diversity of students are able to gain entry to the degree. Indeed this widening participation approach will be further expanded with the availability of an access route for those applicants who hold, or will be working towards holding, an NVQ Level 4 in Care. Both course providers will be providing an equivalency entry route for such applicants for the 2010 intake, UCAS 2009 application process.

4.8.14 Part-time Route to the Degree

Currently no part-time route to the Degree in Social work exists in Northern Ireland. However the existing course providers have agreed to provide such a course for the 2010 intake to the degree. Plans are currently underway to regionally examine issues such as advertising, recruitment and selection, course structures, time-tabling and provision of practice learning opportunities to meet NISCC requirements. The provision of the part-time route will widen participation and diverse entry to the degree considerably. Course Providers and the NIDSWP are currently working on arrangements for AP(E)L, (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning), and the equivalence of NVQ level 4.

4.9 Summary of Trends

- Statistics indicate that there has been a strong demand for places on the social work courses and this high demand continues to be the case.
- There is a low, permanent withdrawal rate.
- The vast majority of students studying social work in NI are already resident in NI prior to the commencement of the course.
- There has been a steady rise in the number of male enrolled students, from 10.6% in 2004 to 16.3% in 2008. The 16.3 % figure for 2008 is quite close to the current number of male social workers in the general social work workforce, namely 17 %.
- With regard to the undergraduate route, most students are over 25 years indicating that they are mature entrants, generally holding a degree, HND/HNC or Access qualification. The students under 21 years are in the main the A Level holders which represents 30 % of the overall enrolment cohort.
- Anecdotally it is felt that approximately 5% of students are registered disabled regionally.
- Students already holding a degree obtaining a place on the Degree in Social Work has increased from 2004 to 2006 and has now leveled off at approximately 29% of all UGRs.
- Students with “A” Levels on enrolment account for an overall average of just over 30% of the intake to the Degree since 2004, with the figure remaining steady year on year. The major challenges for “A” Level students remains the relatively limited experience they have and the resulting challenges that this can pose for their suitability interview.
- Students with HND/HNC on enrolment account for an average of just over 10% of the intake to the Degree since 2004, with the figure increasing year on year overall.
- Access courses on enrolment account for an average of just over 22% of the intake to the Degree since 2004, with the figure generally increasing year on year overall.
- An average of 32% of students have enrolled for the degree from 2004 to 2008 with either HND/HNC or Access courses.
- Social Work remains a popular career choice for a range of individuals.
- The above statistics illustrate that a wide diversity of students are able to gain entry to the degree, both in terms of age range and qualifications used to gain entry.
- The admissions procedure is thorough and effective.
- Social Work is beginning to attract more men.

4.10 Recommendations

- 31. NISCC should consider funding research and/or longitudinal studies on the correlation between a range of factors associated with the degree, e.g. relevant experience and impact on learning, the correlation between gender and progression, qualification on entry and progression, UGR and RGR and fitness to practice, age and progression. (4.7.3/4.8.10)**
- 32. The collation of data has been challenging and the identification of data sources has been problematic. NISCC should consider a more systematic method of capturing, storing and presenting information across a range of**

stakeholders. There are gaps in information data sets which need to be addressed, e.g. disability and ethnicity. (4.8.6)

33. Specific targeting of ethnic minority groups should be undertaken to ensure their representation in social work training. (4.8.6)

34. Course Providers should ensure a part-time route to the Degree in Social Work is accessible to applicants for the 2010 entry to the course. (4.8.14)

Section 5 — Summary and Conclusions

- 5.1 This Review set out to assess the effectiveness of the degree in social work in preparing students for social work practice in all sectors. The Review indicates that the introduction of the Degree in Social Work has raised the standards of social work training considerably. Employer feedback suggests that new graduates come into social work with a clear evidence base for their practice. Whilst the Degree is normally undertaken in 3 years, relevant graduates can achieve this outcome in 2 years. The Review has not identified any difference in outcome between the 2 routes indicating that relevant graduates can be trained to similar standards in 2 years. All those involved in the development and delivery of the Degree are to be commended on these achievements. However it is clear that further exploration needs to be undertaken with employers and users of services to evaluate how well the Degree prepares graduates for employment in all sectors. **A summary of the outcomes of the Review follows, making reference to Section 3 (Aim and Objectives of the Review).**
- 5.2 The Review indicates that course provision in Northern Ireland continues to meet the standards set by the NISCC for the Degree in Social Work. The Review highlights some areas which require further development and these have been set out in recommendations at the conclusion of each objective. They are also summarised in the following section 5.7. Gaps have been noted in the curriculum particularly in relation to social care governance/family group conferencing/partnership working/professional development and multidisciplinary working. Whilst skills teaching has been well evaluated, the Review indicates that this area could be improved. It is recommended that course providers should collaborate with NISCC to review the curriculum in year 1 and evaluate whether adjustments can be made to extend skills teaching and improve teaching to ensure better integration of theory and practice. The Review also indicates that student learning in year 1 would be improved with exposure to practice during the first year. Flexible Learning Days should be reviewed to see if they can be used more effectively in year 1 to bridge the gap in student practice experience. All academic staff delivering the social work curriculum are qualified social workers. Whilst, the NISCC Rules have not required registration of academic staff, registration would be beneficial to staff in keeping them current with developments in social work practice. **(Section 3.1).**
- 5.3 There has been an adequate supply of practice learning opportunities to ensure that each student has practice experience which meets NISCC standards. Recommendations have been made in relation to communication of information about the outcomes expected at each PLO and to the sequencing of practice learning assignments and the weightings given. A range of issues concerning both the supply, quality and sequencing of practice learning opportunities have been identified which require further exploration. **(Section 3.2).**
- 5.4 Considerable achievements have been made in developing regional consistency in admissions, and in practice learning, both in the preparation for practice module and in the assessment of practice learning. These regional developments have been highly rated by all participants in the Review and should be maintained and further developed. Problems have been identified in the operation of the Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership. This will require further exploration and a review of the Rules for the Approval of the Degree in Social Work. **(Section 3.3).**

5.5 Whilst the Review indicates that the introduction of the Degree in Social Work has raised the standards of social work training considerably and is an improvement on its predecessor qualification in preparing students for employment in social work, it is noted that there are no systems in place to elicit regular feedback from employers and users of service. Whilst some dissatisfaction was expressed that the Degree does not adequately prepare students for employment in Family and Childcare, this Review does not provide adequate evidence to make this conclusion. In addition, the first year in employment (AYE) was beyond the scope of this Review. Concurrent with the review there has been a consultation regarding the Roles and Tasks of social workers. The outcomes of this work will have implications for the future training of social workers. NISCC will work with course providers to ensure systematic feedback from employers and users of service on the effectiveness of the degree **(Section 3.4)**.

5.6 Admissions data (Section 4.6) show an increasing number of students accessing the Degree via access routes. The Social Work Degree also attracts a high number of first degree entrants and people making a change in career. There is evidence that the Trainee Scheme has offered good opportunities to some people to change careers, bringing alternatively experienced people into the profession. A part-time route to the Degree in Social Work, planned for entry in 2010 would assist in increasing this number. There continue to be a lower number of male entrants to Social Work, although the Trainee Scheme has attracted a greater number of males. The numbers of students registered as disabled is low. Obtaining statistics on students with disabilities has been difficult because of student unwillingness to disclose their disability particularly those unseen such as dyslexia. Northern Ireland has a growing ethnic minority population. For example, the Chinese community is a large group with several generations of Chinese people having settled here, yet this is not reflected in Social Work Applications. Specific targeting of ethnic minority groups should be undertaken to ensure their representation in social work. There is also a need for further research and/or longitudinal studies on the correlation between a range of factors such as prior experience and its impact on learning, gender and progression, qualification on entry and progression. **(Section 3.5)**

The Recommendations made in this Review Report are summarised in the following section. Course Providers and the NIDSWP should develop action plans to address the recommendations in consultation with NISCC.

5.7 Summary of recommendations

Objective 1

Collaborative Partnership at Queens (CPAQ)

- 1. The key roles which are set out in the Framework Specification should be more clearly specified in course teaching. (4.1.2)**
- 2. CPAQ should build on the achievements made in user participation in teaching by widening this to include users in the design, delivery and evaluation of the academic and practice elements of the curriculum. (4.1.4)**
- 3. Theory into practice should be contextualised better in the classroom and there needs to be a greater emphasis on skills development especially assessment and analysis in the first year. (4.1.6)**

4. The module on child protection should be enhanced by more emphasis on application to practice e.g. skills development and input from practitioners about current protocols. (4.1.6)
5. All staff teaching social work at CPAQ should register with NISCC. NISCC will review the requirement for the registration of teaching staff.(4.1.6)
6. Course Providers should report on how the sequencing of practice learning assignments and the weightings given has been revised, in their annual quality assurance for 2009/2010 report to NISCC. (4.1.8)

University of Ulster/Further Education Collaborative Management Board (UU/FE CMB)

7. The key roles which are set out in the Framework Specification should be more clearly specified in course teaching. (4.2.7)
8. The UU/FE CMB should review the management of class sizes particularly in year 3 with reference to the impact on the effectiveness of teaching about practice. (4.2.5)
9. The UU/FE CMB should build on the achievements made in user participation, using a more strategic, coordinated approach in both the academic and practice components of the curriculum, ensuring that every student from year 1 across all campuses benefits particularly in skills work. Users should be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of the academic and practice curriculum (4.2.6)
10. Access to the intranet for practice teachers should be developed across all sites. (4.2.8)
11. Theory into practice should be contextualised better in the classroom and there needs to be a greater emphasis on skills development especially assessment and analysis in the first year. (4.2.7)
12. The module on child protection would be greatly enhanced by more emphasis on application to practice e.g. skills development and input from practitioners about current protocols. (4.2.9)
13. The UU/FE CMB should ensure that all lecture notes are available to students in advance of lectures to improve access for students with a disability. (4.2.8)
14. All staff teaching social work at UU/FE CMB should register with NISCC. NISCC will review the requirement for the registration of teaching staff. (4.2.9)
15. UU/FE CMB should report on how the sequencing of practice learning assignments and the weightings given has been revised, in their annual quality assurance report for 2009/2010 to NISCC. (4.1.8)

Objective 2

Practice Learning Opportunities (PLOs)

16. NISCC should work with Designated Practice Learning Providers to monitor Family and Child Care sites and sites where no social worker is present. (4.3.3:4.3.5)

17. NISCC should work with NI degree in Social Work Partnership to develop systems to monitor the quantity and quality of PLOs. (4.3.3)
18. Course Providers should provide clearer information to practice teachers and students about the different outcomes for level 2 and level 3 PLOs.(4.3.4 : 4.3.8 : 4.4.1)
19. Course Providers should review the sequencing of PLOs. (4.3.5)
20. NISCC should review the Practice Learning Requirements and the Standards for Practice Learning. (4.3.4 : 4.3.8)
21. Course Providers, in collaboration with NISCC should review the curriculum in year 1 and evaluate whether adjustments can be made to extend the skills teaching throughout year 1 to ensure better integration of theory and practice. (4.4.1)
22. Course Providers should develop guidelines for practice teachers on the 'tuning in' exercises required during the first PLO. (4.4.2)
23. The NISCC should work with Course Providers to review the use of Flexible Learning Days. These days could be used more effectively in year 1 to bridge the gap in student practice experience. (4.5.1)

Objective 3

The NI Degree in Social Work Partnership (NIDSWP)

24. Regional systems for admissions and practice learning should be maintained and developed. (4.6.3)
25. The role and remit of the NIDSWP should be re-examined. Options should be identified for future regional co-operation and co-ordination. (4.6.7 : 4.6.8)
26. NISCC should review the Rules for the Degree in Social Work. (4.6.8)
27. Options should be explored as to how feedback from service users and employers can be sought to ascertain how well students are prepared for employment. (4.6.9)

Objective 4

Fitness to Practise

28. NISCC should work with Course Providers to ensure systematic feedback from employers on how well the Degree in Social Work prepares students to practise. (4.7.1)
29. NISCC should consider funding research to identify if there is any correlation between relevant experience and the impact on learning. (4.7.3)
30. The NISCC should explore the gaps in the curriculum with course providers and develop a plan to deal with these. (4.7.5)
31. Course Providers should ensure that the Summary of Learning (Transcript) is completed for the employer as a record of student progress.

Objective 5

Widening Participation and Diversity

- 32. NISCC should consider funding research and/or longitudinal studies on the correlation between a range of factors associated with the degree, e.g. relevant experience and impact on learning, the correlation between gender and progression, qualification on entry and progression, UGR and RGR and fitness to practice, age and progression. (4.7.3/4.8.10)**
- 33. The collation of data has been challenging and the identification of data sources has been problematic. NISCC should consider a more systematic method of capturing, storing and presenting information across a range of stakeholders. There are gaps in information data sets which need to be addressed, e.g. disability and ethnicity. (4.8.6)**
- 34. Specific targeting of ethnic minority groups should be undertaken to ensure their representation in social work training. (4.8.6)**
- 35. Course Providers should ensure a part-time route to the Degree in Social Work is accessible to applicants for the 2010 entry to the course. (4.8.14)**

Section 6 — Documentation Reviewed, Groups/Individuals Consulted and Abbreviations

6.1 Documentation Reviewed

A Regional Strategy for Practice Learning Provision (DHSSPS May 2008)

Access Pathways to the Degree in Social Work (Heather Ferguson-Brown 2006)

Agreement between the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and the Regional Body for the Degree in Social Work 30 November 2005

Annual Monitoring Reports from UU/FE Collaborative Management Board

Collaborative Partnership at Queen's, Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work

Consultancy Report on the Development of a part-time Degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland (James Marshall April 2008)

Designated Practice Learning Providers: Statistical Returns Report 2007/2008 NISCC

NISCC Report on the Thematic Review of Assessment of Need and Risk 2008

NISCC Standards for Practice Learning for the Degree in Social Work – Notes on Implementation – July 2008

Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership Practice Learning Handbook September 2008

Outcomes from the Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability June 2007

Overview Stakeholder Report to DHSSPS May 2008

Partnership and the NISCC responses 2005 – 2008

Regional Social Work Degree Trainee Scheme. Statistical Analysis of Trainee Intakes 2006 & 2007 (DHSSPS October 2008)

Report of the Independent Review of Agency Involvement with Mr. Arthur McElhill, Ms Lorraine McGovern and their children. June 2008.

Research Report – An Exploration of the Implementation of the Assessed Year in Employment from the perspective of Newly Qualified Social Workers and their Line Managers (Roslyn Dougherty September 2007)

Review of Regional Systems for the Allocation of Practice Learning Opportunities for Social Work students in Northern Ireland (Care Sector Consultancy July 2006)

Review of the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE). Overview of Outcomes of Monitoring 2006/2007 (NISCC November 2008)

The Review of the Social Work Degree Trainee Scheme Report (Lernihan U. 2005)

University of Ulster Evaluation of Practice Learning 2008

Validation Papers for CPAQ and UU/FE Collaborative Management Board

6.2 List of groups/individuals consulted by review team

Collaborative Partnership at Queens	Course directors UGR/RGR, Chair CPAQ, Head of School, Module coordinators for child protection and adult services, Chairs Practice Assessment Panel, students (UGR/RGR), service users/carers, Practice learning tutors + coordinators, professor of social work. Written response from service user
UU/FE Collaborative Management Board	Chair Collaborative Management Board, Faculty Chair of collaborative courses, course directors from all HE/FE partners, year tutors, Chair Collaborative Operational Forum, service users/carers, chair Practice Assessment Panel, Practice Learning Coordinator, students (UGR/RGR), Module Coordinators FCC and Mental Health, FE Heads of Department
Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership	Chair, outgoing and incoming professional officers (2), chairs of 4 committees, 5 members Regional Preparation for Practice Group (6) NISCC Professional Adviser to NIDSWP
2 Focus Groups with Practice Teachers + on site supervisors	Voluntary Sector (total 9), Representation from 5 Trusts, Education Welfare, PBNI, NSPCC, Extern, Bryson House, Juvenile Justice, (Total 22)
Focus Group line managers	Representing F&CC + Adult services NHSCT, WHSCT, BHSCT, SHSCT. Total 9
Focus Group newly qualified social workers	Representing F&CC + adult services NHSCT, WHSCT, BHSCT, SEHSCT, Voluntary Sector. Total 10
Focus Group training managers	Representation from NHSCT,BHSCT, SHSCT, WHSCT, SEHSCT, Extern, PBNI, Youth Justice. Total 9
Focus Group governance leads	WHSCT (1)

6.3 Membership of CPAQ, NIDSWP, UU/FE CMB

CPAQ

Queen's University, NHSCT, SHSCT, BHSCT, SEHSCT, PBNI, Extern.

NIDSWP

EHSSB, WHSSB, WHSCT, NHSCT, BHSCT, SHSCT, SEHSCT, PBNI, NIO (Youth Policy Unit), Care Sector Consultancy, Extern, Queen's University, University of Ulster, Open University, Belfast Metropolitan College, South West College.

UU/FE CMB

University of Ulster, Belfast Metropolitan College, South West College, South Eastern Regional College, North Western Regional College, WHSCT, NHSCT, BHSCT, SHSCT.

6.4 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AYE	Assessed Year in Employment
BHSCT	Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
BMC	Belfast Metropolitan College
CPAQ	Collaborative Partnership at Queen's University
DPLP	Designated Practice Learning Provider
EHSSB	Eastern Health and Social Services Board
F&CC	Family and Child Care
MASRAM	Multi Agency Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management
NHSCT	Northern Health and Social Care Trust
NIDSWP	Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NWRC	North West Regional College
PAP	Practice Assessment Panel
PBNI	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
PLC	Practice Learning Centre
PLO	Practice Learning Opportunity
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
RGR	Relevant Graduate Route
SEHSCT	South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
SERC	South Eastern Regional College
SHSCT	Southern Health and Social Care Trust
SWC	South West College
UGR	Undergraduate Route
UU	University of Ulster
UU/FECMB	University of Ulster/Further Education Collaborative Management Board
WHSCT	Western Health and Social Care Trust
WHSSB	Western Health and Social Services Board

Number of referrals to university fitness to practise procedures and number of student complaints/appeals

Number of referrals to University Fitness to Practise panels each academic year

The universities have reported that a small number of Fitness to Practise referrals under university regulations have been made to date. This is the internal system used within universities which deals with serious issues of conduct. Referral procedures to NISCC and vice versa have been established and used as necessary.

2 Fitness to Practise referrals have been made, in 2007-2008, at QUB and 1 Fitness to Practise referral has been made at the University of Ulster in 2008-2009.

Number of formal complaints in each academic year

The universities have reported that while a number of informal complaints have been received about marks, room conditions and so on these have been resolved locally. No formal complaints are reported at this time. A number of academic appeals have been received by the universities, many relating to practice learning assessment decisions and these are dealt with by Academic Registry.

Permanent withdrawal rates for each intake and regionally

Permanent withdrawal rates for 2004, 2005 & 2006 intake by course and regionally

Degree in SW 2004 Intake

HEI/College	Target No	Actual Intake	Permanent Withdrawals
QUB RGR	50	62	5
QUB UGR	80	69	6
UU RGR	40	38	2
UU UGR	55	50	3
BMC	30	22	1
SWC	15	14	1
SERC	15	8	0
NWRC	15	11	1
Total	300	274	19

Regional permanent withdrawal rate for 2004 intake = $19/273 = <7\%$

Degree in SW 2005 Intake

HEI/College	Target No	Actual Intake	Permanent Withdrawals
QUB RGR	50	57	0
QUB UGR	80	73	7
UU RGR	40	40	3
UU UGR	55	52	6
BMC	30	31	1
SWC	15	15	0
SERC	15	15	2
NWRC	15	15	2
Total	300	298	21

Regional permanent withdrawal rate for 2005 intake = $21/298 = >7\%$

Degree in SW 2006 Intake

HEI/College	Target No	Actual Intake	Permanent Withdrawals
QUB RGR	50	52	0
QUB UGR	80	75	-----
UU RGR	40	40	2
UU UGR	55	54	2 (to date)
BMC	30	32	1 (to date)
SWC	15	15	2 (to date)
SERC	15	16	0
NWRC	15	16	2 (to date)
Total	300	298	9 (to date)

Regional permanent withdrawal rate for 2006 intake = 2/92 = <2%

(RGR courses only – other courses not completed)

Regional permanent withdrawal rates

Degree in SW 2004 Intake – Regional permanent withdrawal rate = 19/273 = <7%

Degree in SW 2005 Intake – Regional permanent withdrawal rate = 21/298 = >7%

Degree in SW 2006 Intake – Regional permanent withdrawal rate = 2/92 = <2%

(RGR courses only – UGR courses not completed and not counted)

Degree in SW	Regional permanent withdrawal rate	% Rate
2004 Intake	19/273	<7%
2005 Intake	21/298	>7%
2006 Intake (RGR courses only)	2/92	<2%

Individual HEI withdrawal rates

QUB overall permanent withdrawal rate of completed courses to date = 18/312 = <6%

UU/FE overall permanent withdrawal rate of completed courses to date = 24/ 381 = >6%

Degree in SW	Overall permanent withdrawal rate of completed courses to date	% Rate
QUB	18/312	<6%
UU/FE	24/ 381	>6%

The regional withdrawal rate of between 6-7% is acknowledged as quite low for an honours degree course. Students tend to withdraw because of personal reasons or because of a conscious career choice, deciding that social work is not the profession for them.

Outputs, withdrawals, re-sits and students remaining in system

Degree in social work - outputs in each year after re-sits

Year	Original intake numbers	Output	% Completing in year including resits	AYE applications
2006	RGRs = 102	94 (8 withdrawals) 102-8 = 94	100% 94/94 Including (12 resits) 11 % resits	2006-2007 72 in Trusts (58 F&CC) 22 in Vol. Sector
2007	174 UGRs & 94 RGRs = 268	222 (15 withdrawals) 268 -15 = 253	88% 222/253 Including 29 resits in total (8 resits RGR) (21 resits UGR) 11.5 % resits	2007-2008 211 (113 in Trusts) (110 F&CC) 98 in Vol. Sector
2008	201 UGRs & 92 RGRs = 293	262 (20 withdrawals) 293 - 20 = 273	96% 262/273 Including (32 resits) 12 % resits	2008-2009 250

It is necessary to calculate the actual intake for both the UGR and RGR courses in a particular year in order to obtain an exact figure with which to compare output. When the regional withdrawal rate of between 6 – 7 % is factored into the above figures and taken account of, it is possible to calculate the figure for those students taking leave of absence or deferred and/or repeating the year. These figures are relatively low regionally and are between 0 % for the 2006 output, 12% for the 2007 output and 4% for the 2008 output.

However when input numbers of students are compared with outputs numbers and the following are included:

- permanent withdrawals, 6-7%,
- deferrals, leave of absences repeating year, 0% for the 2006 output, 12% for the 2007 output & 4% for the 2008 output,
- (resits), 11-12%,

The following information is available:

Year	Original intake numbers	Withdrawals	Output with cohort	Output after re-sits	Remaining in system
2006	RGRs = 102	8 withdrawals	94	0	0 0%
2007	174 UGRs from 2004 intake & 94 RGRs from 2005 intake = 268	15 withdrawals	193	222 (including 29 re-sits)	31 12%
2008	201 UGRs from 2005 intake & 92 RGRs from 2006 intake = 293	20 withdrawals	230	262 (including 32 re-sits)	11 4%

The figures illustrate a picture of quite a high rate of non completion on target with the entry cohort.

2006 – 7% did not complete on target – permanent withdrawals.

2007 – 30.5% did not complete on target- permanent withdrawals, deferrals, leave of absences, repeating year and re-sits.

2008 – 23% did not complete on target – permanent withdrawals, deferrals, leave of absences, repeating year and re-sits.

Assessed year in employment

Employment of AYE registrants in Trusts July 2006 – June 2007

In NI, NISCC has a requirement that newly qualified social workers must register for the Assessed Year in Employment, AYE. During this period newly qualified social workers will remain on the social work part of the NISCC register with a condition to satisfactorily complete the AYE. On successful completion, which is endorsed by the employer, the condition on the register is removed.

In June 2006, 94 RGRs graduated as below.

2006 Graduates	Returned certificates of completion of AYE	Returned Extension Forms to request further time to complete	Certificates of completion not returned	Voluntary removal from the register by student	Total
94	83	5	4	2	94

In 2006/07 a total of 72 AYE registrants were employed by HSC Trusts, the 2006 RGR output. There could be some margin of error in this figure as some social workers changed employer within the year. The smallest number, nine, were employed in the Northern Trust and the largest number, 21, in the Belfast Trust. Of the 72, 58 (80%) were employed in Children and Families services.

	NHSCT	BHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	Total
Total Number	9 (one left)	21	16	9	17	72
Children/Families	6	14	16	7	15	58
Other	2	7	0	2	2	13

From July 2007 to 31 December 2007 a further 133 AYE registrants were employed by the Trusts, the 2007 UGR and RGR outputs. The smallest number, eight, were employed by the Northern Trust and the largest number, 43 were employed by the Western Trust. Of the 133, 110 (83%) were employed in Children and Families services.

Employment of AYE registrants July 2007 – December 2007

	NHSCT	BHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	Total
Total Number	8 (two left)	27	20	35	43	133
Children/ Families	6	24	17	24	39	110
Other	0	3	3	11	4	21

It was reported that three new social work graduates were employed through a recruitment agency and all were placed in posts which require a social work qualification.

Practice learning opportunities 2007 - 2008

DPLP	Sept 2007	Jan 2008 Level 2	Jan 2008 Level 3	TOTAL
HSC Trust				
Belfast	41	9	52	102
Northern	45	15	45	105
Southern	29	12	50	91
South Eastern	31	9	56	96
Western	27	5	41	73
Criminal Justice				
PBNI	0	0	8	8
Youth Justice Agency	0	3	6	9
Education Welfare PLIP				
Belfast ELB	0	0	1	1
North Eastern ELB	0	1	1	2
Southern ELB	0	1	0	1
South Eastern ELB	0	0	0	0
Western ELB	0	0	1	1
Voluntary Organisations				
Barnardos	4	2	2	8
Belfast Central Mission	0	0	0	0
Bryson Charitable Group (Also PLC)	4	3	2	9
Extern (Also PLC)	10	9	2	21
Family Care Society	0	0	1	1
Glenmona Resource Centre	0	1	1	2
Marie Curie Hospice Care	0	0	1	1
NIACRO	0	1	0	1
NIAMH	2	0	2	4
Northern Ireland Hospice	0	0	1	1
NSPCC	2	0	3	5
Orana Respite Care Unit	0	1	0	1
Partnership Care West (PLC)	5	4	3	12
Positive Futures	6	4	1	11
Praxis	2	5	0	7
Presbyterian Board Soc Witness	0	0	2	2
Prospects	3	0	1	4
Salvation Army	1	0	0	1
Starting Point	1	1	0	2
Threshold	0	1	0	1
Triangle Housing	1	0	1	2
Total	214	87	284	585

Practice learning opportunities 2007- 2008

Please note that the detailed PLO statistics for the period 2007-2008 outlined above are illustrated in their own right but are also representative of activity on a year on year basis. Indeed from 2004 to 2007 there would have been more Diploma in Social Work placement activity than is noted here.

Other Degree in Social Work Provision 2007/2008

DPLP	Number	Date	Course
Belfast HSC Trust	1	January 08	Robert Gordon University (YJA)
South Eastern HSC Trust	3	January 08	Robert Gordon University (YJA)
Total	4		

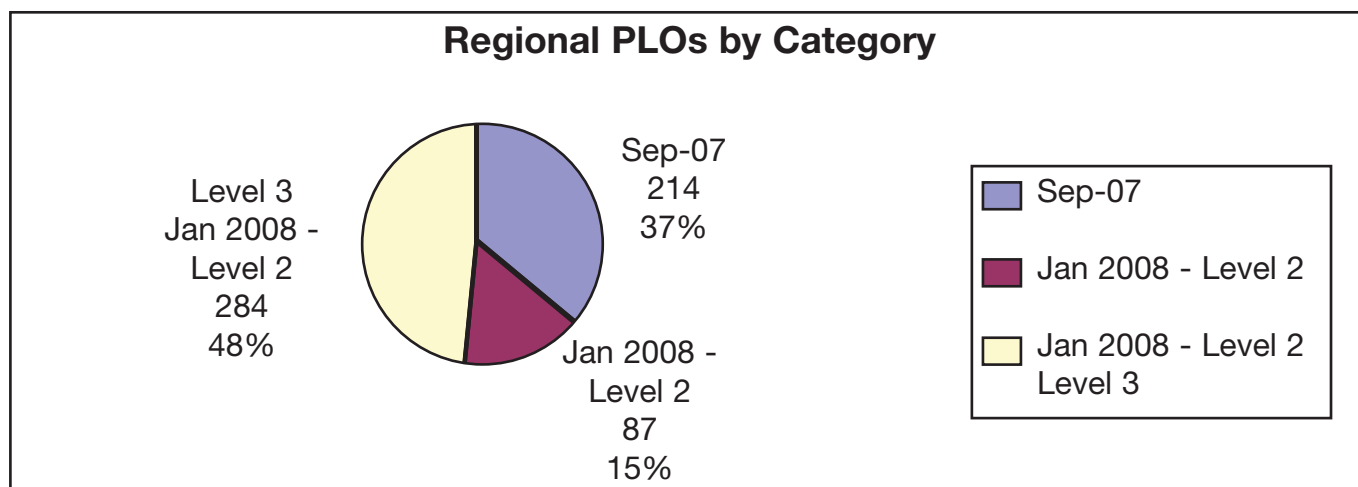
Diploma in SW Provision during 2007/2008

DPLP	Number	Date
Southern HSC Trust	2	September 07
Western HSC Trust	3	September 07
	1	January 08
Barnardos	1	September 07
Total	7	

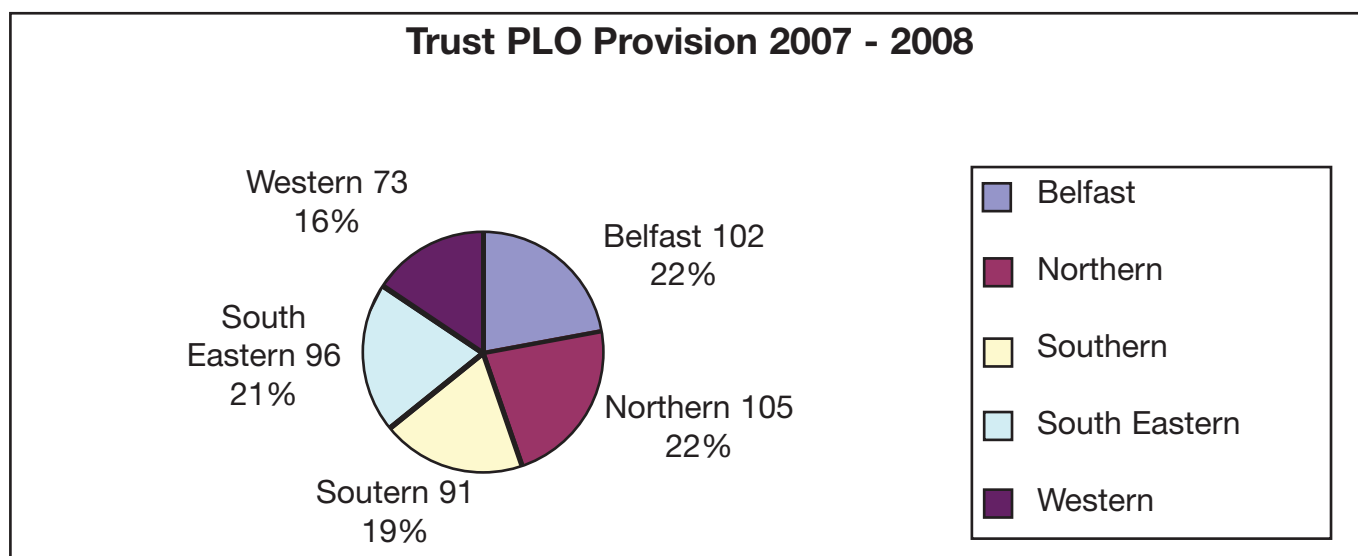
Total PLO Provision during 2007/2008

Course	September 07	January 08		Total
		Level 2	Level 3	
Degree in Social Work (NI)	214	87	284	585
DipSW (NI)	6	1		7
Degree in Social Work (Other)		4		4
Total	220	376		596

Practice Learning Opportunities, PLOs, are provided by Designated Practice Learning Providers, DPLPs, across the Trusts, Criminal Justice, Education and Library Boards and the voluntary sector. In total there are 33 individual PLO providers, namely 5 Trusts, 2 in the Justice sector, 5 Education and Library Boards, and 21 in the voluntary sector which includes 3 Student Units/Practice Learning Centres.

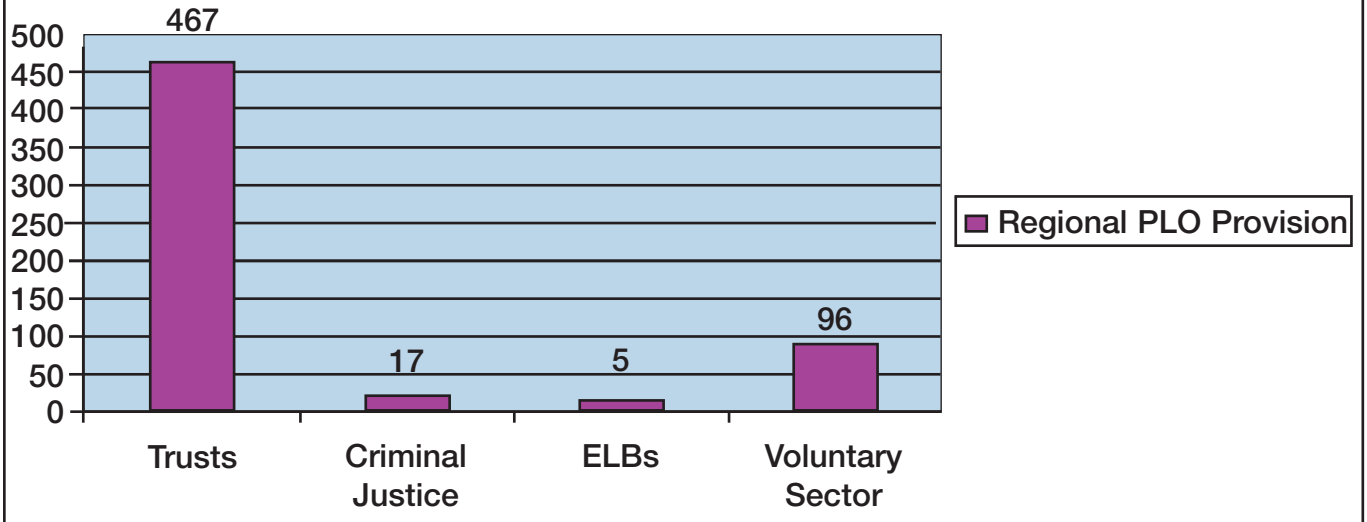


The above chart illustrates the imbalance between September and January PLOs when 37% of PLOs take place in September with 63% of PLOs taking place in January. This is indicative of activity each year.



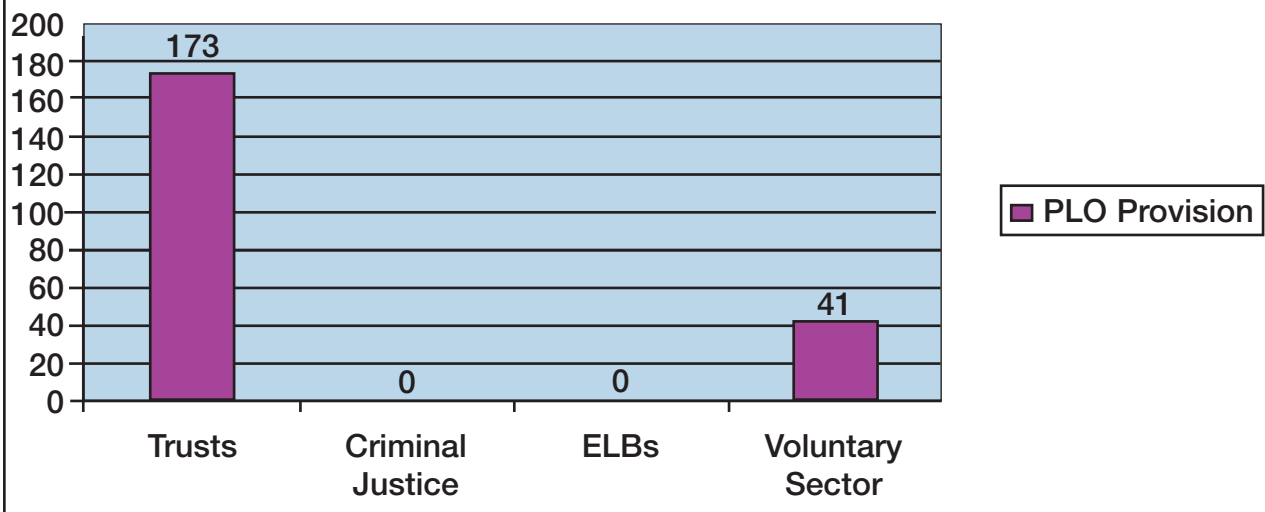
Total number of Degree in Social Work PLOs on a regional basis provided by Trusts for 2007 – 2008 was 467.

Regional PLO Provision - 2007 - 2008



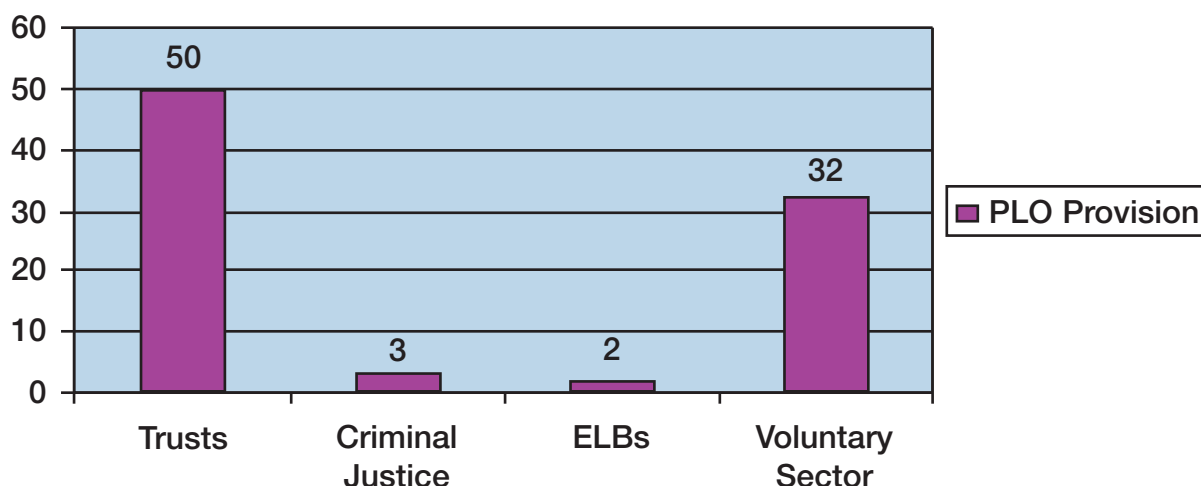
Total number of Degree in Social Work PLOs on a regional basis for 2007 – 2008 was 585. In addition to this there were 7 Diploma in Social Work placements and 4 other Degree in Social Work PLOs.

PLO Provision - September 2007



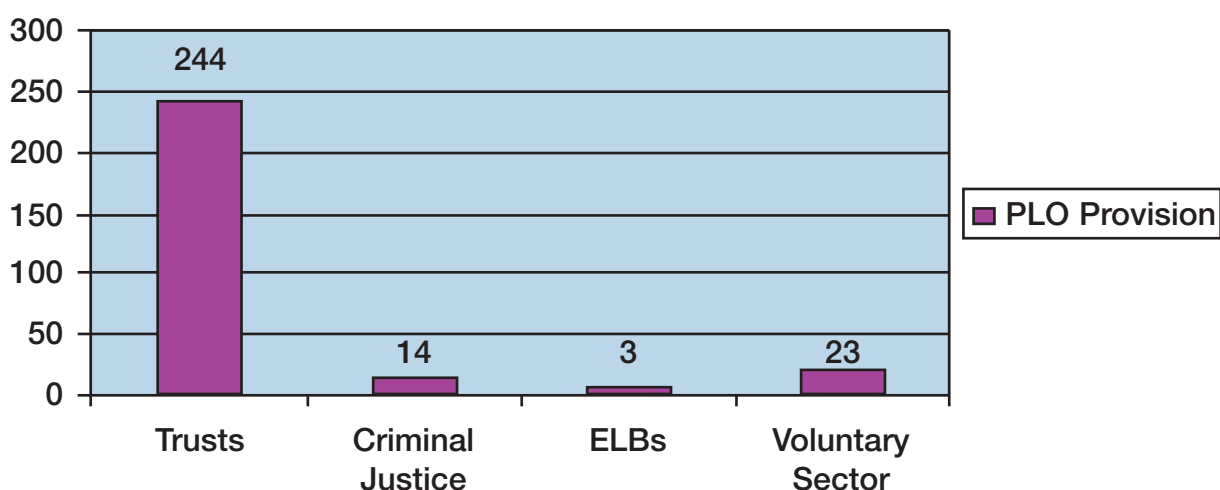
Total number of Degree in Social Work PLOs in September 2007 was 214.

PLO Provision - January 2008 - Level 2



Total number of Degree in Social Work Level 2 PLOs in January 2008 was 87.

PLO Provision - January 2008 - Level 3



Total number of Degree in Social Work Level 3 PLOs in January 2008 was 284.

Profile of PLO Sites

The table below is derived from the statistical returns gathered from the Designated Practice Learning Providers (DPLPs) for the year 2007/2008. This was the first set of such data gathered and work is in progress by NISCC in collaboration with the NIDSWP to ensure more accurate and reliable data in the future. (See 4.3.3) The table below is indicative of PLO settings rather than a precise description since there is considerable variation in the interpretation of prescribed settings. Some 27 descriptors were given by DPLPs which makes analysis of the data provided very difficult. The PLOs provided in family and children's services in the table below include a range of day care, fieldwork and residential services including disability and domestic violence. Criminal justice and education welfare PLOs provided are specific and 'Others' includes all settings that do not seem to include family or children's work, namely adult services.

PLOs Provided	September 2007	January 2008 Level 2	January 2008 Level 3
Family and children's services	40%	37%	41%
Criminal justice	1%	7%	5%
Education welfare	0%	2%	1%
Others	59%	54%	53%

Statutory Family and Child Care PLOs are limited because there are not enough sites available in the academic year to meet the demand from students for PLOs in this service user group. The current sequencing of PLOs concentrates provision in January each year. This fact has a significant impact on the availability of PLOs in this service user group. It is recommended that Course Providers should review the sequencing of PLOs. The Placement and Allocation Committee of the NIDSWP is confident that, the majority of students will normally have one PLO in work with families and children across a range of settings during their training. The DPLPs are themselves working to extend the range of experiences for students within PLOs.

It is acknowledged that the majority of newly qualified social workers in the statutory sector are employed in Family and Child Care services and that a minority of students will not have a PLO experience in Family and Child Care services during their course.

Sites providing more than one PLO at a time during 2007-2008

21 PLO sites provided PLOs for more than 1 student simultaneously. These sites are of immense importance to the region in assisting in meeting regional targets for PLOs, especially for the January period.

No social worker on site during 2007-2008

Individual social work students were placed in 52 PLOs where there was no social worker on site. The student is still, of course, supervised and assessed by a qualified social worker who is also a qualified practice teacher but who remains off site. A number of these sites were used twice in both September and January. This constitutes a figure of 8.5% of PLOs where the student had no social worker on site to show by example and guidance the social work role. While it is obviously preferable that all PLO sites have a social worker on site, it is a relatively low % rate where this has not been possible. This is an area which will require further work for the future.

New sites

16 new PLO sites were used during this period across Trusts, (8 new PLOs), Youth Justice Agency (2), ELBs (1) and the voluntary sector, (5 new PLOs). It is imperative that new sites continue to be developed by Designated Practice Learning Providers in the future and by the Practice Learning Centres/Student Units.

Sites available but not used

42 PLO sites, the majority for Level 2 students in September 2007, were not used during this period.

Practice Teacher Profiles

The DPLPs recorded the total number of practice teachers/assessors in their organisation at 30th June 2008 according to the categories of singleton, training/learning and development staff, independent and 'other'. The table below shows the total at 30 June 2008 and the numbers active between September 2007 and June 2008. The active numbers did not necessarily provide practice teaching/assessing during the year but would have been available for this purpose.

DPLP	Singleton		Training staff		Independent	
	Total	Active	Total	Active	Total	Active
HSC Trust						
Belfast	57	31	13	13	8	8
Northern	72	28	12	13	0	1
Southern	56	38	8	8	2	2
South Eastern	49	46	16	16	0	0
Western	72	68	5	5	4	4
Criminal Justice						
PBNI	13	0	5	3	0	0
Youth Justice Agency	12	12	1	1	0	0
Education Welfare						
Belfast ELB	2	1	0	0	0	0
North Eastern ELB	2	1	1	1	0	0
Southern ELB	3	2	0	0	0	0
South Eastern ELB	0	0	2	0	1	0
Western ELB	3	1	0	0	0	0
Voluntary Organisations						
Barnardos	24	22	0	0	0	0
Belfast Central Mission	2	1	2	0	0	0
Bryson Charitable Group (Also PLC)	2	2	1	1	0	0
Extern (Also PLC)	12	5	3	3	1	1
Family Care Society	3	1	0	0	0	0
Glenmona Resource Centre	4	2	1	0	0	0
Marie Curie Hospice Care	2	2	0	0	0	0
NIACRO	1	1	0	0	0	0
NIAMH	0	0	1	1	0	0
Northern Ireland Hospice	3	3	0	0	0	0
NSPCC	19	6	1	1	0	0
Orana Respite Care Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0
Partnership Care West (PLC)	0	0	0	0	3	3
Positive Futures	0	0	0	0	6	3
Praxis	4	3	3	3	1	1
Presbyterian Board of Social Witness	0	0	0	0	1	1
Prospects	0	0	0	0	2	2
Salvation Army	1	1	0	0	0	0
Starting Point	0	0	0	0	1	1
Threshold	1	1	2	1	0	0
Triangle Housing	0	0	3	0	1	1
Total	419	278	80	70	31	28

Total numbers of Practice Teachers by organisation and category at 30th June 2008 and active between September 2007 and June 2008. The Southern HSC Trust has three Senior Social Workers and two Senior Practitioners who are dedicated practice teachers/assessors and the Western HSC Trust has two dedicated practice teachers who are not trainers.

Number of Singletons

It is estimated that across the region there are approximately 419 singleton practice teachers and 80 training team/learning & development based practice teachers. In addition to this there are 31 independent practice teachers. It must be noted that some agency singleton practice teachers may also undertake some independent work.

In 2006-2007, it is estimated that approximately 180 of the 571 PLOs provided were provided by singletons both in the voluntary and statutory sector, which is an estimated 30% of overall provision. The majority of these singletons undertook only 1 PLO during this period.

In 2007-2008, it is estimated that there were 278 singleton practice teachers active between September 2007 and June 2008, 70 training team/learning & development based practice teachers and 28 independent practice teachers. It is estimated that approximately 34% of the 596 PLOs provided were provided by singletons, approximately 198 PLOs. The majority of singletons undertook only 1 PLO during this period.

Singleton and long-arm provision

The DPLPs recorded the number of PLOs provided by singletons and long-arm practice teachers for each setting.

Breakdown for each PLO period

Arrangement	September 2007 Total No =220	January 2008 Level 2 Total No = 87	January 2008 Level 3 Total No = 284	Overall Average %
Singleton	28%	40%	42%	34%
Long-arm	72%	60%	58%	66 %

Singleton provision for Family and Children's services

The approximate breakdown for PLOs provided by singletons within services for families and children are shown below.

Singleton provision for Family and Children's services

	September 2007	January 2008 Level 2	January 2008 Level 3
% of PLOs in family and children's services provided by singletons	33%	23%	45%

In respect of all PLOs regionally, 13% of these were provided by singletons within services for families and children in September 2007. This percentage rose to 23% in January 2008, for Level 2, and fell to 18% for Level 3 also in January 2008.

Singletons with more than one PLO during 2007/2008

15 singleton practice teachers took more than 1 PLO during this period, 12 in the Trusts, 2 in youth Justice Agency and 1 in the voluntary sector. 5 practice teachers took 2 PLOs simultaneously in January 2008.

Independents with more than one PLO during 2007/2008

17 independent singleton practice teachers took more than 1 PLO during this period, 9 in the Trusts, 8 in the voluntary sector. Between them these independents took 38 students.

Northern Ireland Practice Teacher Training Programme, NIPTTP, Candidates with students 2007/2008

DPLP	Numbers
Belfast HSC Trust	9 Singleton
Northern HSC Trust	6 Singleton
South Eastern HSC Trust	6 Singleton
Southern HSC Trust	7 Singleton
Western HSC Trust	7 Singleton
PBNI	1 Learning & Development team member
YJA	2 Singleton
SELB	1 Singleton
NIACRO	1 Singleton
NIAMH	1 Trainer
Praxis	2 Singleton 1 Training team member
Total	44

It is evident that the majority of candidates on this programme are singletons from across the Trusts and voluntary sector. The recruitment and training of new Practice Teachers in NI is crucial to the maintenance of Practice Teacher supply and ultimately the regional supply of PLOs. Recruitment and retention of Practice Teachers

Second Opinion Practice Teachers

In 2006-2007 there were 12 Second Opinion Practice Teachers used in NI. In 2007-2008, 11 Second Opinion Practice Teachers were used. This system has placed increased pressure on an already stretched regional supply but has now been replaced by a Second Marker System in

September 2008 which will ensure that support to the student is given by the practice teacher and the practice teacher will in turn receive support from the agency.

Fitness to Practice

There were 2 students reported under this section, 1 in a Trust and 1 in a voluntary organisation. The reasons cited were misconduct and breach of confidentiality. In both cases the PLO was terminated and referral made to both the university fitness to practice procedures and NISCC.

Terminations during 2007-2008

In total there were 18 terminations of PLOs during 2007-2008. This constitutes just over 3% of all PLOs commenced. A range of reasons are given for terminations ranging from student illness, fitness to practice, withdrawn leave of absence and ethical reasons.

Individual circumstances

20 "individual circumstances" situations for students were dealt with during this period, the majority being dyslexia and physical disability and adjustments were made to the PLOs to facilitate the students.

Practice learning opportunities 2008- 2009

DPLP	Sept 2008	Jan 2009 Level 2	Jan 2009 Level 3	TOTAL
HSC Trust				
Belfast	41	9	44	94
	38			
	Dip SW 1			
	UGR 3			
	Repeat 1			
Northern	(40)	15	46	101
Southern	30	17	46	93
South Eastern	34	14	46	94
Western	29	7	44	80
Criminal Justice				
PBNI	0	0	10	10
Youth Justice Agency	0	0	8	8
Education Welfare PLIP				
Belfast ELB	0	0	1	1
North Eastern ELB	0	0	1	1
Southern ELB	1	0	1	2
South Eastern ELB	0	0	0	0
Western ELB	0	0	1	1
Voluntary Organisations				
Barnardos	0	0	3	3
Belfast Central Mission	1	0	0	1
Bryson Chari Group (Also PLC)	4	4	3	11
Extern (Also PLC)	8	6	6	20
Family Care Society	0	0	1	1
Glenmona Resource Centre	0	0	2	2
Marie Curie Hospice Care	0	0	1	1
NIACRO	0	0	1	1
NIAMH	0	2	0	2
Northern Ireland Hospice	0	0	1	1
NSPCC	1	0	2	3
Orana Respite Care Unit	1	0	0	1
Partnership Care West (PLC)	5	4	1	10
Positive Futures	7	5	2	14
Praxis	3	3	1	7
Pres. Board Soc. Witness	0	1	3	4
Prospects	2	2	0	4
Salvation Army	1	0	1	2
Starting Point	0	1	0	1
Threshold	0	0	1	1
Triangle Housing	1	0	0	1
Total -Degree in S W	209	90	277	576

Project group's terms of reference

1. Purpose of the Project Group

- 1.1 The purpose of the Project Group is to steer and oversee the work carried out by the Review Team, which was established by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) to undertake the first Formal Review of the Degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland. The scope of the Review was determined by NISCC in collaboration with the DHSSPS, sponsoring body, and will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of (Health and PSS Act (NI) 2001 Section 10), chapter 9 of the "Rules for the Approval of the Degree in Social Work" and the "Framework specification for the Degree in Social Work 2003".

2. Membership of the Project Group

- 2.1 The membership of the Project Team will comprise of:

Chair Mrs M Mc Mahon, Council Member

Members Mrs J Mc Ateer, Workforce Development Committee Member
Mr G Houston, Education and Training Committee Chair
Mrs Miriam Karp, Council Member
Mrs L Simmons, Director of Education and Training

In attendance Review Team members (in order to provide information and updates on the work progressed in line with the agreed action plan and advise on issues arising).

Mrs Eilis Barry (Lead Member)
Ms Elsbeth Rea
Mr Paul Kearney
Mrs Jan Houston
Ms Gerardine Cunningham

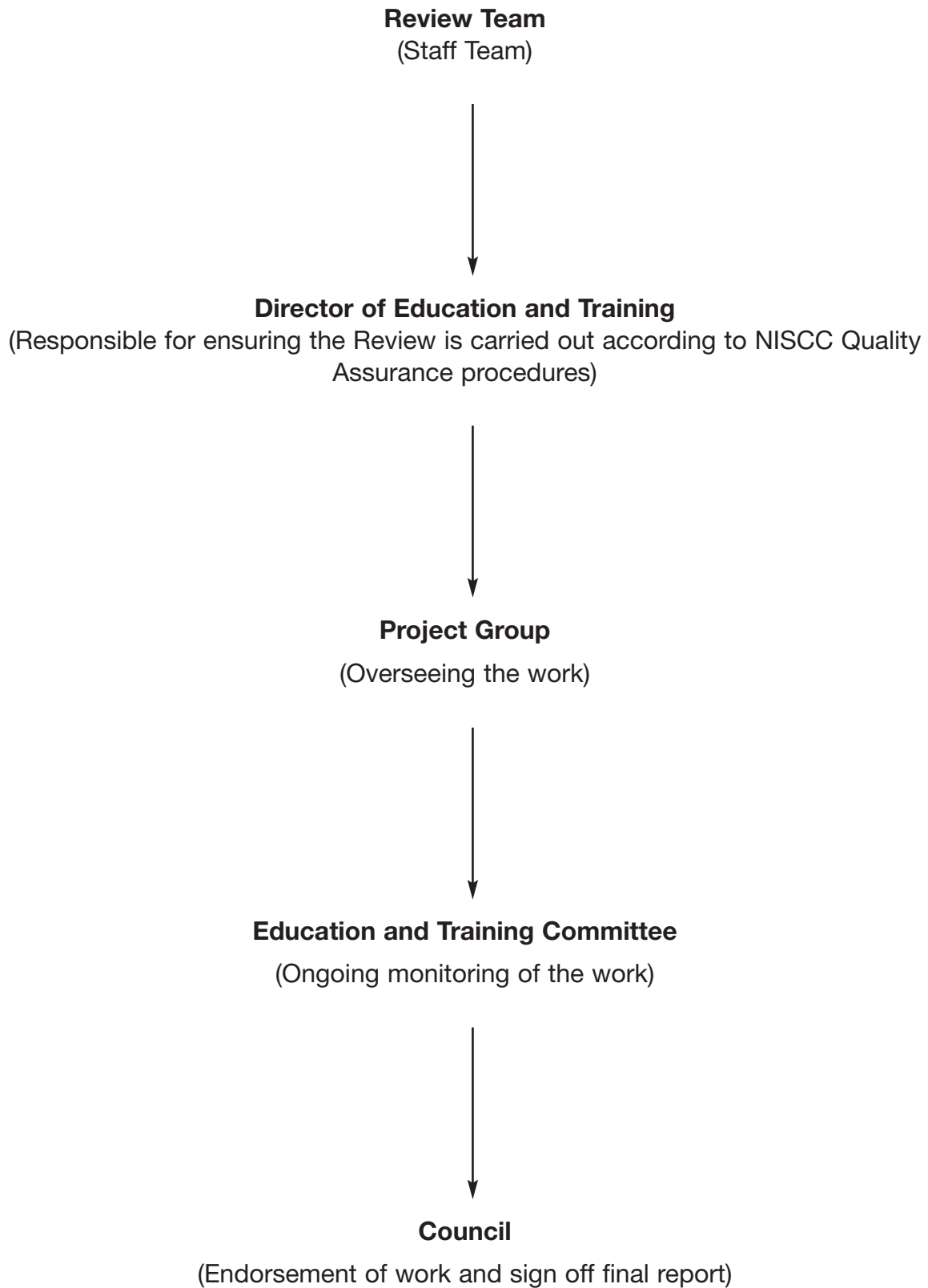
3. Project Group's Terms of Reference

- 3.1 To steer, oversee and provide advice on the work progressed, ensuring it is quality assured in line with the standards set.
- 3.2 To agree the terms of reference, work programme and action plan for the work to be undertaken by the Review Team.
- 3.3 To provide comment on the final report presented to the Council.

4. Timescale

- 4.1 The Project Group will meet every 6 weeks to monitor progress on the work.
- 4.2 The final draft report will be presented to the Project Group, early January 2009, to the Education and Training committee on 13 February and to Council on the 10 March 2009.

Communications Systems



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE