



What are the facilitating and restraining factors that influence practitioners' decision making on whether to engage with post qualifying assessed programmes?

Diane McGarvey

**Learning and Development Officer
Northern Health and Social Care Trust**



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Rationale

- Practitioners need to actively improve their practice throughout their career (Wilson, 2014) to enhance competence to manage complex caseloads (NISCC, 2022).
- For organisations to continuously improve their services, there is a reliance on the continuous improvement of staff (Halton et al, 2015).
- From April 2011 it is mandatory to achieve 2 PiP requirements
- Prior to April 2011 there is no mandatory condition for social workers qualified longer.
- There remains a number of social work practitioners in NI who have no PiP achievements.



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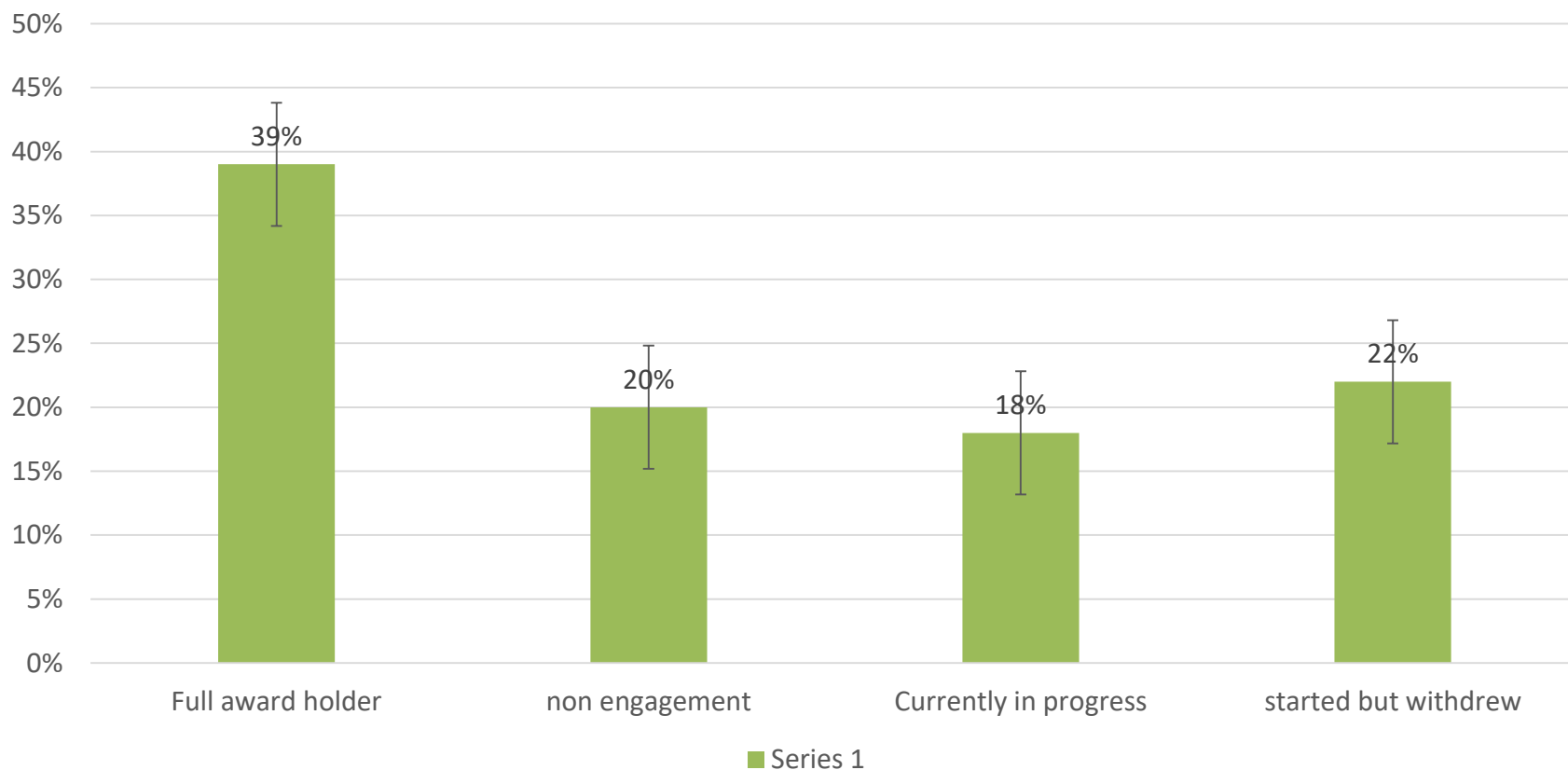
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Stats on PiP engagement

NISCC Live Register Report Mar 2024 (Qtr 4)



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AIMS

To explore the perceptions of SW's who have and who have not completed PQ programmes.

To explore SW's perceptions of whether PQ training has benefitted them and what might benefit them further.

To explore what might promote engagement in PQ training for SW's who have no mandatory condition against their NISCC registration.

To understand SW's views on the use of hybrid approaches in teaching.

To make recommendations to inform future support for SW's wishing to engage on PQ training.





Underlying Theory

Taylor et al (2010:475) states that education should extend beyond undergraduate to postgraduate to maintain effectiveness in meeting client needs. Yet there remains a number of SW practitioners within NI who have chosen not to undertake assessed PQ practice

WHY?



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Underlying Theory

- Job Demands-Resources (J-DR) model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007)
- employees have certain job demands and job resources. Both require a level of equilibrium for an employee to have job satisfaction
- engagement in professional development has a correlation with staff retention as well as overall job satisfaction (Slater et al 2018; Deglau et al 2018; Griffiths et al 2017).



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Underlying theory

- Barriers - Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory



MICRO level

Reported staff retention
issues

MACRO Level

Increase in complex case
work
Cost of living
Staff sickness



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Methodology

- Small scale service evaluation
- Qualitative approach: focus groups and individual interviews with eleven social work practitioners.
- Semi-structured interview schedule piloted with one focus group
- Thematic approach to analysis was applied to the data



Findings

9 subthemes divided into 3 overarching themes

➤ Workforce **CULTURE**

➤ **CONNECTIONS**

➤ **COMMUNICATION**



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Subthemes

Workforce Culture

- Career progression, incentives and time management
- Staff retention, work easement issues and guilt
- Organisational Culture and Mandatory requirements; the tensions between training and education

Connections

- Hybrid approach to teaching
- Supporting relationships to learn and develop
- professional competence and confidence to enhance relationships with service users

Communication

- How PQ programmes are communicated and encouraged within teams by managers
- How organisational communication can enhance engagement



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Workforce CULTURE

I knew that by doing the course it would eventually open more doors for me as I really needed a career change so that's what was carrying me through, so I just had to put the head down and keep going, but it was hard to say the least and a very busy year, and my family had to take the brunt of the loss as a lot of my home time was catching up with study.



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Cont...

- I think there should be some sort of financial incentive because if you are happy in your post and not thinking of career progression, there is really no incentive to do it, when it's a big commitment. And if you are doing it to help improve the service or the team's knowledge, surely you should get something for that. My team colleagues have asked me, why do you put yourself through it, it's so much work?*



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Barriers to PQ

The training demands within this role are quite heavy as well, so you're always updating the training to do this job, which is separate from PQ, so we are still learning, but the difference is, with PQ you are learning but then actually reflecting on the learning.

Managers need to be suggesting to staff that the PQ course will benefit career progression, to make you a better version of the social worker you are. But it's not really pushed. Managers are frightened of losing staff if they complete PQ and move on else were. I was a bit like that as a manager, especially when you had good staff.



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CONNECTIONS

- A hybrid approach would increase motivation to apply and establish peer connections
- The extensive level of support during PQ learning was unknown prior and greatly valued
- An increased level of professional curiosity was reported that enhanced connections with service users
- Increased job satisfaction and staff retention as well as promotion
- Collective leadership qualities were identified as positive outcomes as those who completed became leaders and mentors for others in practice.





Communications

- PQ is not encouraged by managers, fear of losing staff or need to manage competing priorities

Nobody in my team seemed to be doing any PiP So I didn't really have a clue what was available or how to apply, to be honest, as no one seemed to know.

There just isn't the time to think about applying for PQ never mind actually doing it. We are always covering case work as well as trying to stay on top of our own due to sick leave. The will might be there but the time is not on our side. I knew I just couldn't fit it in.



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Discussion

- **Limitations:** Small scale study, results are not generalizable, yet valuable insights into experiences of undertaking PQ programmes and benefits as well as making recommendations to address barriers.

(Job-Demands Resources model) High demands

- increased workloads, staff sickness and lack of work load easement can hinder PQ engagement.
- For those who have not engaged in PQ programmes, although there was a sense of willingness - were adversely impacted by work pressures, increased caseloads and staff retention issues.
- Lack of work easement increases risk of burnout when engaging with PQ programmes



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JD-R cont...

(Job-Demands Resources model) High resources

- High quality supportive relationship with a skilled manager can increase job resources
- Encouraging support from mentors has been highlighted as a motivator to see PQ training to the end of it's process
- Having a leader who was passionate about PQ study increased motivation to apply and complete PQ learning.
- Learning outcomes have been linked to career progression, job satisfaction and an increase in professional curiosity that enhanced positive relationships with service users.



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Conclusions

- The benefits of completing PQ study have been linked to:
 - better outcomes for service users
 - Increased competence and confidence in the social work role
 - Job satisfaction
 - Collective leadership qualities as social workers became leaders in practice and mentors for others



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conclusions

- Those who do not undertake PQ study are willing to, yet training demands to do the job are higher
- Some report that their Line manager have limited knowledge of PQ processes
- Some were unaware of the support available and learning outcomes they would gain if they applied for PQ study
- Enhancing collective leadership styles in practitioners is value for money and promotes staff retention and job satisfaction



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Recommendations

- Incentive to study is important. Publicity and marketing should highlight learning outcomes and links to career progression
- Marketing should highlight the level of support available during PQ study
- Easement remains an issue due to the ever evolving landscape of practice, however if work completed in personal time was paid as overtime, this would enhance motivation
- A hybrid approach is welcomed and should continue



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Feedback

Feedback on this presentation is welcomed:

diane.mcgarvey@northerntrust.hscni.net



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