

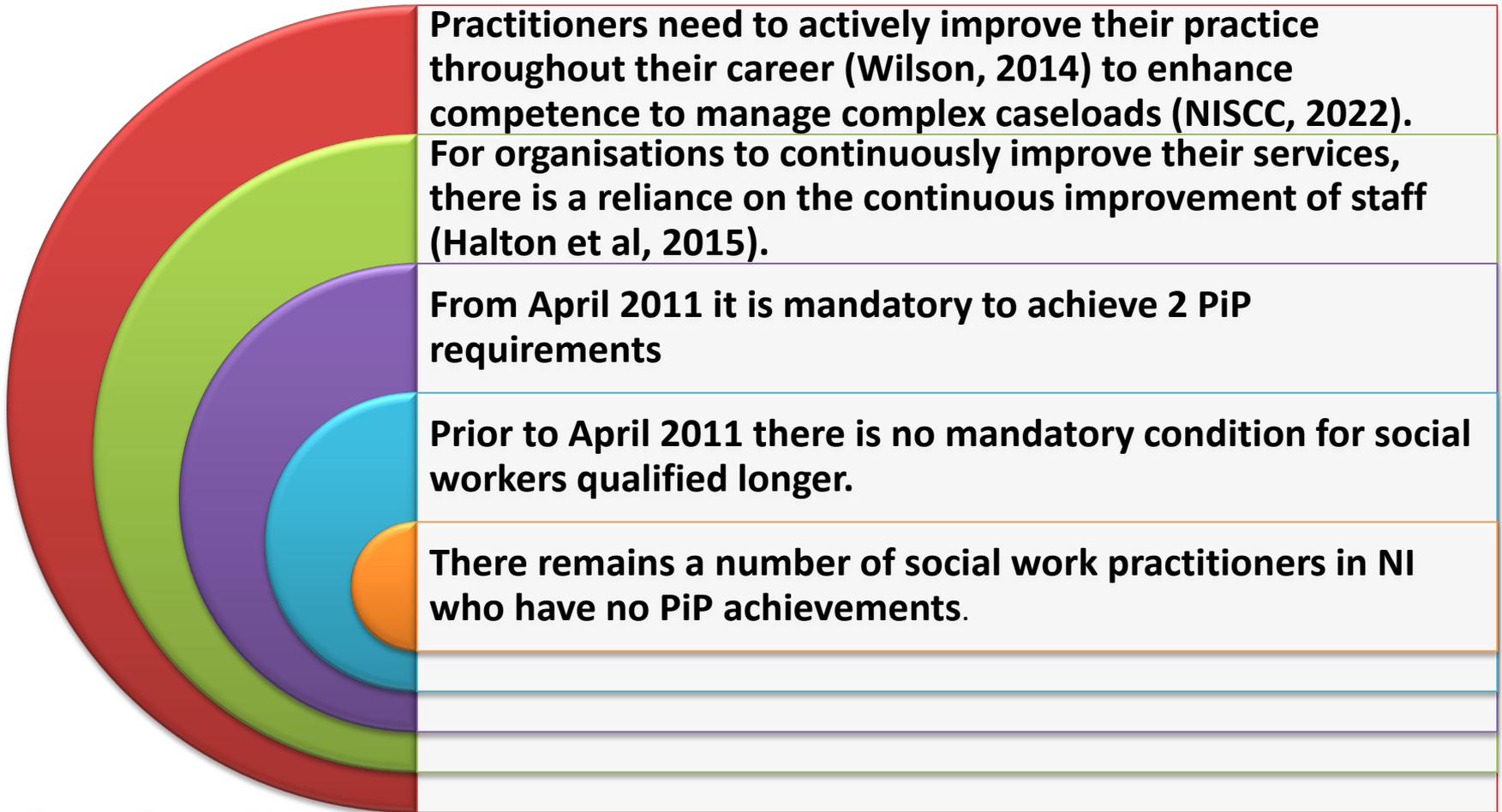
What are the facilitating and restraining factors that influence practitioners' decision-making on whether to engage with post-qualifying assessed programmes?

Diane McGarvey

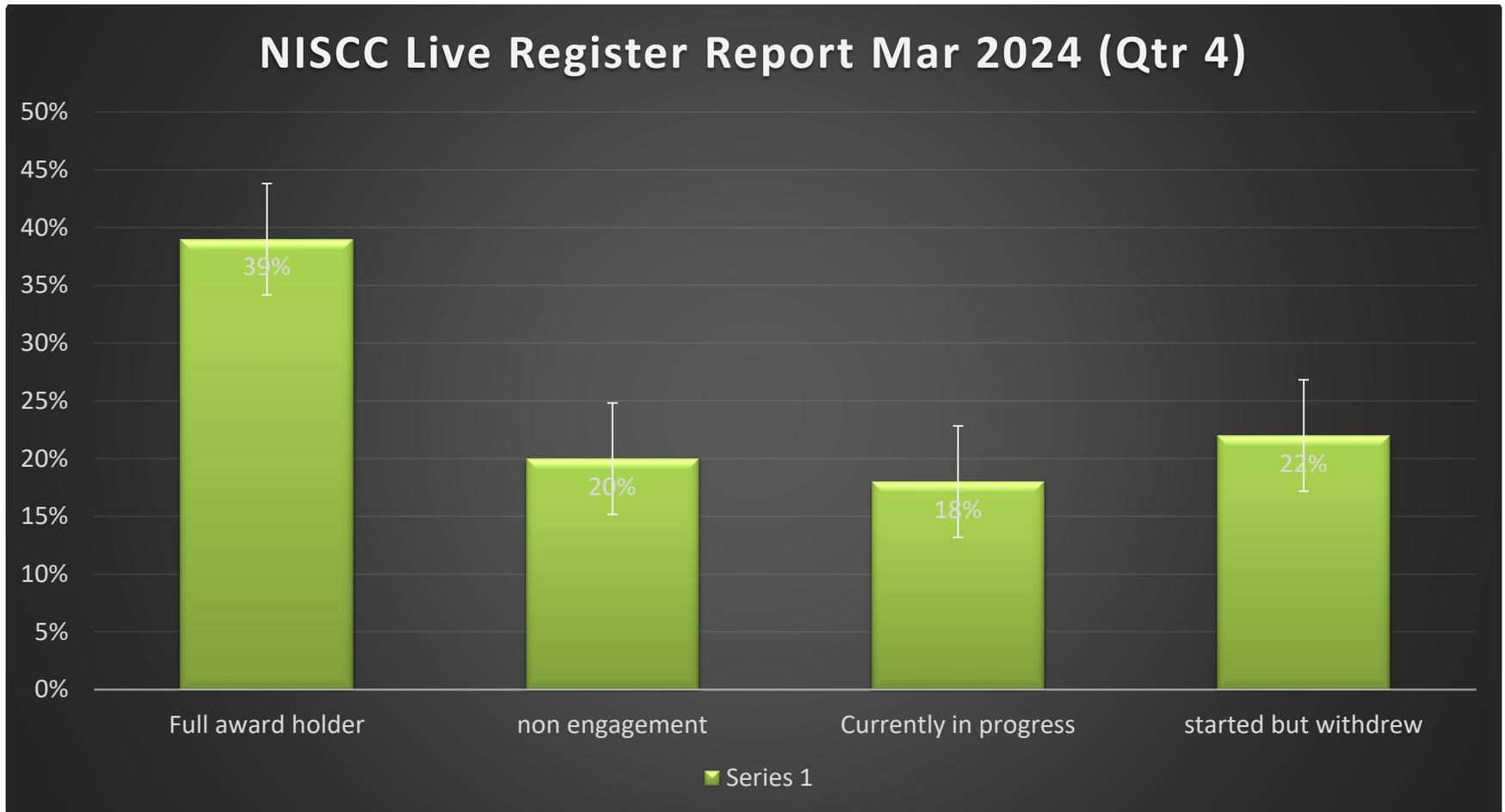
**Learning and Development Officer
Northern Health and Social Care Trust**



Rationale



Stats on PiP engagement



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

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.



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

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



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).



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

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



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

NI Social Work Workforce Review

Growing Elderly
population

High rates of trauma

Deprivation and mental
health issues

NI has a 25% higher rate
of mental health than
England

Arguably leading to
greater service
dependency and larger
caseloads (McFadden et
al, 2022; Fenton, 2019)



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

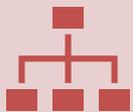
Understanding New Public Managerialism



Market principals have shaped all aspects of the profession



A neoliberal-aligned administrative approach to improve efficiency, performance and accountability



Pascoe et al (2023) found SW's felt a focus on risk management and training increasingly limited to managerial tasks.



Working together



Excellence



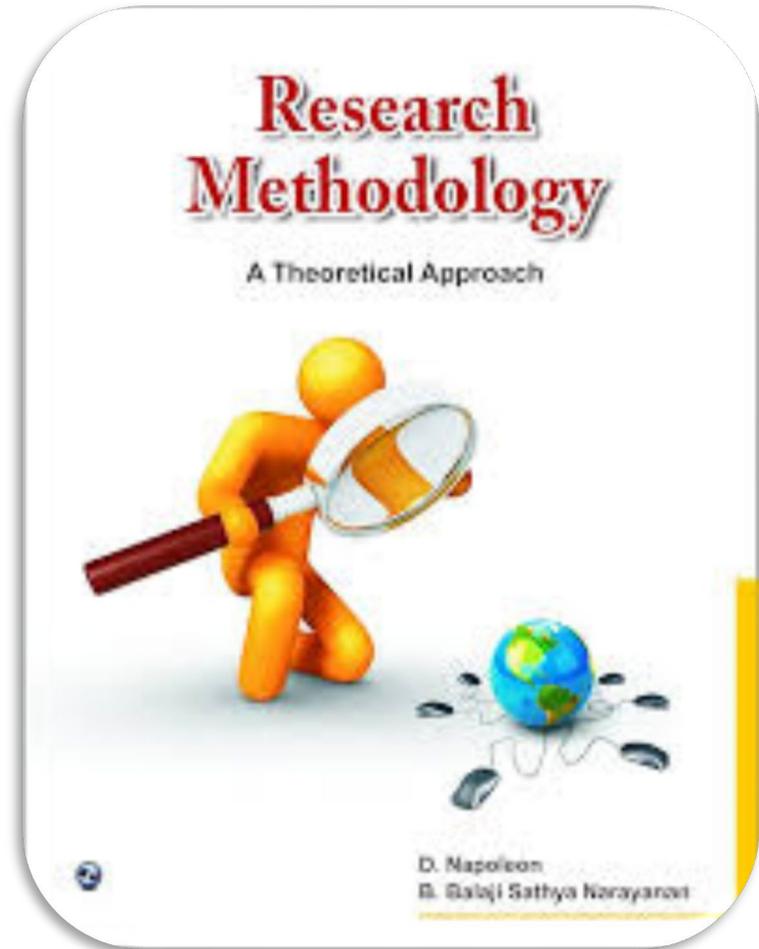
Openness & Honesty



Compassion

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**



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



Communications

How PQ programmes are
communicated and
encouraged within teams
by managers?

How organisational
communication can
enhance engagement?



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

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.”



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

#teamNORTH 

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?”



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

#teamNORTH 

Feelings of Guilt



Overwhelming feelings of guilt due to camaraderie within team colleagues



Internal conflict between personal and professional values relating to their commitment to the profession and families they supported versus time with their own families, already impacted on overtime



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

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.



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

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

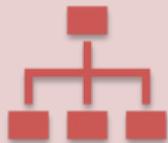
Increased job satisfaction and staff retention as well as promotion

Collective leadership qualities were identified as positive outcomes as those who completed became leaders and mentors for others in practice.

Tensions between training and education



Training that is task orientated (to do the job) took precedent.



Some described a culture whereby managers felt under pressure to manage easement for training that was required to manage accountability and targets, therefore PQ wasn't prioritised.



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

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.”



Working together



Excellence



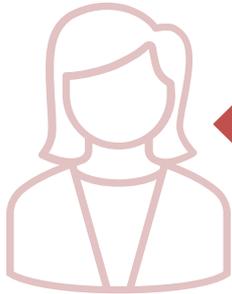
Openness & Honesty



Compassion

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.”



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

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

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.**

Improved competence builds confidence for practice

Those who achieved PiP requirements unanimously reported increased competence and confidence and greater professional curiosity:



“when using a challenging case example for my assignment, through applying theory and research, I gained a better understanding of why the young person wasn’t engaging, which helped me adapt my approach and connect with her more effectively”



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

Psychological Safety

- Financial organisations including government institutions employing highly skilled and motivated individuals is insufficient in itself (Edmondson, 2018)
- Individuals need to feel free from interpersonal fear (fear of being penalised for not reaching targets) but encouraged to take interpersonal risks optimise team performance in knowledge intensive contexts.



Recruitment and Retention

- This is an ongoing concern in the social work profession
- However, when an organisation supports career development and professional development – this can lead to higher rates of staff retention (Clark et al, 2013)
- Those with strong connections with enablers were more likely to progress through PQ education, having successful learning outcomes.



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

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



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

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



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

Benefits for the Organisation

Higher
employee
engagement
and retention

Stronger team
capabilities

Deepens
professional
curiosity
enhancing
positive change
for service users

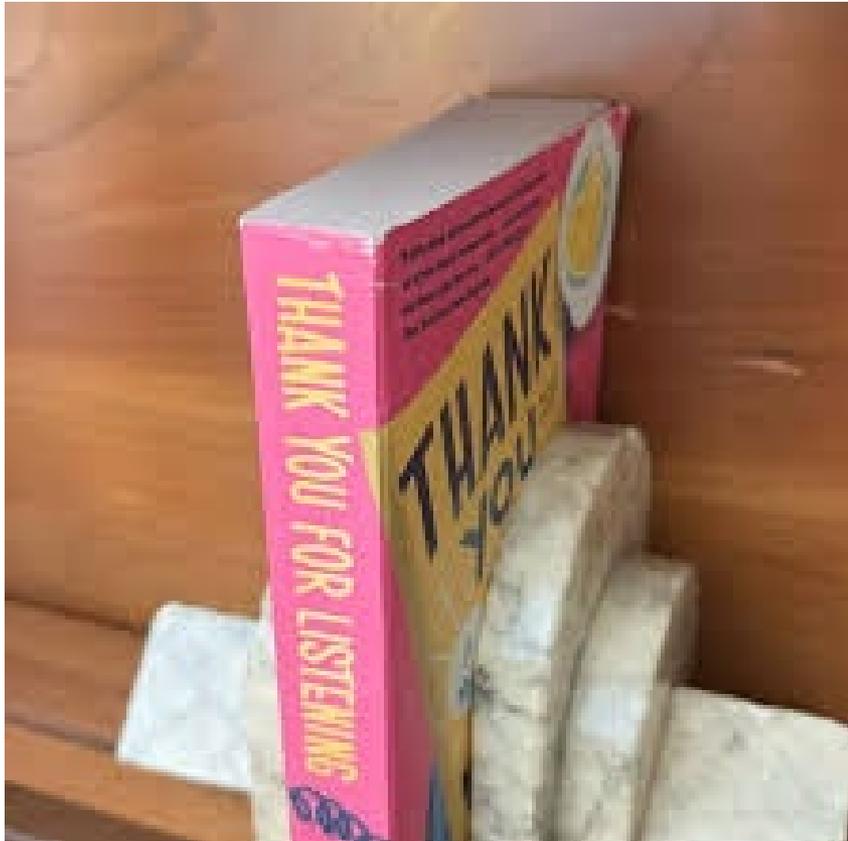
Develops
leadership
qualities
outlined within
the leadership
framework

Research Article – Scan QR Code

- Research Article –
McGarvey, D (2025)
[Post qualifying
education: the
facilitating and
restraining factors that
influence decisions on
whether to engage
with post qualifying
assessed programmes.](#)



Feedback



Feedback on this presentation is welcomed:
diane.mcgarvey@northyorkhscni.net



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion