A Labour Market Plan: Our Workforce Strategy

Contents

Chapter 1: Executive summary

1. The social work profession has experienced a series of reforms since 2007 to improve the quality of recruitment, better prepare students for social work practice and increase retention, one being the Department for Education's rollout of a social work teaching partnership programme of which we are a part. A skilled and stable workforce is essential for delivering effective change and so this Strategy sets out for the first time how our labour market and broader aspirations interact to drive our ambitions for the Developing Together Social Work Teaching Partnership (TP).

2. This Strategy provides a framework for our approach to workforce planning and describes the actions we will take to deliver our vision:

To leverage the strengths of our partners to create the UK's leading pre and post-qualifying social work education community, capable of attracting, developing and retaining the best and brightest social workers in the country.

3. This vision is consistent with the overarching purpose of social work teaching partnerships, which is to transform the quality of education and experience received by social work students and practitioners. The DfE (2019) saw Teaching Partnerships as the vehicle for attracting high quality students into

the profession and ensuring students and existing social workers have the necessary knowledge, skills and values to practice effectively. In addition, they expected that they would improve workforce planning and development to address retention and recruitment issues.

4. We believe that tackling retention and recruitment issues and promoting high quality pre and post-qualifying education and development are not mutually exclusive. In fact, we believe that targeting the initial education and continuing professional development of social workers is essential to the sustained, long-term prosperity of the social work profession. A stable workforce is also fundamental in delivering improvements to practice and services.

National social work context and current workforce

5. Since 2007 there have been a series of reforms in social work education and training, intended to improve the quality of recruitment, to better prepare students for social work practice and increase retention;
6. There currently exists a lack of longitudinal robust and reliable evidence on recruitment, retention and progression within the social work sector, however we do know of a number of workforce challenges facing our region:
   a. The majority of leavers in children and family and adult social work **leave within 2 and 3 years** respectively. This is a national trend but is significantly more pronounced in our region with 46.3% of leavers in children and family social work leaving within 2 years and 23.2% of leavers in adult social work leaving with 3 years;
   b. The **turnover rate** in children and family social work in our TP (24%) is considerably higher than the national average (16%) and rising;
   c. The use of **agency staff** in our TP is particularly notable, with the agency worker rate double the national average for children and family social work (at 28.4%) and four times higher than the national average for adult social work (31%);
   d. At 25.3%, the **vacancy rate** for children and family social work in the TP is higher than the national average of 16% (although consistent with the London average of 26%). In adult social work within the TP, the vacancy rate is apparently lower than the national average at 5.1%, however this is puzzling given the agency worker rate is reportedly 4 times the national average.

Delivering the change

7. In response to these challenges, and to achieve our vision, we need coordinated actions for the short, medium and long term. 3 overarching aims have been identified, each with a number of deliverables underneath. Some

of these deliverables are new; others show how work that is already underway relates to this Strategy. The 3 overarching aims are as follows:
   a. Improving pre-qualifying social work education
   b. Stimulating recruitment of social workers
   c. Promoting a skilled and stable social work workforce
8. This Strategy also highlights 2 key principles that will underpin the work of the TP and influence its approaches:
   a. Championing innovation
   b. Improving Business Intelligence
9. This Strategy allows the issues facing the labour market to be addressed and progress measured and delivered in a coherent way, that will evolve and adapt over time;
10. The TP must identify, consider and attempt to mitigate its potential barriers to success, which include:
   a. Engagement and communication;
   b. Partnership working;
   c. Sustainability and dependency.
11. It is thought that the reduced core membership of the TP from April 2020 onwards, and the renewed focus that will result from the production of this Strategy and the Visioning Day in January 2020, will go some way to mitigating the challenges facing the TP;

Defining success and ensuring progress

12. We have identified four outcomes that provide the strategic framework that we will use to measure and ensure the progress we wish to see within the labour market:
   a. High calibre graduates;
   b. Efficient recruitment;
   c. Low turnover rates;
   d. Improved practice;
13. These outcomes do not sit in isolation; they are interdependent and they all have an important role to play in meeting our vision. Moving forward, they will be used as a framework to guide and deliver our actions;
14. Delivery of the TP's overall purpose and impact is currently measured by a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); these are being examined and refined to ensure they are still fit for purpose and reflective of our new aspirations which have evolved as we respond to new challenges and opportunities;
15. This is particularly relevant in relation to this Strategy, which builds upon the original implementation plan and makes explicit the links between TP activities and workforce planning as well as outlining the new priorities that will address identified needs.
16. An ongoing priority will be the creation of legacy tools to collect outcome and output data (as well as workforce data) as the TP continues, which is

particularly important given much of the outcome data will only be available further downstream;

17. In addition, the TP participates in the DfE's ongoing national evaluation of teaching partnerships and produces a number of reports and case studies that contribute to these regular reviews.

Chapter 2: The vision for social work in South West London

To leverage the strengths of our partners to create the UK's leading pre and post-qualifying social work education community, capable of attracting, developing and retaining the best and brightest social workers in the country.

18. This Strategy sets out a framework for achieving Developing Together Teaching Partnership's (TP) vision of a well-qualified, skilled and stable workforce that drives better outcomes for those accessing our services. It responds to the Department for Education's (DfE) plans to cement important collaborations between universities and local authorities to ensure a steady stream of high-calibre social workers to the frontline and builds upon the work already completed by the TP during the last two years. In its grant offer letter to the TP, the Government outlined its aspiration to see social work teaching partnerships become centres of excellence that over time become a hub for innovative workforce development and can plan for labour market needs in their area (2019);

19. As such, this Strategy sets out the actions we will take as a partnership to attract more students into social work training and employment within our region, develop and retain experienced practitioners and deliver practice improvements that translate into better services for those accessing them. It builds upon the original implementation plan, to make explicit the links between TP activities and workforce planning, and it outlines new priorities that will address identified needs.

Chapter 3: National social work context and current workforce

20. Our Strategy needs to take account of the evolving social work landscape and societal change if we are to ensure our labour market remains resilient and adaptable to the future needs of employers, higher education institutions (HEI), students, social workers and, most importantly, those accessing our services;

21. In addition, having access to and understanding data on the current workforce and how it is changing is critical to our ability to plan for the future. These data form an essential part of the evidence required for workforce planning. However, changing structures and approaches to service delivery mean that data needs for workforce planning are also changing. Thus one of the priorities for action identified in this plan is to better understand the data needs of the different partners and develop approaches to collecting the necessary information;

22. The following subsections provide an overview of the current national social work context in which the TP operates and a national and local level overview of the current social work workforce.

National social work context

23. In 2013, Baginsky stated that poor retention in social work results in a workforce with insufficient numbers of experienced staff capable of dealing with the complexity of the work, and of providing appropriate leadership and support to less experienced colleagues. High staff turnover impacts upon service provision; may affect public confidence; limits opportunities for individual and organisational learning; and offers a low return on investment in social work education (RiP, 2015);

24. It is during qualifying education that social work students build upon their initial commitment to the profession (Collins, 2016). Professional commitment is one factor said to predict intention to leave a role, along with organisational commitment, burnout and job satisfaction, (Mor Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001), and consequently social work education has an important role in laying strong foundations for students' futures in the profession;

25. Since 2007 there have been a series of reforms in social work education and training, intended to improve the quality of recruitment, to better prepare students for social work practice and increase retention. Two postgraduate accelerated routes have been introduced in child and family social work - Step Up to Social Work, in 2010, and Frontline, in 2013. Think Ahead, introduced in 2016, is widely considered the 'adult social work equivalent' of Frontline (Community Care, 2016);

26. While early evaluations of Step Up, Frontline and Think Ahead are generally positive (Maxwell, Scourfield et al 2016), these programmes have not been running for long enough to determine their impact on longer term retention. Findings from a longitudinal study of Step Up to Social Work found that 85% of Cohort 1 graduates were still practising in child and family social work three years after qualifying and 73% five years after (Smith et al, 2018). However, it also recorded concerns among employers that such high calibre graduates would soon be lured away from frontline practice which is where they are needed most. Similarly, Sir Martin Narey, in his review of Frontline, deplored its strategy of advertising itself as a route into the civil service and a fast-track into management;

27. Given the early stages of most of the schemes, the only place we can look for comparable evidence is Teach First, a similar fast-track training scheme for teachers. The Institute of Education (IoD) at the University of London did a study, published in 2013, which found a higher turnover of staff in those schools where Teach First graduates were placed (as much as 10%) (Community Care, 2016);

28. Giving students a more 'realistic' view of what social work practice will be like has been highlighted as a possible way of improving retention (Webb & Carpenter, 2012), with implications for the engagement of employers in social work education (McLaughlin, Shardlow et al. 2010);

29. The Social Work Reform Board (2010, 2012) recommended a professional capabilities framework that would be useable at all levels from student to senior practitioner. This has since been supplemented by the key knowledge and skills areas for child and family practitioners (DfE, 2014) and social workers in adult services (Department of Health, 2015);

30. The DfE workforce statistics (2019) indicate that 68% (FTE) of children and family social workers leaving within the reference year had been in service in their local authority for less than five years (up from 63% the previous year) and 35% of those leaving were within the first two years. When looking at the workforce statistics within the South West London and Surrey region, this is mirrored for social workers in adults services, with those with less than 3 years' experience having the highest turnover rate at 23.2% (Arkesden, 2019);

31. Evaluations of the Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) and Early Professional Development pilot schemes, which developed into the current Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), suggest that targeted programmes to support new workers may help to boost retention (Carpenter et al, 2012; Blewett et al 2013);

32. However, there is currently a lack of longitudinal robust and reliable evidence on recruitment, retention and progression, particularly within child and family social work. The DfE workforce statistics data presents experimental data, and is not yet capturing the impact of new initiatives; the reasons why people leave their job; or indeed, whether they leave social work altogether (Johnson et al., 2019).

The social work workforce in England and the TP

33. As of September 2018, there were 20,500 social workers employed in the adult social care sector in England (Skills for Care, 2019). In comparison, there were 31,720 (29,470 FTE) children and family social workers as well as 5,360 FTE agency workers;

34. Of these, 550 adult social workers and 1270 children and family social workers worked for local authority employers within the TP;

35. The majority of the adult social worker jobs in England (17,000) involved working for local authorities and around 1,000 were in the independent

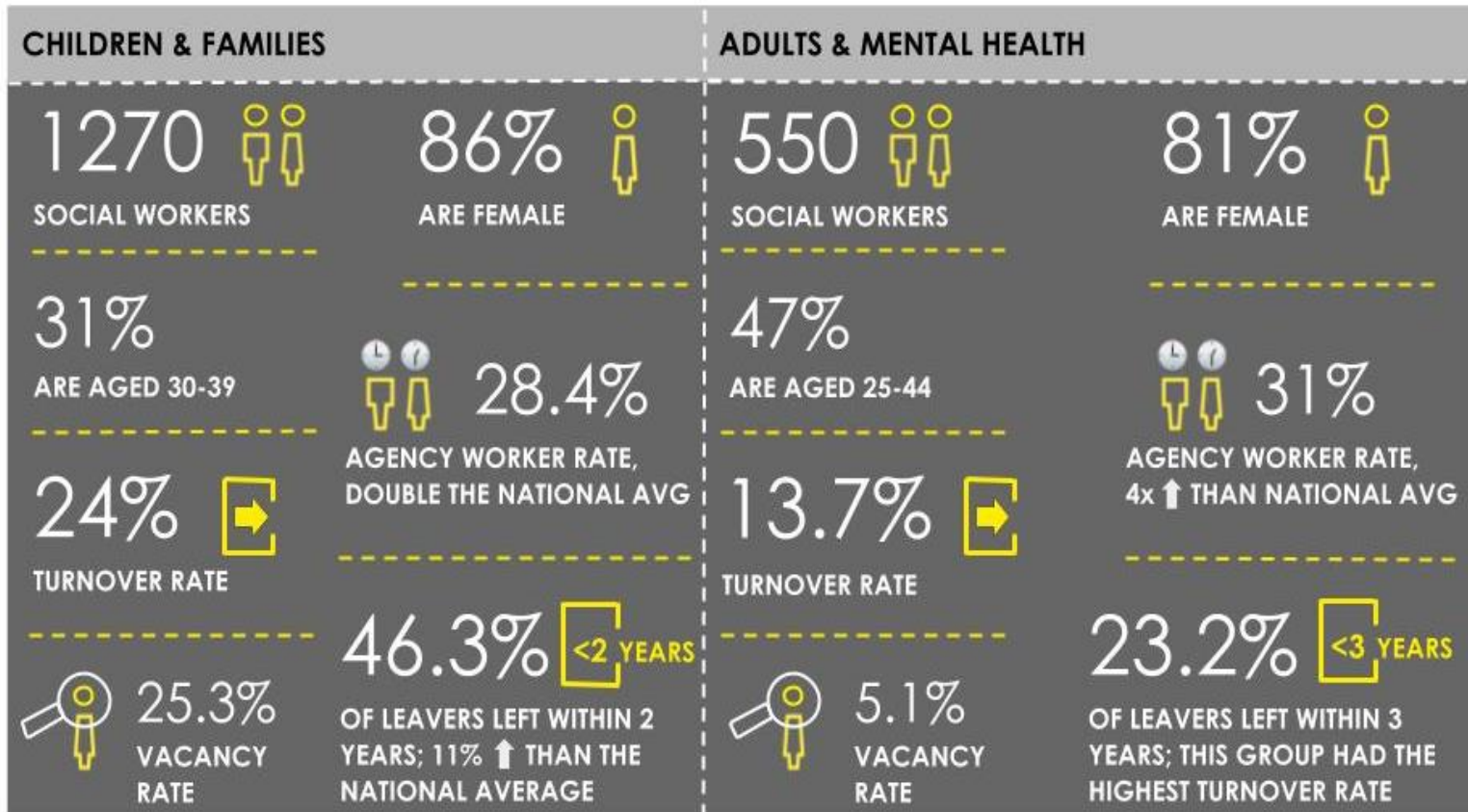sector. Data from NHS Digital shows that there were around 2,400 adult social worker jobs in the NHS [3];

36. The 34,830 FTE child and family social workers (including agency workers) are those reported by local authorities;

37. The social work workforce is involved in delivering a range of services and care to different groups of people who use services, including adult social care/social work, mental health, children's social services and criminal justice (offender) services. Some of these services are provided as part of integrated health and social care services, some are publicly provided but are not integrated, and some of these are accessed privately by people without the involvement of statutory services;

38. The workforce also includes people working in a wide variety of roles, from senior manager to case holder. For example, 51% of child and family social workers are case holders and 14% are qualified without cases;

39. Some headline statistics, as of September 2018:

    a. 86% of children and family social workers were female compared to 81% of adult social workers. This is comparable to the demographic of social workers in the TP (84.4% and 78% respectively);

    b. 31% of children and family social workers were 30 to 39 years old and 47% of adult social workers were aged 25 to 44;

    c. The national average turnover rate was 16% for children and family social workers in local authorities (up from 15% in 2017), whereas in the TP this figure was considerably higher at 24%;

    d. Turnover rate was 13.9% for adult social workers in local authorities (down from 15.2% in 2017) and this is consistent with the turnover rate for adult social workers in the TP (13.7%);

    e. 68% of FTE children and family social workers leaving that year had been in service in their local authority for less than 5 years (up from 63% in 2017). 35% of those leaving were within the first 2 years compared to 46.3% in the TP;

    f. Within the TP, adult social workers with less than 3 years' experience had the highest turnover rate at 23.2%;

    g. For children and family social work, the national average FTE agency worker rate was 15%, down from 16% last year, however in the TP this was almost double at 28.4%;

    h. For adult social work, the national average agency worker rate was 8%, however within the TP this was almost four times higher at 31%;

    i. For children and family social work, the FTE vacancy rate was largely unchanged from 2017 at 16%, although there were large variations between regions (Yorkshire & Humber had the lowest rate at 6% and London had the highest at 26%). The TP's FTE vacancy rate within children and family social work was comparable with the London figure, at 25.3%.

    j. For adult social work, the FTE vacancy rate was 8.4% - this figure has decreased year on year from 12% in 2015 (again, there are variations between regions, although these are less pronounced than for children and family social work). Within the TP, the rate was 5.1% however this

has been very volatile over the past 7 years and there were significant disparities between areas in the partnership;

k. The average full-time equivalent salary for a local authority adult social worker in England was £34,100. This is compared to £42,700 in the TP which is more consistent with the London average of £42,800.

Infographic: The Teaching Partnership's workforce

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

1270 SOCIAL WORKERS

86% ARE FEMALE

31% ARE AGED 30-39

28.4% AGENCY WORKER RATE, DOUBLE THE NATIONAL AVG

24% TURNOVER RATE

46.3% <2 YEARS OF LEAVERS LEFT WITHIN 2 YEARS; 11% ↑ THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE

25.3% VACANCY RATE

ADULTS & MENTAL HEALTH

550 SOCIAL WORKERS

81% ARE FEMALE

47% ARE AGED 25-44

31% AGENCY WORKER RATE, 4x ↑ THAN NATIONAL AVG

13.7% TURNOVER RATE

23.2% <3 YEARS OF LEAVERS LEFT WITHIN 3 YEARS; THIS GROUP HAD THE HIGHEST TURNOVER RATE

5.1% VACANCY RATE

Chapter 4: Delivering the change

40. To achieve our vision, we need coordinated actions for the short, medium and long term which will deliver the changes we want to see. Some of these actions are new; others show how work that is already underway relates to this Strategy. The below is a new Workforce Strategy Framework through which issues facing the labour market can be addressed and progress measured and delivered in a coherent way, that will evolve and adapt over time.

DEVELOPING TOGETHER
SOCIAL WORK TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

Workforce Strategy Framework

VISION	To leverage the strengths of our partners to create the UK's leading pre and post-qualifying social work education community, capable of attracting, developing and retaining the best and brightest social workers in the country					
PURPOSE	To focus the Teaching Partnership on creating a successful pre and post qualifying environment, with opportunities for all social workers to flourish and deliver services that are effective for those accessing them					
AIMS	Improving pre-qualifying social work education		Stimulating recruitment of social workers		Promoting a skilled and stable social work workforce	
PRINCIPLES	Championing innovation			Improving business intelligence		
OUTCOMES	High calibre graduates		Efficient recruitment	Low turnover rates		Improved practice
KEY PRIORITIES	Improved support and consolidation of learning for practitioners in years 2-3 post qualifying	Improved support for those on the ASYE	Improved placement offer from partners on BA and MSW programmes	Quality BA and MSW placements with skilled PEs and OSSs	Increase the supply of good quality, well-trained social workers	Reliable pipeline of NQSWs from KU into partner agencies
	Students and practitioners have a stronger attachment to local employers	Continue to improve the quality of teaching on qualifying programmes	Establish a local talent pool with joined up recruitment strategies	Better prepared social work managers	Established Career Pathways linked to a PQ/CPD framework	Improved support and development of experienced practitioners
KEY ACTIVITIES	Maintain increased entry requirements and enhanced point of entry tests, involving practitioners and SUCs in admissions	Build on SUC training and involvement in curriculum design and delivery	Support TCs to ensure students are taught specialist elements of the curriculum by those responsible for statutory social work	Implement academic shadowing of practice	Provide a support network to those on the Social Work Degree Apprenticeship Programme	Ensure 75% of placements annually are provided by partners, coordinated at Placement Allocation Meetings
	QA placements and transfer recommendations and learnings back into KU and placement providers	Agree minimum requirements for learning opportunities on PVI placements	Support PEs and OSSs across the region through workshops and support groups, facilitated by the TP's Practice Consultants	Develop OSSs through a learning programme delivered by KU to those taking students	Deliver employment skills sessions to final year students	Host careers fairs / open evenings for partner employers
	Develop a 'grow your own' recruitment scheme for KU students into partner employers' NQSW posts	Develop consistent ASYE programme standards across the Partnership	Develop NQSW assessor support and training in line with KSS expectations	Support the transition from the ASYE into years 2 and 3 through a post-ASYE 'Consolidation' Programme	Deliver reflective KSS workshops to the workforce, faciliated by the TP's Practice Consultants	Develop a skills gap analysis to be used to inform workforce opportunities across the partnership
	Support partners in establishing a regional pool of coaches	Facilitate a variety of CPD opportunities for practitioners in the region	Support partners to articulate Career Pathways to their practitioners, ensuring skilled and experienced practitioners who do not want to be managers have an alternative progression route		Promote a regional identity through social media channels, sharing progression, development and network opportunities and resources from across the partnership with all staff	
	Ensure equality & diversity in recruitment and progression, linked to ADASS priorities	Target social worker resilience through an overarching 'Wellbeing' agenda	Develop joined-up recruitment strategies e.g. a local talent pool and application management system	Coordinate a joined-up PQ/CPD framework for practitioners in the region, linked to the Career Pathways		Collate and share statutory workforce data collections and additional workforce data across the TP

41. Previously all work delivered by the TP was coordinated via six workstreams. These workstreams aligned to an Implementation Plan, submitted to the DfE as part of the application to become a TP, as well as to key outcomes outlined in the DfE's grant offer. In brief, these workstreams were as follows:

    a. <u>Student Selection:</u> Ensure the highest calibre of Social Work students with the attributes, competencies and passion needed to thrive in the profession are recruited to our academic programmes.

    b. <u>Curriculum Development:</u> Develop a curriculum that aligns with local need and is grounded not only in research and the Chief Social Workers' Knowledge and Skills Statements, but also in practice.

    c. <u>Readiness for Practice:</u> Give students the experience & support they need to ensure they are ready to practice within our region as Newly Qualified Social Workers.

    d. <u>Academics in Practice:</u> Ensure practice across our region is consistently informed by theory & research and that academics' teaching is equally informed by practice.

    e. <u>Regional Progression & Development</u>: Create regional progression pathways and Continuing Professional Development opportunities capable of attracting and retaining the best and brightest Social Workers in the UK.

    f. <u>Future Workforce:</u> Better understand our regional labour market to enable us to develop a robust plan to meet our partnership's current and future workforce demands.

42. As we approach the third year of the TP, the majority of planned work under these areas has been completed, or is in the process of being completed, and the initial TP two year project lifecycle is coming to an end. All continuing activities that are embedded across the TP will become 'Business as Usual' (BAU) and this is outlined in a separate BAU Handover document;

43. This transition from a 'project' to 'BAU' releases resource from the existing Project and Practice Education teams to take forward a new Implementation Plan that will be aligned to this Strategy and the associated framework (pg. 9);

44. Crucially, sustainability funding from the DfE has been announced and this will be boosted by a financial contribution from core members of the TP as well as an annual membership fee, allowing the activities required to deliver against this Strategy to be funded;

45. New governance structures, partnership agreements and associated documents will be produced to provide the infrastructure for the TP to carry out the agreed work;

46. The following are a number of key aims identified through information shared by the DfE, direct employer and HEI engagement, insights from those studying, working and accessing services in and outside our region, quantitative data research and analysis and sector research:

    a. Improving pre-qualifying social work education;

b. Stimulating recruitment of social workers;
c. Promoting a skilled and stable social work workforce.
47. This Strategy also highlights 2 key principles that will underpin the work of the TP and influence its approaches:
    a. Championing innovation;
    b. Improving Business Intelligence.

Aim: Improving pre-qualifying social work education

48. The DfE has been explicit in its requests to develop pre-qualifying social work education through a number of initiatives. For example, involving those with lived experience and employer representatives in all stages of admissions, guaranteeing statutory placements in child and family settings and adult services offering students experience of using statutory frameworks, and quality assuring placement opportunities.

49. The positive impact of TP interventions on pre-qualifying social work education to date has confirmed the need for an ongoing focus on a number of key deliverables:
    a. Maintaining increased entry requirements and enhanced point of entry tests (involving TCs and SUCs) for admission on to the Bachelors (BA) and Masters in Social Work (MSW programmes;
    b. Driving forward academic shadowing of practice to ensure student exposure to a curriculum influenced by local practice issues and contemporary social work;
    c. Building on the service user and carer training and involvement in curriculum design and delivery;
    d. Quality assuring learning opportunities on practice placements;
    e. Agreeing minimum requirements for learning opportunities on PVI placements;
    f. Supporting Practice Educators (PEs) and Onsite Supervisors (OSSs) across the region through workshops and support groups, facilitated by the TP's Practice Education Team;
    g. Developing OSSs through a learning programme suitable for both qualified and non-qualified OSSs delivered by the HEI's Practice Education Lead to those taking students;
    h. Ensuring first and second practice placements on the BA and MSW programmes are increasingly provided by partner employers (75% of placements annually), coordinated at dedicated Placement Allocation Meetings;
    i. Supporting Teaching Consultants in their role to ensure students are taught specialist elements of the curriculum by those responsible for statutory social work;
    j. Delivering employment skills sessions to final year BA and MSW students by partner employers to prepare them for their NQSW application and interview;

k. Launching a support structure for apprentices on the new Social Work Integrated Degree Apprenticeship;

Aim: Stimulating recruitment of social workers

50. Direct employer engagement has told us that employers in the TP should benefit from priority access to social workers who studied / are studying within the partner HEI, Kingston University;

51. This should be effective from student induction, through to the taught curriculum, placement allocations and eventual post-graduation employment;

52. The result should be a steady pipeline of social workers from Kingston University into partner employers who are not only well prepared for practice, in particular local practice, but who are familiar with the employer, their processes and organisational culture, thus accelerating their induction and integration. This is already being delivered in a number of ways, all of which will continue:

    a. The role of Teaching Consultant ensures students are exposed to partner employers from the point of admission through to the delivery of the curriculum on both the Bachelors (BA) and Masters in Social Work (MSW) programmes;

    b. Similarly the first and second practice placements are increasingly provided by partner employers on the BA and MSW;

    c. NQSW vacancies are advertised directly to final year BA and MSW students via Kingston University on the student's digital platform, via partner employers at the employment skills sessions, and also via the TP website.

53. To build upon the success in this area, the following are additional deliverables for the TP in years three and four:

    a. Improve the recruitment journey from student to NQSW by developing a 'grow your own' scheme for Kingston University students and partner employers. By identifying those students who wish to secure employment with a partner employer during their first year of studies and ensuring these students have both placements with these agencies, the pipeline of NQSWs entering agencies should be better established and more reliable. There is the added benefit that NQSWs find the transition from student to social worker smoother and feel a sense of 'allegiance' to their employer, potentially improving retention rates in the currently problematic years 1-3 post qualifying;

    b. Design an annual Careers Fair for partner employers to access final year students who are undecided about their next steps in order to fill any residual NQSW vacancies after the 'grow you own' scheme;

    c. Develop a joined up approach to recruitment for NQSW vacancies through cross-TP applicant tracking and interview panels to improve

business efficiencies, save costs and ensure a robust and consistent 'best practice' approach across the region;

d. Develop joined up recruitment strategies for experienced roles to enable skilled practitioners to progress and remain within the TP, for example through a local talent pool and application management system.

Aim: Promoting a skilled and stable workforce

54. Direct employer engagement, analysis of workforce data and sector research has told us that retention of social workers is a challenge for many local authority employers, including those in our TP;

55. For children and family social workers in local authorities, national turnover rates increased in the year ending September 2018 to 16%. In the TP in the same period, the turnover rate for children and family social workers was considerably higher than the national average at 24%;

56. Although turnover rate was down for adult social workers in local authorities nationally, and the TP's adult social work rate was consistent with the national figure at 13.7%, both children and family and adults directorates across the TP experienced challenges retaining those with less than 5 years' experience, in particular those with less than 2-3 years' experience;

57. 46.3% of children and family social workers leaving partner employers had been employed by that agency for less than 2 years and adult social workers in the TP with less than 3 years' experience had the highest turnover rate at 23.2%;

58. We know that the following are key factors influencing retention:
    a. Workload (caseload and paperwork)
    b. Resilience
    c. Progression opportunities
    d. Training opportunities
    e. Working environment and technology
    f. Flexible working
    g. Supportive management

59. To support the development and retention of the existing workforce, the TP has already delivered in a number of ways, all of which will continue:
    a. Commissioned, delivered or facilitated a wider variety of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for practitioners in the region e.g. facilitating the opening up of courses between partners through the CPD Passport scheme and commissioning experts to deliver masterclasses, conferences and workshops;
    b. Contributed to the development of an alternative professional development pathway and a 'Coaching Culture' by designing a Level 7 post-qualifying course - Mentoring, Coaching and Advanced Assessment of Professional Practice - and supported partners to establish regional pool of coaches;

c. Specifically targeted social worker resilience through an overarching 'Wellbeing' agenda, with conferences, bespoke training, a social media presence and 'Wellbeing Hub' on the Developing Together website. Strategic Leads have noted that those who are partaking are contributing to a wellbeing change culture in their own organisations;

60. The TP recognises social worker retention as the core priority for years three and four not least because a stable workforce is fundamental in delivering effective change and high quality practice. As such, the following deliverables are integral:

a. Consult on existing ASYE standards across the TP, ensuring a consistent, well structured, supportive programme is in place for all NQSWs in our region including developing NQSW assessor support/training programmes in line with KSS expectations;

b. Better support the transition out of ASYE into experienced practitioner roles, reducing the 'cliff-edge', most likely through a post-ASYE 'Consolidation Year' or 'Early Professional Development' programme lasting two years. This could involve the use of coaches or mentors to support recently qualified social workers to develop their practice or draw on the skills, knowledge and experience of existing Practice Educators who aren't currently taking students on placement;

c. Collaboratively develop a CPD/PQ framework that is aligned to the needs of employers, sector developments and findings of the skills gap analysis, but also aligned to clear Career Pathways;

d. Support partner agencies in articulating Career Pathways to their practitioners, ensuring skilled and experienced practitioners who do not want to be managers have an alternative progression route. For example, through a 'Consultant Practitioner' role that enables experienced social workers to be an expert for the organisation on a niche and specific area of practice. This is particularly relevant for children and family social work where there are no 'recognised' specialist roles like there are for adult social work e.g. Best Interest Assessors and Approved Mental Health Professionals;

e. Develop a social work specific 'Step into Management' programme for aspiring social work managers to address the challenges faced by first time managers and ensure social work teams are supported by experienced, skilled and resilient managers offering effective supervision. The leadership and management programme currently offered by many local authorities is a corporate one, and is not bespoke to the unique dilemmas faced by managers of social workers;

f. Involve practitioners in research in practice and work with academics on research projects;

g. Deliver reflective KSS workshops to the workforce.

Principle: Championing innovation

61. Through insights from those working within our TP, as well as those working within other TP regions, there is scope for TPs to be the vehicle for outstanding creativity and innovation. Progress in social work has to be increasingly fast moving to respond to the evolving social work landscape as well as the long standing challenges, so our ability to innovate remains at the forefront of resilience, stability and sustainability;

62. In our TP, the starting point was facilitating collaborative research projects between practitioners in partner employers and academics at Kingston University, with the aspiration that this would lead to practical findings that could be addressed through novel solutions;

63. At this time there are a number of collaborative research projects underway, although many are still in their infancy and the more mature projects have not yet produced their final outputs;

64. There is a role for TPs to play going forward in continuing to promote, encourage and facilitate ground breaking research between employers and HEIs, and our TP will inspire collaborative research on an ongoing basis;

65. In addition, our TP will always consider radical approaches when problem solving issues with practice, recruitment and retention and will facilitate a forum for developing collective responses to emerging sector research and recommendations.

Principle: Improving Business Intelligence

66. Through direct employer and HEI engagement, quantitative data research and analysis and sector research it is apparent that there is a need for improved data collection, both in terms of workforce data and performance data;

67. An increase in the quantity and quality of data collected would better inform the TP's plans for improvement in the region. Not only would it help in identifying where there may be issues, gaps or opportunities to address, it would also tell us more about any action we have taken and whether it is working well or requires improvement. The use of data in decision-making is vital and whilst initial steps have been taken to enhance the data available, there still remains a significant piece of work to be executed;

68. To date, the TP has monitored more robustly and reported more widely on a number of measures, including the following:
    a. Entry levels of those admitted into the BA in Social Work programme (BA);
    b. The role experienced practitioners and those with lived experience have in admitting students into the BA and Masters in Social Work (MSW) programmes;

    c. The extent to which experienced practitioners and those with lived experience contribute to the design and delivery of teaching on both the BA and MSW;

    d. The extent to which academics responsible for teaching on the BA and MSW programmes experience frontline practice;

    e. Students' academic achievement on Readiness for Direct Practice module;

    f. Provision of statutory placements and the provision of placements by those within the TP;

    g. The extent to which independent Practice Educators are used;

    h. The quality of placements (quality assurance conducted independently by the central TP Practice Education Team);

    i. The success of Kingston University graduates in securing employment as an NQSW within partner employers.

69. In addition, the TP has been able to draw on a number of workforce data sources to produce a TP Workforce Analysis which has been used to inform the production of this Strategy;

70. Deliverables for the next two years include:

    a. Sharing information supplied as part of statutory returns to the DfE for the data collection on the children's social work workforce and Skills for Care, who is commissioned by the Department of Health and Education for their data collection service known as Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS);

    b. Collecting and sharing supplementary information through a TP issued workforce survey to each partner employer and Kingston University;

    c. Better understanding the data needs of the different partners and developing approaches to collecting the necessary information. The creation of legacy tools will allow the TP to collect improved outcome, output and workforce data - particularly important given much of the outcome data will only be available further downstream;

    d. Developing a skills gap analysis to inform workforce opportunities across the partnership.

Barriers to success

71. The following are a number of key challenges and barriers to success that the TP must navigate. In most cases these are obstacles that the TP has already experienced to date.

    a. Engagement and communication:

        i. Levels of engagement in the TP have varied, both between partner agencies and within the same partner agencies. Whilst some partners have been consistently engaged at every level, others have been engaged at an operational level but have struggled to demonstrate a similar level of strategic engagement. This can slow decision making and has a significant impact on pace and momentum;

ii. Impact has proved difficult to evidence due to the medium-long term nature of the project outcomes, and this has contributed to inconsistent engagement amongst partners. However, the [May 2016](#) and [June 2019](#) DfE commissioned evaluations on the Phase 1 and 2 TPs which are further ahead in their journeys, along with the early and indicative impacts illustrated throughout the TP's [Year One Progress Report](#) (Aldred and Lansley, 2019) can make the case for continuing the TP whilst partners realise the benefits that will sustain partnership engagement;

iii. In addition, the ongoing membership of the TP is changing, with a number of partners not subscribing formally to the TP beyond March 2020, although it is expected that an ongoing relationship will be maintained. The unintended benefit of this change is that a smaller and more engaged group remains, enabling the TP to be more progressive, provided the core partners play an active role in the TP, reaffirming their commitment and representing their organisations at Strategic Board meetings;

iv. Finally, core partners recently attended a Visioning Day to develop a plan focused on agreed priorities and this Strategy has been adapted to reflect the outputs from this event.

b. Partnership working:

i. The nature of partnership working across different agencies means that there is often no 'one size fits all' approach in terms of developing processes and approaches;

ii. Furthermore, working across both children and family and adult social work could present a challenge when it comes to agreeing priorities and the direction of travel;

iii. In addition, some organisations may require additional facilitation to get activities off the ground whilst others will be more proactive and driven. This in turn could lead to resentment amongst partners;

iv. However, the challenges of partnership working are likely to be mitigated in some way by the reduction in the number of core partners as the TP enters its third year and the alignment of priorities as part of the recent Visioning Day.

c. Sustainability and dependency:

i. The ongoing work of the TP will continue to be largely resourced by the Project Lead, Social Work Lead and two Practice Consultants (formerly known as Practice Education Development Workers). It is recognised that these posts have supported the programme with a range of activities and have been critical to facilitating pace, communication, stakeholder engagement and operational accountability for workstreams. The national evaluation of TPs also noted having a central function as one of their key transferable lessons;

ii.   Whilst the benefits of having additional resources are evident, the dependency on a central function can make long term sustainability more difficult. It can also contribute to a sense of detachment from the TP amongst partners, who may view it as a separate entity that they subscribe to rather than something that they are very much a part of;

iii.   Previously, in acknowledgement of this, 'workstream leads' from partner agencies were allocated to each area of work to improve ownership and assist with embedding initiatives and sustainability. A similar model will be adopted for future arrangements.

Chapter 5: Defining success and ensuring progress

72. Our vision as set out in this Strategy is to leverage the strengths of our partners to create the UK's leading pre and post-qualifying social work education community, capable of attracting, developing and retaining the best and brightest social workers in the country;

73. To achieve our vision we have identified four outcomes that provide the strategic framework that we will use to measure and ensure the progress we wish to see within the labour market:
    a. High calibre graduates;
    b. Efficient recruitment;
    c. Low turnover rates;
    d. Improved practice.

74. These outcomes do not sit in isolation; they are interdependent and they all have an important role to play in meeting our vision. Moving forward, they will be used as a framework to guide and deliver our actions;

75. Our vision and outcomes for the labour market in our region support the overarching purpose of the social work teaching partnership programme, which is to transform the quality of education and experience received by social work students and practitioners following reviews such as Narey and Croisdale-Appleby. These reviews highlighted an urgent need for better social work education and professional development;

76. The programme aims to formalise collaborative working to raise the quality of social work, by attracting high quality students into the profession and ensuring students and existing social workers have the necessary knowledge, skills and values to practice effectively – and to improve workforce planning and development to address retention and recruitment issues (DfE, 2019);

77. Delivery of this purpose and the impact of the TP is currently measured by a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and an array of quantitative and qualitative information is collected to demonstrate progress towards the outcomes;

78. At the time of writing, the KPIs are being examined to ensure they are still relevant, meaningful and able to be evidenced. It is not uncommon for evaluation plans to evolve in order to respond to programmes that involve emergent and responsive strategies and causal processes which cannot be completely controlled or predicted in advance. Although there is an overall goal in mind, the details of a programme tend to unfold and change over time as different people become engaged (or disengage) and as it responds to new challenges and opportunities;

79. This is particularly relevant in relation to this Strategy, which builds upon the original implementation plan and makes explicit the links between TP activities and workforce planning as well as outlining the new priorities that will address identified needs. As such, it is anticipated that this KPI audit will result in more robust and effective measures that better reflect the TP's current and ongoing aspirations;

80. An ongoing priority will be the creation of legacy tools to collect outcome and output data (as well as workforce data) as the TP continues, which is particularly important given much of the outcome data will only be available further downstream;

81. In addition, the TP participates in the DfE's ongoing national evaluation of teaching partnerships and produces a number of reports and case studies that contribute to these regular reviews.

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