

Evaluation of the Developing Together Social Work Teaching Partnership

September 2020

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Executive summary

The Developing Together Social Work Teaching Partnership was originally funded from April 2018 to March 2020. It comprises of 14 partners, including seven local authorities, two PVIs and one HEI and includes the involvement of an active Service User and Carer group.

The Partnership has a clear 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”

Underpinning the vision is a set of aims relating to the Partnership’s workstreams. These are articulated in a Theory of Change.

A set of Key Performance Indicators were agreed with the Department for Education to monitor progress against the targets set by the Partnership. These were supplemented with qualitative and quantitative data collected by Skills for Care as part of its independent, summative evaluation.

Reflecting the way that the Partnership’s activities evolved over time, Skills for Care’s evaluation framework adopted a thematic approach to document the aims, activities, outputs, outcomes and KPIs of the Partnership. The four key themes are:

- The identity and brand of the Partnership
- The student journey
- The development of qualified social workers
- The future workforce

Key achievements in each of the four themes are presented below.

The identity and brand of the Partnership

- The Partnership has had a clear brand from the outset and awareness of the brand amongst partners and stakeholders is high.
- Events held by the Partnership are many and varied. They have been well received and valued by attendees.
- The Partnership's website is a comprehensive source of information about what it does and the opportunities it provides.
- The newsletters produced are regarded as a valuable way for the Partnership to keep in touch with its stakeholders.
- The Partnership maintains an active Twitter presence and a number of blogs have been written to give an insight into the breadth of activities covered by its work.

The student journey

- An increased UCAs tariff and an enhanced admission process was introduced from the 2019/20 academic year.
- The role of the Service User and Carer group and Teaching Consultants in the student selection process was cemented.
- A range of stakeholders have been involved in reviewing the curriculum.
- Some academics were able to spend time shadowing practice within partner agencies.
- Students have been able to access a range of additional support to enrich their learning experience and to enhance their readiness for practice.

- The placement allocation process has been reviewed and improved.
- The Practice Education Team has provided support for students and the number of statutory placements available has been increased.

The development of qualified social workers

- Five collaborative research projects have been supported by the Partnership.
- The Partnership has delivered a comprehensive programme of learning for social workers in addition to its 'CPD passport'.
- The PQ offer from Kingston University has been updated during the lifetime of the Partnership. A bespoke coaching and mentoring module has been created and the University will be working with the other members of the Partnership to deliver 'hybrid' programmes whereby delivery is shared between academics, independent trainers and experts from partner agencies, beginning with an Early Career Managers' Programme.
- The establishment of a Practice Education Team has enabled a greater level of support for existing and aspiring Practice Educators. Feedback on training and events run by the team is overwhelmingly positive.
- The Partnership has delivered a raft of support around well-being and resilience for practitioners.

The future workforce

- The Partnership commissioned Skills for Care's Workforce Intelligence team to undertake analysis to underpin its labour market planning.

- Intelligence about learning and development needs has been gathered via consultations with partner agencies and through training event evaluations.
- The Partnership has used the intelligence about its workforce to underpin its strategy for the next two years and secure sustainability funding and has retained the Partnership Project Team to ensure that this is delivered.

The future of the Partnership

The Partnership reviewed what had worked well (largely operational issues) and what had worked less well (largely activities requiring strategic direction).

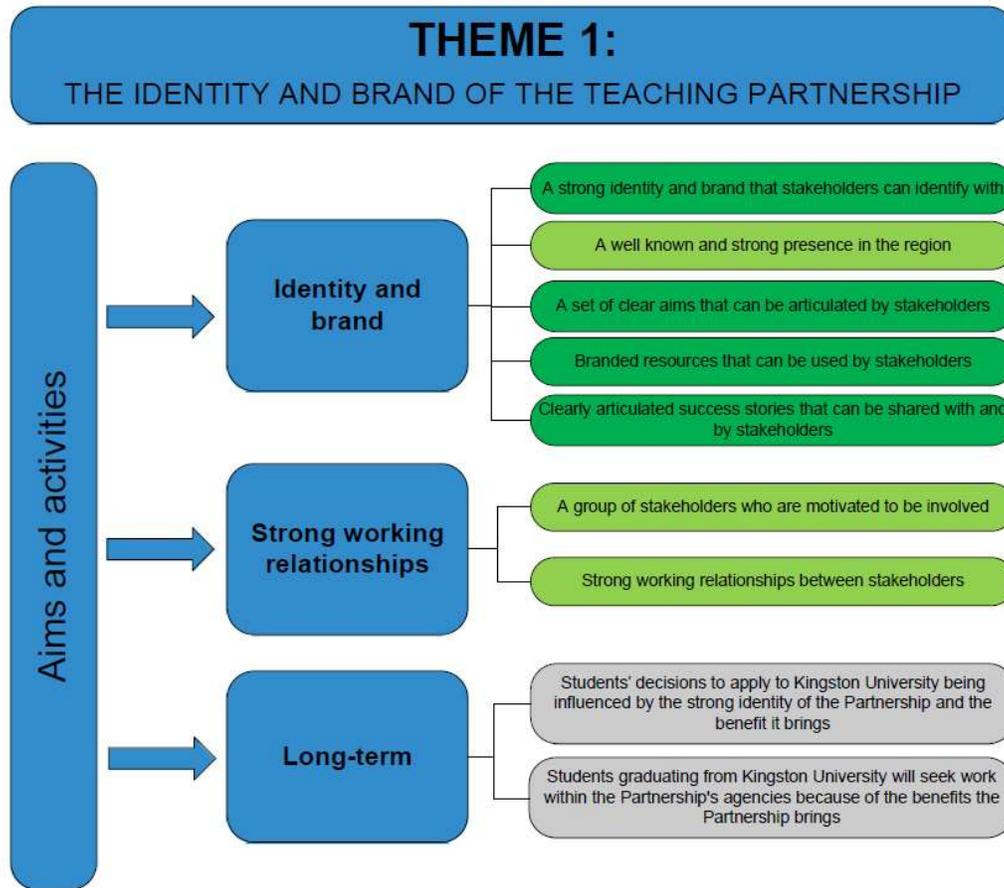
Membership of the Partnership was reviewed and a new, two-tier membership was created:

- Primary partners who contribute financially to the future of the Partnership and thereby determine its objectives and desired outcomes
- Secondary partners who are involved in pre-qualifying activity only

The new Partnership has been working successfully together since April 2020.

The Partnership is confident that it is in a position to respond to the changing social work landscape and the needs of partners as it navigates through the coming two years, and possibly beyond.

A visual representation of the Partnership’s progress against its Outcomes for each Theme can be found below¹:

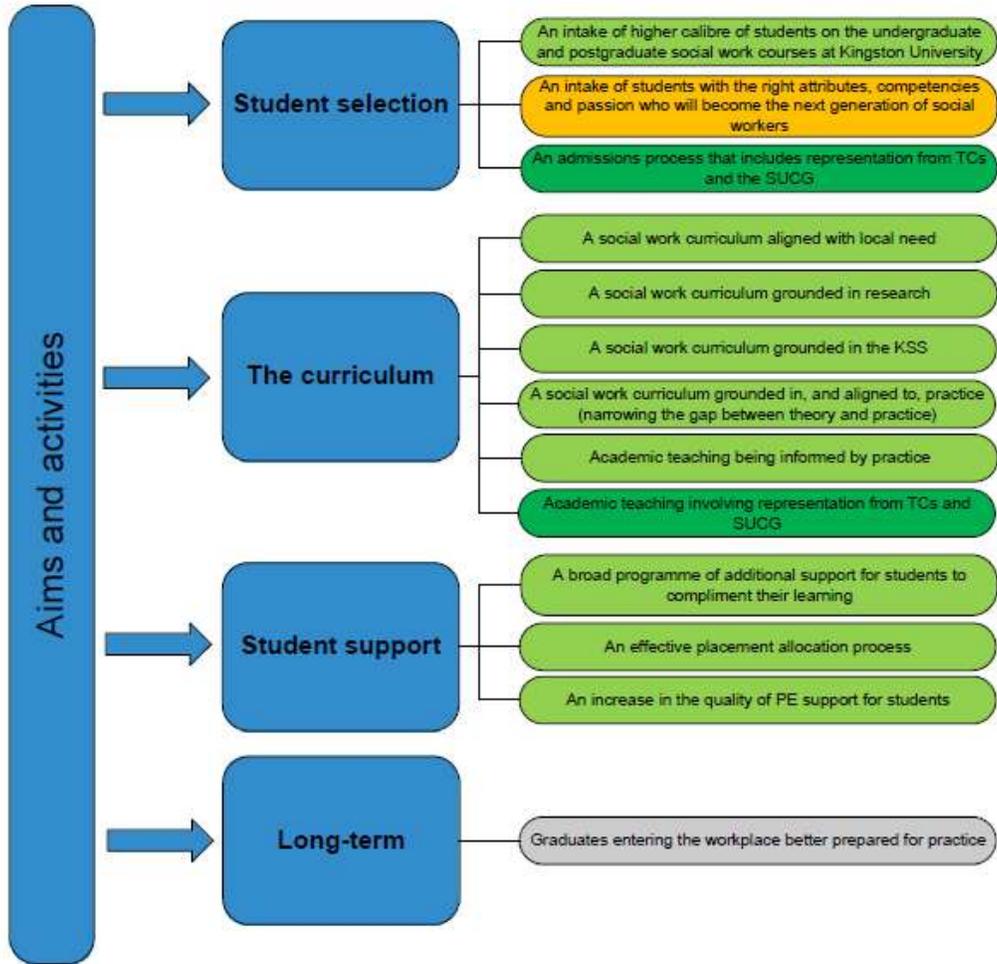


Key:

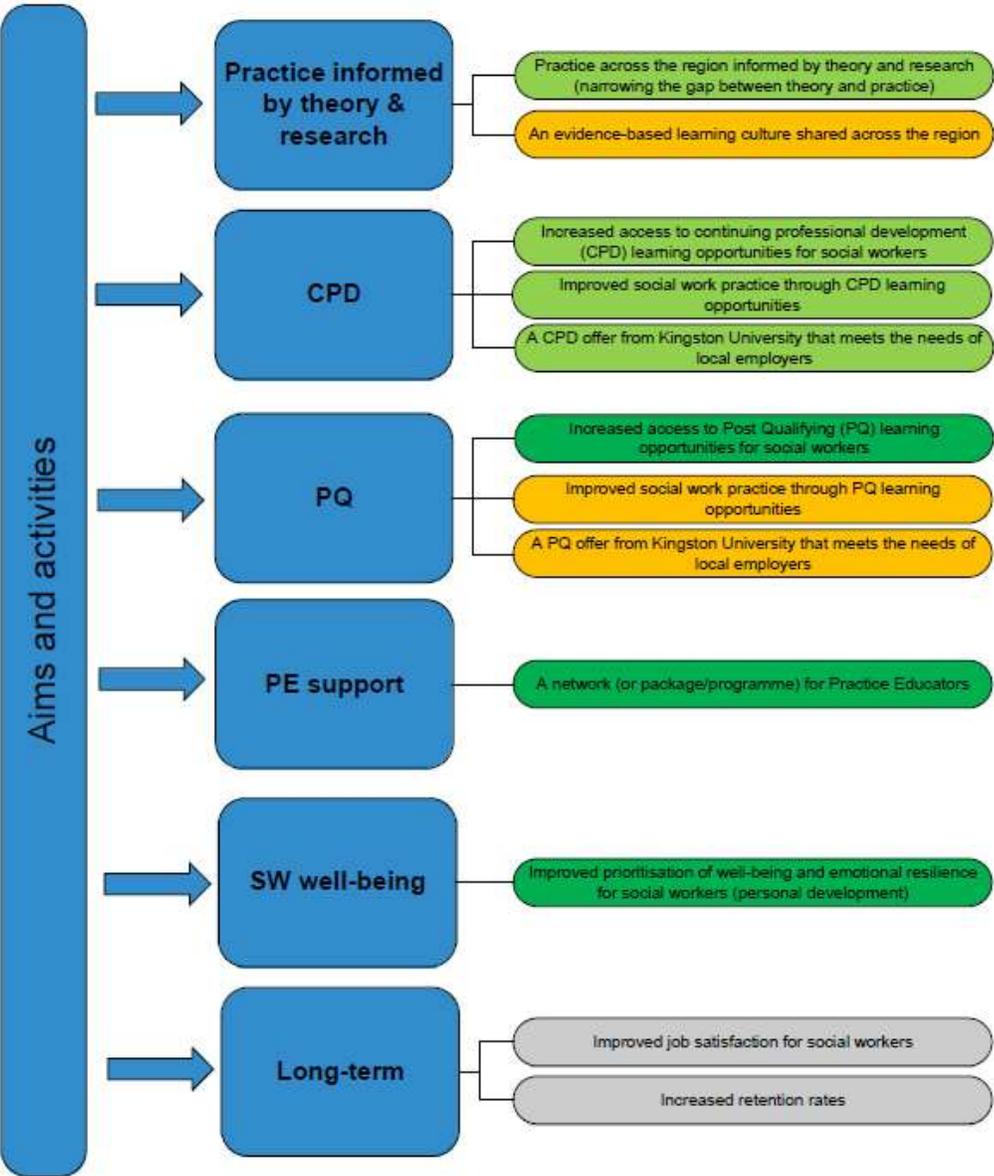
- Strong evidence that outcome was achieved*
- Some evidence of progress towards outcome being achieved*
- Insufficient evidence available to external evaluators to determine progress*
- No evidence of progress made*
- Evidence not available during the evaluation period (long-term aim)*

¹ These diagrams represent the views of the external evaluators based on evidence collected to the end of May 2020. We acknowledge that further progress has been achieved by the Partnership since our data collection was finalised.

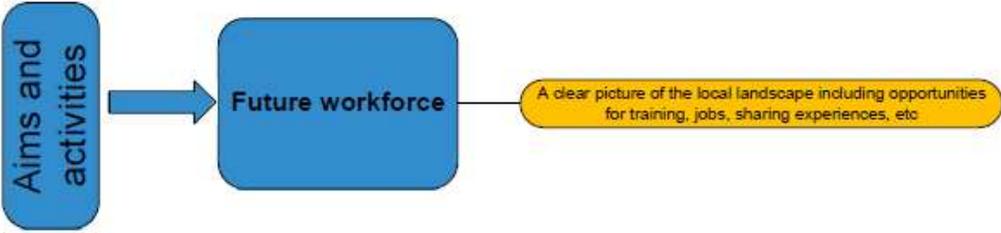
THEME 2: THE STUDENT JOURNEY



THEME 3: THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS



THEME 4:
THE FUTURE WORKFORCE



1 Introduction

The Developing Together Social Work Teaching Partnership (the Partnership) was originally funded from April 2018 to March 2020.

It comprises of 14 partners, including seven local authorities, two PVIs and one HEI.

The Partnership has a Strategic and Operational Board and is managed on a day-to-day basis by a Partnership Project Lead and a Social Work Lead. The activities of the Partnership were organised into six workstreams, each has a working group to co-ordinate and deliver associated activities.

The range of activities that the existing Service User and Carer group has been involved in has been expanded since the establishment of the Partnership.

The Partnership has a clear 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”

Underpinning the vision is a set of aims relating to student selection, curriculum development, readiness for practice, academics in practice, regional progression and development and intelligence around future workforce needs. These are articulated in the Theory of Change.

A set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were agreed with the Department for Education (DfE) to monitor progress against the targets set by the Partnership. These were supplemented with qualitative and quantitative data collected by Skills for Care as part of its independent, summative evaluation of the Partnership.

1.1 Background to the Partnership

The Developing Together Social Work Teaching Partnership (herein referred to as ‘the Partnership’) built upon an existing successful partnership, the South West London and Surrey Social Work Alliance, which has worked together 2008.

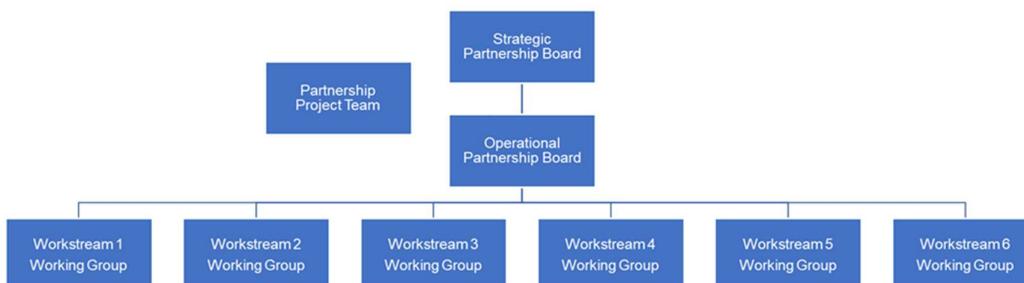
In April 2018, the Partnership, led by Achieving for Children, was awarded government funding over two years.

1.2 Membership and governance of the Partnership

The Partnership is one of the largest of all the Teaching Partnerships funded to date. Its members are²:



The Partnership has a clear and straightforward governance structure:



² Achieving for Children (responsible for the delivery of statutory children’s services in the boroughs of Kingston and Richmond); Croydon (Adult and Children’s services); Kingston (Adult services); Merton (Adult and Children’s services); Surrey (Children’s services); Sutton (Adult and Children’s services); Richmond & Wandsworth (Adult services); Wandsworth (Children’s services); Kingston University; The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC); Welcare

A Strategic Board, comprising of Assistant Directors from each local authority, senior managers from the PVIs and senior academics from the University, was established to lead the Partnership.

Day-to-day management of the Partnership is undertaken by the Partnership Project Team consisting of a Partnership Project Lead and a Social Work Lead who are tasked with co-ordinating the delivery of the planned activities.

An Operational Board, comprising of Principal Social Workers, Workforce Development Leads and academic staff, is responsible for ensuring the delivery of the Partnership's vision.

Each of the six original workstreams also has a working group responsible for the practicalities of delivering of the activities associated with the individual workstream. The working groups report to the Operational Board, providing updates on progress and identifying any risks requiring attention.

Note: Kingston University already worked with a long-established Service User and Carer group (now known as People with Lived Experience), but the membership of this group was expanded by the Partnership and the range of activities that it was involved in was extended.

1.3 The Partnership's vision

The Partnership has a clearly articulated 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”

1.4 The Partnership's aims

In order to achieve its vision, the Partnership aimed to:

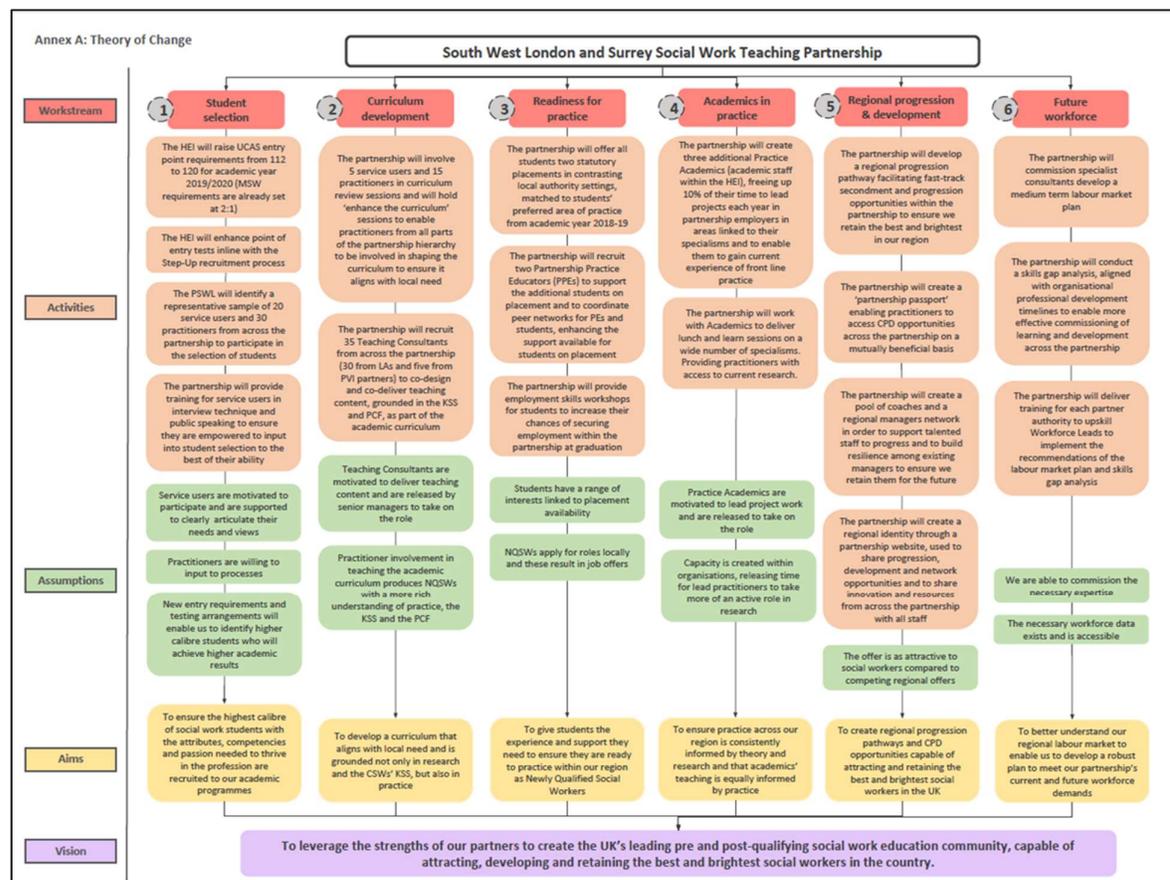
- Ensure the highest calibre of social work students with the attributes, competencies and passion needed to thrive in the profession are recruited to the pre-registration undergraduate and post graduate academic programmes at Kingston University
- Develop a curriculum that aligns with local need and is grounded not only in research and the CSWs' KSS, but also in practice

- Provide students with the experiences and support they need to ensure they are ready to practice in the region as Newly Qualified Social Workers
- Ensure practice across the region is consistently informed by theory and research and that academic teaching is informed by practice
- Ensure that practice is of an excellent standard through the creations of regional progression pathways and CPD opportunities capable of attracting and retaining the best and brightest social workers in the UK
- Better understand the regional labour market to enable the development of a robust plan to meet current and future workforce demands

The Partnership also aimed to develop a strong brand and identity and to build strong working relationships between the partners.

1.5 The Partnership's Theory of Change

The Theory of Change, which evolved slightly during the funding period, highlights the activities planned to realise the Partnership's vision and aims.



Note: Initially the Partnership operated with a series of six workstreams highlighted in the Theory of Change diagram above. However, over time working practices evolved and a more thematic and pragmatic approach was adopted to progress the Partnership's work.

1.6 The Partnership's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

A set of KPIs was agreed with Department for Education (DfE) as part of the application process (see Appendix 10.1). These were closely aligned to the six workstreams articulated in the Theory of Change but have been subsequently mapped to the structure reflected in the evaluation framework (see Section 2.2).

2 Independent evaluation of the Partnership

Skills for Care was commissioned to undertake an independent evaluation of the Partnership in November 2018.

The evaluation covers the lifespan of the funding, from April 2018 to March 2020.

An evaluation framework was produced based on the ‘Results-Based Accountability’ (RBA) or ‘Outcomes-Based Accountability’ (OBA) model.

A thematic approach was adopted, with all Partnership activities falling under one of four themes:

- **The identity and brand of the Partnership**
- **The student journey**
- **The development of qualified social workers**
- **The future workforce**

The framework sets out the aims, activities, outputs, outcomes and KPIs for each theme and evidence of progress is recorded in a tracker.

The following chapters in the report reflect the four themes listed above.

2.1 Background

Skills for Care was commissioned in November 2018 to undertake an independent, summative evaluation of the Partnership during the funding period (from April 2018 to March 2020).

The evaluation was driven by the planned activities, outputs and outcomes of the Partnership, establishing what worked well and what worked less well³.

2.2 Introduction to the evaluation framework

An evaluation framework was created to capture all planned activities and to monitor progress against them.

The Framework was produced in reference to the 'Results-Based Accountability' (RBA) or 'Outcomes-Based Accountability' (OBA) model developed by Mark Friedman⁴. The RBA/OBA model is centred around three simple questions:

- What does the Partnership want to achieve? (its underlying aim/s)
- What will it take to get there? (the strategy, planned activities, personnel and resources required to deliver the planned changes, underpinned by an understanding of the context of life before the Partnership existed)
- How will we evidence that this has been achieved? (the identification of what has changed, how, why, and what lessons can be learnt, evidenced through the agreed success measures and KPIs)

The framework was originally focussed around the six workstreams as set out in the Theory of Change, but over time it evolved to reflect the changing nature of the Partnership's work. The final version of the framework therefore takes a broader, more thematic approach which is reflected in this report:

- Theme 1: The identity and brand of the Partnership
- Theme 2: The student journey
- Theme 3: The development of qualified social workers
- Theme 4: The future workforce

³ Given the timescale of the evaluation there is less focus on impact as much of this will only be measurable in the longer term

⁴ <http://resultsaccountability.com/about/what-is-results-based-accountability/>

The framework incorporates the KPIs but takes a wider approach in order to capture more detail about the work undertaken by the Partnership.

Data and evidence included in the evaluation was drawn from a wide variety of sources. These are set out in Appendix 10.2.

2.3 The evaluation framework

Each of the four themes in the framework has a clear statement of its associated aims and activities, as well as an outcomes and outputs 'quadrant', which divides the outcomes and outputs into segments relating to Effort, Effect, Quality and Quantity (see Appendix 10.3). From these a tracker was devised to record evidence collected against each outcome, output and KPI.

The following chapters of the report focus on each of the four key themes in turn.

3 Theme 1: The identity and brand of the Partnership

The Partnership has had a clear brand from the outset. Awareness of the brand amongst partners and stakeholders is high and many have used the logo on their email footers as a way of publicising the Partnership.

The Partnership's website is a comprehensive source of information about the Partnership and the opportunities it provides.

Events held by the Partnership have been well received and valued by attendees.

The newsletters produced are regarded as a valuable way for the Partnership to keep in touch with its stakeholders.

The Partnership maintains an active Twitter presence, including weekly #welbeingwednesday tweets.

A marketing video produced in March 2019 was found to be a positive way of bringing partners together and has been widely used at subsequent events as a promotional tool.

A number of blogs have been written by those engaged with the Partnership. These give an insight into the breadth of activities covered by its work.

3.1 Introduction

The overarching aims of this theme were:

- 1) To build a strong identity and brand for the Partnership
- 2) To build strong working relationships between the partners (stakeholders)

Specifically, this meant developing:

- a strong identity and brand that stakeholders can identify with
- a set of clear aims that can be articulated by stakeholders
- branded resources that can be used by stakeholders
- clearly articulated success stories that can be shared with and by stakeholders

In doing so the Partnership hoped to achieve:

- a well-known and strong presence in the region
- a group of stakeholders who are motivated to be involved
- strong working relationships between stakeholders

And in the longer term it was hoped that the strong identity of the Partnership and the benefits it brings would influence students' decisions to apply to Kingston University and that students graduating from Kingston University would seek work within the Partnership's agencies.

In order to achieve this the Partnership planned to do the following:

- create a brand
- create a website
- use its branding across all resources/products created and marketing materials/communications shared
- promote its resources, website, social media platforms, activities, etc via internal and external events and at the University through a poster presentation
- promote its key activities and invite involvement through newsletters
- promote itself via social media
- communicate its success stories and examples of collaborative working through the production of a marketing video

3.2 The Partnership's brand

Once the Partnership had secured funding from the DfE it employed a Communications Officer on a short, fixed term contract to help establish a brand identity. This began with some competitor research to learn from good practice. This led to the Partnership changing its name from The South West London and Surrey Children's Social Work Teaching Partnership to the Developing Together Social Work Teaching Partnership.

The Partnership then commissioned a design company used by one of the partner organisations (Achieving for Children) to develop a logo to represent the Partnership. The brief for this was that it should:

- look professional
- be easily identifiable
- stand out from the crowd
- represent the partnership and what it is trying to achieve

The resulting logo was:

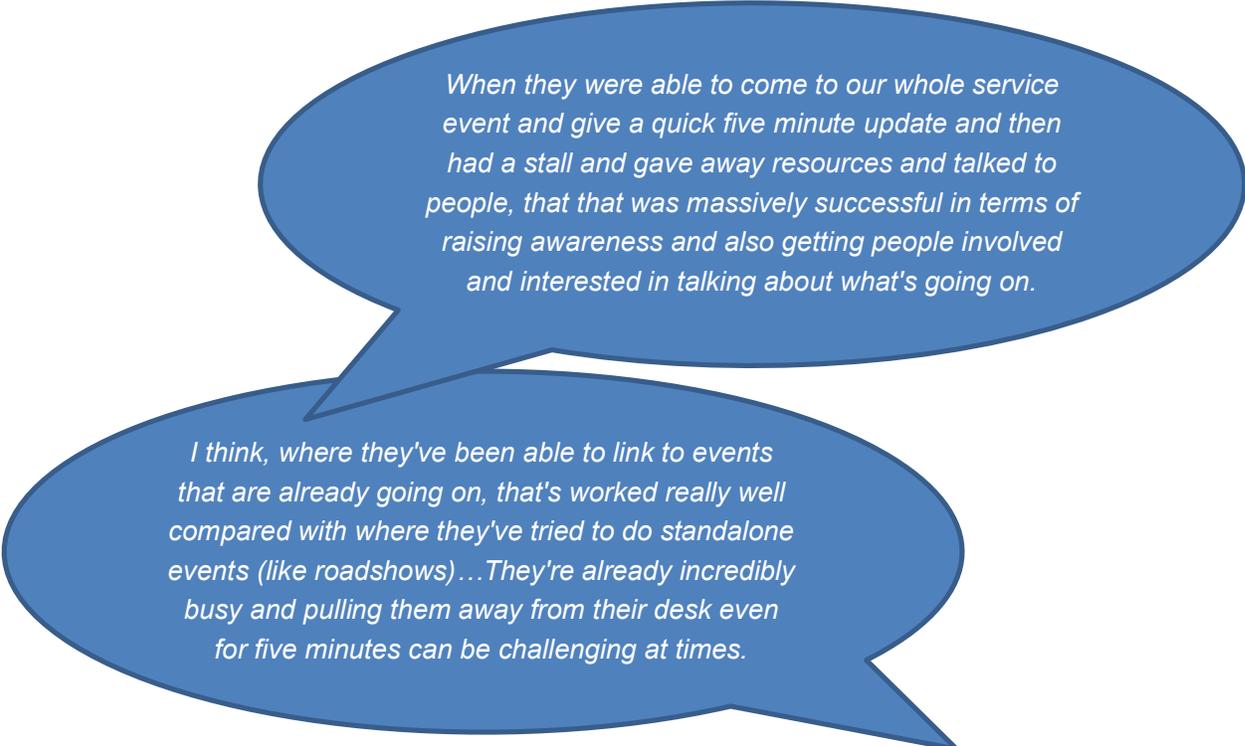


This logo was used by the Communications Officer to establish the original website for the Partnership, as well as a Twitter page, email signatures for use across the Partnership and other branded products that could be used when the Partnership was launched in September 2018.

In the final online survey of stakeholders in May 2020 most respondents (22 out of 24) reported an awareness of the Partnership logo and half (13) said that they had used the logo on their email signature or on resources that they had produced.

In the same survey, the majority agreed that the Partnership had developed a strong brand identity and that it had clearly articulated its aims and objectives (19 and 21 out of 24 respondents respectively).

Wider awareness of the brand was explored in the final telephone interviews with a sample of the partners in May 2020. Interviewees talked about the value of Partnership representatives visiting their organisation to deliver workshops and about times when they piggy-backed onto existing in-house events to talk about the work of the Partnership. The latter were felt to have been particularly successful. Whilst some felt that more could be done to promote the work of the Partnership there was a recognition that this is a shared responsibility across all stakeholders.



When they were able to come to our whole service event and give a quick five minute update and then had a stall and gave away resources and talked to people, that that was massively successful in terms of raising awareness and also getting people involved and interested in talking about what's going on.

I think, where they've been able to link to events that are already going on, that's worked really well compared with where they've tried to do standalone events (like roadshows)...They're already incredibly busy and pulling them away from their desk even for five minutes can be challenging at times.

When asked if there was anything that the Partnership could/should do to improve its brand identity in the future respondents to the final stakeholder survey (May 2020) talked about the need to continue working together to provide opportunities, to support one another and to take joint responsibility for promoting the Partnership. A partner interviewed at the same time highlighted that some of the local authority partners are very large organisations which makes disseminating information to all staff more difficult, therefore they were not sure that there was universal awareness of the Partnership in their organisation. However, they did recognise the need for partners to take responsibility for ensuring that messages are shared and awareness is raised.

3.3 The Partnership's website

The Partnership has maintained a web presence since its launch in September 2018 (<http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/>).

It is a comprehensive resource hub which clearly articulates what the Partnership is and what it can offer. Prospective students can explore the benefits of the Partnership which it is hoped may positively influence their choice of where to study, whilst existing students can find links to partner job adverts through a 'one stop shop' link.

The website is regularly updated and maintained by the Partnership's Project Lead, with contributions from the Social Work Lead, Practice Consultants and others.

Google analytics show that from July 2019⁵ to end March 2020 there were 11,427 page views which equates to almost 1270 'hits' per month. The most viewed areas of the website were:

		Number of hits
1.	Home	2196
2.	PE Resources	1169
3.	Events	1130
4.	Our Partnership	961
5.	Accredited CPD courses	679
6.	Professional Standards	576
7.	Jobs	384
8.	Professional Capabilities Framework	361
9.	PCF Toolkit	320
10.	CPD Training Opportunities	281

There was a 5% increase in the number of hits in Q3 of 2019 and a 16% increase in Q1 of 2020. The Partnership therefore exceeded its target of a 5% increase in the number of website hits quarter on quarter.

Respondents to the final online survey of stakeholders in May 2020 were positive about the Partnership's website (19 out of 24 respondents said that they were 'very' or 'fairly satisfied' with it). This was summed up by a comment made by a partner in the final telephone interviews undertaken in May 2020:



⁵ Analytics data was only 'switched on' at the end of June 2019 so data is not available prior to then. Details of downloads has not been recorded so cannot be reported.

3.4 The Partnership's resources / marketing materials/ communications

The Partnership has produced a number of resources which are available via its website⁶ and which have been promoted at events.



The Partnership has **pull up banners** that it uses at events and produced 100 '**kit bags**' for social workers containing craft kits, card, pens, crayons, puppets, feelings cards, bubbles, egg timer, conversation cubes, stress balls and worry monster to assist in direct work with children. In the future the Partnership plans to develop a similar resource kit for direct work with adults.



The Partnership also put together '**well-being kits**' for attendees at the well-being conference in September 2019 (see Section 3.5 below). These kits included a booklet and postcards on mindfulness, a head massager, an essential oil destress roll-on wrist bottle, fruit, a chamomile tea bag, a water carton, a healthy cereal bar, lavender bags and a stress ball.

The Partnership has a static **poster presentation** at Kingston University with information about the Partnership and the team. Alongside this is a separate poster which is updated monthly with relevant information, well-being tips, models of reflection, etc.

Twelve **blogs** have been produced on behalf of the Partnership⁷. These include reflections from members of the Partnership Team, feedback on specific pieces of work, including an example of 'Academics in Practice', some of the research projects associated with the Partnership and a piece by one of the Teaching Consultants.

⁶ <http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/resources/>
<http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/practice-education-resources-2/>

⁷ <http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/category/blogs/>

The Partnership has also produced eight **case studies** for the Department of Education (DfE) covering:

- Academic delivery (February 2020)
- Academic experience of practice (February 2020)
- Admissions (June 2019)
- Governance (March 2019)
- Placements and curriculum (February 2020)
- Practice support and development (February 2020)
- Progression (February 2020)
- Workforce and labour market planning (February 2020)

Note: Details from these case studies, which have been positively received by the DfE, have been used within this report, where appropriate, and will inform the final Interface evaluation of social work teaching partnerships, commissioned by the DfE. The Partnership also hopes to showcase this information at a celebration event in 2021.

Respondents to the final online survey of stakeholders in May 2020 were positive about the resources and materials produced by the Partnership (23 out of 24 respondents said that they were 'very' or 'fairly satisfied' with them).

A partner interviewed in May 2020 praised the way that the Partnership had facilitated the sharing of information and resources and suggested that this could be cemented by establishing a resource library where useful information and good practice examples could be deposited for colleagues to draw upon when needed.

3.5 The Partnership's key events

The Partnership's '**launch**' event was held on 10th September 2018 at Kingston University. It was attended by social work professionals, students, Assistant Directors and Directors, prospective Teaching Consultants and Practice Educators.



The event was introduced by Dr Clarissa Wilks, the Vice Chancellor Kingston University and included a video message from Lynn Romeo, the Chief Social Worker for Adults.

Speakers then presented an overview of what the Partnership was setting out to do and gave attendees an opportunity to discuss in small groups what they would like to see it achieve and to consider how they could be involved.

On 15th March 2019 the Partnership hosted the first of two **'Emotional Resilience and Well-being'** conferences at The Chaucer Centre in Morden. This was attended by around 100 social workers, social work managers, workforce development leads and PSWs.

The conference included presentations from Jim Greer, Principal Lecturer in Social Work at Cumbria University, on 'Emotional labour' and Dr Sarah Parry, a clinical psychologist at Manchester Metropolitan University, on her research on the impact of social work on social workers individual well-being. There were also workshops chaired by experts to provide delegates with information, advice and skills in relation to promoting their well-being and developing resilience. The conference concluded with a reflection session facilitated by PSWs where delegates were given the opportunity to consider how they would take forward the learning from the event.

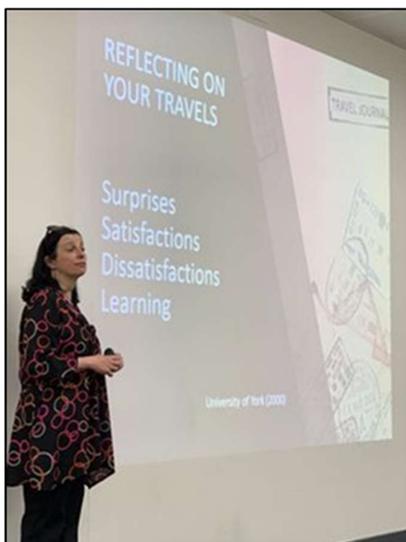


Feedback forms were circulated to delegates, but only 23 responses were received. However, the feedback that was received was overwhelmingly positive with the majority stating that it had 'fully met' or 'exceeded' their expectations (19 respondents). Key take aways from the event focussed around specific skills learnt and the importance of everyone taking responsibility for their emotional well-being and resilience.

The following quotes give a flavour of how much delegates valued the event:



On 5th June 2019 the Partnership held a **'Celebrating Practice Education'** conference at Kingston University. It was attended by approximately 100 social work students, practice educators, trainees and assessors, and practice education academics.

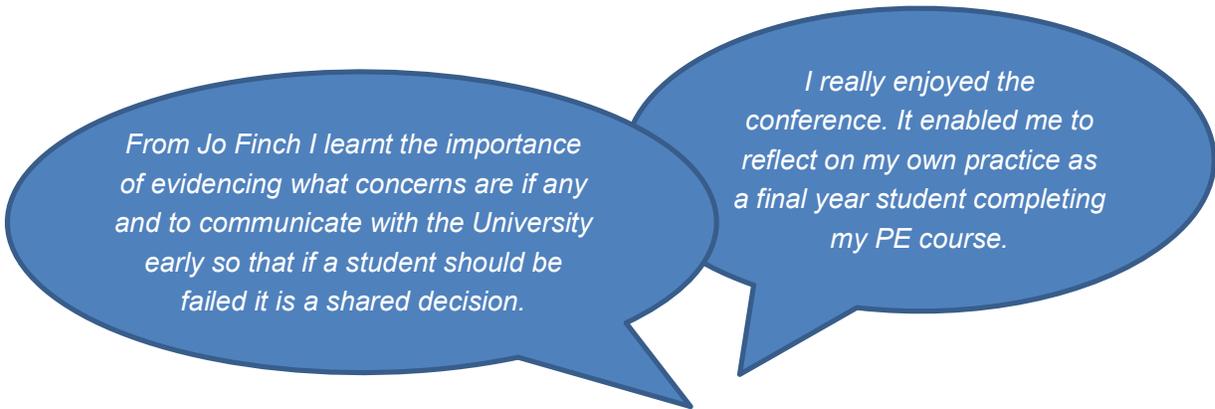


It included presentations from Siobhan McLean, an experienced social worker, practice educator and author on 'Enabling learning' and Dr Jo Finch, Reader in Social Work and Deputy Director at the Centre for Social Work Research on 'Having courageous conversations in placements'.

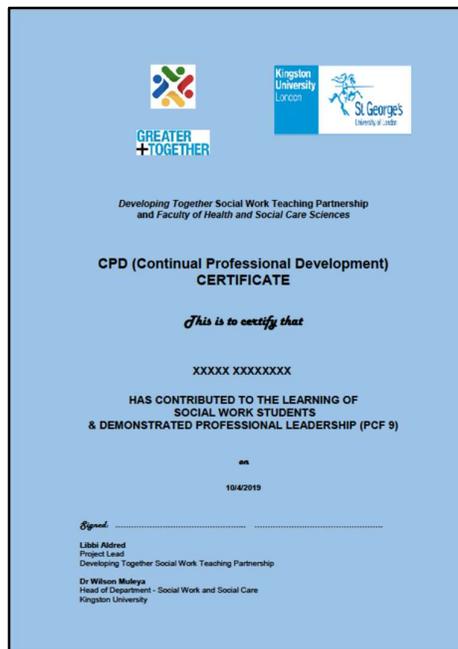


There were also workshops and a plenary session by Carol Dicken, Associate Professor and Faculty Practice Education Lead at Kingston University.

Unfortunately, a technical issue meant that feedback was only received from eight delegates, but these quotes demonstrate that those whose feedback was received had found the event helpful:



A **celebration event for Teaching Consultants** was held on 12th September 2019 at Kingston University to recognise the contribution and achievements of Teaching Consultants during the previous year (see Section 4.4 for more details). 16 of the 34 teaching consultants attended the event, but all were awarded a CPD certificate noting specific KSS and PCF domains demonstrated.



At this event the Partnership also launched an opportunity for Teaching Consultants to undertake a work-based learning project to gain academic recognition (30 credits at post-qualifying level) for the work undertaken during their involvement in the Partnership. This was funded by the Partnership. To date twelve Teaching Consultants have taken up this opportunity. Most assignments were due in the Summer of 2020. At the time of writing, seven submissions had been marked and all had achieved very good results.

Of the twelve, six have now applied to become Associate Fellows of the Higher Education Academy⁸. The opportunity is still open if others wish to pursue this avenue.

A second **'Emotional Resilience and Well-being'** conference was held on 27th September 2019 at The Chaucer Centre in Morden. This was attended by around 70 social workers, social work managers, workforce development leads and PSWs.

The conference included sessions facilitated by Angela Killalea, Head of Practice and Principal Social Worker (Children's) at London Borough of Sutton and Rose Christopher, Clinical Psychologist within Sutton CAMHS on 'Working with Vicarious Trauma' and Mandy Hagan from Here & Now Training⁹ on 'Self-care, work/life balance and mindfulness'. The Partnership provided attendees with a stress reduction techniques booklet and a well-being 'goody bag' (see Section 3.4 above).



Evaluation forms were circulated to delegates and 45 responses were received. Feedback received was overwhelmingly positive with the majority stating that it had 'fully met' or 'exceeded' their expectations (41 respondents). Key take aways from the event focussed around sharing the skills and knowledge with colleagues and focussing more on one's well-being:

I will reflect on today and how I can use everything I have learnt to make more space for myself and then hopefully I will be a better colleague/manager at work

Techniques will be brought back to the team and demonstrated in team meetings

⁸ <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/fellowship/associate-fellowship>

⁹ <https://hereandnowtraining.co.uk/>

Feedback from partners interviewed in May 2020 was very positive in relation to the events and conferences hosted by the Partnership. They were felt to have wide appeal, be well attended and very relevant to the attendees. The benefit of being in a Partnership was clearly articulated by one partner:



We haven't been able to offer things like that [the Practice Education conference] in the past because there aren't enough of them in our organisation. So, for me, it's been really positive that as a Partnership we can do things for smaller groups of people.

3.6 The Partnership's newsletters

The Partnership produced six newsletters between December 2018 and December 2019¹⁰. These provided feedback on events held, updates on announcements relevant to partners, as well as key diary dates and pen portraits of members of the Partnership Project Team and Practice Education Team.

The newsletters are a key way that the Partnership communicates with its members and keeps them up to date with activities and plans. It was therefore heartening to find that the majority of respondents to the final online survey of stakeholders in May 2020 were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the newsletters (20 out of 24 respondents).

Furthermore, there was overwhelming agreement with two related statements:

- *The Partnership has actively promoted its achievements* (21 out of 24 respondents 'agreed'/'agreed strongly')
- *The Partnership keeps me well informed about what is happening* (23 out of 24 respondents 'agreed'/'agreed strongly')

In the interviews undertaken in May 2020 a couple of partners mentioned that they would like to see the newsletters produced more regularly (the suggestion was bi-monthly) so that they could highlight progress made and upcoming events or important information. In order to increase the reach of information about the Partnership it was suggested that a link to the newsletters could be included in the newsletters / communications of the partner organisations.

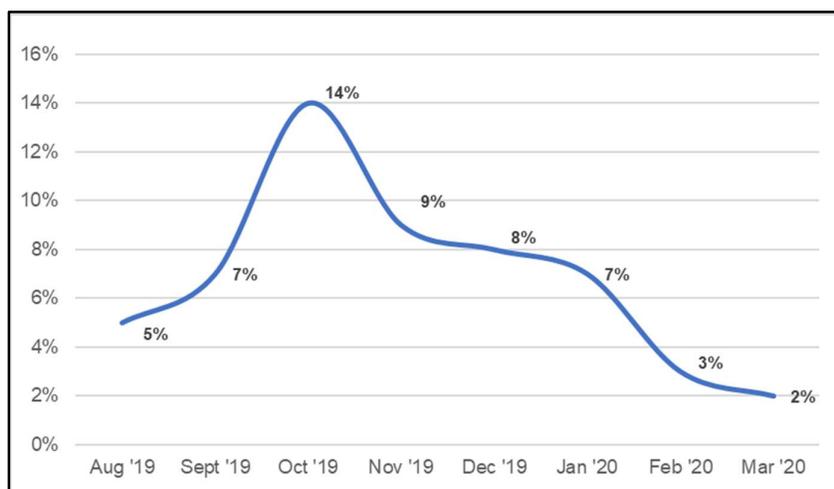
¹⁰ <http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/newsletters/>

The Practice Education Team have also produced a series of newsletters to keep everyone up to date with what they have done / plan to do¹¹.

3.7 The Partnership's social media presence

The Partnership Project Team have maintained a Twitter account since July 2018¹² to promote good practice in local and national social work. As at end March 2020 it had 407 followers and had tweeted 625 times (including weekly #wellbeingwednesday tweets from 5th June 2019).

The Partnership set a target to increase the number of Twitter followers by 5% each month from July 2019. As the chart below shows, this target was met in six of the eight months to end March 2020.



Respondents to the final online survey of stakeholders in May 2020 were generally positive about the Partnership's social media presence (18 out of 21 who had seen the Twitter feed were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with it). One respondent, a member of the Steering Committee, suggested that it might be helpful to do some analysis of the Twitter account to find out more about its followers (i.e. to see if students and frontline social workers employed by partner organisations are engaged with it).

¹¹ <http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/category/practice-education-updates/>

¹² https://twitter.com/DevelopT_SWTP



The use of this social media platform has supported partners to stay up-to-date with news across the Partnership which in my view has laid the foundations for building a stronger community between social workers in the region
[Principal Social Worker]

3.8 The Partnership's marketing video

In March 2019 the Partnership launched a promotional video that it has posted on its website and used at various events¹³. This was a collaborative effort involving stakeholders from across the Partnership and was felt to be a positive way of engaging with partners and celebrating the successes achieved.

Awareness of the Marketing video was lower than for other types of communication amongst respondents to the final online survey of stakeholders in May 2020, however, of those who remembered seeing it most were happy with it (13 out of 17 were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with it).

3.9 Working relationships within the Partnership

The *Year One: Evaluating our success* report¹⁴, produced by the Project Partnership team in November 2019 recognised that the Partnership was built upon an existing relationship between employers in the region and the University, but that it had *"...bought new focus and stimulated new ways of working...[and had] supported improved relationships between partners and the HEI."*

At an operational level, the report noted that *"...there is a common understanding of the purpose of the partnership and how improved relationships, appreciation of roles and collaborative working can enhance the development of the social work profession."*

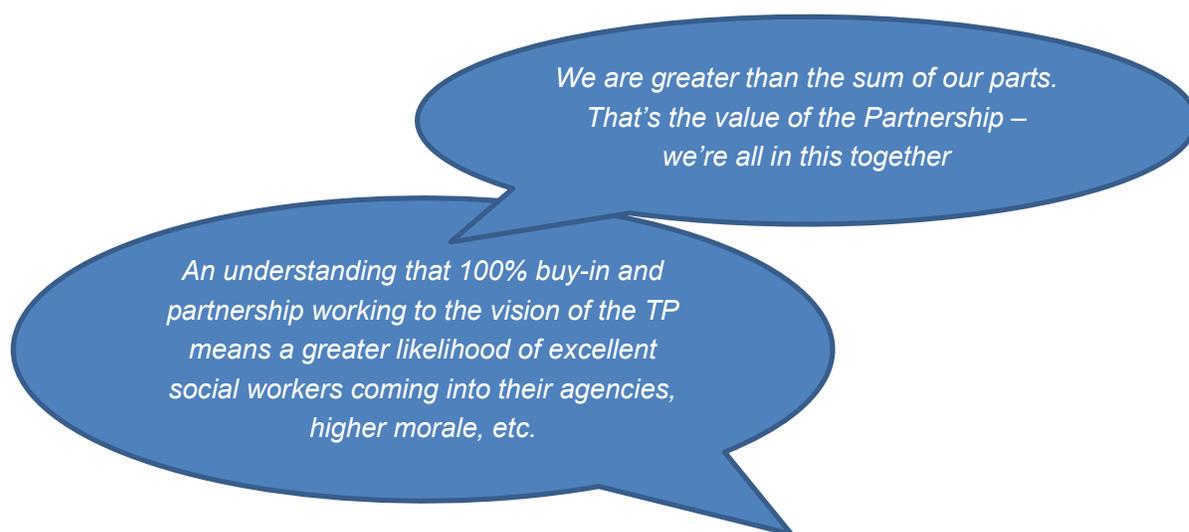
The final online survey of stakeholders in May 2020 explored views relating to joint working. Again, respondents were very positive about what had been achieved:

¹³ <https://youtu.be/pGjmBb5fLUg>

¹⁴ <https://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/year-one-progress-report-evaluating-our-success/>

- *The Partnership has facilitated greater cross-organisational working* (21 out of 24 respondents 'agreed'/'agreed strongly')
- *I am motivated by what the Partnership has achieved* (19 out of 24 respondents 'agreed'/'agreed strongly')

When asked about improving joint working in the future respondents mentioned continuing to make use of virtual meetings, brought about largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and expanding opportunities for joint learning beyond the groups working on specific issues. The need for partners to be equally committed and reminded of the value the Partnership brings was also noted:



3.10 Has the Partnership achieved its aims?

The Partnership has clearly achieved a great deal in relation to building its brand and identity. It has hosted a series of successful events and promoted its resources and achievements via a comprehensive website and through its newsletters and social media presence. Partners would like to see the newsletters become more regular (bi-monthly was suggested) and further analysis of Twitter analytics would be useful to establish who is following the account and to take steps to address any gaps identified.

Feedback from stakeholders suggests that awareness of the Partnership is good within their organisations, although it is not clear whether this awareness exists in the region more widely. This is something that should be explored in the future, especially given that a longer-term goal of the Partnership is that its existence will attract students who want to study at Kingston University and who want to work in partner employer agencies when they graduate because of the added value that the Partnership brings.

Although not specifically highlighted in this chapter, levels of commitment by partners varied¹⁵. Those who were most committed and involved have benefitted from forging stronger working relationships with each other and have been motivated by what the Partnership has achieved.

¹⁵ See Chapter 7 for more details about the sustainability of the Partnership

4 Theme 2: The student journey

An increased UCAs tariff and an enhanced admission process was introduced from the 2019/20 academic year. Whilst not all students met the revised tariff, the average tariff score across this cohort of students was higher than the previous year.

A range of stakeholders have been involved in reviewing the curriculum, building on existing University processes.

The role of the Service User and Carer group and Teaching Consultants in the student selection process was cemented. Both have received training to support their contribution to this and the curriculum.

A limited number of academics spent time shadowing practice within partner agencies and their experiences were mixed. It was agreed that it would be more beneficial for the two parties to work together on joint projects.

Students have been able to access a range of additional support to enrich their learning experience and to enhance their readiness for practice.

The placement allocation process has been reviewed. New guidelines and regular allocation days are now in place to enable the University and partners to agree on student placements. Whilst this has generally been well received more could be done to refine the process from both perspectives.

The Practice Education Team has provided support for Practice Educators and students and has increased the number of statutory placements available by taking on the role of off-site Practice Educator on a number of placements.

4.1 Introduction

The overarching aims of this theme were:

- 1) To ensure that the highest calibre of social work students with the attributes, competencies and passion needed to thrive in the profession are recruited to the undergraduate and postgraduate academic programmes at Kingston University
- 2) To develop a curriculum that aligns with local need and is grounded not only in research and the Chief Social Workers' Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS)¹⁶, but also in practice
- 3) To ensure that academic teaching is informed by practice
- 4) To provide students with the experiences and support they need to ensure they are ready to practice in the region as competent NQSWs

Specifically, this meant:

- increasing the entry requirements and strengthening the admissions process for students
- reviewing the curriculum
- recruiting Teaching Consultants
- introducing a broader programme of additional support for students
- improving the placement allocation process
- increasing the provision of statutory placements
- increasing the quality of Practice Educator support for students
- increasing the number of Service Users and Carers and expanding their role

In doing so the Partnership hoped to achieve:

- an intake of higher calibre of students who have the right attributes, competencies and passion to become the next generation of social workers
- greater involvement of Teaching Consultants and the Service User and Carer Group in the student admissions process and in teaching the curriculum
- a curriculum that meets local need, the requirements of the KSS and is reflective of practice
- an effective placement allocation process

¹⁶ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/411957/KSS.pdf
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/338718/140730_Knowledge_and_skills_statement_final_version_AS_RH_Checked.pdf

- an increase in the number of statutory placements with a view to better preparing students for practice¹⁷

And in the longer term it was hoped that graduates would enter the workplace better prepared for practice.

In order to do this the Partnership planned to do the following:

- raise the entry tariff for the undergraduate course
- enhance the admissions tests for students
- train Teaching Consultants and the Service Users and Carers group to participate more effectively in the admissions process and in teaching the curriculum
- carry out reviews of the curriculum involving a range of stakeholders
- encourage academics to access practice
- deliver a package of additional support for students to compliment the taught curriculum
- review the placement allocation process
- ensure students have quality support from a Practice Educator
- reduce the use of off-site Practice Educators

4.2 Student selection

The Partnership aimed to improve the student selection process in two ways:

- Raising the threshold for UCAS points from 112 points to 120 points for the BA in Social Work course¹⁸
- Developing enhanced point of entry tests

The increased UCAS tariff was implemented for the 2019/20 student intake. The Partnership set an ambitious target that all students accepted onto the course would meet the revised threshold, however, this was not achieved. Of the forty-eight students admitted onto the BA in Social Work course, twenty-five had tariff-able qualifications¹⁹. Nineteen (76%) had UCAS points of 120 or more and six (24%) were mature students with significant levels of work experience (their tariffs ranged from 93 to 118 points).

¹⁷ This was a recommendation of the independent reviews of social work by both David Croisdale-Appleby and Sir Martin Narey

¹⁸ 112 points is equivalent to 3 A levels with grades BBC and 120 points is equivalent to 3 A Levels with grades BBB

¹⁹ The remaining 23 students had qualifications that weren't tariff-able (i.e. Level 3 qualifications obtained pre-2014, international qualifications)

The average tariff score across this cohort of students was 131.48, compared with 123.1 in the previous year (a 7% increase). A full breakdown of these figures can be found in Appendix 10.4.

In an interview with us in March 2019, Dr Wilson Muleya, the Head of Department of Social Work and Social Care at Kingston University, confirmed that there had been a national downward trend in the number of applications being made for places on social work degree courses over recent years and subsequently a reduction in the number of students invited for interview. However, he was reassured that the conversion rate from successful application to acceptance of a place on the BA in Social Work course at Kingston University had remained consistent.

Dr Muleya also noted that the minimum tariff could only ever be an aspiration as the Social Work department is bound by wider University policies which require a minimum number of students to be admitted onto its courses in order that they are viable to run. Therefore, if not enough applicants meet the threshold the University will permit the tariff to be lowered in order to meet its quotas. This position was discussed with the Department for Education who agreed that the Partnership would not be penalised for amending the entry requirements set out in the original bid document. Nevertheless, the 120-point tariff currently remains in place for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 intakes²⁰.

In tandem with the increased threshold for UCAS points, work was carried out to enhance the tests undertaken by prospective students at the selection days. The admissions testing process at Kingston University had always involved representation from service users and carers and from local employers, but this was formalised after the launch of the Partnership.

The aim of the selection day is to test the attributes, competencies and passion of candidates to ensure that they are suited to social work. They include multi-mini interviews (likened to a speed dating approach whereby applicants answer a series of questions at four 'stations'), a role play or group exercise and a written exercise based on real life case scenarios.

There were 20 selection days for the 2019/20 intake on the BA in Social Work course. A minimum of two members of the Service User and Carer group and up to six Teaching Consultants attended each day manning two of the four multi-mini interview stations. Their role was to ask the candidates a question, score them and provide feedback as part of the wider admissions panel discussions. This placed them in a more determining role than in previous years.

²⁰ <https://www.kingston.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/social-work/>

A review of the admissions process was undertaken in June 2019 by a group including representatives from Kingston University and from the partners. As a result the group proposed that the individual role plays facilitated by actors be replaced with a group role play facilitated by Teaching Consultants and Service User and Carer group members. The review group felt that it would enable applicants to demonstrate their relevant social work skills more effectively and that bringing the skills back 'in-house' would be more sustainable. The group also proposed some tweaks to the multi-mini interview questions to include the student's ability to manage their workload / competing priorities. The group agreed that the written exercise should remain largely unchanged, except for an additional instruction in the introduction that the 'content needs to reflect the values of social work'. These changes were ratified by the Operational Board in July 2019.

Following on from the review an Admission Tutor from the University undertook two further meetings to refine the student selection day activities. The first was with representatives from the Service User and Carer group and some Teaching Consultants and the second was with a group of students. Both groups reviewed the details of the group role play scenarios.

In conjunction with the Partnership Project Team, Skills for Care created a short survey to collect feedback from students attending the selection days, but unfortunately the University rejected this idea. They felt potential students were already being asked to do a lot on those days and that they wouldn't feel able to give honest feedback in case it jeopardised their application, so this was not implemented²¹.

However, when meeting with a group of Level 4 students who had experienced the selection day process in 2019, the Admission Tutor was able to gain some anecdotal feedback about their experiences (October 2019). A key point of note was that students felt there was a lack of consistency in approach across the different stations used in the multi-mini interviews which caused some confusion and awkwardness, along with a lack of clear signage of where to go between the various activities. These points have both been noted and addressed. Students liked the presentation and found the written test to be fair. They reported that they had felt welcomed by the staff they met and had formed a positive impression of the University. It was important to students that they received their offer of a place on the course quickly as they were under pressure to make decisions based on offers made to them by other Universities.

²¹ During the 2020 Admissions Processes Review the University agreed to collect feedback from the 2020/21 admissions cycle.

Training was provided to the Service User and Carer group and the Teaching Consultants to ensure that they have the skills to contribute fully to the student selection days. This included selection and unconscious bias. Feedback collected by the Social Work Lead after the training for the Service User and Carer group in September 2019 suggests that the group found it very helpful in understanding how the process works, how students apply for the course and how they are expected to contribute to the day.



It was very illuminating – you think you know about interviewing and don't need any training, but I learnt a lot!

The training day filled in gaps where I had uncertainties and gave me clarity

A baseline survey of Teaching Consultants conducted in May 2019 found that 11 out of 12 respondents said that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the training provided whilst the follow-up survey in May 2020 found that all 16 respondents were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied'. The follow-up survey also found that all respondents felt that their skills and confidence had been improved as a result of the training received. Across the individual training sessions run for Teaching Consultants the feedback was consistently high (all rated it relevant and worthwhile).

Feedback collected during telephone interviews in May 2020 indicated that the Service User and Carer group members and Teaching Consultants enjoy being involved in the student selection days. Both groups appreciate the opportunity to observe potential students and explore their values. This sentiment was summed up by one Teaching Consultant in their appraisal with the Partnership Social Work Lead in November/ December 2019:



[It was] an honour to interview the next generation of social workers and to be part of their social work journey

The Teaching Consultants we spoke to generally preferred the opportunity to deliver lectures (more detail about this can be found in Section 4.4) than be involved in the student interviews which they felt could be undertaken by more junior members of staff (i.e. those in their ASYE). This mirrors feedback from the Teaching Consultant appraisals.

This view appears to have stemmed predominantly from the lack of clarity and organisation around their roles, when they needed to attend and where they needed to be on some of the earlier student selection days. Fortunately, these issues were addressed and improved over time and in the follow-up survey of Teaching Consultants in May 2020 involvement in the student selection process was rated equally to the experience of teaching students (fourteen out of sixteen respondents said that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with both).

Academic staff found it difficult to articulate the impact of the Partnership's involvement in student selection owing to the constraints placed upon them to fill quotas (see Dr Muleya's explanation earlier in this chapter) and because they had already done a lot of work prior to the Partnership in order to ensure that their processes were rigorous. However, during a focus group in February 2020 they acknowledged the benefits of having more formalised involvement of Teaching Consultants in the student selection days and were positive about the introduction of a group role play. They also felt that the training provided to Teaching Consultants and the Service User and Carer group was beneficial.

4.3 Curriculum reviews

Kingston University already had a programme for reviewing modules across the BA and MA social work courses, but these were enriched through the Partnership involving a wider range of stakeholders, including representatives from the Service User and Carer group, Teaching Consultants and practitioners from partner agencies.

The Service User and Carer group were involved in a review of all modules in June/July 2019 across the curriculum to ensure that their perspective is represented. Feedback from those interviewed in May 2020 confirmed that they were happy to have been involved in this process and that they feel embedded in the curriculum. Most find their involvement in the curriculum empowering and they feel that their contribution is valued by students and academic staff.

Teaching Consultants were supported, through the module leaders, to develop content for the modules they taught on. Specifically, they were involved in redesigning and/or reviewing the following modules:

- Readiness for Direct Practice (SW4001) - Practice Skills and Methods: Assessment and Intervention (BA and MSW)
- Critical Analysis of Practice (SW6007)
- Theory to Practice (SW7001 and SW5002)
- Applied Social Work Practice (SW7003)

In the final survey of Teaching Consultants in May 2020 respondents were generally satisfied with their *'Involvement in reviewing the curriculum'* (8 out of 13 respondents were 'very satisfied' / 'satisfied') and all agreed that *'The involvement of Teaching Consultants ensures that social work practice is adequately represented in the curriculum'* and that it *'Helps to improve the quality of social work practice through improving students understanding of the reality of practice'*.

A series of 'Enhance the curriculum' focus groups were held in May 2019. Partners met with groups of NQSWs who were completing their ASYE to explore how what they had been taught at the University on their social work courses had prepared them for practice. Key questions were:

1. What are the key areas that social workers need to be trained/skilled in?
2. Did your training adequately prepare you for practice?
3. Were there gaps or areas you needed more input on?
4. If you could enhance or develop one area of the curriculum, what would it be?

Suggestions were made around areas where more focus could have been given in teaching such as motivational interviewing, strengths-based practice, legal frameworks and policies and resilience in Social Work practice - preparing for the realities of the role. This information was shared with the University for them to consider when reviewing the modules for the academic year 2019/20.

The final online survey of stakeholders in May 2020 explored views relating to the success of the curriculum reviews. Respondents were asked, *'As a result of the reviews that have taken place, do you feel that the curriculum is now better aligned with a) the KSS, b) contemporary research, c) best social work practice and d) the needs of local employers?'* Almost half of the twenty-two respondents were unable to comment on whether it was better aligned with the KSS and contemporary research, but those who did felt that this had been achieved. Approximately a third of the respondents were unable to comment on whether it was better aligned to best social work practice or the needs of local employers, but those who did felt that this had been achieved.

Academics responding to the survey were keen to point out that the curriculum is under constant review to ensure that it reflects legislation and working practices and that it is already of a very high standard. The purpose of the curriculum reviews is to sense check this and has led to only minor tweaks to the course content.

Statistics from the National Student Survey (2019 and 2020) showed that seven in ten students agreed with the statement *'Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course'*. This is lower than hoped, but Dr Wilson Muleya, Head of the Social Work and Social Care department, explained that the results in 2019 were negatively impacted by issues experienced by some students who were not allocated placements in time and who therefore had their views tainted and that in 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in numerous changes to teaching plans and assessments which had negatively impacted upon the student experience.

4.4 Teaching Consultants and the Service User and Carer Group

Teaching Consultants, practitioners with responsibility for statutory social work, were recruited by the Partnership to support the student selection process and to enhance the curriculum by ensuring academic teaching was informed by practice (see Sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more details). Their involvement was supported by their employers through a 10% release of their contractual hours.

The Partnership received 100 applications for the Teaching Consultant roles. A rigorous interview and assessment process was implemented involving workforce development, academics, service users and carers and the Social Work Lead.

Over 70 interviews were conducted and from these, 34 Teaching Consultants with a variety of specialisms²² were recruited from across the 10 partner agencies²³.

An analysis of their skills and knowledge enabled the University to match them to modules that would enhance the student learning experience. This formalised the involvement of practitioners in the delivery of the curriculum at Kingston University as previously arrangements had been more ad hoc.

²² See Appendix 10.5

²³ Some were more involved than others and some left the employment of partner agencies



A baseline survey of those recruited (May 2019) found that their main reasons for applying were:

- To help improve the quality of social work practice through students understanding more about the reality of practice (12 out of 13 respondents)
- To learn from students to improve their own practice (9 out of 13 respondents)
- To improve their teaching skills / improve their confidence in teaching (8 out of 13 respondents)

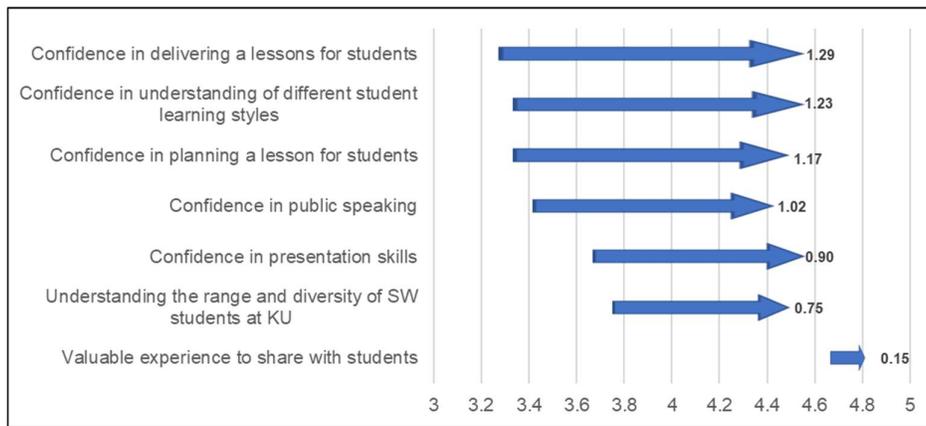
Prior to beginning their role, Teaching Consultants were provided with three full days initial training and development delivered by David Nilsson and Susan Watson from Kingston University. This aimed to:

- provide them with an introduction to the university and a profile of its students
- develop their knowledge of producing lesson plans
- examine the aims and learning outcomes of teaching sessions, styles of delivery and exercises and tools that could be used in the classroom

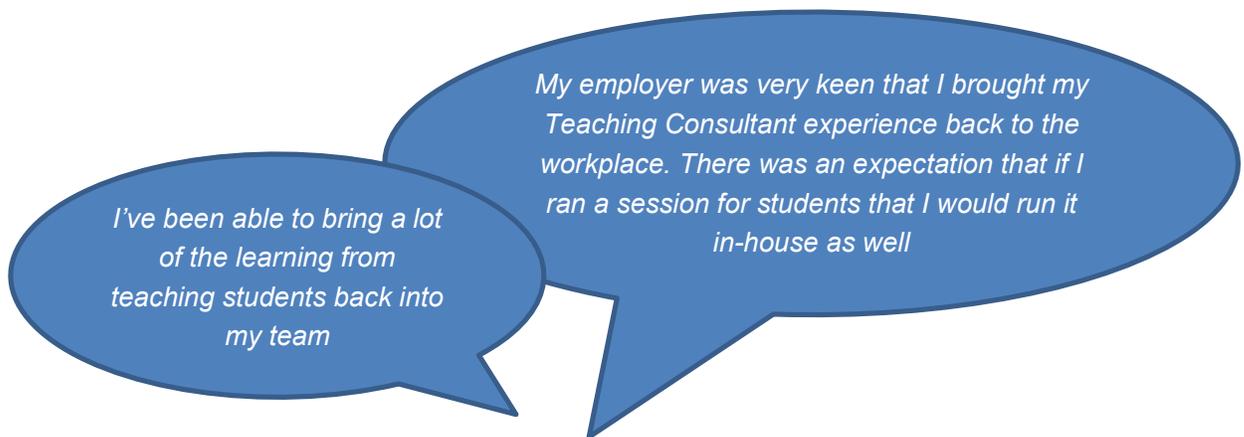
In total each Teaching Consultant received approximately 40 hours of training, feedback and reflection from academics at Kingston University.

A final survey of Teaching Consultants (May 2020) asked them to reflect on the way that they were recruited and the training and support that they had received. All 16 respondents reported being 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their recruitment and training. They also confirmed that their training had improved their skills, motivation and confidence, particularly in relation to delivering lessons and understanding different student learning styles²⁴:

²⁴ The graph shows 'distance travelled' between the Baseline and Final survey of Teaching Consultants using average scores calculated from a 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' Likert scale



In the same survey, the majority said that they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with the support from their employer (13 out of 16 respondents) and from the Partnership (15 out of 16 respondents). This was reiterated in the final interviews with Teaching Consultants (May 2020) where there were lots of positive stories about how their experiences had been taken back into the workplace and had helped them in their substantive posts:



As noted in Section 3.5, the Teaching Consultants have been given the opportunity to undertake a work-based learning project to gain academic recognition for the work undertaken during their involvement in the Partnership. This has helped them to feel that they are part of a group, as prior to that a lot of their involvement had been on an individual basis.

In the final interviews with Teaching Consultants (May 2020) it became apparent that in some instances there had been no reduction in workload to accommodate the Teaching Consultant role. Despite this most were happy to carry out the preparation for teaching in their own time as they found it contributed to their personal and professional development. Others found that the time needed for the role was less than they originally anticipated.



I had some really great feedback from the students I taught and from the tutors I worked with...Even if the role wasn't funded by the Partnership I'd still go in as a guest speaker because I've always wanted to return to academia.

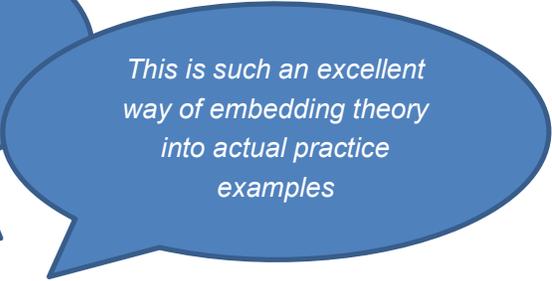
The final stakeholder survey (May 2020) also sought feedback on the recruitment and training of Teaching Consultants. Their views mirrored those of the Teaching Consultants, with the majority expressing satisfaction with both aspects.

Across the BA and MSW courses the Teaching Consultants were involved in 153 hours of teaching in 2018/19 and there were 267 hours of teaching scheduled in 2019/20; unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this reduced to 194 hours²⁵. In addition to teaching on modules, Teaching Consultants were involved in the skills lab for Readiness for Direct Practice.

In general feedback from Teaching Consultants in relation to their experience of teaching was positive. In final survey (May 2020) 12 out of 16 respondents were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the opportunities to teach and 14 were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their experience of teaching.



The Teaching Consultant role has allowed me to share my experience and give student social workers the chance to speak to me as a practicing front line manager



This is such an excellent way of embedding theory into actual practice examples

The module leader for the Applied Social Work practice module gave this appraisal of the involvement of Teaching Consultants:

²⁵ There is no comparable data available prior to this as arrangements for involving practitioners in curriculum delivery were ad hoc

This module focuses on consolidating previous learning from modules on assessment, law and ethics and considers the application of this learning to practice. This module runs just before the students go out on their first placement so the input of the Teaching Consultants is beneficial in introducing key models and approaches they will shortly be applying in practice. Eight Teaching Consultants supported this module. Feedback from the students was very positive - 91%²⁶ stated that they had found the input of the Teaching Consultants beneficial and helpful to their learning and in their preparation for practice.

In the final interviews with Teaching Consultants (May 2020) it became apparent that the feedback they had received from students and tutors was rather ad hoc and inconsistent. This meant that it was difficult for them to determine what impact they had made. However, we understand that a more robust method for collecting student feedback on the involvement of Teaching Consultants has recently been agreed. This will be overseen by a single academic who will produce an annual report of the findings. So, in future this issue should be addressed.

Note: The first-time pass rate on the Readiness for Direct Practice module has improved from 71% in 2017/18 to 90% in 2018/19 on both the BA and MSW courses. While the causation link between this data and the introduction of Teaching Consultants is not proven, the Theory of Change on which the activity was based, suggests strongly that there is a connection between the two things.

Some frustrations were expressed in the appraisal interviews conducted by the Social Work Lead, although there was recognition that many of these had been ironed out over time:

- delays in matching Teaching Consultants to modules, particularly for those recruited later in the process, which limited the opportunities available
- delays arising from academics being unable to free up time to consider where to best use the Teaching Consultants because of their existing workloads
- academics requiring Teaching Consultants to be available at short notice which made it difficult to juggle workplace responsibilities²⁷

²⁶ From a survey with 32 responses from students

²⁷ Note: Academics conversely noted frustrations in Teaching Consultants having to drop out at late notice owing to front line responsibilities

There was also positive feedback from Teaching Consultants in relation to how they had been supported to deliver teaching for example having clear discussions with academics about what is required of them, and how they were used in the skills lab to deliver Readiness for Direct Practice. Teaching Consultants really enjoyed their experiences teaching and found them more rewarding and more aligned with their motivations for participating in the Teaching Partnership, than the student selection days.

A **Service User and Carers Group**, consisting of fourteen people, has been involved in a range of Partnership activities during its lifetime. Despite efforts to increase the size and representation of this group, initial aspirations to expand its membership to forty have not been realised. However, those who are involved are very committed and links are being forged with other representative organisations (i.e. Mencap) in an effort to broaden the membership of the group in the future.

Barriers to participation are well recognised by the existing group. These include financial issues (particularly for those on zero hours contracts or on state benefits whereby payments received can be an issue), lack of time, caring responsibilities and anxieties about joining the group. The latter is being addressed by assigning one of the existing group members to mentor new members, as well as facilitating people to join the group virtually and contribute in different ways.

The Service User and Carers group have a long association with the University, dating back some fifteen years, however, the Partnership has enhanced and cemented its role. In addition to their involvement in student selection and the curriculum, members of the Service User and Carers group have been involved in workstream meetings and interviewing the Teaching Consultants.

The 2018/19 Annual Report of the Service User and Carer Group provided evidence of the extent of the group's involvement:

Type of activity	Number of sessions involved in	Total individual involvements
Student Recruitment and Assessment Boards	47	55
Direct Teaching and Role Plays	17	33
Assessment	12	29
Teaching Partnership involvement (e.g. Teaching Consultant interviews / Teaching Partnership workstream meetings / Attendance at training sessions)	40	79
Other activities	10	39
Total	126²⁸	235²⁹

A baseline focus group with the Service User and Carer group in May 2019 found them to be very positive about their role and extremely satisfied with how they had been supported to be involved and the communication they receive from the University. The ability to help shape future social workers was a motivating factor for some who had had negative encounters with social workers in the past. As well as the group providing valuable peer support they specifically noted that they felt:

- included in decisions and encouraged to make contributions
- valued
- warmly welcomed
- safe (they felt comfortable to make contributions)



²⁸ An increase of 57 compared to the previous year

²⁹ Comparative data from previous years is not available

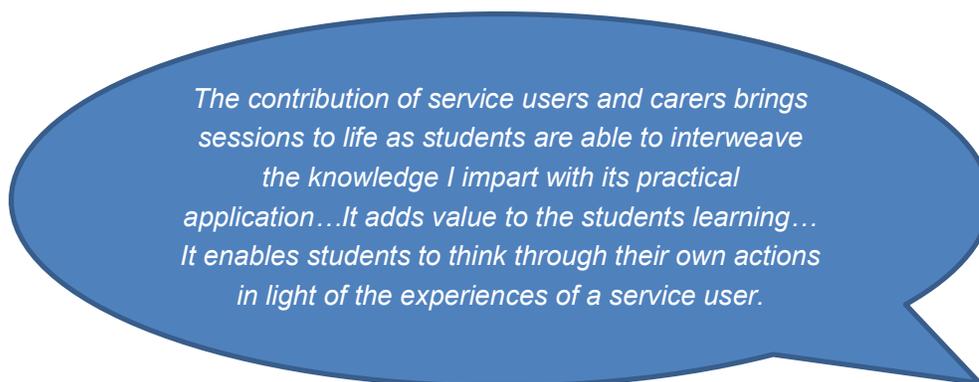
They also mentioned that they appreciated the briefings they had been given before teaching sessions and that academic staff had developed skills to help them deliver practical sessions to students. The group were particularly satisfied with their opportunity to be involved with the Teaching Consultant selection, feeling their involvement was not tokenistic and that they were really listened to:



On the whole training provided to the Service User and Carer group to facilitate their involvement in the student selection process and in the curriculum was positively received and expectations were fulfilled. One member commented that the session delivered on public speaking could have been improved by a greater focus on these skills specifically rather than more general self-exploration.

In our more recent contact (telephone interviews in May 2020) members of the group expressed that they now played a more central role in supporting and selecting students and in the operational and strategic business of the Partnership (through their involvement in workstream meetings), and that they were more visible / have a greater profile (through mentions in newsletters, blog posts etc).

In the focus group with Academics (February 2020) appreciation for the contribution of the Service User and Carer group was expressed and the value of their real-life experience was recognised. One of the Service User and Carer group members passed on feedback they had received from a social work practitioner who taught on the same module as them:



Whilst our evaluation lacks any direct feedback from students, the Service User and Carer group told us that they had received positive student feedback about the impact of their involvement in teaching³⁰ and they felt positive that their involvement would prepare students better for the world of work. They reported that students were very engaged with them and asked lots of questions and that they were grateful to have the perspective of a service user to help them consider how they will apply the theory of what they learn to practice.



[Hearing] the experiences of a mother with a disabled child and the knowledge shared has been very useful and has clarified some grey areas I had from my placement. It's helpful to see the bigger

Service Users and Carers also shared with us some specific examples of positive feedback from students and how their involvement had improved their understanding of particular issues. It was fed back to us that students often requested more involvement from Service Users and Carers with greater representation of different experiences.

4.5 Academics in practice

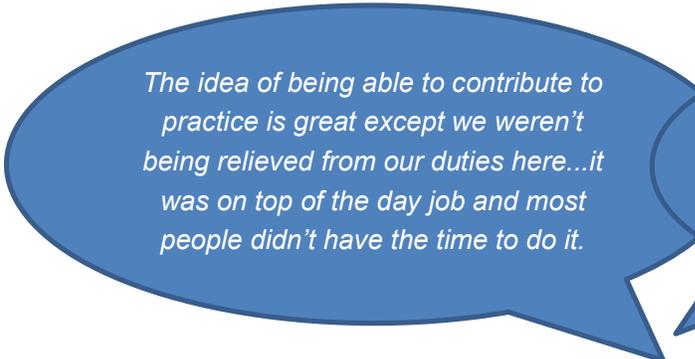
The Partnership's original plans were to facilitate academic staff to spend time observing/shadowing practice within partner agencies. Whilst the academic staff teaching on the social work courses at Kingston University are all qualified social workers this was seen as a good opportunity to build stronger links between academia and practice and to contribute towards their continuous professional development.

Academic staff were initially enthusiastic about this opportunity and put forward suggestions for areas of practice that they would be keen to shadow³¹, but this proved more difficult to implement than envisaged. For many it was simply not possible to fit this into their schedule around their timetabled teaching commitments, despite plans for a 10% backfill.

³⁰ Methods for collecting student feedback have been rather ad hoc in the past, but this has now been formalised so better data should be available in the future.

³¹ <http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/research/>

However, at a focus group with academic staff in February 2020 there was a discussion around the purpose of the shadowing concept. Some felt that it was too passive and was just paying lip service to the concept of bridging the gap between academia and practice because the partner agencies weren't inviting them to make a real contribution to the workplace in the way that the Teaching Consultants were able to do within the curriculum:

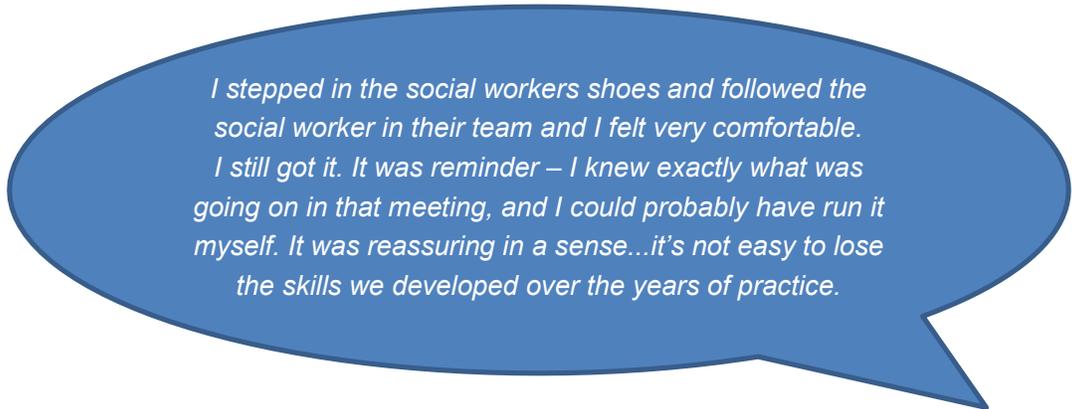


The idea of being able to contribute to practice is great except we weren't being relieved from our duties here...it was on top of the day job and most people didn't have the time to do it.



There wasn't a clear-cut reason why we would be useful or welcome in that context

Those who had shadowed practice also reported mixed experiences. One academic felt that the agency they went to had not considered the role they could play and consequently there was very little that they were able to contribute to which was frustrating as it meant they were unable to take anything useful back into their teaching role. Conversely, Dermot Brady, Senior Lecturer in Social Work at Kingston University has written two blogs about his experience of shadowing practice³² which he described as “inspiring” and another academic talked about how their experience had been reassuring as it felt quite natural to them to slot into the team within the agency despite having been away from front line practice for some time:



I stepped in the social workers shoes and followed the social worker in their team and I felt very comfortable. I still got it. It was reminder – I knew exactly what was going on in that meeting, and I could probably have run it myself. It was reassuring in a sense...it's not easy to lose the skills we developed over the years of practice.

³² <http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/blog-post-the-halt-programme-in-wandsworth/>
<http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/blog-post-academic-shadowing-of-mini-marac-in-sutton/>

The discussion concluded with the academic staff agreeing that the idea of working alongside social work teams in partner agencies had the potential to be positive for both parties, but only if the roles and expectations are clearly agreed from the outset and rather than shadowing practice the benefit would come from undertaking some joint work on a specific issue. Plans are also being explored to enable academic staff to contribute to supervision sessions where they have a specific area of interest / expertise.

Note: Details of the collaboration between academic staff and practitioners on research projects can be found in Section 5.2.

4.6 Additional support for students

In addition to the taught curriculum the Partnership engaged in a broad programme of additional support for students to further enrich their learning and prepare them for practice:

- Three 'Twilight' sessions were delivered in 2019, but uptake from students was poor. This was attributed to the timing of the sessions (students were out on placement at the time, rather than being University-based).
- An Employment Skills session was delivered to 40+ final year students in 2019. A further three sessions were planned for 2020 but these were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic³³.

Anecdotal feedback from students attending the first Twilight session was positive:



Note: Students were also invited to join the 'Lunch and Learn' sessions (see Section 5.3 for more details) and they also have also been able to access other CPD opportunities primarily designed for practitioners. Students can access the CPD brochure via the Partnership's website and specific opportunities that are felt to be relevant are flagged by academic staff.

³³ Students were sent a presentation and supplementary information instead.

4.7 Student placements

The Partnership was committed to improving the number of statutory placements for students on the BA and MSW social work courses at Kingston University. It identified a number of barriers that had impacted upon this in the past, predominantly relating to the lack of a clear strategy and timeline which had been frustrating for partners and issues relating to having enough qualified Practice Educators to support students³⁴.

The Partnership began by agreeing what constituted a statutory placement. It decided to adopt Social Work England's definition which was first published in its *Guidance on practice placements for social work students* (draft) in May 2019³⁵:

A statutory placement is one which takes place within a statutory setting that meets the following definitions, and which requires students to carry out tasks that involve high-risk decision-making and legal interventions:

A statutory placement is one which:

- takes place in a local authority setting or settings delivering delegated statutory functions on behalf of the local authority
- involves a sufficient amount of work on either s17 and s47 cases (under the Children Act 1989) or on delivering requirements of the Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005
- requires case records to be updated by the student, under appropriate supervision

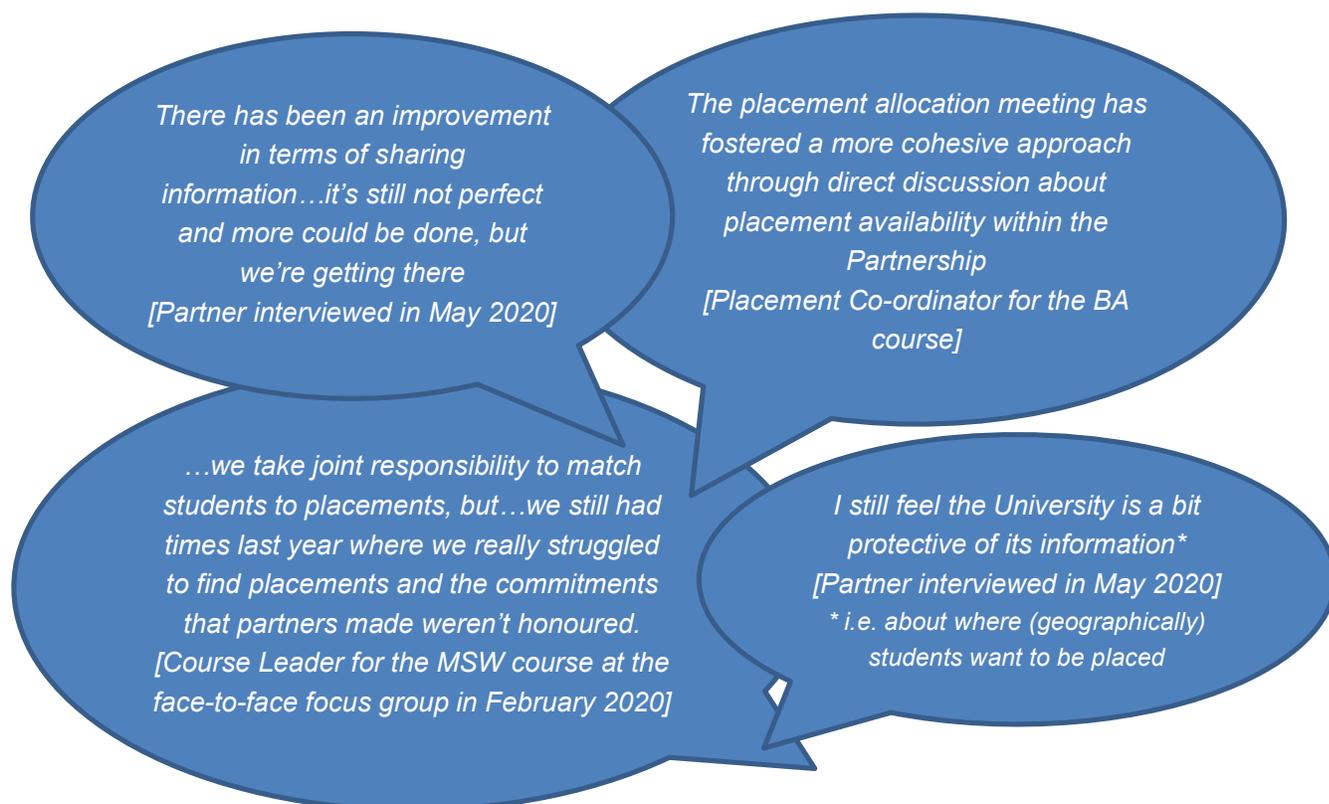
In order to address the challenges identified the Partnership created a Placement Allocation Strategy and Timeline (see Appendix 10.6) which set out its strategy for co-ordinating and allocating student placements. This included a timeline of key dates and the establishment of regular meetings to discuss placements and what is expected of all parties prior to and during placements. In addition, Pre-placement meeting guidance (see Appendix 10.7) was developed to help Practice Educators facilitate initial meetings with students and improve consistency. In doing this the Partnership ensured that relationships were formed and cemented between the University and key personnel within the partner organisations. This will be reviewed on an on-going basis.

³⁴ First year student placements can be supported by someone who is PEPS1 trained whereas final year placements must be supported by a PEPS2 trainee or a qualified Practice Educator.

³⁵ This was subsequently published as the *Practice Placements Guidance* in February 2020: https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/2973/practice_placements_guidance_final.pdf

The first Placement Allocation Day was convened in June 2019. This brought together representatives from Kingston University and the partners in order to discuss the needs of final year BA students for their placements in September 2019 and first year BA students for their placements in November 2019. Partners were sent student profiles for their preliminary allocations in advance to help with the allocation process and these were also projected onto a board during the meeting. A further two meetings were held for subsequent placement tranches.

Feedback about the revised placement allocation system has been broadly positive, reflecting the significant increase in placements offered within the Partnership (up 18% from 2018/19):



In the final online survey of stakeholders (May 2020) there was consensus that the revised allocation system had improved the experience of everyone involved (the University, employers and students), but that there was still room for improvement in relation to the timeliness of information sharing and commitment from partners to honour placements offered.

The table below shows a number of KPIs relating to student placements:

	2018/19	2019/20	% change
Percentage of first year BA students undertaking a statutory placement	55%	90%	↑ 35%
Percentage of final year BA students undertaking a statutory placement	80%	91%	↑ 11%
Percentage of final year BA students undertaking two statutory placements	22%	48%	↑ 26%
Percentage of BA students guaranteed a final statutory placement in their preferred area of practice	Unknown	87%	N/A
Percentage of MSW students undertaking two statutory placements	63%	71%	↑ 8%
Percentage of MSW students undertaking a final statutory placement	90%	87%	↓ 3%
Percentage of MSW students guaranteed a final statutory placement in their preferred area of practice	87.5%	90%	↑ 2.5%
Proportion of statutory placements provided annually across the BA and MSW courses	75%	90%	↑ 15%
Proportion of placements offered within the Partnership	48%	66%	↑ 18%
Note: All in-house Practice Educators used for first placements on the BA course had demonstrated capability against PEPS1 and the majority of those used for the final placements had demonstrated capability against PEPS2 (in rare exceptions to this the Practice Educator was supported by a Practice Assessor).			

As the table above shows, there has been an increase across the board in the percentage of students receiving statutory placements in all but one KPI. However, the Partnership set challenging targets that *all* students should receive statutory placements and that 90% of students should be allocated a final statutory placement in their preferred area of practice, so although progress has been made it has not achieved the targets set. The increase in the number of placements provided from within the Partnership is a very positive achievement.

In hindsight it is not clear why the Partnership set 100% targets for statutory placements that should come from within the Partnership when this is not realistic for a number of reasons, including:

- some students express a preference for a PVI placement
- some students request a placement closer to their hometown
- some students turn down statutory placement offers (i.e. because of personal circumstances or availability of public transport)

These factors are outside the control of the Partnership and mean that it will rarely be able to meet a 100% target. This was discussed by the Strategic Board in December 2019 and a new target was agreed. In future the Partnership will ensure that a minimum of 75% of all statutory placements will be provided from within the Partnership. Furthermore, it has also taken steps to formalise arrangements to address situations where the aspiration cannot be met due to students turning down placements (see Appendix 10.8).

The Practice Education Team (see Section 5.5 for more details) were responsible for:

- providing off-site practice education to students on placement
- providing bespoke support for placements where there are difficulties
- carrying out quality assurance checks on Learning Agreements and Placement Reports (February 2019 onwards)

The Practice Educator Development Workers have acted as off-site Practice Educators for eight placements to date, have stepped in twice to support students on placements that have got into difficulty and assumed the role of Practice Assessor for one trainee Practice Educator. Across five tranches of student placements just 8% of Practice Educators used were independent (i.e. not employed by the Partnership or the placement provider). The Partnership therefore exceeded its target which was that no more than 20% of Practice Educators should be independent.

Views about whether the quality of placements had improved since the establishment of the Partnership were mixed. In the final online survey of stakeholders (May 2020) four respondents said that there had been an improvement, four that there had not and six were unsure. Those who felt that there had been an improvement referenced the additional support available to Practice Educators.

Skills for Care worked with the Partnership Project Team to devise an evaluation questionnaire for students to complete at the end of their placements, but, unfortunately, we did not receive any responses to this. As we were also unable to convene a planned focus group with students due to the Covid-19 pandemic we are unable to include any first hand feedback from students in our analysis.

The Practice Education Team has facilitated student networks for those on placements to enable the sharing of learning and to provide a safe space for students to voice any concerns or raise issues and anecdotal feedback from the Practice Education Development Workers in our discussions in February 2020 indicate that these were well received.

Instead we have relied upon the findings of the Practice Education Team's quality assurance review of the Learning Agreements and Placement Reports which examined the consistency of placement experiences across the Partnership. However, these are predominantly focussed on recommendations for employers around ensuring Practice Educators have the capacity and support to undertake their role fully and around improving the dialogue between employers and the University to ensure that Practice Educators are producing consistent reports on students.

In both the focus group with academic staff (February 2020) and the final online survey of stakeholders (March 2020) an issue was raised that there is no agreed definition of what a 'quality placement' is and whether it is possible, or even desirable, to ensure that all students have a consistent experience. This merits further discussion.

4.8 Has the Partnership achieved its aims?

The entry requirement for the BA in Social Work course was increased and the Partnership was involved in both strengthening the role of Teaching Consultants and the Service User and Carer group in the student selection process and in reviewing/revising the selection days activities. However, it is too early to measure any impact that these have had on the students admitted in September 2019.

Academic staff at Kingston University argued that significant changes had already been made to the student selection process prior to the Partnership's involvement and that because the University was required to fill the places on the course, even if this meant lowering the entry tariff, that it could have little influence in this area. However, the process has been 'tweaked' by the Partnership and those involved in delivering the activities are positive about their efficacy.

Dr Muleya, the Head of Department of Social Work and Social Care at Kingston University, told us when interviewed in March 2019, that in the longer term it will be possible to look at the results of this cohort of students when they graduate and to compare them with previous cohorts and to take a view as to whether the increased UCAS tariff and enhanced selection tests have had an effect.

In addition, Dr Muleya told us that the University will be able to examine the 'value added' scores of students as they progress through their degree and that those with higher scores at entry would be expected to perform better throughout their course. Unfortunately, even then it will be difficult to say with any certainty that these changes had a direct impact because there are many other factors involved in the student journey.

A series of activities have contributed to reviews of certain modules within the curriculum. This builds upon existing processes that the University have to ensure the curriculum aligns with current legislation and good practice. The Partnership has broadened the involvement of stakeholders in this process and academics appreciate the 'sense check' that this provides.

Plans to enhance the student experience through additional learning opportunities delivered via 'Twilight' sessions or 'Skills' sessions have been more limited than planned. The former suffered from poor take up owing to timing (students had already gone on placement so were not University-based at the time). A Skills session planned for 2020 had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and was instead delivered virtually.

Feedback from partners and the University was positive about the Placement Allocation Days and therefore the Partnership plans to hold these up to four times a year. Statutory placement provision has increased significantly over the lifetime of the Partnership, from 75% of all placements in 2018/19 to 90% in 2019/20.

It is apparent that there is no agreed definition of what a 'quality' placement is. This is something that the Partnership should consider developing now that the Practice Education Team have been in post for a year and have had first-hand experience of observing students whilst on placements and also in supporting Practice Educators.

It would be useful to explore the possibilities of gaining student feedback via the University, particularly in relation to their placements. Whilst we appreciate the University has ethical constraints around contacting students it could work with the Partnership to understand the type of data that would be helpful in assessing impact and then look to build that into existing feedback mechanisms.

Teaching Consultants are positive about their contributions to student learning. There was a sense that they would have liked more opportunities to teach as this was the element of their role that they preferred (over the involvement in student selection). They also clearly articulated the benefits to their own learning and development.

The Partnership has cemented and extended the role of the Service User and Carers to group. Although the group remains smaller than planned, those involved have benefitted greatly and are extremely satisfied with the support they have received. There is some evidence of the positive impact that the Service User and Carer group has on the student experience and on their readiness to practice but feedback mechanisms could be improved.

5 Theme 3: The development of qualified social workers

Five research projects have been supported by the Partnership. Most of these are collaborations between the University and partner agencies.

The Partnership has delivered a comprehensive programme of learning for social workers in addition to its 'CPD passport'.

The PQ offer from Kingston University has been updated during the lifetime of the Partnership. A bespoke coaching and mentoring module has been created and the University will be working with the other members of the Partnership to deliver 'hybrid' programmes whereby delivery is shared between academics, independent trainers and experts from partner agencies.

The establishment of a Practice Education Team has enabled a greater level of support for existing Practice Educators and those aspiring to be Practice Educators.

Feedback on training and events run by the Practice Education Team is overwhelmingly positive, but it is not clear whether all potential beneficiaries are aware of the support available.

In order to recognise and address the challenging nature of social work on practitioners the Partnership built a raft of support around well-being and resilience, including weekly #wellbeingwednesday tweets, a well-being 'hub' on the website, and two 'Emotional resilience and well-being' conferences.

5.1 Introduction

The overarching aims of this theme were:

- 1) To ensure that practice across the region is informed by theory and research
- 2) To ensure practice is of an excellent standard
- 3) To improve job satisfaction and, ultimately, retention

Specifically, this meant:

- encouraging practicing social workers to undertake research projects alongside academics
- increasing access to continuing professional development (CPD) and Post Qualifying (PQ) opportunities
- ensuring that the CPD and PQ offer from Kingston University meets the needs of employers
- improving support for Practice Educators
- promoting the well-being and emotional resilience of social workers

In doing so the Partnership hoped to achieve:

- a narrower gap between theory and practice in social work
- an improvement in social work practice through the availability of CPD and PQ learning opportunities
- the prioritisation of the well-being and emotional resilience of social workers and their teams

And in the longer term it was hoped that the job satisfaction of social workers would be improved and that, as a result, they would be more likely to stay working in the profession and specifically, in the region.

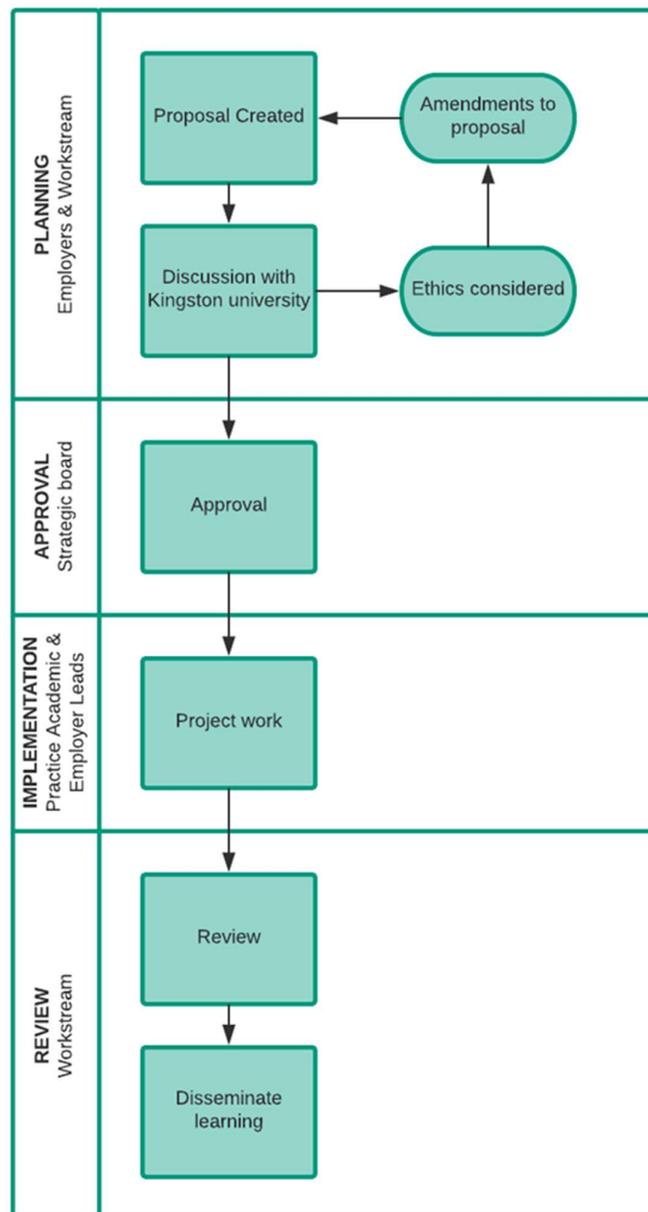
In order to achieve this the Partnership planned to do the following:

- support practicing social workers to undertake research projects with academics
- create a 'CPD passport' / sharing CPD training opportunities across the Partnership
- support social work managers' CPD through access to specific training opportunities including a coaching and mentoring course
- develop a PQ pathway based on the needs of employers
- create new PQ opportunities

- recruit a Practice Education Team to develop the quality and quantity of practice learning provision
- deliver events, products, training and communications around well-being and emotional resilience

5.2 Practice informed by theory and research

The Partnership produced a Project Pathway to illustrate how a research idea could become a supported project:



Six proposals were received and reviewed by the Academics in Practice workstream group who recommended that five be progressed. This was ratified by the Operational Board. Feedback on the sixth, unsupported, proposal was given. The five supported research projects were:

Outcome Measures: The impact of using outcome measures when completing assessments in children and families social work

This research was completed with Surrey Children's Social Care. A group of social workers in each organisation were provided with a 'tool box' of outcomes measures which they used in their practice with children and families. A series of focus groups over a six-month period were held to discuss the social workers' experiences in using outcomes measures and the qualitative data collected was analysed to identify key themes and messages.

Status: The researchers, Dr Rick Hood, Sue Lansley and Toni Mitchell, have completed a research paper which has been submitted to a social work journal. They are currently waiting to find out whether it has been accepted for publication.

Practice Education: Exploring the motivation of Practice Educators in their career

This research is being carried out by Dermot Brady, Senior Lecturer at Kingston University. A survey has been created to explore the motivation of Practice Educators in their career. It is being distributed to all partner agencies and social work employers beyond the Partnership. This research is mirroring research that was completed in this field 20 plus years ago in order to explore any changes or similarities on the experiences of Practice Educators and their motivation to take on the role of enabling students' learning on placements.

Status: A pilot survey is currently in the field. Once this has been reviewed the survey will be shared more widely.

Team Culture and Retention: The impact of practice supervision on organisational culture and retention

This research is being carried out in Achieving for Children and the London Borough of Wandsworth, supported by Dr Rick Hood and Dermot Brady from Kingston University and Sue Lansley, the Partnership Social Work Lead. The organisations involved are hopeful that the key messages from this research around team culture and how it links to retention will support them in their workforce strategy on the recruitment and retention of social workers going forward.

Focus groups with social workers and managers were held to explore the impact of team culture on retention. From the qualitative data gathered a survey was created to explore Team Culture and how this is experienced by Social Workers and Team Managers.

Status: The survey is currently being piloted and once this is completed it will be shared more widely.

Self Neglect: An exploration of social workers' experiences of working with adults who self neglect

This research is being completed by Maria Brent, Senior Lecturer in Social Work at Kingston University as part of her PhD in conjunction with the London Boroughs of Kingston and Croydon.

Data was collected via ten interviews and home visits where social workers were shadowed.

Status: Maria has presented a number of seminars to social workers across the Teaching Partnership on her research and is currently in the final stages of completing her PhD on this subject.

Restorative Group Supervision: An evaluation of the impact on social workers' wellbeing through the delivery of restorative group supervision

The London Borough of Sutton has rolled out the use of Restorative Group Supervision across their Children's Services teams and the proposed research aims to evaluate this in terms of its impact on social worker wellbeing.

A number of meetings to explore the research topic and gather information for the ethics proposal have been held with senior managers in Sutton and the CAMHS which co-runs this programme. Focus groups are planned to provide information from social workers on how restorative group supervision has been received and the benefits of this practice. The project is supported by Dr Wilson Muleya.

Status: Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has interrupted the progress of this project but we are hopeful that it will be resumed in due course.

Individual projects will produce academic papers for publication, where appropriate, and the Partnership will produce a publication highlighting key findings from all supported projects once they are complete. In doing so the Partnership will seek to raise the profile of research projects and highlight their contribution to social worker CPD. Key messages from research projects will also contribute to workforce strategies for the Partnership in the future.

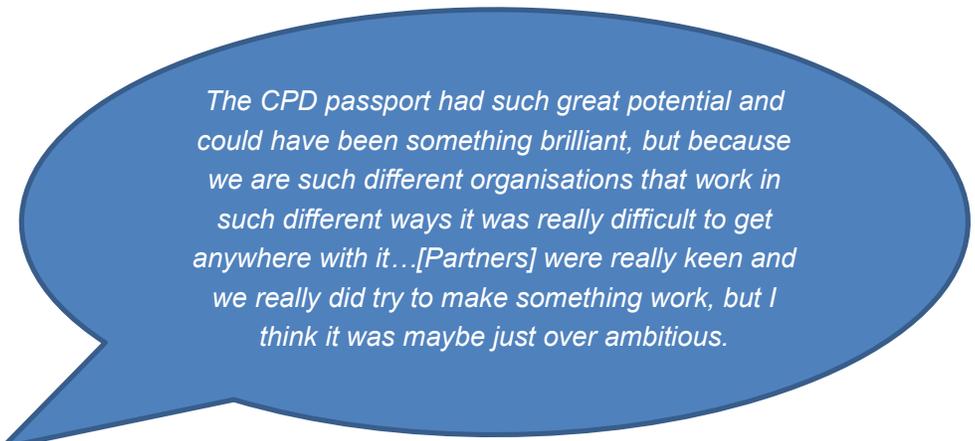
5.3 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The Partnership recognises that high quality social work practice is underpinned by a well-trained and highly skilled workforce.

Social workers are expected to undertake learning and development, informed by the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)³⁶ and the Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSSs)³⁷ throughout their career in order to maintain their registration with Social Work England.

To this end the Partnership planned to create a 'CPD passport' that would enable partners to streamline their learning and development offer and share opportunities across the Partnership in a formal way. The passport would also enable social workers to access opportunities not available within their own organisation and give them the opportunity to learn alongside different colleagues.

However, this proved more difficult to establish than anticipated. There was reluctance to share information from some partners, a realisation that each organisation stored information in different formats that were not necessarily compatible and a variety of booking systems that could not easily be amalgamated into one. This was summed up by one of the partners interviewed in May 2020:



The CPD passport had such great potential and could have been something brilliant, but because we are such different organisations that work in such different ways it was really difficult to get anywhere with it...[Partners] were really keen and we really did try to make something work, but I think it was maybe just over ambitious.

³⁶ <https://www.basw.co.uk/social-work-training/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf>

³⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/411957/KSS.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/338718/140730_Knowledge_and_skills_statement_final_version_AS_RH_Checked.pdf

A more pragmatic approach was therefore adopted whereby partners can submit notice of available places on forthcoming training events. This is then co-ordinated and published on the website within a regularly updated CPD Brochure by the Partnership Project Lead³⁸:

This approach appears to suit the needs of partners and is working well:



I think most organisations have got an established professional development offer. Where we've had gaps we've filled them via the University or the Partnership [Partner interviewed in May 2020]

In 2018/19 the Partnership advertised more 50 learning and development opportunities via its 'CPD passport' and in 2019/20 this rose to 86 opportunities taken up by at least 21 members of staff³⁹. The original targets set in relation to this relied on data that proved impossible to capture (percentage of partner places made available and percentage of frontline staff taking up places). However, in year two the Partnership amended the targets to numerical ones and exceeded them both (80 opportunities and 10 staff taking them up).

In addition to the 'CPD passport' the Partnership has created a number of other learning and development opportunities for practitioners, including⁴⁰:

- approximately one hundred practitioners have attended one of five sessions run by the NSPCC on Child Sexual Exploitation (since the Covid-19 pandemic these have been delivered virtually)
- approximately fifty social workers attended Trauma Informed Practice training delivered by Kati Taunt from Trauma-Informed Practice (January 2020)

³⁸ <http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Developing-Together-Teaching-Partnership-CPD-Brochure-June-20-March-21-v1.0.pdf>

³⁹ Not all partners submitted data against this KPI so this figure is an underestimation of the actual number of places taken up

⁴⁰ Training around Action Learning Sets was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic but it is hoped that they can commence in the Autumn

- approximately forty social workers from Sutton Adults and Children's services attended a reflective workshop on the KSS and SWE which was facilitated by the Social Work Lead and Practice Education Team (March 2020) - the remainder of the planned KSS workshops have now been moved online due to the Covid-19 pandemic
- approximately thirty NQSWs attended training with Siobhan Maclean of Kirwin Maclean Associates Limited (March 2020)
- twenty-five practitioners undertook the NSPCC's training on Harmful Sexual Behaviour (July 2019)
- sixteen social work managers attended the Developing Resilience and Practicing Self-Care in Social Care and Health training delivered by Self Care Psychology (October 2019)
- fifteen social workers attended the Royal Society for Public Health's Self-neglect and adult safeguarding conference (February 2019)
- fourteen social work managers were funded to attend the BASW Leadership and Management course (March-June 2019)

Those attending the Leadership and Management course were overwhelmingly positive about it:



A network was established for managers who had attended the BASW course and a series of network sessions were planned, but take up was low and so they were cancelled. An event planned for March 2020 was also cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A series of 'Lunch and Learn' sessions have been held in partner agencies by academics from Kingston University. These are another way of bridging the gap between academia and practice. Ten sessions were initially planned, but to date only four have taken place. The topics covered include:

- Self-neglect with Maria Brent (March 2019)
- Deprivation of Liberty Standards (DoLS) with Tim Spencer Lane (May 2019 and February 2020)

- Self-neglect and Strengths Based Approaches with Maria Brent and Aga Buckley (March 2020)

A further planned session on The Nuffield Research Briefing: Demand management and the crisis in children's social care was postponed due to lack of interest. Further sessions planned have been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Feedback was collected from those attending the initial 'Lunch and Learn' session. This showed that attendees felt more confident in their knowledge and understanding of the subject and that they thought the skills of the facilitator were 'excellent'.

Feedback from the first of the two DoLS sessions was similarly positive. All respondents said that they understood how to apply the learning to their own practice and that their levels of knowledge and confidence had increased.

The Partnership Project Lead also received an email from a Workforce Development Lead following the first 'Lunch and Learn' session, expressing her appreciation for it:



*Maria gave a very engaging, passionate talk...
It was pitched at just the right level for a
lunchtime session – relaxed and informal but
also stimulating and informative*

In the final online survey of stakeholders (May 2020) the majority of respondents (11 out of 12) said that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the CPD opportunities made available via the Partnership.

5.4 HEI Accredited Post Qualification (PQ) learning

The Partnership were able to build upon a solid foundation with regards to PQ opportunities for social workers as Kingston University already had a comprehensive and flexible offer in place comprising of a range of short courses (15 or 30 credits), PG Certificates (60 credits), PG Diplomas (120 credits) and MA degrees (180 credits). However, with uptake on some modules being poor⁴¹ the Partnership agreed to carry out a review of what was needed and to attempt to address the lack of a clear PQ pathway for social workers.

⁴¹ The exceptions to this are: Practice Education, Best Interests Assessor (BIA) and Adult safeguarding

A group of academic staff and representatives from the partner organisations came together on 2nd July 2019 to consider:

- their own experiences of learning and development during their career
- the learning and development offer provided by their employer
- Kingston University's PQ offer

The consultation event identified the need for a more streamlined PQ offer, aligned to the PCF and KSS descriptors to help define a PQ 'pathway'. It identified that the cost of PQ modules was a major barrier to uptake⁴² and included discussions around how in-house learning and development could be assessed for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) credits⁴³. It also highlighted that the University could do more to market its PQ offer. The day concluded with participants identifying a range of specific learning and development needs for those in the early stages of their career (post-ASYE) and those further down the line who were looking for leadership, supervision and more advanced professional skill development.

As a result of the consultation, and taking into consideration the data it held on the declining uptake of certain modules, Kingston University withdrew a number of the PQ courses it offers to social workers. The cost of PQ education is universally expensive, and it is not within Kingston University's gift to change this, but it is looking at ways of raising awareness of its offer to ensure that practitioners and employers know what is available.

The University is also working the other members of the Partnership to develop a different approach to PQ, contributing to 'hybrid' programmes whereby delivery is shared between academics, independent trainers and experts from partner agencies as part of its sustainability approach (see Chapter Seven for more details).

It has already created a new, bespoke Coaching and Mentoring PQ module⁴⁴ at the request of partners. To date three cohorts of approximately twenty social workers have been funded to undertake this course (September 2019, February 2020 and the next is due to start in October 2020).

⁴² In 2018/19 the average cost for a 15 credit module was £825 and for a 30 credit module was £1480. Note: The Practice Education modules were significantly discounted by the University (£275) as they were seen as a pathway into postgraduate studies.

⁴³ There are crucial differences between accredited formal education and non-accredited training which need to be factored into such decision-making. The former focussing on embedding skills and values development within theoretical frameworks and research-based evidence and the latter focussing more on skills development and the application of standardised forms of knowledge.

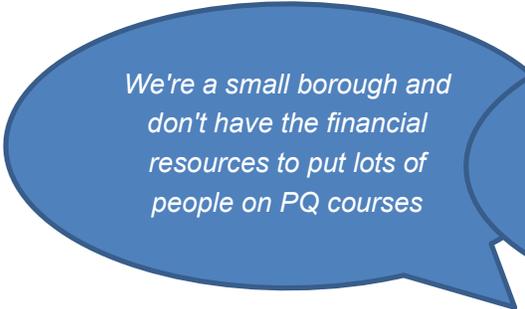
⁴⁴ Mentoring, coaching and advanced assessment of professional practice (SW7044) – 30 credits
<https://www.kingston.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/post-qualifying-social-work-modules/>

One social work manager who has completed the course summarised their experience:

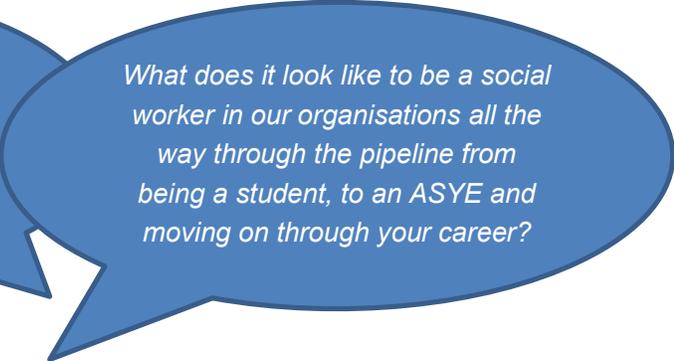


It's been a really positive experience to spend time with partner agencies and other LAs to look at ways to improve and develop my practice.

Feedback from the final online survey of stakeholders (May 2020) was positive with 11 out of 12 respondents being 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the PQ opportunities made available through the Partnership. This was also explored in the final telephone interviews with partners (also in May 2020). The Coaching and Mentoring training, paid for by the Partnership, was singled out as being a particular success, an appetite for further development of the PQ pathway was noted, as was the financial barrier for some:

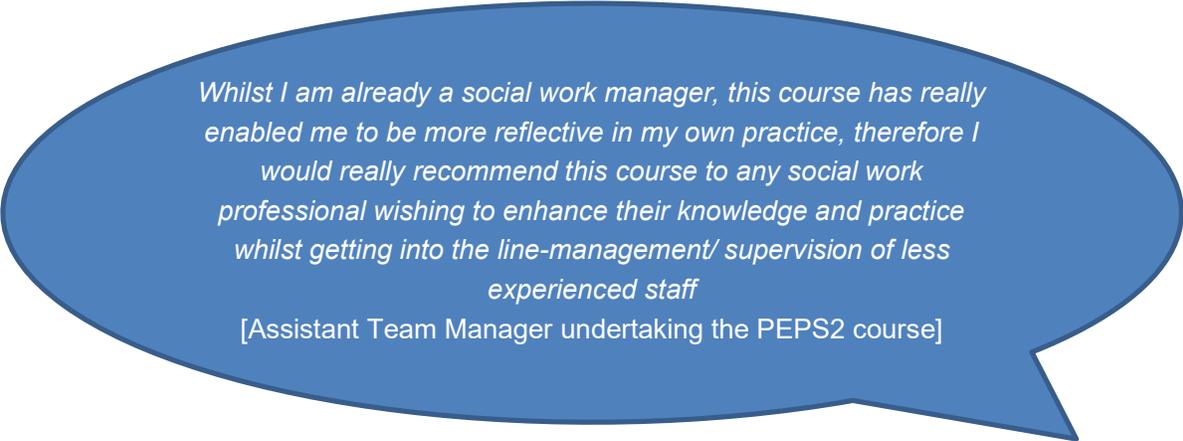


We're a small borough and don't have the financial resources to put lots of people on PQ courses



What does it look like to be a social worker in our organisations all the way through the pipeline from being a student, to an ASYE and moving on through your career?

Feedback on the University's PQ offer is generally positive:



Whilst I am already a social work manager, this course has really enabled me to be more reflective in my own practice, therefore I would really recommend this course to any social work professional wishing to enhance their knowledge and practice whilst getting into the line-management/ supervision of less experienced staff

[Assistant Team Manager undertaking the PEPS2 course]

5.5 Practice Education support

The Partnership established a Practice Education Team comprising of two Practice Education Development Consultants (1.6 FTE), Dale Van Graan and Paul Lawrence, and two Practice Educator Development Workers (1.4 FTE), Sarah Cave and Josie Newton. The team's remit is to embed a culture of practice learning within partner agencies and to increase the statutory placement capacity for students. All were in post by April 2019 which was much later than planned owing to recruitment challenges.



Dale Van Graan



Paul Lawrence



Josie Newton



Sarah Cave

All four members of the Practice Education Team are experienced social workers and Practice Educators. Dale came from a teaching role at Kingston University, whilst Paul joined on secondment from the London Borough of Merton where he was Workforce and Practice Development Manager in Children's Social Care. Prior to joining the Partnership Josie worked for the New Malden Community Mental Health Team as a Care Co-ordinator and Sarah came from the London Borough of Hounslow where she worked with adults with learning disabilities.

The team have been involved in a wide variety of activities, including:

- running a recurring programme of seven workshops and a conference
- hosting ten roadshows across the region to meet social workers and publicise their offer
- providing training for Practice Educators / those interested in becoming Practice Educators / refresher sessions for those who are 'lapsed' Practice Educators / Onsite Supervisors / Practice Assessors
- curating resources hosted on a dedicated section of the Partnership's website
- establishing a library of books and other resources for loan to those working in partner agencies
- providing off-site practice education to students on placement⁴⁵
- providing bespoke support for placements where there are difficulties⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Covered in Chapter Four

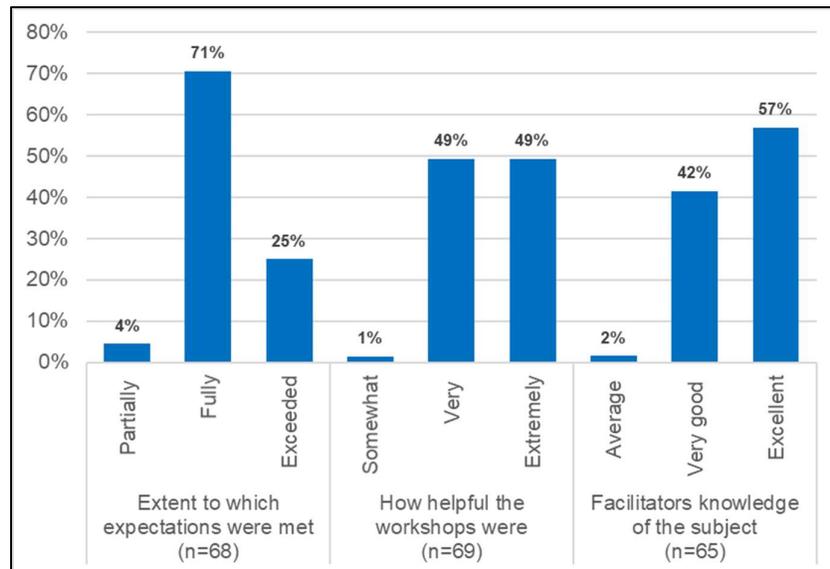
⁴⁶ Covered in Chapter Four

- carrying out quality assurance checks on Learning Agreements and Placement Reports (February 2019 onwards)⁴⁷
- supporting trainee Practice Educators as Practice Assessors
- writing newsletters and blog posts
- running groups for Newly Qualified Social Workers

The planned ‘network’ for Practice Educators might more accurately be described as a ‘package’ or ‘programme’ of support since there are no formal arrangements to tie Practice Educators together as a group.

Whilst feedback has been collected at training, workshops and at the Practice Educator Conference (see below), we do not have any feedback from Practice Educators about the offer from the Practice Education Team in its entirety.

Feedback from the seven workshops run by the Practice Education Team was overwhelmingly positive. Participants found the workshops to be practical, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to apply in the day-to-day practice of supporting students. Analysis of the evaluation forms found that attendees expectations had been met, that they found the workshops helpful and that they rated the knowledge of the facilitators highly:



A request for case study feedback from those who have benefitted from the support of the Practice Education Team elicited one response from a trainee Practice Educator who had attended the majority of the workshops:

⁴⁷ Covered in Chapter Four

I attended most of the workshops run by the Practice Education Team. I work out of hours and alone at home so they gave me opportunities to meet with other practitioners to discuss and learn from each other's experience.

The workshops were invaluable in supporting my practice in supervising and teaching my student as well as improving my own critical reflection using the models and theories learnt on the workshops.

My student benefitted from having deeper and broader reflective supervision with me. I was able to provide them with more challenge and support due to the knowledge and skills that I had gained.

I was also able to share my learning with other trainee Practice Educators through our WhatsApp group.

The workshops provided me with a toolbox of resources to draw upon as required and this in turn increased my confidence in my practice as I knew that if I was struggling with an issue that there would be resources to help me.

An away day facilitated for Croydon Adult Services in October 2019 was also highly rated in terms of expectations, helpfulness and facilitator knowledge. The key learning from the day reported by attendees related to understanding and managing emotions and appropriate methods of communication.



The event has kept me abreast of the key changes in social work. [It has] enriched my practice, refreshed my thinking and enabled me to build on my existing awareness to support effective and objective decision making.

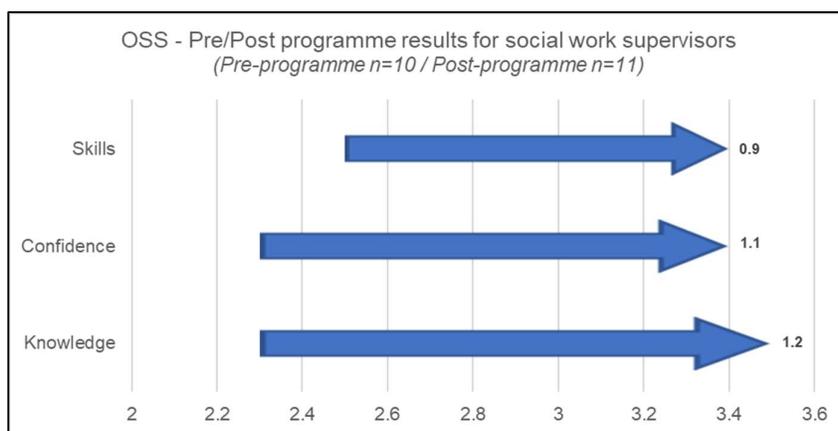
The team piloted an Onsite Supervisor Training programme in September/October 2019 to address the domains and values requirements of the Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) (2012)⁴⁸. It was developed to fill a gap in training which was previously provided by Kingston University and also to increase the quantity and quality of practice learning opportunities in the region.

⁴⁸ The 2019 refreshed version is available here: <https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/peps-for-social-work.pdf>

There were two versions of the training: one aimed at qualified social workers (attended by sixteen people) and one aimed at supervisors with other qualifications (attended by seven people).

All attendees received a handbook, slide deck and handouts to accompany each session and were given small tasks to complete between sessions to reinforce their learning. A certificate of attendance was awarded at the end of the training.

Eighteen of the twenty-three participants in this programme completed an evaluation form. As the 'distance travelled' graph below shows, there was a demonstrable increase in the skills, confidence and knowledge amongst social work supervisors⁴⁹.



The anticipated impact on professional practice was also rated as 'very high' by this group of attendees.

The report produced by Dale van Graan evaluating the Onsite Supervisor Programme recommended that, in order to meet the requirements of the refreshed PEPS (2019), this training be considered a minimum requirement for all staff carrying out onsite supervision of social work students within the Partnership⁵⁰. This recommendation was acknowledged by the Strategic Board at a Visioning Day held in January 2020 however a request was made to review the duration of the programme to make this more achievable. The Practice Education Team have agreed that this will be done in conjunction with Kingston University, but given the current Covid-19 pandemic situation details of how this will happen have not yet been finalised.

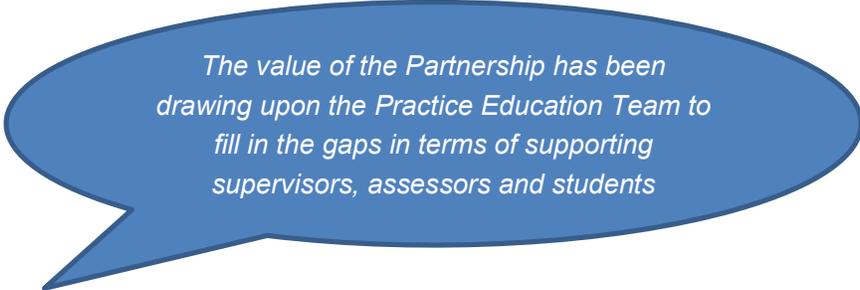
⁴⁹ The start of each arrow is the mean score calculated from the pre-programme evaluation and the end of the arrow is the mean score from the post-programme evaluation. The numbers to the right of the arrows represents the magnitude of the change. The figures should be treated as indicative given the small sample sizes.

⁵⁰ An evaluation of the OnSite Supervisor Programme can be found here: http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Evaluation-Report_-_OSS-Programme-24.12.19.pdf

The Partnership has now agreed a system for allocating places on PEPS courses at the University in order to support partners with staff who need training in order to support placements.

The Practice Education Team also hosted a successful conference in June 2019 (see Section 3.5 for details).

By providing 'long arm' Practice Education support the Practice Education Team have been able to improve the quality of supervision provided and also increase the capacity for placements.



The value of the Partnership has been drawing upon the Practice Education Team to fill in the gaps in terms of supporting supervisors, assessors and students

5.6 Well-being and resilience (personal development)

The Partnership recognised how challenging social work can be and as such were keen to provide support for social workers well-being to build resilience in the workforce. It has achieved this through a number of routes, including its weekly #wellbeingwednesday tweets where inspirational ideas are shared to remind social workers to take time for themselves and to practice self-care⁵¹ and the creation of a 'Well-being Hub' on its website (<http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/wellbeing-hub/>) containing links to useful sources of advice and information for individual social workers and those managing teams.

The Partnership also hosted two well-attended and successful 'Emotional Resilience and Well-being' conferences in March and September 2019 (see Section 3.5 for more details). These events included presentations from respected academics in the field as well as practical workshops to share information, advice and skills with delegates. Attendees at the September conference also received a 'well-being kit' to take away (see section 3.4 for more details).

⁵¹ See Section 3.7 for more details about the Partnership Twitter account

The final online survey of partners in May 2020 showed high levels of awareness of and satisfaction with the Partnership's activities in relation to well-being and resilience. 22 out of 24 respondents were aware of the Partnership's work in this area, 15 out of 22 were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the topics covered by the resources produced and 14 out of 22 were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the dissemination of the resources.



I think it's been great. The weekly updates via Twitter and the support from the partners has been invaluable

Feedback on the events was equally positive (16 out of 17 who had attended were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the topics covered). Suggestions for future events included looking at how they can be delivered virtually and reflecting diversity⁵².

5.7 Has the Partnership achieved its aims?

A number of research projects, conducted jointly by academic staff and practitioners from partner agencies, are underway, with one already completed. This collaboration is further strengthening links between academia and practice.

The Partnership's 'CPD passport' was more difficult to establish than anticipated and instead a less formal agreement has been reached whereby partners share opportunities with one another via a CPD Brochure which is co-ordinated by the Partnership Project Lead and published on the Partnership's website.

The PQ offer from Kingston University has been updated during the lifetime of the Partnership. Courses that were no longer deemed viable due to poor uptake have been removed and a new bespoke, post-graduate, masters level module on 'Mentoring, coaching and advanced assessment of professional practice' has been developed. The University is also contributing to the upcoming Managers Programme (see Chapter Seven for more details) and will be involved in the planned Early Professional Development Programme for practitioners who are 2-3 years post-ASYE.

Whilst the Practice Education Team have achieved a lot in a short period of time the Partnership Project Lead confirmed that it is too early to measure their impact beyond the satisfaction measures outlined above.

⁵² A "Black Lives Matter Discussion Group: The Voice of Social Work" was held in July 2020 with a further two dates in the pipeline.

A consistent delivery model for Practice Education is now in place through Practice Educator Professional Standards for Social Work (PEP1 and PEP2⁵³) courses and Practice Education workshops and in the longer term the Partnership will be able to determine improvements to practice education and student placements as they gather evidence via the University's Practice Assessment Panel (PAP) and Quality Assurance of Learning Agreements (QAPL), as well as reviews of placement reports and learning opportunities. Plans are also underway to develop the QAPL and, to improve response rate, making this a mandatory submission as part of the student's final report is being considered.

When interviewed in February 2020, the Practice Educator Development Workers were unable to determine what percentage of Practice Educators they had supported across the Partnership because the total number of Practice Educators employed is unknown. However, it is known that in 2019/20 approximately 120 Practice Educators have accessed at least one element of the provision on offer, with many accessing multiple elements.

Those who had engaged with the workshops and training on offer had clearly benefitted, but if there are still a number of Practice Educators who have not been engaged then this is likely to have had a knock-on impact for the students they are supporting. The Practice Education Team should continue to raise their profile and develop their networks to increase their reach and the Partnership should encourage those continuing with their involvement in 2020/21 and beyond to ensure that relevant staff are aware of the opportunities and links available.

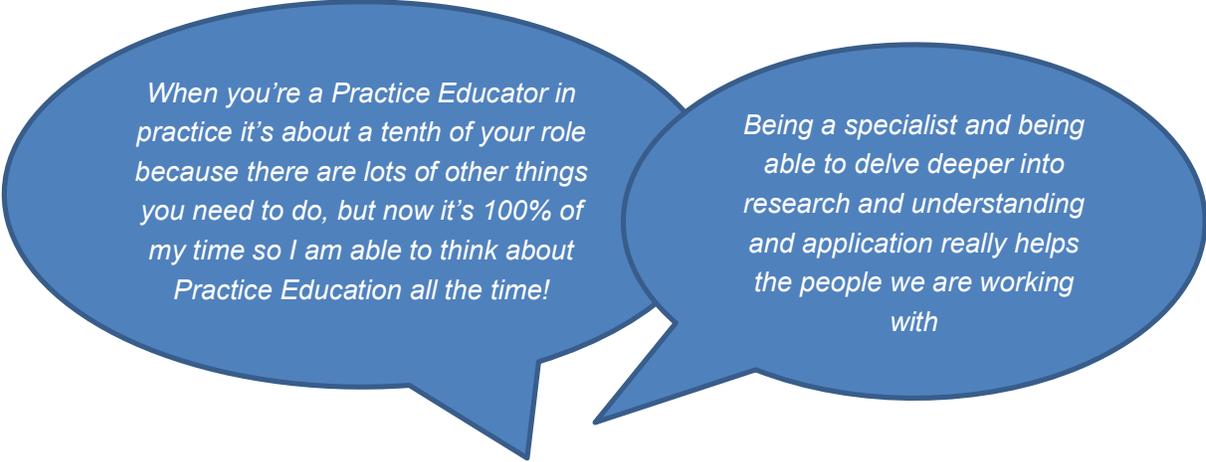
A major benefit of the Practice Education Team being partly based at the University is the bridge that they form between academia and practice. They have been able to support situations where there was no Practice Educator available or where a student's placement was at risk of breaking down. Moving forwards they will also be looking to ensure that Newly Qualified Social Workers have the support that they need to succeed in their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment and ultimately that they will want to stay working within the Partnership.

The Practice Education Team recognise that its resources have been spread thinly across the fourteen partners, but with a smaller number of core partners involved moving forward (see Chapter Seven for more details) they are hopeful that they will be able to realise a bigger impact.

⁵³ Details of PEPS: <https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/peps-for-social-work.pdf>

On a personal level the two Practice Educator Development Workers reported during our online discussion with them in March 2020 that they have been on a huge learning curve. They have had a wide range of opportunities to teach, learn and reflect that weren't possible when they were working on the frontline.

They are also happy to be able to further develop their skills as Practice Educators and are delighted to now also be Practice Assessors. Both also talked about developing skills as an Off-site Practice Educator:



When you're a Practice Educator in practice it's about a tenth of your role because there are lots of other things you need to do, but now it's 100% of my time so I am able to think about Practice Education all the time!

Being a specialist and being able to delve deeper into research and understanding and application really helps the people we are working with

6 Theme 4: The future workforce

A separate piece of analysis was commissioned by the Partnership to underpin its labour market planning and skills gap analysis. This was undertaken by Skills for Care's Workforce Intelligence team.

The analysis used a mixture of primary and secondary data sources to provide a comprehensive profile of the workforce.

Unfortunately, some of the partner agencies did not complete the survey distributed by the Workforce Intelligence team which meant that some of the planned analysis could not be completed.

A labour market plan has been produced by the Partnership.

Intelligence about learning and development needs has been gathered via consultations with partner agencies and through training event evaluations, rather than the skills gap analysis originally planned.

The Partnership has used the intelligence about its workforce to underpin its strategy for the next two years and has retained the Partnership Project Team to ensure that this is delivered.

6.1 Introduction

The overarching aim of this theme was:

- 1) To better understand the regional labour market to enable the development of a robust plan to meet current and future workforce demands

Specifically, this meant developing:

- a clear picture of the local landscape including opportunities from training, jobs, sharing experiences, etc

In doing so the Partnership hoped to achieve:

- a labour market plan and skills gap analysis, aligned with professional development timelines, to enable more effective commissioning of learning and development

In order to achieve this the Partnership planned to do the following:

- commission a specialist consultant to develop a medium-term labour market plan
- commission a specialist consultant to undertake a skills gap analysis

6.2 Labour market plan and skills gap analysis

Skills for Care's Workforce Intelligence team were contracted to undertake some analysis to underpin the Partnership's labour market planning and skills gap analysis.

The analysis undertaken involved the following:

- data held within the National Minimum Dataset for Social Care (now re-named the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set⁵⁴)
- Higher Education Statistics Agency student records including the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey⁵⁵
- a workforce data survey of partner organisations conducted by Skills for Care

⁵⁴ <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/adult-social-care-workforce-data.aspx>

⁵⁵ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/19-07-2018/DLHE-publication-201617>

- Department of Education data on the Child and family social work workforce in England (year ending September 2018)⁵⁶

Unfortunately, the planned survey of partner organisations proved difficult. There was a lack of engagement from key senior stakeholders when the Workforce Intelligence team attempted to scope what the Partnership wanted to achieve. The task therefore fell to the Partnership Project Lead and three representatives from partner agencies who then worked with Skills for Care to design and circulate the survey. Despite communications from within the Partnership to encourage completion, the response rate to the survey was low. This meant that the Workforce Intelligence team were unable to undertake all of the analysis originally planned. The Partnership Project Team were aware of this and despite multiple requests for compliance they eventually agreed to draw a line under this piece of work.

Below is a summary of the key findings presented by the Workforce Intelligence Team:

Adults social workers:

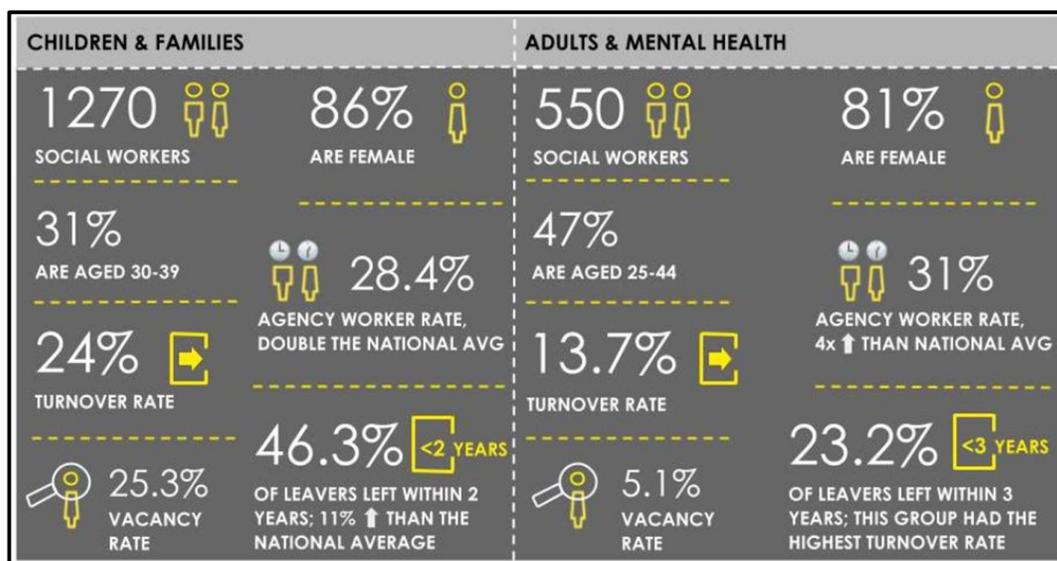
- the Partnership has a higher reliance on agency social workers than the average across London and England
- turnover and vacancy rates are lower than the national and regional averages, however they have fluctuated in recent years
- real term social worker pay has stagnated, meaning some social workers may be earning less than three to four years ago in relative terms
- on average, most social workers are travelling less than 5 miles to work
- of workers that left their role, the majority left the local authority sector all together
- those that were more likely to leave their role included young workers, lower paid social workers and those with less experience
- there were very few new social workers obtaining jobs through Frontline or StepUp
- most qualified social workers had studied at Kingston University

Child and family social workers:

- in the Partnership turnover rates were higher amongst child and family social workers compared to the adults workforce
- similar proportions of agency staff were used in child and family social work compared to the adults workforce
- around a third are over the age of 50 and may therefore be approaching retirement

⁵⁶ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/782154/Children_s_social_work_workforce_2018_text.pdf

- around three in five workers have less than five years of experience in the local authority
- the vast majority of those that left their roles in the preceding 12 months had less than five years of experience



This trend data provides the Partnership with a better understanding of the pipeline of social workers entering the workforce, the characteristics of qualified social workers and the likelihood of social workers leaving the Partnership / profession.

A Tableau tool was also produced for the Partnership so that regional data can be updated and shared.

Following receipt of the intelligence from Skills for Care’s Workforce Intelligence team the Partnership produced a local labour market plan (see Appendix 10.9). This was submitted to the Department for Education as part of one of its case studies and was positively received. The Department confirmed that the Partnership was one of the more advanced teaching partnerships in terms of its workforce planning and focus on recruitment and retention issues.

The planned skills gap analysis was not conducted in the format originally envisaged. Instead the Partnership has assessed training needs through a series of consultations with partner agencies and training has been developed or commissioned accordingly.

Attendees at training events are asked about future training needs as part of event evaluations and this information is also taken into consideration when determining learning and development needs across the Partnership. In addition, a learning needs assessment was undertaken with partners to inform a forthcoming programme of support for managers (due to launch in October 2020).

6.3 Has the Partnership achieved its aims?

Skills for Care's Workforce Intelligence team were able to provide the Partnership with a considerable amount of insight using ASC-WDS and other third-party sources. However, the lack of response from some partners to its workforce data survey meant that elements of the planned analysis were not possible.

The Partnership used the analysis to inform its local labour market plan and revised its plans to undertake a skills gap analysis as it was already gathering useful data through consultation with partners agencies and evaluations from training sessions.

7 Sustainability and the future of the Partnership

Note: This section was written by the Project Partnership Lead

The Partnership reviewed what had worked well (largely operational issues) and what had worked less well (largely activities requiring strategic direction).

Membership of the Partnership was reviewed and a new, two-tier membership was created:

- **Primary partners who contribute financially to the future of the Partnership and thereby determine its objectives and desired outcomes**
- **Secondary partners who are involved in pre-qualifying activity only**

The new Partnership has been working successfully together since April 2020 and a list of its achievements and planned activities can be found below.

The Partnership is confident that it is in a position to respond to the changing social work landscape and the needs of partners as it navigates through the coming two years, and possibly beyond.

7.1 Introduction

As noted in our annual progress report (November 2019)⁵⁷ the majority of the operational activities in the implementation plan had been progressed and were either embedded or were making good progress towards being embedded. Conversely, activities that required strategic direction or oversight had struggled to stay on track. In addition, impact had proved difficult to evidence due to the medium-long term nature of the project outcomes, and this contributed to inconsistent engagement amongst partners.

In light of the above and owing to preparations required in order to submit a bid to the Department for Education for sustainability funding, the membership of the Partnership was reviewed in Summer 2019. A group of engaged partners emerged who wished to supplement the sustainability funding from the Department with an annual financial contribution in order to sustain the Partnership for a further 2 years (until end March 2022). It was felt that this would be appropriate given the long-term nature of the project outcomes and the desire to diversify into new areas of work.

In October 2019 a decision was made by the Strategic Board to move to a two-tier membership model, with primary and secondary partners. The nine primary partners⁵⁸ agreed to contribute financially to the future of the Partnership thereby determining its objectives and desired outcomes. Primary partners have access to all initiatives relating to workforce development and recruitment and retention strategies. The five secondary partners⁵⁹ are involved in pre-qualifying activity only, including practice education.

Strategic Board representatives from the primary partner agencies attended a Visioning Day in January 2020, led by Skills for Care, to determine the future direction of travel for the Partnership and a new implementation plan was developed (see Appendix 10.11).

7.2 What has happened since the end of the initial funding period?

Since April 2020, the Partnership has continued to deliver Practice Education workshops, as well as:

⁵⁷ <http://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Teaching-Partnership-Year-One-Progress-Report-Evaluating-Our-Success-1.pdf>

⁵⁸ Achieving for Children (responsible for the delivery of statutory children's services in the boroughs of Kingston and Richmond); Croydon (Adult services); Kingston (Adult services); Merton (Adult services); Sutton (Adult and Children's services); Kingston University; The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC); Welcare

⁵⁹ Croydon (Children's services); Merton (Children's services); Richmond & Wandsworth (Adult services); Wandsworth (Children's services)

- six Reflective Supervision group sessions
- four ASYE Assessor workshops
- three Trauma Informed Practice workshops
- three Child Sexual Exploitation workshops
- three 'Blacks Lives Matter' discussion groups
- two Anti-Racism in Social Work presentations and Q&A sessions with BASW
- one Harmful Sexual Behaviour workshop
- one Enabling Reflective Practice workshop
- one CPD Reflective Writing workshop in partnership with Social Work England
- one training session on Engaging Children & Adults when Working Virtually or Online
- one online Reflective KSS Workshops (originally planned for face to face delivery but adapted for virtual delivery due to the pandemic)
- an Action Learning Set Facilitation training programme

Further ad hoc CPD activity, including a virtual Wellbeing event, is planned for later in the year.

The primary partners have also collaborated on a number of new initiatives including:

- a programme of workshops for ASYE Assessors
- a Student Internship scheme (launched in September 2020)
- an 'Early Career Managers' nine-day training programme⁶⁰ (the first cohort of which is due to commence in October 2020)
- a Career Pathways and CPD Framework that demonstrates the opportunities for progression, not limited to a linear management route⁶¹

In the pipeline are:

- an Early Professional Development programme for post-ASYE social workers that aims to reduce the 'cliff-edge' after the ASYE and improve retention by developing knowledge and resilience during these critical early years
- plans to support to Apprentices and/or Apprentice Mentors when the new Integrated Social Work Degree begins in September 2020

⁶⁰ The aim is that by the end of March 2021 all managers across the primary partners who have been in role for 0-18 months will have received the training

⁶¹ All primary partners will be supported to implement the pathway in their respective organisations to support retention of skilled workers

A longer-term ambition is also to introduce more joined up recruitment processes for NQSWs and establish a local talent pool, to make career progression easier for experienced, skilled practitioners and reduce the likelihood of them leaving the region.

7.3 Conclusion

The Partnership's priorities have evolved over the last two years. Whilst oversight of pre-qualifying activities has been maintained, there is now a much greater focus on recruitment, retention and workforce development strategies.

It became apparent during the Visioning Day that there are a number of common challenges faced by primary partner agencies across both Adults and Children's services and the new logic model (see Appendix 10.10) and associated implementation plan (see Appendix 10.11) reflect the initiatives that are being developed in order to address these challenges.

We expect that the priorities of the Partnership will continue to evolve and be shaped by the national social work agenda and local landscape as well as the needs of the primary partners. The added value of the Partnership is that the infrastructure, governance and key relationships that have been built mean that it can be flexible and responsive to the emerging agenda.

With its annual contribution from primary partners and sustainability funding from the Department for Education, the Partnership has sufficient finances to continue to the end of March 2022. It is not yet known what form the Partnership will take beyond this, however there is sufficient time and opportunity in the next 18 months to assess the impact it has made and determine its return on investment.

8 Conclusions and recommendations

The Partnership had a clearly articulated vision from the outset:

“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”

In order to achieve its vision, the Partnership aimed to:

- Ensure the highest calibre of social work students with the attributes, competencies and passion needed to thrive in the profession are recruited to the pre-registration undergraduate and post graduate academic programmes at Kingston University
- Develop a curriculum that aligns with local need and is grounded not only in research and the CSWs’ KSS, but also in practice
- Provide students with the experiences and support they need to ensure they are ready to practice in the region as Newly Qualified Social Workers
- Ensure practice across the region is consistently informed by theory and research and that academic teaching is informed by practice
- Ensure that practice is of an excellent standard through the creations of regional progression pathways and CPD opportunities capable of attracting and retaining the best and brightest social workers in the UK
- Better understand the regional labour market to enable the development of a robust plan to meet current and future workforce demands

The Partnership also aimed to develop a strong brand and identity and to build strong working relationships between the partners.

Through our evaluation of the Partnership’s activities, drawing on our own primary data as well as evidence produced by the Partnership, we have been able to demonstrate what has worked well and what has worked less well. We will briefly re-cap these here, following the thematic approach used throughout the report as well as making our recommendations for the Partnership moving forwards.

8.1 Theme 1: The identity and brand of the Partnership

In Chapter Three we explored the progress made by the Partnership in relation to developing its brand identity and in building strong working relationships between its partners. We were able to demonstrate the value of the Partnership's website, resources, social media presence, events and newsletters and to cite examples of how it has shared its successes through its marketing video, blogs and newsletters.

Motivation and participation levels varied across the partners, with some being much more involved than others. This was probably inevitable given the large number of partners involved, but unfortunately did hamper the progression of some of the more strategic goals of the Partnership. Moving forwards the Partnership has developed a two-tier membership approach which has enabled partners to choose their level of commitment. It is anticipated that this, along with a renewed vision and implementation plan, will enable the Partnership to capitalise on the strong working relationships formed and to achieve more in the coming two years.

Recommendations:

- The Partnership should review the frequency of its newsletters (some partners felt it would be useful if they were bi-monthly)
- The Partnership should undertake an analysis of its Twitter followers to establish who is following the account and to take steps to address any gaps identified
- The Partnership should continue to use its website, newsletters and Twitter to share good practice and promote the benefits that it brings
- The Partnership should undertake some research to explore awareness of it within the region and more widely to support its ambition to be a driver to attract students to Kingston University and qualified social workers to partner agencies

8.2 Theme 2: The student journey

In Chapter Four we examined the Partnership's achievements in relation to student selection, reviewing the curriculum, the involvement of Teaching Consultants in delivering academic content and additional support provided to students to improve their readiness to practice.

The Partnership was able to build on the firm foundations put in place by the University to ensure that students offered places on its BA and MSW courses are assessed holistically to ensure that they can demonstrate the attributes, competencies and passion needed to thrive in the profession.

The role of the Service User and Carer Group and of Teaching Consultants in the student selection process was enhanced and the academic staff involved are satisfied that the process is as rigorous as it needs to be.

On reflection, the increase in the UCAS tariff for entry was over ambitious and unrealistic given the University's need to fill quotas in order to run courses, and the threshold was dropped during 'clearing'. However, the average tariff for the 2019/20 cohort was higher than in the previous year and the University is still expecting that the 20/21 cohort will have a minimum of 120 UCAS points.

Any demonstrable impact of the changes made to the entry requirements and student selection process will only be realised in the longer term once the cohorts of students affected reach graduation and beyond. The University collects data that will enable it to compare academic achievements and 'value added' scores for the affected cohorts in comparison with previous ones, although it will be difficult to prove a direct causal link between the revised processes and student outcomes given all the other factors that students are exposed to throughout their courses.

The University also had well-established processes in place for reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it reflects current practice, is grounded in research and is aligned with guidance such as the KSS. The Partnership was able to contribute to reviews of modules, offering a broader level of input than was previously the case. This was viewed positively by academic staff who felt that this gave an additional 'sense check' to their processes. Again, the Service User and Carer Group played an important and valued role in this.

Plans for academic staff to shadow practice were less successful than anticipated. Academic staff were keen to be involved but opportunities for them to do so in a meaningful way were limited and the pressures of teaching meant that some simply could not free up the time to be involved. There were some successes in relation to this and the experiences of Dermot Brady demonstrate the potential for this to be mutually beneficial.

The creation of a pool of Teaching Consultants, who were recruited and trained not only to support student selection, but to deliver teaching on some of the academic modules was a welcome development for the University who had previously relied on ad hoc arrangements with practitioners. Whilst the experiences of Teaching Consultants were predominantly positive many would like to have been more involved so this was perhaps a missed opportunity. Teaching Consultants valued the personal and professional development that this role afforded them.

We were unable to access much in the way of student feedback on the involvement of Teaching Consultants (or the Service User and Carer Group) which was a disappointment to those involved who would have liked to know what they had done well and what could be improved in the future. However, we are pleased to learn that a more robust system of gathering student feedback has now been agreed so this should be addressed in the future.

The planned programme of additional support for students through the use of 'Twilight' and 'Skills' sessions was less successful than envisaged. Some of this was due to timing with sessions being run whilst students were off-site on placement. Latterly sessions were postponed or cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic, although some content was delivered remotely.

The placement allocation process was reviewed and updated by the Partnership and this was generally well received by partner agencies and the University. As is to be expected, there were some niggles whilst the system beds in, but early indications are that the system is an improvement and will lead to an increase in statutory placements and more students being allocated to placements in their preferred areas of practice.

Support from Practice Educators for students on placement either without an onsite Practice Educator or in situations where the placement was under threat of breaking down has been invaluable. Unfortunately, this was another area where we were unable to gather the student perspective on the support provided.

Recommendations:

- Partners, Teaching Consultants and the Service User and Carer Group should continue to be involved in future reviews of the curriculum
- The Partnership should consider canvassing student views about the additional support they require and when this could best be delivered
- The University should look to utilise the skills and enthusiasm of the Teaching Consultants more in the future
- The Partnership should review what it means by a 'quality placement' as there is currently no shared definition in place
- The Partnership should review the idea of Academics in Practice in light of the experiences of those involved to date
- The Partnership should explore how to best gather feedback from students on their placement experiences utilising existing methods that the University has available

8.3 Theme 3: The development of qualified social workers

In Chapter Five we focussed on the development of qualified social workers, ensuring practice is of a high standard. This included practitioners being involved in research projects alongside academic staff (narrowing the gap between theory and practice), access to CPD and PQ learning, the additional support provided to Practice Educators and the well-being and resilience of the social work workforce.

Five research projects were supported and were progressing at the time of writing. These involved successful collaborations between practitioners and academic staff. Once completed opportunities for publication in academic journals will be sought, where appropriate, and a publication and promotion of them all will be produced by the Partnership.

The Partnership's 'CPD passport' was more difficult to establish than anticipated and instead a less formal agreement has been reached whereby partners share opportunities with one another via a CPD Brochure which is co-ordinated by the Partnership Project Lead and published on the Partnership's website. This seems to be working well for partners and means that staff, particularly those in smaller agencies, can access CPD that might otherwise not be available to them.

Kingston University has updated its PQ offer during the lifetime of the Partnership, with courses that were no longer deemed viable due to poor uptake being removed and new ways of delivering PQ learning being explored. Partners seem to be satisfied with the PQ opportunities available to their staff.

The Practice Education Team have had a productive start to its existence. It has delivered workshops, conferences, road shows and training to raise awareness of the support it can offer and has formalised a consistent model for Practice Education across the Partnership. In time it should be possible to establish the impact of this activity, but at the time of writing we were limited to the (positive) feedback given in response to events and training delivered by the team.

The Partnership have achieved a great deal in relation to social worker well-being and resilience. They have held two well-attended conferences, have created a 'well-being hub' on the website which contains a wide range of resources and post weekly #wellbeingwednesday tweets to share top tips for self-care and reflection.

Recommendations:

- The Partnership should consider further opportunities for joint research between academics and practitioners
- The Partnership should continue to share CPD opportunities amongst partners and with the smaller group of primary partners could re-visit the idea of the 'CPD Passport' in the future
- The Partnership should establish feedback mechanisms for those involved in the new 'hybrid' delivery of PQ learning to ensure that it is working for all involved, as well as for those in receipt of the training
- The Partnership should develop mechanisms for gathering feedback on the support offered by the Practice Education Team
- The Practice Education Team should seek to engage with Practice Educators who have not accessed their support to date to ensure that their offer is understood and that a consistent level of support is being provided to students

8.4 Theme 4: The future workforce

Finally, in Chapter Six we looked at the Partnership's work in relation to developing a local labour market plan. This was based on analysis commissioned from Skills for Care's Workforce Intelligence team using ASC-WDS data and third-party sources. Unfortunately, some key data that it hoped to utilise was unavailable because few partners were willing to complete its workforce data survey. Despite this the Partnership has completed a local labour market plan which will underpin its activities in the future.

Recommendation:

- The Partnership should consider whether it wishes to re-visit the workforce data survey now that there are a smaller group of primary partners as this would plug some gaps that still exist in its knowledge bank

Final thoughts from Skills for Care

Overall the Partnership should be congratulated for all that it has achieved, especially given the challenging targets that it set for itself and the fact that it is one of the largest Teaching Partnerships funded by the Department for Education. It set out with an ambitious plan and a lot of different workstreams which all required partners to attend face-to-face meetings which proved quite onerous but was flexible and willing to re-prioritise its activities and to work in different ways in order to achieve its aims.

Whilst some areas of work were slow to get off the ground and buy-in from partners was not universal much has been achieved. The Partnership Leads have been key to driving the Partnership's successes and their roles have been warmly recognised by the partners.

It is testament to the strong working relationships forged that nine of the original fourteen partners have signed up (and contributed financially) to a further two years of Partnership working with the remaining five partners retaining a peripheral role. It has been a pleasure to be involved in its journey and we wish everyone well for the future.

9 References

Croisdale-Appleby (2014) *Re-visioning social work education: An independent review*

Narey, M. (2014) *Making the education of social workers consistently effective: Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of the education of children's social workers*

10 Appendices

The appendices for this report can be found at:

<https://www.developingtogetherswtp.org.uk/skills-for-care-teaching-partnership-evaluation-report-appendices/>

They are:

1. The Partnership's KPIs
2. Sources of data and evidence used in the evaluation
3. The evaluation framework
 - a. Aims and activities
 - b. Outputs and outcomes quadrant
 - c. List of abbreviations used
4. Student qualifications at entry
5. Teaching Consultant specialisms
6. Placement allocation strategy and timeline
7. Pre-placement meeting guidance
8. Placement Rejection Form and Guidance
9. A labour market plan: Our workforce strategy
10. (New) Logic model
11. (New) Implementation plan

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