



**DEVELOPING TOGETHER**  
SOCIAL WORK  
TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

# **A Labour Market Plan: Our Workforce Strategy**

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# Chapter 1:Executive summary

The social work profession has experienced a series of reforms since 2007 to improve the quality of recruitment, better prepare students for social work practice and increase retention, one of these being the Department for Education's social work teaching partnership programme. A skilled and stable workforce is essential for delivering effective change and so this Strategy sets out how our labour market and broader aspirations interact to drive our ambitions for the Developing Together Social Work Teaching Partnership (TP). This Strategy provides a framework for our approach to workforce planning and describes the actions we will take to deliver our vision:

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

This vision is consistent with the overarching purpose of social work teaching partnerships, which is to transform the quality of education and experience received by social work students and practitioners. The DfE (2019) saw Teaching Partnerships as the vehicle for attracting high quality students into the profession and ensuring students and existing social workers have the necessary knowledge, skills and values to practice effectively. In addition, they expected that they would improve workforce planning and development to address retention and recruitment issues. Tackling retention and recruitment issues and promoting high quality pre and post-qualifying education and development are not mutually exclusive. Targeting the initial education and continuing professional development of social workers is essential to the sustained, long-term prosperity of the social work profession. A stable workforce is also fundamental in delivering improvements to practice and services for people of lived experience.

## National social work context and current workforce

Since 2007 there have been a series of reforms in social work education and training, intended to improve the quality of recruitment, to better prepare students for social work practice and increase retention. There currently exists a lack of longitudinal robust and reliable evidence on recruitment, retention and progression within the social work sector, however we do know of a number of workforce challenges facing our region:

- Nationally, the majority of **leavers** in children and family social work had been with their employer for between 2-5 years (36.3%), closely followed by those who had been with their employer for less than 2 years (33.1%). The picture is a little different in our partnership, with the majority of leavers

having been with their employer for less than 2 years (37.6%) followed by those who had been with their employer for between 2-5 years (33.71%). Similarly, 71.43% of leavers in adult social work in our partnership had less than 3 years experience, compared to 64.71% nationally.

- The **turnover rate** in children and family social work in our TP (22.05%) is considerably higher than the national average (15.4%) and, although not improving, has been fairly steady since 2017-18. The turnover rate in adult social work paints a different picture, with a turnover rate of just 11.7% within our TP, a vast difference in comparison to the London average of 18.5% and the national average of 13.6%.
- The use of **agency staff** in our TP is interesting, with the agency worker rate significantly higher (21.7%) than the national average for children and family social work (15.5%) however this is still marginally lower than the London average (22%). Our rate is also down almost 7% since we collated our baseline data in 2017-18. For adult social work the rate (23%) is almost three times higher than the national average (8%). This is, however, again lower than the London regional average (26%) and down 10% on the rate we measured in 2017-18.
- At 24.5%, the **vacancy rate** for children and family social work in the TP is considerably higher than the national average of 16.7% (although only marginally higher than the London average of 23.5%). In adult social work within the TP, the vacancy rate (6.6%) is marginally better than the national average (7.5%) and significantly better than the London average (10.9%).

## Delivering the change

In response to these challenges, and to achieve our vision, we need coordinated actions for the short, medium and long term. 3 overarching aims were identified within our first labour market plan (LMP), published in 2020, each with a number of deliverables underneath. Some of these deliverables were new; others showed how work that was already underway related to the LMP. The 3 overarching aims were as follows:

- Improving pre-qualifying social work education
- Stimulating recruitment of social workers
- Promoting a skilled and stable social work workforce

These overarching aims are as relevant today as they were in 2020. The original LMP also highlighted 2 key principles that were to underpin the work of the TP and influence its approaches:

- Championing innovation
- Improving Business Intelligence

Again, these are just as relevant in 2022. Our LMP allows the issues facing the labour market to be addressed and progress measured and delivered in a coherent way, that will evolve and adapt over time. The TP must continue to identify, consider and attempt to mitigate its potential barriers to success, however many of the challenges experienced in the early days of partnership working are less prominent now. For example, engagement and communication has improved significantly since the implementation of a two-tier membership structure in 2020 and our annual membership

model and other means of income generation are supporting a sustainable approach. More details can be found in our [2020-24 Business Plan](#).

## **Defining success and ensuring progress**

In 2020, we identified four outcomes that provided the strategic framework used to measure and ensure the progress we wish to see within the labour market:

- High calibre graduates;
- Efficient recruitment;
- Low turnover rates;
- Improved practice;

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

Delivery of the TP's overall purpose and impact is currently measured by a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); these were examined and refined in 2020-21 to ensure they were fit for purpose and reflective of new aspirations which have evolved as we responded to new challenges and opportunities. This is particularly relevant in relation to this LMP, which builds upon the original implementation plan (2018-20) and subsequent implementation plans (2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23) and makes explicit the links between TP activities and workforce planning as well as outlining the new priorities that will address identified needs.

An ongoing priority will be the collection of outcome data (as well as workforce data). This is important to demonstrate the impact of any interventions and to inform future decision making, but it is also a requirement of the DfE's grant funding that all teaching partnerships submit outcome data linked to their nine (national) programme objectives. In addition to providing outcome data, the TP participates in all the DfE's national evaluations of the teaching partnership programme and as part of these produces a number of reports and case studies that contribute to these regular reviews.

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

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

This LMP sets out a framework for achieving Developing Together Teaching Partnership's (TP) vision of a well-qualified, skilled and stable workforce that drives better outcomes for those accessing our services. It responds to the DfE's plans to

cement important collaborations between universities and local authorities to ensure a steady stream of high-calibre social workers to the frontline and builds upon the work already completed by the TP during the last four years. In its grant offer letter to the TP, the Government outlined its aspiration to see social work teaching partnerships become centres of excellence that over time become a hub for innovative workforce development and can plan for labour market needs in their area (2019).

As such, this LMP sets out the actions we will take as a partnership to attract more students into social work training and employment within our region, develop and retain experienced practitioners and deliver practice improvements that translate into better services for those accessing them. It builds upon the original implementation plan (2018-20) and subsequent plans (2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23), to make explicit the links between TP activities and workforce planning, and it outlines new priorities that will address identified needs.

## **Chapter 3: National social work context and current workforce**

Our LMP needs to take account of the evolving social work landscape and societal change if we are to ensure our labour market remains resilient and adaptable to the future needs of employers, higher education institutions (HEI), students, social workers and, most importantly, those accessing our services. Having access to and understanding data on the current workforce and how it is changing is critical to our ability to plan for the future. These data form an essential part of the evidence required for workforce planning. The following subsections provide an overview of the current national social work context in which the TP operates and a national and local level overview of the current social work workforce.

### *National social work context*

In 2013, Baginsky stated that poor retention in social work results in a workforce with insufficient numbers of experienced staff capable of dealing with the complexity of the work, and of providing appropriate leadership and support to less experienced colleagues. High staff turnover impacts upon service provision; may affect public confidence; limits opportunities for individual and organisational learning; and offers a low return on investment in social work education (RiP, 2015). Professional commitment is one factor said to predict intention to leave a role, along with organisational commitment, burnout and job satisfaction, (Mor Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001), and consequently social work education has an important role in laying strong foundations for students' futures in the profession.

In recent years, new models of initial social work education have been developed, to address both recruitment and retention problems, and concern about the quality of training and recruits. These new models include fast-track work-based

routes to qualification. Two postgraduate accelerated routes have been introduced in child and family social work - Step Up to Social Work, in 2010, and Frontline, in 2013. Think Ahead, introduced in 2016, is widely considered the 'adult social work equivalent' of Frontline (Community Care, 2016).

The DfE's longitudinal study (2017-21) of social workers trained via the two fast-track child and family social work programmes – Frontline and Step Up to Social Work - demonstrates that the great majority completed the programme successfully and moved into posts in Children & Family social work, with most still known to be practising in equivalent posts 3 years later.

For the first Step Up cohort (the only cohort for which these figures are available), 73% are still employed in Children & Family social work at the 5 year point. For Step Up, there appears to be relatively good completion and 'conversion' rates when compared to the 78% of those completing mainstream postgraduate social work qualifying programmes who then take up jobs as social workers within six months of graduation (2018).

Frontline's own surveys suggest a similar retention rate in social work of 80% across all cohorts, with 74% in local authority children's services. A substantial number of Frontline trained social workers had moved to a different local authority since qualifying although this was more marked in earlier cohorts, which suggests this is being addressed to some extent. However even for the cohort with the highest same local authority retention rate at 2.5 years (48%), this was still considerably lower than the same local authority retention rate at 2.5 years for Step Up social workers at 60%. Even at 3.5 years, the majority of Step Up social workers were still at the same local authority in which they trained (53%).

The options for fast track qualifications in the Adult social work sector are more limited, with the only national fast track programme being Think Ahead, specifically to train mental health social workers. However the independent review of the programme's first 2 cohorts found that 80% were still employed as social workers 18 months after qualifying, so not dissimilar to those from both the Children & Family fast track programmes.

Giving students a more 'realistic' view of what social work practice will be like has been highlighted as a possible way of improving retention (Webb & Carpenter, 2012), with implications for the engagement of employers in social work education (McLaughlin, Shardlow et al. 2010). The Social Work Reform Board (2010, 2012) recommended a professional capabilities framework that would be useable at all levels from student to senior practitioner. This has since been supplemented by the key knowledge and skills areas for child and family practitioners (DfE, 2014) and social workers in adult services (Department of Health, 2015).

The DfE workforce statistics (2022) indicate that 69.4% (FTE) of children and family social workers leaving within the reference year had been in service in their local authority (LA) for less than five years (consistent with the previous year). The highest proportion of leavers (36.3%) were those who had been in service in their LA for between 2-5 years. The picture was very similar within the TP, with 71.31% of leavers having been in service in their LA for less than 5 years, however the highest proportion of leavers were those who had been in service in their LA for less than 2

years (37.6%). Whilst concerning, this is down more than 7% compared to the TP's baseline data from 2017-18.

Similarly, 71.43% of leavers in adult social work in our partnership had less than 3 years experience (compared to 64.71% nationally), however we were unable to obtain baseline data from Skills for Care to analyse whether this has improved or worsened over the last few years. The last reference year for which the closest equivalent was available was 2018, where, in the TP, those with less than 3 years' experience in role had the highest turnover rate at 23.2% (Arkesden, 2019), so it appears as though this is an ongoing challenge for adult social work, as well as children and families social work. The data suggests that across the board, most social workers who are leaving are doing so relatively 'soon' after they join a local authority and/or within the first few years of becoming a qualified social worker.

### *The social work workforce in England and the TP*

As of July 2022, there were 23,500 social worker jobs in the adult social care sector in England (Skills for Care, 2022). Many of these jobs (17,300) were within local authorities, and around 2,500 were employed within the independent sector. Data from NHS Digital shows that there were also around 3,300 social worker jobs in the NHS. In comparison, there were 34,679 (32,502 FTE) children and family social workers as well as 5,977 FTE agency workers, an increase of 3% compared to the same period the year before. Of these, 500 adult social workers and 1310 children and family social workers worked for local authority employers within the TP.

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

The workforce also includes people working in a wide variety of roles, from senior manager to case holder. For example, 48.4% of child and family social workers are case holders and 13.3% are qualified without cases;

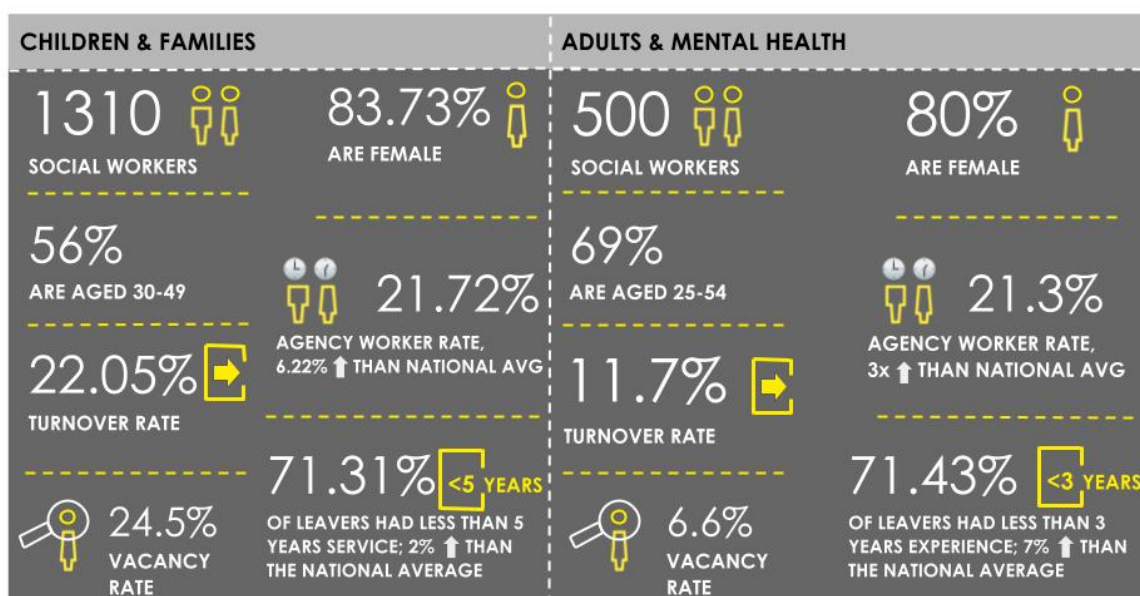
Some headline statistics, as of September 2021:

- Nationally, 87% of children and family social workers were female compared to 82% of adult social workers. This is comparable to the demographic of social workers in the TP (83.73% and 80% respectively);
- 55.4% of children and family social workers were 30 to 49 years old (compared to 56% in the TP) and 74% of adult social workers were aged 25 to 54 (compared to 69% on average in the TP, although this ranged from as low as 60% in Wandsworth and almost 20% higher in Kingston at 79%;
- The national average turnover rate was 15.4% for children and family social workers in local authorities, whereas in the TP this figure was considerably higher at 22.05%;



- Turnover rate was 13.6% for adult social workers in local authorities (down from 15.3% in 2017); the turnover rate for adult social workers in the TP is lower than this at 11.7%;
- 69.4% of FTE children and family social workers leaving that year had been in service in their local authority for less than 5 years. This is slightly more pronounced in our TP, with 71.31% leaving within 5 years. 37.6% leave within the first 2 years and 33.71% leave within 2-5 years. Nationally, 64.71% of leavers in adult social work had less than 3 years experience, compared to 71.43% in the TP.
- For children and family social work, the national average FTE agency worker rate was 15.5%, however in the TP this was considerably higher at 21.72%.
- For adult social work, the national average agency worker rate was 8%, however within the TP this was almost three times higher at 23%;
- For children and family social work, the FTE vacancy rate was largely unchanged from 2017 at 16.7%, however London is considerably higher at 23.5%. The TP's FTE vacancy rate within children and family social work was comparable with the London figure, at 24.5%.
- For adult social work, the FTE vacancy rate was 7.5% - this figure has decreased year on year from 12% in 2015. Within the TP, the rate was 6.6% however this has been very volatile over the past 7 years and there were significant disparities between local authorities in the partnership;
- The average hourly rate for adult social workers in London was £19.27, whereas in the TP this was £23.01, although it did range from local authority to local authority (from £20.59 to £26.46). However, it is important to note that average hourly rates can be affected by the proportion of staff who have spent longer in service or who have higher levels of experience. Comparable data was not available for children and family social workers.

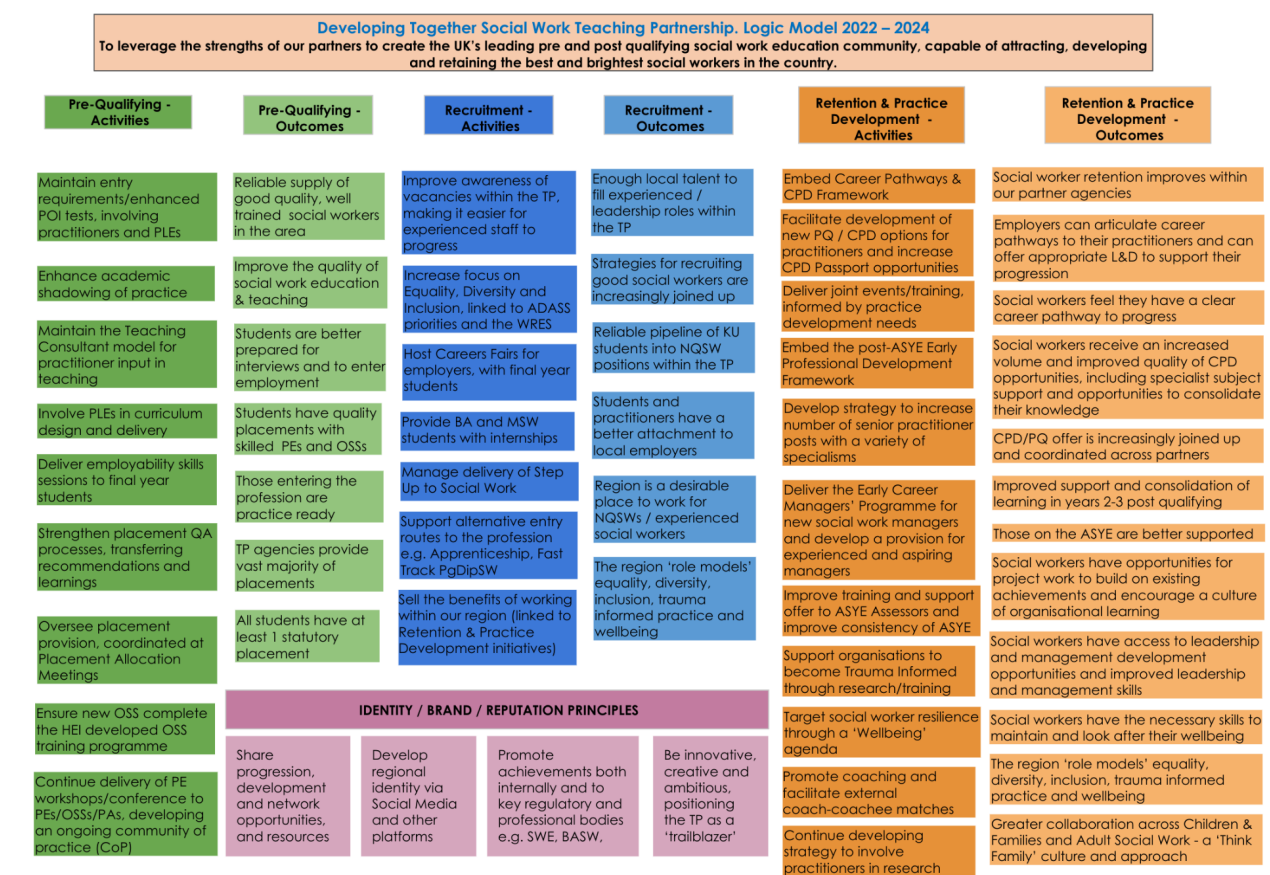
*Infographic: The Teaching Partnership's workforce*



# Chapter 4: Delivering the change

To achieve our vision, coordinated actions are needed for the short, medium and long term. The below is our most recent Logic Model, which is refreshed annually at a Visioning Day with senior leaders from across the Partnership. It demonstrates how issues facing the labour market, and aspirations for our Partnership, can be addressed, with progress measured and delivered in a coherent way, that will evolve and adapt over time.

## Teaching Partnership Logic Model 2022-24



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

- Student Selection: Ensure the highest calibre of Social Work students

with the attributes, competencies and passion needed to thrive in the profession are recruited to our academic programmes.

- Curriculum Development: Develop a curriculum that aligns with local need and is grounded not only in research and the Chief Social Workers' Knowledge and Skills Statements, but also in practice.
- Readiness for Practice: Give students the experience & support they need to ensure they are ready to practice within our region as Newly Qualified Social Workers.
- Academics in Practice: Ensure practice across our region is consistently informed by theory & research and that academics' teaching is equally informed by practice.
- Regional Progression & Development: Create regional progression pathways and Continuing Professional Development opportunities capable of attracting and retaining the best and brightest Social Workers in the UK.
- Future Workforce: Better understand our regional labour market to enable us to develop a robust plan to meet our partnership's current and future workforce demands.

As we are now in the fifth year of the TP, the majority of planned work under these areas has been completed, or is in the process of being completed. All continuing activities that are embedded across the TP have now become 'Business as Usual' (BAU) with activities outlined in our annual Implementation Plan. Crucially, we have secured sustainability funding from the DfE for a further year, which has been boosted by an annual membership fee from primary partners, allowing the activities required to deliver against this LMP to be funded. This year we have also secured primary partner membership from two further local authorities, Merton Children and Wandsworth Children, which further strengthens the position and helps to embed and align the overarching aims across the partnership.

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

- Improving pre-qualifying social work education;
- Stimulating recruitment of social workers;
- Promoting a skilled and stable social work workforce.

This LMP also highlights 2 key principles that will underpin the work of the TP and influence its approaches:

- Championing innovation;
- Improving Business Intelligence.

#### *Aim: Improving pre-qualifying social work education*

The DfE has been explicit in its requests to develop pre-qualifying social work education through a number of initiatives. For example, involving those with

lived experience and employer representatives in all stages of admissions and teaching, guaranteeing statutory placements in child and family settings and adult services offering students experience of using statutory frameworks, and quality assuring placement opportunities. This is being delivered in a number of ways, all of which will continue, for example:

- Entry requirements for the BA in social work course remain at 120 UCAS points (increased from 112 in 2018-19);
- The role of Teaching Consultant supports students learning through linking theory to practice and prepares them for the realities of frontline social work;
- First and final practice placements are increasingly provided by partner employers on the BA and MSW resulting in a higher proportion of statutory placements;
- Practice Educators and Onsite Supervisors across the TP are supported by a variety of support options and development opportunities including workshops, conferences, resources etc.

Full details of the positive impact of TP interventions on pre-qualifying social work education to date is outlined in our most recent [annual progress report](#), however you can view our success measures below:

Measure	2017-18 (Baseline)	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
% of students with 120+ UCAS points	52%	76%	85%	89%	Reported in 2023
Average (mean) UCAS points	123.1	131.8	139.62	139.95	Reported in 2023
First time pass % Readiness for Direct Practice module	71%	90%	94% (BA) 100% (MSW)	71% (BA) 89% (MSW)	Reported in 2023
% NQSW posts offered to Kingston University graduates (AfC and Sutton average)	12%	29%	47%	45%	Reported in 2023
% students graduating with 2:1 or a 1st (BA)	44%	78%	59%	62%	Reported in 2023
% of students graduating with distinction or commendation (MSW)	76%	81%	87%	91%	Reported in 2023
% of BA students progressing from Level 4 to Level 5	77%	85%	87%	88%	Reported in 2023
% of (statutory) annual placements provided by TP agencies	Unknown	47%	68%	80%	73%
% of students on BA programme who have 2	Unknown	22%	48%	86%	69%

Measure	2017-18 (Baseline)	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
'statutory' placements					
% of students on MSW programme who have 2 'statutory' placements	Unknown	85%	71%	100%	92%
% of BA students who receive a final statutory placement	Unknown	83%	91%	93%	79%
% of MSW students who receive a final statutory placement	Unknown	90%	87%	100%	92%
% of independent PEs used annually	3%	8%	5%	4%	6%
No. of PEs/OSSs attending training/event/workshop/conference	Unknown	120	96	116	158

*Aim: Stimulating recruitment of social workers*

Direct employer engagement has told us that employers in the TP should benefit from priority access to social workers who studied / are studying within the partner HEI, Kingston University; this should be effective from student induction, through to the taught curriculum, placement allocations and eventual post-graduation employment. The result should be a steady pipeline of social workers from Kingston University into partner employers who are not only well prepared for practice, in particular local practice, but who are familiar with the employer, their processes and organisational culture, thus accelerating their induction and integration. This is being delivered in a number of ways, all of which will continue, for example:

- The role of Teaching Consultant ensures students are exposed to partner employers from the point of admission through to the delivery of the curriculum on both the Bachelors (BA) and Masters in Social Work (MSW) programmes but also on the fast track Step Up to Social Work route;
- Similarly the first and final practice placements are increasingly provided by partner employers on the BA and MSW. We have also successfully launched a student internship programme, whereby students can apply to have both of their placements within one partner local authority and they are then guaranteed an interview for an NQSW position at the end of their course. There is the added benefit that NQSWs find the transition from student to social worker smoother and feel a sense of 'allegiance' to their employer, potentially improving retention rates in the currently problematic years 1-3 post qualifying;

- NQSW vacancies are advertised directly to final year BA and MSW students via Kingston University on the student's digital platform, via partner employers at the employment skills sessions, and also via the TP website;
- The Teaching Partnership has also recently developed an automatic job listing section on the Developing Together Website to host live, current job opportunities from across the partnership in one place. It is hoped that this site will act as a 'one stop shop' for social workers looking for roles within South West London and Surrey;
- The Teaching Partnership also hosts an annual Careers Fair for final year students, this enables partner employers to access final year students who are undecided about their next steps and offers an opportunity to explain more about their ASYE programmes and the Teaching Partnership offer;
- The Teaching Partnership was awarded funding to form a regional Step Up to Social Work Partnership for the first time, alongside two local authority partners, Achieving for Children and Sutton, and Kingston University as the HEI provider. We successfully recruited 9 applicants who are now halfway through this programme. These candidates will be automatically eligible for interview at the end of the 14 month programme and it is hoped that they will secure full time employment on the ASYE programmes within the respective local authorities. It is also hoped that we will see strong retention of these individuals post the crucial 2 year mark, as they already live and work within the local authority boroughs.

The DfE also asks TPs to report on whether partner HEI student admissions are within 60% of the projected workforce need for the expected year of employment following graduation. On average, partner employers recruit 140 NQSWs onto their ASYE programmes each year and Kingston University admits approximately 150 onto their qualifying programmes each year; this includes the BA, MSW, PgDip, Apprenticeship and Step Up to Social Work. We also know that the proportion of NQSWs employed by partner agencies that studied at Kingston University is steadily increasing.

Full details of the positive impact of TP interventions on recruitment to date is outlined in our most recent [annual progress report](#), however you can view our success measures below:

Measure	2017-18 (Baseline)	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
% NQSW posts offered to Kingston University graduates (AfC and Sutton average)	12%	29%	47%	45%	Data available in 2023
% of MSW students on	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%

student internship scheme who secure NQSW post					offered
% of employers who confirm improved 'readiness to practice' of NQSWs who completed student internship	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Data available in 2023

### *Aim: Promoting a skilled and stable workforce*

Direct employer engagement, analysis of workforce data and sector research has told us that retention of social workers is a challenge for many local authority employers, including those in our TP. Both children and family and adults directorates across the TP experienced challenges retaining those with less than 5 years' experience in particular.

We know that the following are key factors influencing retention:

- Workload (caseload and paperwork)
- Resilience/burn out
- Progression opportunities
- Training opportunities
- Working environment and technology
- Flexible working
- Supportive management
- Pay and remuneration

To support the development and retention of the existing workforce, the TP has already delivered in a number of ways, all of which will continue:

- Commissioned, delivered or facilitated a wider variety of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for practitioners in the region e.g. facilitating the opening up of courses between partners through the CPD Passport scheme and commissioning experts to deliver masterclasses, conferences and workshops;
- Contributed to the development of an alternative professional development pathway and supported a number of practitioners to complete a post qualifying Coaching module to aid employers in establishing a regional pool of coaches and a 'coaching culture'. Another alternative professional development pathway that has been supported is the role of Teaching Consultant, with many of the Teaching Consultants completing post qualifying modules and achieving Associate Fellow through the Higher Education Academy;
- Specifically targeted social worker resilience through an overarching 'Wellbeing' agenda, with annual wellbeing conferences, bespoke training, a social media presence promoting wellbeing activities, 'Wellbeing Hub' on the Developing Together Website and Elearning



modules developed specifically for NQSW and students to embed a wellbeing ethos early on in their career;

- Developed and launched the Career Pathways & CPD Framework in 2021. The Framework is mapped against the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and the Post-Qualifying Standards (PQS). The framework demonstrates employers' commitment to improving social work practice through continual professional development and career progression and supports social work practitioners and those involved with workforce learning and development, by outlining indicative social work job roles/responsibilities and associated CPD opportunities, offered by the TP, Kingston University and employers at each career stage. It also supports practitioners to meet Social Work England (SWE) CPD requirements and identify learning opportunities;
- In addition, The Early Professional Development (EPD) Framework was launched in 2021, which dovetails the overarching Career Pathways and CPD Framework. The EPD Framework comes into effect at the end of the ASYE and aims to support practitioners in these crucial early years of their career, alleviating the metaphorical 'cliff edge' post ASYE that is often referred to within the sector. The framework provides EPD social workers with the support and opportunities they need to develop as practitioners in the coming years and covers a host of different initiatives, training and resources, relevant and appropriate to each stage of a social worker's career, identified as vital to help develop resilience, professional curiosity and leadership skills in the second and third years post-qualifying;
- Developed a three day Early Career Manager's training programme, to support those with 0-18 months of management experience, delivered to over 60 new social work managers to date;
- Established the Monthly Research Hub in 2021, with the aim of helping social workers from across the partnership to become more confident in critiquing, applying and getting involved in research;
- Established an 'ASYE working group' in 2022 to consult on existing ASYE standards across the TP and to develop a cross-TP handbook for ASYE assessors and NQSW. We wanted to ensure a consistent, well structured, supportive programme was in place for all NQSWs in our region. We also recognise that linked to the retention of NQSW is the development of the ASYE Assessors who are supporting and evaluating them, to ensure that they are able to fulfill the requirements of the role. Ensuring that ASYE Assessors have received appropriate training in providing ample support, effective professional supervision and holistic assessment will be paramount to the success of the ASYE programme, as well as the retention of NQSWs thereafter.

Full details of the positive impact of TP interventions on recruitment to date is outlined in our most recent [annual progress report](#).

The TP continues to recognise social worker retention as the core priority not least because a stable workforce is fundamental in delivering effective



change and high quality practice. As such, the following deliverables are integral:

- Continue to collaboratively develop our Career Pathways & CPD Framework, supported by relevant and appropriate post qualifying modules, ensuring it is aligned to the needs of employers, sector developments and findings of skills gap analyses;
- Support partner agencies in communicating and articulating the Framework to their practitioners, ensuring skilled and experienced practitioners who do not want to be managers have an alternative progression route;
- Build on the success of the Early Career Social Work Managers' programme, which targeted new social work managers, by extending support and development to aspiring and experienced managers, ensuring that social work teams are supported by experienced, skilled and resilient managers.

*Principle: Championing innovation*

- Through insights from those working within our TP, as well as those working within other TP regions, there is scope for TPs to be the vehicle for creativity and innovation. Progress in social work has to be increasingly fast moving to respond to the evolving social work landscape as well as the long standing challenges, so our ability to innovate remains at the forefront of resilience, stability and sustainability;
- There is a role for TPs to play going forward in continuing to promote, encourage and facilitate ground breaking research between employers and HEIs, and our TP will inspire collaborative research on an ongoing basis, primarily through our Monthly Research Hub;
- In addition, our TP will always consider radical approaches when problem solving issues with practice, recruitment and retention and will facilitate a forum for developing collective responses to emerging sector research and recommendations.

*Principle: Improving Business Intelligence*

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

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

a number of measures, including the following:

- Entry levels of those admitted into the BA in Social Work programme (BA);
- The extent to which experienced practitioners and those with lived experience contribute to the design and delivery of teaching on both the BA and MSW;
- The extent to which academics responsible for teaching on the BA and MSW programmes experience frontline practice;
- Students' academic achievement on Readiness for Direct Practice module;
- Student progression through qualifying programmes;
- Students' academic attainment;
- Provision of statutory placements and the provision of placements by those within the TP;
- The extent to which independent Practice Educators are used;
- The success of Kingston University graduates in securing employment as an NQSW within partner employers.

Deliverables for the next two years include:

- Beginning to collate data on the location and status of Practice Educators within the TP, which is also a DfE reporting requirement as of 2022-23;
- Collecting aggregate data on the diversity of social work course applications and starts (by ethnicity and gender), also a DfE reporting requirement for 2022-23;
- Collecting aggregate data on the diversity of the final year student cohort (by ethnicity and gender), also a DfE reporting requirement for 2022-23;
- Collecting data on the pipeline of students from Kingston University into partner agencies as NQSWs and, later, their retention throughout the ASYE and EPD Framework. This data will also capture where these NQSWs had their practice placements in an effort to establish the correlation between placement provider and subsequent employer;
- Developing a skills gap analysis to inform workforce opportunities across the partnership.

### *Barriers to success*

The following are a number of potential barriers to success that the TP must navigate. In most cases these are obstacles that the TP has already experienced to date and taken steps to successfully overcome:

- Impact is difficult to evidence due to the medium to long term nature of the project outcomes, and this has contributed to inconsistent engagement amongst partners in the past. However, the DfE commissioned [evaluation of Social Work Teaching Partnerships](#), released in November 2020, gives an in depth overview of phase 1 and phase 2

partnerships, as well as an initial review of phase 3 partnerships. The early and indicative impacts from our Teaching Partnership activity is also illustrated throughout the TP's most recent [Annual Progress Report 2021-22](#). Both can make the case for continuing the TP, whilst partners anecdotally have said they have 'felt' the benefits of being in the partnership and realise the long term benefits are harder to measure and will continue to be seen in the coming years;

- The TP infrastructure is largely dependent on the engagement of both primary and secondary partners, as well as financial contributions from primary partner agencies in the form of an annual membership fee to strengthen the financial position of the partnership. It is expected that this will continue, however there is no guarantee and is dependent on primary partner members reaffirming their commitment on an annual basis for the year ahead. Lack of injection of this membership fee would have significant impact on the Teaching Partnership's ability to maintain a central team and continue the majority of the deliverables. The central team resource is instrumental in driving the pace of partnership activity, facilitating effective change and improvements, including driving stakeholder management and engagement;
- The nature of partnership working across different agencies means that there is often no 'one size fits all' approach in terms of developing processes and approaches. Working across both children and family and adult social work also can present a challenge when it comes to agreeing priorities and the direction of travel. Building and maintaining genuine whole-organisation commitment within partners remains an ongoing activity, recognising the complex environment that partnerships operate in (competing priorities, partner restructures, recruitment, Ofsted inspections etc).

### *Sustainability and dependency*

- The ongoing work of the TP will continue to be largely resourced by the Head of the Teaching Partnership, the Teaching Partnership Manager, CPD & Events Consultant and Practice Consultants. It is recognised that these posts have supported the programme with a range of activities and have been critical to facilitating pace, communication, stakeholder engagement and operational accountability for workstreams. The national evaluation of TPs also noted having a central function as one of their key transferable lessons;
- Whilst the benefits of having additional resources are evident, the dependency on a central function can make long term sustainability more difficult. It can also contribute to a sense of detachment from the TP amongst partners, who may view it as a separate entity that they subscribe to rather than something that they are very much a part of;
- Our [2020-24 Business Plan](#) outlines our overall approach to sustainability.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

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

To achieve our vision we have identified four outcomes that provide the strategic framework that we will use to measure and ensure the progress we wish to see within the labour market:

- High calibre graduates;
- Efficient recruitment;
- Low turnover rates;
- Improved practice.

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

- Our vision and outcomes for the labour market in our region support the overarching purpose of the social work teaching partnership programme, which is to transform the quality of education and experience received by social work students and practitioners following reviews such as Narey and Croisdale-Appleby. These reviews highlighted an urgent need for better social work education and professional development;
- The programme aims to formalise collaborative working to raise the quality of social work, by attracting high quality students into the profession and ensuring students and existing social workers have the necessary knowledge, skills and values to practice effectively – and to improve workforce planning and development to address retention and recruitment issues (DfE, 2019);
- Delivery of this purpose and the impact of the TP is currently measured by a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and an array of quantitative and qualitative information is collected to demonstrate progress towards the outcomes;
- The KPIs are routinely revisited to ensure they are still relevant, meaningful and able to be evidenced. It is not uncommon for evaluation plans to evolve in order to respond to programmes that involve emergent and responsive strategies and causal processes which cannot be completely controlled or predicted in advance. Although there is an overall goal in mind, the details of a programme tend to unfold and change over time as different people become engaged (or disengage) and as it responds to new challenges and opportunities;
- An ongoing priority will be the collation of outcome and output data (as well as workforce data) as the TP continues, which is particularly important given much of the outcome data will only be available further downstream;
- In addition, the TP participates in the DfE's ongoing national evaluation of teaching partnerships and produces a number of reports and case studies that contribute to these regular reviews.

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# Appendix 1: Workforce Data

	BASELINE				TEACHING PARTNERSHIP YEAR 1				TEACHING PARTNERSHIP YEAR 2				TEACHING PARTNERSHIP YEAR 3			
	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20				2020-21			
Children & Families	National	London	SWTP		National	London	SWTP		National	London	SWTP		National	London	SWTP	
Vacancy rate	16.5%	25.60%	25.50%		16.40%	24.20%	24.25%	▼	16.10%	23.80%	23.62%	▼	16.70%	23.5%	24.5%	▲
Leavers within 2 years	35.30%	39.70%	44.92%		34.80%	41.50%	33.32%	▼	34.60%	39.90%	42.83%	▲	33.1%	37.50%	37.6%	▼
Leavers within 2-5 years	33%	35.50%	35.65%		32.90%	34.10%	38.63%	▲	35.10%	33.90%	31.7%	▼	36.30%	38.70%	33.71%	▲
Turnover rate	15.20%	18.80%	22.40%		15.10%	17.70%	21.52%	▼	13.50%	16.90%	18.05%	▼	15.40%	18.30%	22.05%	▲
Agency rate	15.40%	25.50%	28.40%		15.80%	23.80%	28.72%	▲	15.40%	22.40%	20.52%	▼	15.50%	22.0%	21.72%	▲
Adults	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20				2020-21			
	National	London	SWTP		National	London	SWTP		National	London	SWTP		National	London	SWTP	
Vacancy rate	10.20%	16.40%	7.80%		8.40%	14.60%	5.2%	▼	8.30%	13.40%	1%	▼	7.50%	10.90%	6.6%	▲
Leavers within 3 years	Not available	Not available	Not available		Not available	Not available	Not available		Not available	Not available	Not available		64.71%	Not available	71.43%	
Turnover rate	15.30%	17.90%	14.13%		13.80%	17.00%	13.4%	▼	13.60%	17.00%	15.2%	▲	13.60%	18.50%	11.7%	▼
Agency rate	7%	26%	33%		7%	27%	30%	▼	7%	27%	29%	▼	8%	26%	23%	▼
<div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> </div> <p>Overall improvement since 2017-18 and/or lower than the London average</p> <p>Overall improvement since 2017-18 <b>but</b> at least 1% higher than the London average</p> <p>Overall decline since 2017-18 <b>and</b> higher than the London average</p> <p>The arrows indicate whether there has been an increase (negative) or decrease (positive) in the rate compared to the previous year. The down arrows indicate an improvement on the previous year (the rate has reduced) and the up arrows indicate a decline on the previous (the rate has increased).</p> <p>The coloured cells take into account how we are performing since the TP's inception as well as against the London averages.</p>																