

social work Connections

June 2011



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in social work degree
not adequate**

Newsletter of the General Social Care Council

Social Work Connections

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Newsletter of the General Social Care Council

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Editorial statement

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Welcome to the June 2011 issue of Social Work Connections

In this issue you will find an update on developments with the Health and Social Care Bill, the latest with The College of Social Work and our take on Munro's final report on the findings of her review into child protection in England.

Congratulations to graduating students – what a massive achievement! You can read about the next steps to joining the Register as a qualified social worker in this issue and on our website.

If you are interested in learning about post-qualifying (PQ) awards from another social work professional's viewpoint, you will enjoy reading Paul Lawrence's case study. Paul has almost finished the PQ Advanced Level and MA in Professional Education and Training in Human Services (PETHS) at Kingston University.

Let us know what you think of June's edition and what topics you would like to see covered in the future. You can share your opinions with us and other social workers through posting comments on articles and also by joining our private forum on the main website: www.gsc.org.uk/login.php

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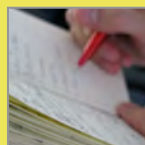
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Longer Health Bill scrutiny revises transfer date to HPC

In March, MPs scrutinised the Health and Social Care Bill in Committee, which includes the legislation needed to transfer the functions of the GSCC to the Health Professions Council (HPC). A number of amendments to the Bill were tabled, but none of the tabled amendments were agreed.

MPs discussed the name of the HPC after the transfer – it is due to be called the Health and Care Professions Council. They also debated whether there should be a definition of social work in the legislation and the regulation of students. The Minister confirmed that the HPC will take over the voluntary register

for students from the GSCC and consult on how students should be registered in future.

The legislation also includes the NHS reforms. Before Easter the Government announced that they would review and consult widely on the NHS Bill to address concerns about the proposed reforms. As a result of this, the Bill and consequently the transfer of our powers to the HPC have been delayed by a few months. We now expect the transfer to happen no earlier than July 2012, rather than in April. Until the transfer happens, social workers are still required to remain registered with us in order to practise.



Photograph: UK Parliament

We will keep social workers updated about the transfer though **Social Work Connections** and the GSCC website.

The college of social work - a step nearer

THE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

The GSCC welcomes the news that the College of Social Work and the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) have agreed a process by which both organisations will work together to create a new entity - a single UK-wide College of Social Work. If the proposals in the memorandum of understanding are endorsed by BASW members at their forthcoming annual general meeting (AGM), the intention is to have the new body in existence by January 2012.

There will be a joint working group bringing together The College and BASW to produce a detailed development plan covering constitutional issues, a business plan, trade union links and staffing. The two bodies have agreed a mechanism that will be able to deal with any difficult issues and come up with agreed solutions.

The importance of getting The College established on a sustainable basis is huge and growing. The Social Work Task Force recommended the creation of The College and the reform board, and is already thinking of a range of tasks that it wants to see picked up in due course. There is already work going on to draw up arrangements that will see the new Professional Capabilities Framework transferred to the 'ownership' of The College when the reform board has completed its work. The College will also want to take a key role in developing the new continuing practice development (CPD) framework and ensuring that social workers have the support and training opportunities they will need to meet the new registration requirements set by the Health Professions Council.

GSCC welcomes the progress made and will continue to support the process that leads to the formal launch of the new College by the beginning of 2012.

Munro review – the final report

In June last year, the Department for Education commissioned Professor Eileen Munro to carry out a comprehensive review of child protection in England. She published two interim papers: Part One in October 2010, and the Interim Report in January 2011.

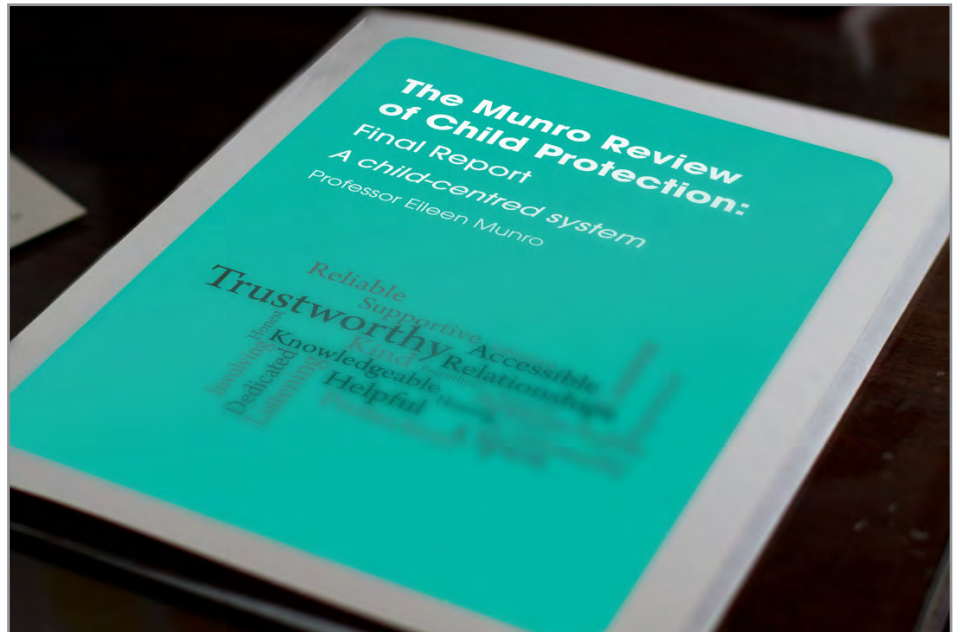
The final report, which was published in May 2011 was welcomed by the GSCC as a report which tackles head-on some of the difficult realities of frontline social work practise.

Professor Munro's analysis finds that local areas should have more freedom to design their own child protection services and that a 'one-size-fits-all approach' to child protection is preventing local areas from focusing on the needs of the child. The report also focuses on reducing bureaucracy in children's services in favour of increased use of professional judgement and expertise.

Complementing the work of the Social Work Reform Board, this report makes a further case to improve the knowledge and skills of social workers and takes on board a number of GSCC recommendations around initial education and continuing professional development (CPD).

The report echoes the GSCC in highlighting the need for a close working relationship between higher education institutions (HEIs) and employers to ensure students are prepared for the challenges that a career in social work brings.

Munro's report recognises the importance of developing and maintaining the skills of social work professionals, supported at a national level by the regulator. We are pleased that the report notes the extremely important role that the College of Social Work will have in developing and maintaining the CPD framework after the transfer of the GSCC functions to the Health Professions Council (HPC) from 2012.



Photograph: Jake Przespo

The GSCC currently requires every social worker to complete at least 15 days of relevant training and learning every three years. The HPC's requirements are different; they do not specify a set number of training and learning days, but they do require the completion of a mixture of learning activities that are relevant to current or future practice. The HPC will look at their system of CPD after the first year to see if it is sufficiently rigorous.

Munro's report focuses on child protection and children's social workers. As the regulator for 85,000 social workers, across all areas of social work, we think it important that the report's impact on adult social workers is looked at and where appropriate, recommendations are adopted across social work as a whole.

The reports 15 recommendations will be considered by an implementation group set up by Ministers, which the GSCC looks forward to contributing to. A detailed Government response is to be published before the summer recess.

PQ case study: Paul Lawrence

Photograph: Paul Lawrence



Paul Lawrence has almost finished the PQ Advanced Level and MA in Professional Education and Training in Human Services (PETHS) at Kingston University. He is the Practice Development and Learning Officer (Children’s Social Care) for the London Borough of Merton.

“ At the turn of this century I had completed five years as a frontline children and families social worker and I was looking for new professional challenges and ways to move my career forward. I was in another borough at the time and they sponsored me for the Practice Teaching Award, which I gained in 2001. I enjoyed the new dimension to life which a London university and higher academic study offered me.

I had the support of my wife (and young daughter) as I focussed on my continuing professional development. I did not have a first degree, having qualified with the DipSW, and returning to study at a higher level was not initially easy. However, I rose to the challenge. My professional knowledge, skills and confidence grew in leaps and bounds and I gained my PQ Award in Social Work (PQ1-6) in 2004.

Now in Merton, a helpful encounter with a PQ lead from Kingston University in 2005 kick-started my Higher Specialist studies and before I knew it I had signed up for an introductory module on the practice education pathway at the university. One module somehow led to another. I had the ‘PQ bug’.

However, unlike a long distance runner, I didn’t pace myself and found it difficult to find a work/life/study balance. I took ‘time out’ in 2007 to muster my motivation. With Merton now sponsoring me, I returned 18 months later to complete the final modules to Advanced Level by June 2011.

PQ study has given me a renewed, positive outlook about social work and my own professional worth. So much so that I was recently appointed to the Practice Education role in Merton.

I’m relieved that my PQ studies are now complete but conversely I still have a yearning for continuing professional development and the challenges this offers me.

A sense of normality has, for now, returned to my family. I no longer have excuses for delaying the backlog of jobs around the house and I can give my wife more one-to-one time (including the two of us walking the dog!)

By July I will have an MA in PETHS and the Advanced Level in Social Work. Where to next in my professional journey? I don’t yet know, but I haven’t shaken the ‘PQ bug’ and want to continue to ‘infinity and beyond’ on my academic and professional travels (don’t tell my wife, daughter and dog!). ”

Information for graduating students

Photograph: David Michael Morris



Congratulations if you have, or are about to, successfully complete your social work degree this summer. On course completion you will be eligible to [apply to join the Social Care Register](#) as a qualified social worker; you can find details of how to do this on our website.

Please do not send us your application form until you have checked that your higher education institution has sent us your pass result, as without formal notification of this we will not be able to

progress your application. The website also explains how to ask for your application to be dealt with as a priority if you have a job offer that is dependent on registration. Please don’t forget to let us know about any changes to your contact details, as failure to do so can significantly slow down the progress of your application.

Mental health training in social work degree not adequate

By Melanie Henwood OBE

The GSCC's recent poll in Social Work Connections explored the adequacy of the Social Work Degree in addressing mental health awareness, and whether this equips you to support people who have mental health problems. The poll was completed by 775 people (433 through Social Work Connections and 342 via the GSCC website), and the findings were clear. Fewer than one in five people thought the degree provided adequate preparation*.

As [my blog](#) on findings pointed out, the implications of the poll need careful consideration. There is a balance needed between generic and specialist training and many in-depth issues are probably best approached in specialist post-qualifying training. However, it is likely that all social workers will come into contact with people experiencing mental distress or illness, and often this may be undiagnosed or untreated.

Across the total adult population it is estimated that over a lifetime one in four people will experience mental illness, and at any one time this is true of one in six people. People with mental health problems are likely to experience compound disadvantage in other areas of their lives and have poorer outcomes from education, poorer health status, and difficulties in finding and maintaining employment. For all these reasons it can be argued that social workers should be equipped with excellent skills and understanding in recognising mental health problems and responding appropriately.

It is too easy, perhaps, to argue that the Social Work Degree must include training on everything (training on drug, alcohol and substance misuse was another area recently addressed by a SWC poll), but clearly there is an issue here.

“ There is a balance needed between generic and specialist training and many in-depth issues are probably best approached in specialist post-qualifying training. ”

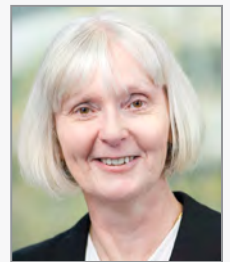
The Education Working Group of the Social Work Reform Board is currently addressing the content and delivery of the curriculum framework for social work, and what should be mainstream and what the focus of post-qualifying training is a fundamental question that needs to be addressed. Improved mental health outcomes will only be achieved if this is seen as the concern of everyone working in social work and social care.

Discuss your views on the Social Work Degree on our forums.

**18 per cent overall, but 16 per cent are SWC respondents and 21 percent responded via the GSCC website which could include members of the wider public.*

Author profile

Melanie Henwood OBE is an independent health and social care consultant. From 2002-2010 she was a lay member, and later Vice Chair, of the General Social Care Council.



Photograph: Still Waters Run Deep

She is a specialist adviser to the House of Commons Health Select Committee, an adviser to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and was Chair of the Advisory Group on Independent Living to the MS Society.

Previously Melanie has held Visiting Fellowships at the London School of Economics, the University of Leeds, and the University of New South Wales, Sydney.

Her latest work – for the Putting People First Consortium and SCIE - has focused on the experience of people who are self-funding, and how they navigate the social care system.

Renewal of registration – an update

Over the last six months thousands of social workers have been busy renewing their registration and we are now in the final phase of our renewals peak. Since last December we have received almost 40,000 renewal applications and due to improvements to our processes, we have maintained an initial processing time of three weeks throughout the peak. A further 22,000 registrants are due to renew between May 2011 and March 2012.

If you are due to renew your registration at any point over the next year we will write to remind you. In order for this to happen it is imperative that we have accurate details for you on our database. Therefore, if you have moved house, changed your name or there are any other changes to your personal details, please let us know by emailing changeofcircumstances@gsc.org.uk; phoning 0845 070 0630; or logging them on MyGSCC.

When we write to remind you we will enclose your renewal application form, which should be completed without

delay and sent back to us. Based on common errors we have noted over the past six months, we are urging social workers to double-check their application before submitting it. The most common errors are:

- not ticking the first box on the front page, indicating whether 90 hours/15 days of post-registration training and learning (PRTL) have been completed;
- ticking the declaration box but not supplying additional information;
- insufficient payment; and
- not signing the form at the end, or signing at the bottom of the employer endorsement section (which must be completed by the employer).

Once we have received your renewal form we will write to confirm its receipt. As long as you have submitted your renewal form by the deadline, and your name shows on our register, you can continue to practise as normal.



Photograph: Getty Images

Last July, the Government announced that responsibility for regulating social work will transfer to the Health Professions Council no earlier than July 2012. However, until that time, we continue to regulate social workers and the requirement to renew your registration when it is due to expire still applies. For more information visit the [renewals page on our website](#).

We will keep all social workers and social work students informed about the date and arrangements of the transfer to the HPC through a variety of channels, including our website and Social Work Connections.

Who would be a social worker?

During the month of May, Radio 4 ran a three-part series following final year social work students at Birmingham University from the lecture theatre to their first jobs in mental health, hospice care and frontline child protection.

In the series, Simon Cox explored the initial training of social workers to discover why, despite hundreds of students graduating with social work degrees each year, the vacancies persist. Penny Thompson, Chief Executive of the GSCC, was interviewed as part of the series.

To read more about the series visit: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-13230881

Conduct hearing outcomes: June

Removals	4
Suspensions	5
Admonishments	9
Misconduct not proved	3

Please note that this information relates to hearings concluded from 23 February 2011 till 26 May 2011.

For the full list of hearings and sanctions, please visit : www.gsc.org.uk/page/45/Conduct+hearings.html

GSCC events

Photograph: Andrew Parsons



Following the success of the two regional events we held in Leeds and London during March, we are hoping to hold more information days for social workers and social work students.

The social work sector is going through a period of significant change, which will impact on practitioners' professional lives. These interactive sessions aim to provide social workers with information on the

impending changes to their regulatory body and what this will mean for them. The days will also explore some of the other key proposals for the development of the profession.

If you are a social worker or student and would like to register an interest in attending a free information day, please email **your name, your SCR number** and your **location** to events@gsc.org.uk.

We are still in the early planning stages so dates and locations have not yet been fixed, however we anticipate an autumn timetable. Once planning has progressed we will email those who have registered an interest, giving them the opportunity to apply for a place.

Community Care Live 2011

The annual Community Care Live event took place on 18 and 19 May in London, and as usual it was an extremely lively, informative and well-attended conference.

Our exhibition stand attracted approximately 400 delegates, who had a range of questions on a number of topics; the most popular being [registration renewal](#), [post-qualifying \(PQ\) awards](#) and the [transfer of our functions to the Health Professions Council \(HPC\)](#).

We held a joint workshop with the HPC, which was co-hosted by our Director of Strategy and Social Work Education, Sherry Malik and the HPC's Stakeholder Communications Manager, Mark Potter. The session explored the two organisations' different approaches to regulation and the impact of next year's planned changes on social workers. Sherry also looked at the Social Work Reform Board's proposed changes to the social work sector and invited comments. If you were not at the event you can [listen to a recording of the session](#).

Photographs (all): GSCC



Support in meeting your PRTL requirements

Social workers must complete 90 hours or 15 days of PRTL in each three year registration period. GSCC works with a range of bodies to ensure that there is plenty of support to help registrants to complete the PRTL requirements. The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) is one of those bodies.

SCIE has released three new Social Care TV films called “What is social work?” They cover the rewarding and complex roles of social workers in an emergency duty team, in services for older people and the third film follows a children’s services social worker. And for those new to practise, SCIE’s [Newly Qualified Social Workers](#) resource will be invaluable. The resource has been developed to support you to meet the 12 outcomes statements contained in the NQSW framework in adults’ services developed by Skills for Care. You will find useful resources, suggestions for evidence and links to current legislation and policy to help your continuing professional development. Although the primary focus is on adults’ services, social workers in other settings will also find it useful.

Visit www.scie.org.uk for full details.

Another resource available to social workers is Community Care Inform (www.ccinform.co.uk). This is an online training and learning resource for social workers working with children, young people and their families from the publishers of Community Care magazine. Inform helps practitioners make, and evidence, decisions by putting professionally-critical, expert-written information at your fingertips.

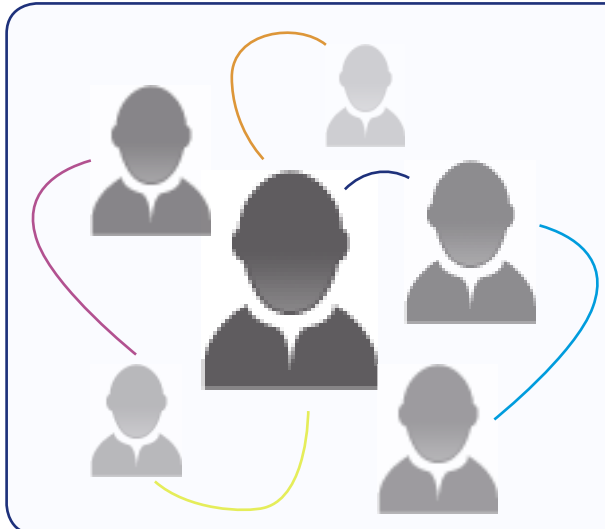


Photograph: geekcalendar

The service contains: case law summaries written for practitioners; legislation digests updated with the latest regulations; expert-written practice guides; research reviews; and much more.

You can also record your learning for post-registration training and learning (PRTL) on a PRTL Log.

There is a subscription cost for individual social workers, but many local authorities are providing this service to their employees. For further information, please visit www.ccinform.co.uk.



Join the conversation

Join the conversation at the GSCC’s new online **community** exclusively for registered social workers and social work students.

You will be able to keep updated on issues relating to the regulation of the profession, and share and discuss the latest developments on our revamped website.