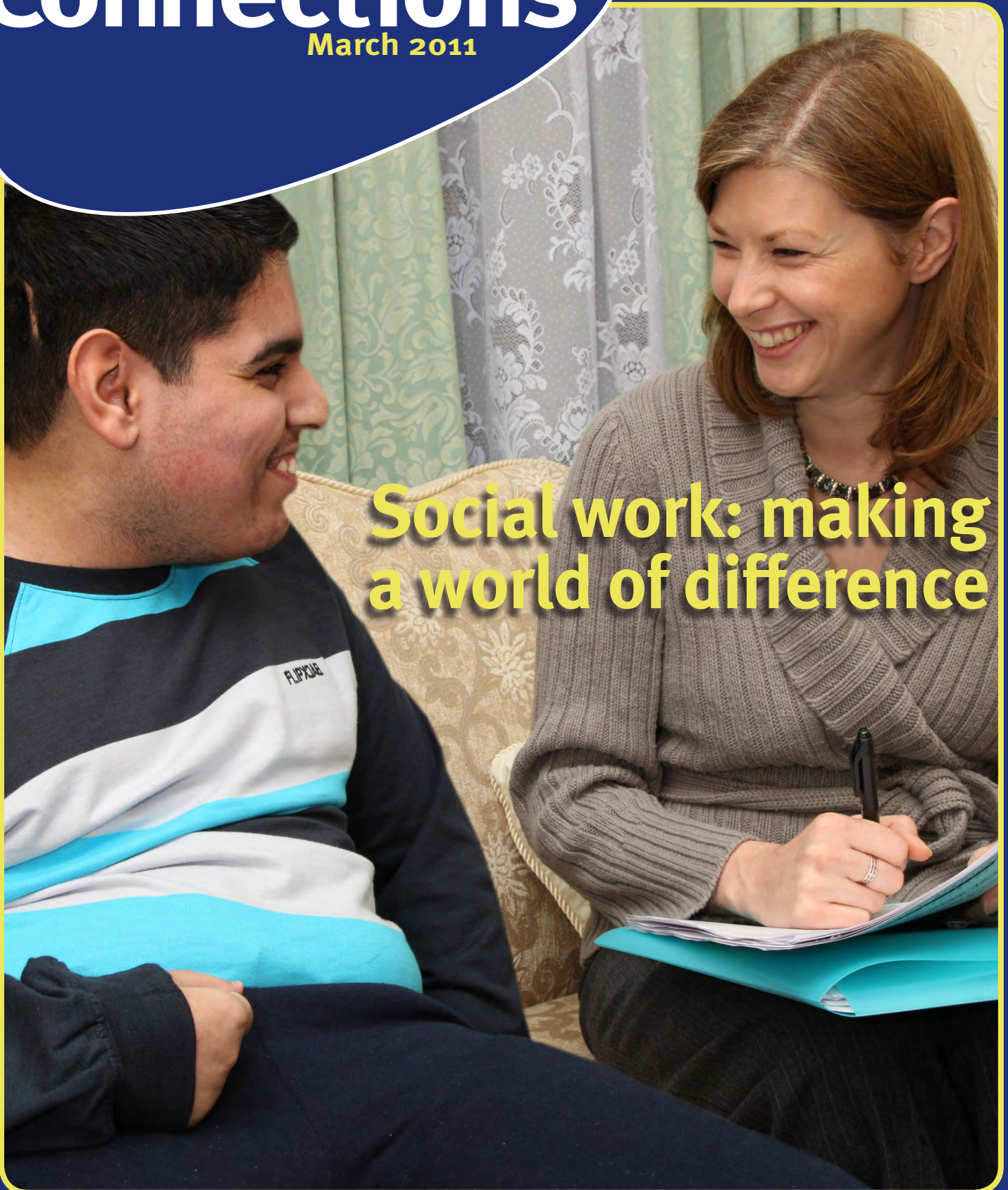


social work
Connections
March 2011



**Social work: making
a world of difference**

Newsletter of the General Social Care Council

Social Work Connections

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Editorial statement

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Welcome to the March 2011 issue of Social Work Connections

In this issue you will find information about our social worker events in Leeds and London and how you can still win a free place at the London event by posting a post-registration training and learning (PRTL) tip on [our forum](#).

We have included guidance on some common mistakes to avoid when completing your renewal of registration application form, to help make sure the processing of your application is not delayed.

Amongst the feature articles this time, we keep you updated on the Reform Board and their report “**Building a safe and confident future: One year on**”, as well as an update on the much talked about College of Social Work.

We hope you enjoy this issue; please continue to share your opinions with us and other social workers through posting comments and also by joining our private forum and engaging in discussion on our [website](#).

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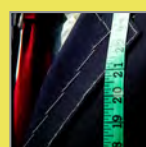
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MPs approve GSCC transfer to HPC

On 31 January MPs voted the **Health and Social Care Bill** through its first stage in the Parliamentary process. The Bill contains the measures that will transfer the regulatory powers of the GSCC to the Health Professions Council (HPC), which will be renamed the Health and Care Professions Council.

The Bill is expected to complete its progress in Parliament and receive royal assent by the end of the year. In a briefing for Parliamentarians we highlighted the need for public protection to remain a priority in social work regulation. A voluntary register

for students should be maintained in future, the GSCC said. The Bill will allow this to happen. The change to a fitness to practice regime is also welcome, though how this system will fit with the other care councils in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, which continue to use the code of practice, needs to be considered.

From the date of the transfer, expected in April 2012, social workers will be subject to the rules of the HPC. The HPC is currently running a Professional Liaison Group, which is working on the Standards of Proficiency for social work.



Meetings are held in public; full details can be found on the [HPC's website](#).

Photograph: grendelkhan, 2006

The Independent Safeguarding Authority

The Protection of Freedoms Bill was presented to The House of Commons on Friday 11 February 2011. Part of the bill provides the intended amendments to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (SVGA), which is the legal framework underpinning the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). The Government's published intention, by reviewing the VBS and making related amendments to the SVGA, is to have a proportionate central barring scheme which continues to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

Broadly, the proposed amendments to the SVGA mean that the planned registration of 9.3 million people will no longer go ahead and the scope of the scheme has been reduced and will now cover approximately 4.8 million individuals working (paid and unpaid) in, redefined, regulated activity. The barred lists will remain and individuals who are considered a risk to vulnerable groups can still be barred.

Social work is specifically addressed within the revised definition of regulated activity. It is roughly defined as community care services (including assessments of needs) provided by social workers.



While the Protection of Freedoms Bill works its way towards becoming law, the GSCC is still under a duty to consider safeguarding matters for possible notification or referral to the ISA. Registrants and applicants will be advised if we provide the ISA with details about them and the related GSCC investigation into them.

Photograph: GSCC, 2011

When it's time to renew your registration, don't leave it until the last minute

Thousands of you have been busy renewing your registration and we are now gearing up for the height of the renewals peak.

In February alone, we received over 13,000 applications, and we are expecting March to be just as busy. We are working at full capacity and we have hired extra temporary staff to make sure that the process runs smoothly and applications are dealt with as quickly as possible.

In January, despite the high volume, applications were still being processed within the normal time of three weeks. If you are renewing your registration you can keep an eye on the [processing times on our website](#) to find out how long your application is likely to take.

Please be aware that processing can be delayed by errors being made when completing the four-page renewal form, and so we urge you to double-check your application before submitting it. The most common errors are:

- not ticking the first box, 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; 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. There is no need to panic if you do not hear back from us immediately; it is due to the sheer volume of renewals we are dealing with and we will write to you as soon as possible. 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.

We will soon be conducting random sampling of social workers' PRTL so please ensure you have this information up-to-date and ready to send to us if requested.

Last July, the Government announced that responsibility for regulating social work will transfer to the Health Professions Council in 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](#).

Photograph: Getty Images, 2010



Conduct hearing outcomes

March

Removals	9
Suspensions	6
Admonishments	7
Misconduct not proved	2

Please note that this information relates to hearings concluded from 23 November 2010 to 23 February 2011.

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

Social work: making a world of difference



Social Workers around the world will join together to celebrate World Social Work Day on 15 March. This annual event, which is organised by the [International Federation of Social Workers](#), focuses on social work contributions to society and is part of an on-going dialogue about how to address challenging social conditions worldwide. The theme for World Social Work Day 2011 is 'Social Work voices responding to global crises: Together we develop the Agenda!'

To celebrate the life-enhancing job that social workers do, we have asked a few practitioners about what it is that makes social work so special and why they are proud to be part of the profession.

The test of a humane and civilized society is how we treat people who suffer from poverty and injustice, and from disadvantage and exclusion. Social work is about working with those people, and with the groups and communities in which they live, to help them overcome the challenges that undermine their independence and well-being. It's a hugely valuable job, it needs to be done well, and the people who do it deserve to be valued highly.

Owen Davies – Social worker and Special Policy Advisor to the GSCC's Executive Management Team

Today social workers made someone's life a bit less cruel, a family's life a bit less difficult, an older person's life a bit less isolated, growing up a bit less painful, parenting a bit less intimidating, our society a bit more just, and our world a bit more humane and a better place to live... That's why I am proud to be a social worker.

Claudia Megele - Social worker and lecturer

Social work is like no other profession because of the opportunity to change and save lives whilst always risking getting it wrong. What other job can you come home from work and say - I intervened in stopping a teenage girl from committing suicide today because no one believed she had been abused by her foster carer; a well respected vicar - I did.

Graham Ixer – Social worker and Head of Social Work Education at the GSCC

Social work is one of the most fulfilling roles you can have. Good social workers are the difference between enhancing lives, upholding justice and rights of all individuals, and devastating lives by poor practice. It is not just our training or our employers that in the end makes the difference in our practice; it is the attitude and perspective we have. The value of social work done well cannot be underestimated. My enjoyment and pride as a social worker has lead to me, in the past, using all my annual leave to undertake freelance social work.

Helen Tyers – Social worker and GSCC Inspector

A good social worker listens, questions evidence, accepts mistakes are made by professionals too, makes clear what is significant and what is not in case recordings, builds bridges not barriers and sets clear boundaries and expectations, does not manipulate evidence in an adversarial way to bolster the Local Authority's case.

Rosie Bracher – Solicitor and winner in the Category of 'Excellence in Client Service' 2010

Poll shows support for regulation of social work students

Photograph: GSCC, 2011



Your responses to the last Social Work Connections poll indicate that regulation of social work students is regarded as a more effective way of ensuring public protection and confidence, and engendering a sense of professionalism. We received a total of 270 responses, of which 226 were in favour of full regulation of social work students; only 44 felt that supervision and monitoring of students by universities alone would be sufficient.

This poll was also separately carried out on our website and over half the respondents (60 per cent) were in favour of full regulation of social work students; the Social Work Connections responses were overwhelmingly in favour of full regulation, with more than three quarters (84 per cent) voting for this option.

The Health and Social Care Bill, which had its second reading on the 31 January 2011, contains the measures that will transfer the regulatory powers of the GSCC to the Health Professions Council, which will be renamed the Health and Care Professions Council (HPC). The transfer is likely take place from April 2012. The HPC does not currently register students; however clause 212 of the Health and Social Care Bill will allow the HPC to open a voluntary register for students. The GSCC believes that, as a minimum, voluntary registration should continue. In due course, registration should become a requirement for all students before they begin placements as this gives them direct and unsupervised contact with service

users and being registered ensures they understand the standard of practice required of them.

“ I feel that being registered with the GSCC means I’m part of a profession and I like that we work to a set of professional standards. Being a social work student is hard work, especially on placement but I find it rewarding. Because I’m registered, the service users who I work with feel more at ease; it gives an element of protection to both the service user and me as a student on placement.”

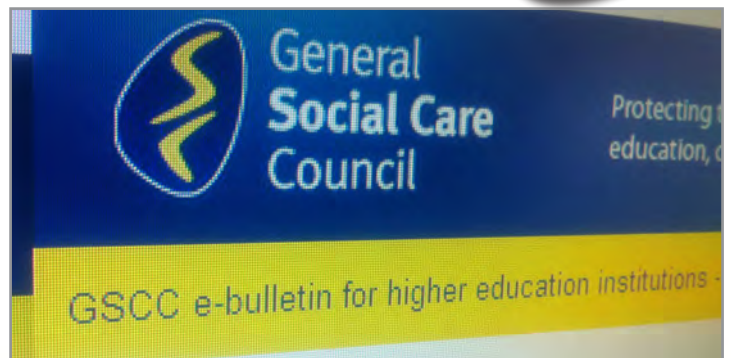
Natasha Cleeton, Final year of BSc (Hons) Social Work at the University of Winchester.

GSCC launches e-bulletins

We now publish regular e-bulletins for employers and higher education institutions.

The updates provide information and regulatory news from the GSCC and the rest of the sector that will be of interest and use to registrants, employers and educators. We will also be using these bulletins to help keep colleagues up to date with the transfer of our regulatory powers to the Health Professions Council (HPC).

You can [sign up for the e-bulletins](#) on the GSCC website.



Photograph: GSCC, 2011

The College of Social Work

THE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

One of the key recommendations of the Social Work Task Force was to establish a College of Social Work. The reasons for this proposal were essentially to ensure that the profession has a powerful and authentic voice speaking up for social workers and championing the high standards of conduct and practice that they aspire to deliver.

To take forward this recommendation the Government funded the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to set up a development project to bring together all the interested groups and to develop a plan for setting up a strong and independent College by April 2012. The development group which included all the key organisations including British Association of Social Workers (BASW), UNISON, The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and Joint University Council – Social Work Education Committee (JUC/SWEC), set up an Interim Board for the new College in the autumn

of 2010. Maurice Bates and Corinne May-Chahal were appointed as co-chairs.

The College Interim Board has now invited social workers to [sign-up as 'prospective founder members'](#) and is preparing to become a formal legal body later in the year. There have been some disagreements between the Interim Board and BASW – the College of Social Work in recent weeks, but a meeting on 11 February convened by ministers led to the issuing of a joint statement expressing the intention of both organisations to work for “a single college of social work in the interests of the whole profession”.

GSCC calls for strategic partnerships between employers and course providers

In January, we published [A Report on Social Work Education in England 2009-10](#), which identified a number of significant trends in social work education over the last academic year. Notably, there has been a decline in the number of local authority placements being provided to students. In 2008-09, 44 per cent of practice placements were provided by local authorities, compared to 47 per cent in 2007-08. This potentially raises concerns about the amount of experience students are getting of statutory interventions.

This led to the GSCC emphasising the need for strong, strategic partnerships between higher education institutions (HEIs) and local employers, a view also expressed by the Social Work Reform Board. The GSCC's chief executive Penny Thompson said: “The GSCC has

believed for some time that the most sustainable way for HEIs to provide high-quality placements is by forging robust partnerships with local employers, and we are working with the Reform Board to encourage the building of these partnerships. Of course it is not a one-way process and it is imperative that employers work just as hard to ensure that partnerships are established and developed. As the Reform Board has pointed out, it is very much in their interests to do so.”

A Report on Social Work Education in England 2009-10 also identified other key trends in social work education:

- The number of students enrolling on the social work degree increased by five per cent to 6,113 in 2009-10, the second highest intake since the

degree was introduced;

- The proportion of enrollees who are women (85 per cent) continues to be significantly higher than men; mature students dominate enrolment, with students over the age of 21 accounting for 81 per cent of the intake;
- There is a correlation between previous qualification and final pass result. Broadly, the higher the student's previous qualification, the higher the success rate in passing;
- Since the degree started in 2003, 89 per cent of graduates have registered with the GSCC at some time, indicating that most of those who train move into the profession.

The Reform Board's 'One year on' report

The Social Work Reform Board was established to work for the implementation of the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force. It is chaired by Moira Gibb, who also chaired the Task Force, and the members of the board include all the key national bodies. The GSCC's chief executive Penny Thompson is on the board and other GSCC staff support the key work-stream groups.

Just before Christmas the board published a report – “[Building a safe and confident future: One year on](#)”. In this report the board aims to describe what it has done in its first year of work and to set out the plan for taking its fifteen recommendations forward. It particularly focuses on five key areas for reform and invites the views of social workers, service users and other interested people.

The five areas are:

1. A professional standards framework
2. Standards for employers
3. A continuing professional development framework
4. Requirements for social work education
5. Proposals for effective partnership working

We urge all our registrants to look at the report as the board is keen to gather the views of social workers. You might want to look at all five documents or choose to concentrate on the one that particularly links to your experience and concerns. Making sure the reform process leads to real and lasting changes that will support social workers to do a better job is something that all registrants have a stake in.

You can also discuss your views on the report and recommendations on our forum exclusively for social workers and students. Sign-up or log-in to join the debate: www.gsc.org.uk/login.php



Photograph: GSCC, 2011

Following the Reform Board's report, Eileen Munro released her interim report into child protection, '[The Child's Journey](#)' in February.

The interim report followed Munro's first report, '[A System's Analysis](#)', which discussed the problems in the child protection system and how they have arisen. The interim review looks at how to refocus on the child's journey from needing to receiving the right help.

The interim report discusses some early recommendations and considerations for reform, covering areas such as inspection, performance monitoring, and referral and assessment.

Munro's final report will be presented to Government in April 2011.

Compass Jobs Fair

On Monday 7 March, Sherry Malik, Director of Strategy and Social Work Education at the GSCC spoke at the Compass Jobs Fair in Birmingham. This session looked at changes in the sector, including the transfer of regulatory powers to the Health Professions Council (HPC).

This event, which attracted large numbers of final-year social work students and

qualified social workers, brought together employers from across the region looking for new recruits.

We also had an exhibition stand, which drew large numbers of delegates who had many questions for us. The most frequently asked questions were about the [transfer of our functions to the HPC](#) and [registration renewal](#).

News

compass
events • publications • training

Social work events

With social work under-going some major changes following the Reform Boards recommendations and the decision to transfer the regulation of social work from the GSCC to the Health Professions Council (HPC), we thought it would be a good time to bring social workers together to discuss how the changes will impact the workforce.

Photograph: Andrew Parsons, 2009



On 4 March in Leeds we held 'Building a stronger profession in challenging times', the first of two regional conferences, aimed specifically at registered social workers and social work students.

Over 100 delegates came together to listen to speakers from the GSCC, the HPC, employers and practitioners about the planned and proposed changes, and developments within the social work sector. There were four workshops which focussed on social work education; continuous professional development; employer support; and the GSCC's conduct function. Delegates' satisfaction was high, with the majority rating the event as excellent or very good.

The second event will take place on 18 March in London and we have one place to give away. If you are interested in attending all you need to do is submit a post-registration training and learning (PRTL) tip on [our forum](#). Our Director of Strategy and Social Work Education, Sherry Malik, who is a qualified social worker, will judge the entries and we will email the winner on Monday 14 March. Full conference details are on [our website](#).

Penny Thompson interview with Community Care

Feature

In January, our chief executive, Penny Thompson, was interviewed for a [Community Care Podcast](#). In the interview she set out the GSCC's three priorities until the transfer of functions to the Health Professions Council (HPC). These are:

1. Continuing to deliver high quality regulation and to improve the service provided
2. Ensuring an effective transfer of functions to the HPC, leaving a strong legacy
3. Treating staff with respect and care with an initial focus on retention, moving towards assistance with their future employment opportunities

With the Health and Social Care Bill now

published, Penny also explained how the transition discussions would now move away from the legal technicalities and on to the practical details of the transfer of functions between the two organisations.

Penny also emphasised that the GSCC is focused on the here and now, and that the organisation is continuing to learn lessons and improve processes.

Penny said:

“There will be no let-up in the focus on quality and fairness...we are continuing to learn from what we do and improve the quality of our assessments and investigations.”

She also highlighted areas of



Photograph: GSCC, 2010

development, in particular the publishing of guidance on professional boundaries which is expected later this year. This has been developed in collaboration with the other three care councils. The issue of professional boundaries is a common and recurring theme in conduct cases and the guidance should provide useful information about common breaches for social workers and their employers. Look out for the guidance on our website.

The role of post-qualifying (PQ) training in proving your fitness to practice

At a time when there is considerable change in the sector, pressure on councils to make significant savings, and social workers under increased strain of work, you may question how anyone would find the time and motivation to undergo further training. As a registered professional it is right that you maintain your fitness to practice; so you can provide the safest and best possible service to those who need it – the service users who you work to protect and support.

The post-qualifying (PQ) award is still the national CPD framework for social workers. Thousands have gone on to benefit from its education and training. Moreover, it provides universal recognition through the academic credit awarded to support your career as you advance into new and possibly more demanding roles.

The PQ framework is one of the best ways to support your further development and appraisal objectives because it is well developed, nationally available wherever you work and tailored to meet your specific needs. It is now commissioned by employers to provide in-house tailor-made training. This ensures flexible and needs-based education on tap to employers.

The Government's Reform Board is recommending a new national CPD framework, which will endorse a hybrid model of accredited and unaccredited training. We hope that the new College of Social Work will have a leading role in this and take the best of PQ to enhance its benefits as part of a new future direction for supporting

career development for social workers. Education and training should not be something that is only done when there is the time and the money, but instead an expectation and a right for all registered social workers.



Photograph: Hello Turkey Toe, 2010

PQ can be carried out in small modules built-up over years and all forms of PQ count towards post-registration training and learning (PRTL), which as you know is one of your renewal of registration requirements.

Find out who your local provider is and enquire about PQ today: www.gsc.org.uk/page/124/Post+qualifying+education.html.

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.

