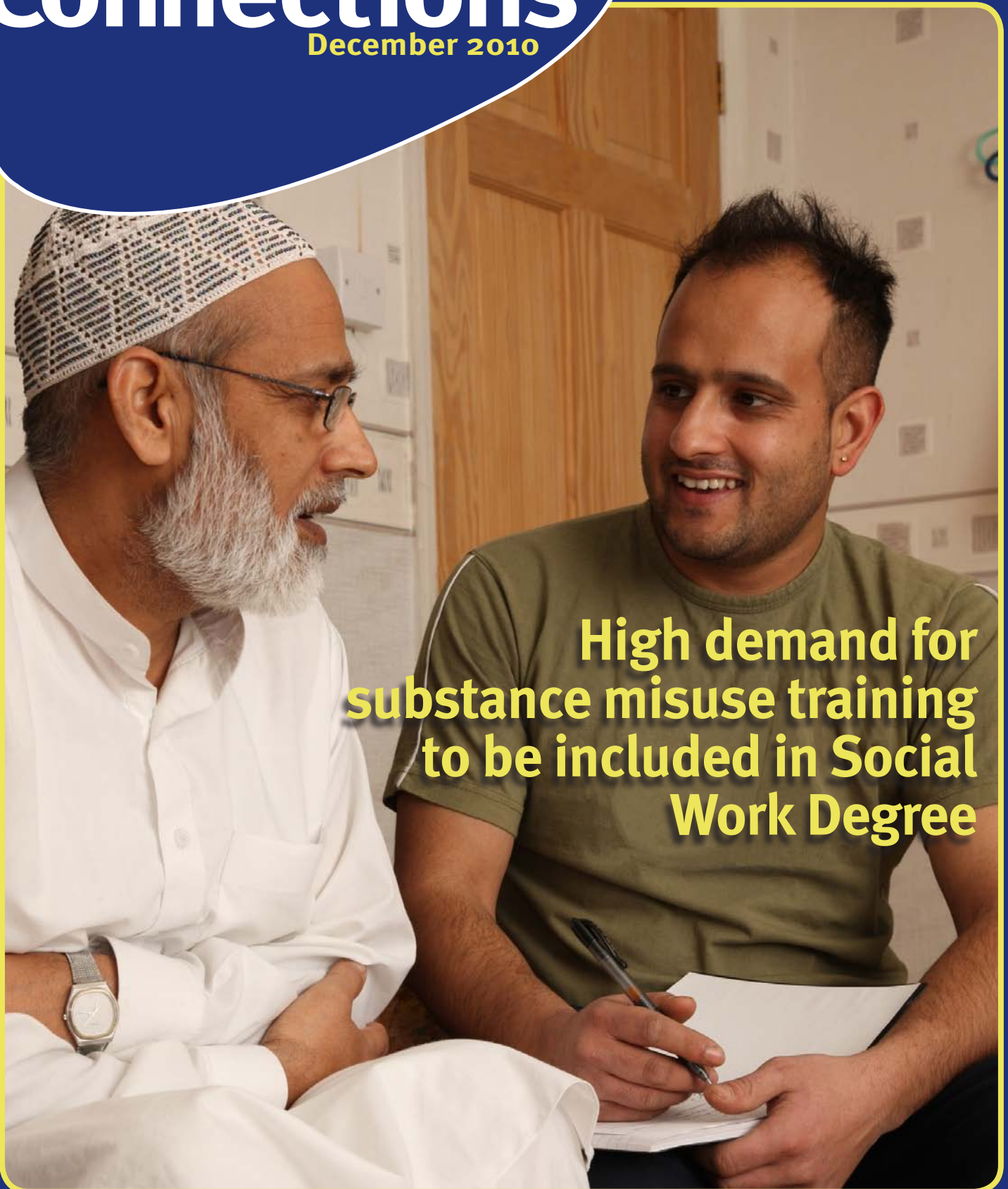


social work
Connections
December 2010



**High demand for
substance misuse training
to be included in Social
Work Degree**

Newsletter of the General Social Care Council



Social Work Connections

www.gsc.org.uk

Newsletter of the General Social Care Council

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Editorial statement

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Welcome to the December 2010 issue of Social Work Connections.

You will have noticed that your newsletter looks quite different – this is to make it easier for you to find the articles of interest to you and also to keep you more connected with the news and updates on our main website www.gsc.org.uk.

There are now links to the new forum for social workers and students, so you know what the hot topics are and can log straight into them. We hope you like the new design, and if you have any feedback or suggestions, please use our comments page.

In this issue you will find information about our new website, the social worker events we've been attending and the latest update on our transfer to the HPC.

You can also read our feature articles, which include a student's experiences during her practice placement, what our latest poll results told us about your views on drug, alcohol and substance misuse training within the Social Work Degree, and progress on social work reforms to date.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

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Update on the transfer of GSCC's functions to the HPC

As reported in the last edition, the Government has announced that the GSCC's functions will be transferred to the Health Professions Council (HPC) by April 2012 at the earliest.

We don't yet know any more details of the timings of the transfer but the Health and Social Care Bill which is where the changes will be made provision for is expected to be published early in the New Year.

Until the transfer your registration arrangements with us do not change. You are still required to maintain your registration, pay your annual fee, renew your registration, and complete post-registration training and learning.

In light of the announcement we have refocused our priorities to:

- sustain and improve delivery of our core functions until they are transferred
- participate in an effective transfer of functions which will leave a positive legacy for the public, those who use social work services, and the profession itself
- support staff with respect and care, enabling them to prepare for their professional futures

The Department of Health (DH) has established a Social Work Regulation Oversight Group to advise on the transfer of functions. It is independently chaired by Harry Cayton and has membership from DH, the Department for Education (DfE) and the Chair of the Social Work Reform Board, as well as the Chief Executives of HPC and GSCC. Its remit includes: public protection; ensuring the right contribution continues to be made to the work on social work reform; and supporting the distinctiveness of the social work profession.

The HPC has set up a professional liaison group that will develop the proficiency standards that social workers will need to meet once they become regulated by the Health Professions Council. The GSCC will sit on the group which will start to meet early in the New Year.

Please be assured that we will inform you of everything you need to know about the transfer as soon as we have the information.

To have your say on the transfer or discuss any social work issues with your peers, you can [join the forum on our website](#), which is exclusively for GSCC registrants.



Photograph: Getty Images, 2010

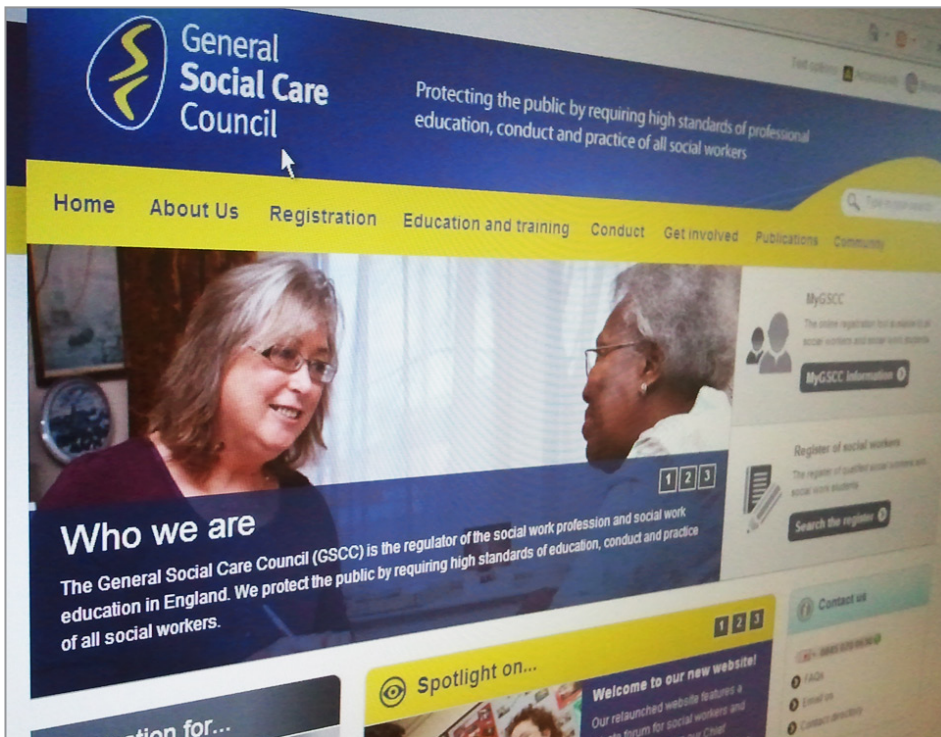
Registration renewal reminder

Over 40,000 social workers are due to renew their registration with us over the next few months. If this applies to you, we will send you a reminder letter and renewal form three months before your registration expires.

As long as we receive your completed renewal application form before your registration expires, you can continue to practise as a social worker. We will write to confirm we have received your form and again to confirm when your renewal has been approved.

To receive your reminder letter, it is vital that we have your up-to-date contact details. If you've moved house, changed your job or made any other changes to your personal details and have not already informed us, please do so via [MyGSCC](#) or by emailing changeofcircumstances@gsc.org.uk.

New GSCC website with forum for social workers



Photographs on this page: GSCC, 2010

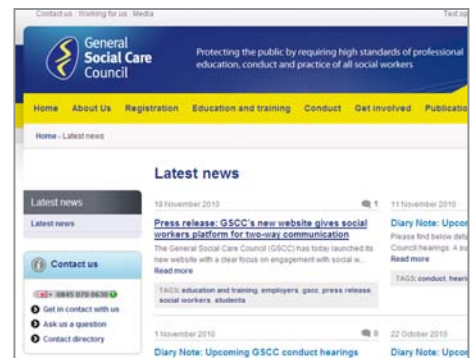
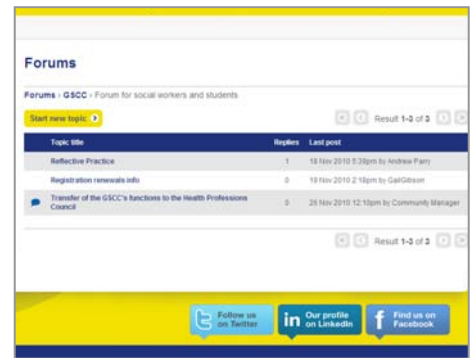
Last month we re-launched our website – www.gsc.org.uk. The biggest development for social workers is a **private forum** where you can engage in two-way dialogue with us, as well as other social workers and students, on regulatory and social work issues.

Other new features include [a blog from our Chief Executive](#); sharing content to social networking sites; the ability to post comments and rate the usefulness of pages; and to sign up for news feeds.

The site was developed following consultation with social workers, people who use services and universities. It incorporates two new e-bulletins – one for employers, and one for universities.

We have also launched presences on social network platforms [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#). These sites will mainly serve to signpost social workers back to our website for information they are looking for, and to help build our online community. Social media offers us cost-effective channels for direct communication with our key audiences.

We feel these new methods of communication are especially important to keep social workers up-to-date with the reforms to the system of regulation coming out of the Social Work Reform Board and the transfer of GSCC's functions to the Health Professions Council. We hope that you will find the new website and forum easy to use and informative. Please spend a few minutes having a look round, and remember to tell your colleagues about this new space where you can have conversations about the regulatory and social work sector news affecting you.



Conduct hearing outcomes

December

Removals	11
Suspensions	4
Admonishments	24
Misconduct not found	9
Misconduct not proved	2
No sanction	3

Please note that this information relates to hearings concluded from 26 August till 22 November 2010.

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

High demand for substance misuse training to be included in Social Work Degree

Social Work Connection readers want the social work degree to include training on drug, alcohol and substance misuse, according to the results of our latest poll.

More than 880 people responded to the poll, with an overwhelming 89 per cent saying they thought that training on drug, alcohol and substance misuse should be included within the core learning of the social work degree. Just 11 per cent said it should continue to be offered within post-qualifying courses.

The Education Working Group of the Social Work Reform Board is reviewing the content and delivery of the curriculum framework for social work. As part of this, they will be considering whether there needs to be more emphasis on certain issues including drug, alcohol and substance misuse training in the social work degree. Getting the right balance of all the knowledge, skills and values to prepare social workers for the complex and demanding jobs they do in many different settings is difficult. This is why opportunities for continuing professional development offer more specialist training.

Anecdotally we know that a large number of social workers have dealings with matters relating to drug, alcohol and substance abuse and would benefit from this training. This poll has also revealed to us the strength of your feelings and as a result we will convey your view to the Education Working Group at the next meeting on 13 December.

Have your say on the [GSCC's online forum](#).



Photograph: Ashley Rose, 2008

Social Care Institute for Excellence materials

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) improves the knowledge and skills of frontline social work and social care staff. The GSCC works closely with SCIE on a range of initiatives which help to raise standards of conduct and practice amongst social workers.

Whether you are newly qualified, a student, or an experienced practitioner or manager, SCIE has a range of materials to support you to practise with confidence. These include briefings on current hot topics, lively Social Care TV films and interactive e-learning resources.

You can trust that the SCIE materials you use to inform your decisions with people who use services are based on best available evidence of what works. SCIE's range of materials can also help you to

meet your post-registration training and learning (PRTL) requirements.

To find out more, visit www.scie.org.uk/socialworker

social care institute for excellence



Case Study: Practice placements

Hannah Prescott is studying for a masters in social work at the University of Central Lancashire and is in her second year of study. During her first year she completed a placement at Creative Support, a not-for-profit company in Blackburn that provides services for people with learning disabilities, mental health problems and other needs. Here she talks about her first practical experience of social work.

What type of work were you involved in on your placement?

Creative Support provides accommodation to people with learning disabilities, which helps to increase their independence. I was working directly in the accommodation section assisting service users by helping to draw up their care plans and trying to reduce some of the barriers that stop them from doing what they want and need to do. On a practical level I would help people with the day-to-day tasks of life, and be there to discuss how they might do things in the future.

What personal strengths did the placement highlight?

I was very daunted at the prospect of working with people with learning disabilities as this was something I had no previous experience of and didn't know what to expect. I have to admit that I had some preconceptions, but of course these were proved to be totally wrong! I was surprised at how easy I found it to communicate effectively with the people I was working with and how I was able to build really strong relationships. This was something I was nervous about and I was really pleased how I reacted.

Did the placement highlight

any things you need to work hard on?

It's still really early days for me so I probably still need to work hard on all areas to become a good social worker. I was pleased and a bit surprised with my communication skills but I think it would be stupid to think that I've got anything mastered yet.

Were there any negative things about the placement?

It was definitely an eye opener. I was quite shocked by how little support people are getting. There is so much that an organisation like Creative Support can do to promote people's independence, but unfortunately they are not always getting the resources they need to do their job fully.

“... you've got to have the right attitude going into it. You may not always get the exact placement you want, but I think you have to try and make the most of it...”

Did you get much supervision when you were on your placement?

I was really impressed with the support I got. Creative Support gave me regular supervision sessions and there were always people available to offer advice and talk to me. I had visits from my personal tutor and the practice assessor

and they also offered plenty of useful advice.

How important do you think good quality placements are as part of the qualification?

They're really important. There is a limit to what you can learn in tutorials and at lectures. Good communication, the ability to form relationships and an understanding of people's needs are essential parts of being a social worker and these can only be learnt through good practical experience.

How has your placement experience compared with those of your fellow students?

People seem to have had very varied experiences, but I think that can be down to more than just the quality of the placement. Firstly, you've got to have the right attitude going into it. You may not always get the exact placement you want, but I think you have to try and make the most of it regardless. I think it's the people that make the placement for you. I was well supported and given plenty of opportunities and although I wasn't doing what I ultimately want to do – I want to work in Children and Families – I can still definitely see the benefits of it. No doubt I will work with people with learning disabilities in the future so what I experienced at Creative Support will be put to good use. Having said all that, I know that some people were given placements where they weren't supported or ever given interesting things to do. To some extent it is still luck of the draw, and I know that I was lucky.

A duty to ‘whistle blow’?



Photograph: snig3r, 2007

If you fear that a colleague is working in a way that puts the safety of service users at risk should you report them? It's a dilemma that many social workers will face at one time or

another and your response will say a lot about the way you see your job and your profession.

Registered social workers are bound by the GSCC's code of practice. The code is all about the social worker's duty to protect service users from harm. Part 3.5 says that you must 'inform your employer or an appropriate authority where the practice of colleagues may be unsafe or adversely affecting standards of care'.

This is easy to say but immensely difficult to do; we all feel loyalty to colleagues who may be under great pressure and we are all reluctant to 'shop' someone. But where we are

convinced that there is a real danger of harm to a client, the first duty is to the service user. Every employer or commissioner should have procedures in place to allow for a social worker to report such concerns.

But that is not the only form of whistle blowing that the code of practice covers. Part 3.4 says that you must 'bring to the attention of your employer or an appropriate authority resource or operational difficulties that might get in the way of the delivery of safe care'. The GSCC sometimes gets calls from registrants who say that they are being asked by their employer to do something which they think will bring them into conflict with their obligations under the code of practice. A regulatory body cannot interfere in the relationship between the registrant and their employer – and anyone in such a situation is best advised to seek the support of their union or professional body – but the code says that there is a duty 'to bring to the attention of the employer' and you need to be able to show that you have done this where you believe that safe care might be compromised.

To get involved in further discussion with your fellow social workers about whistle blowing and other issues, please sign up to the new [social work forums](#) on our website.

Social work events

As part of our on-going commitment to engage with our registrants and the sector as a whole, we have recently been involved in a number of social work events.

The National Children's and Adults' Services Conference was a chance for us to highlight the need for a strong social work profession that has the confidence of the public and the sector. During a fringe meeting held with Skills for Care and the Children's Workforce Development Council, our Chief Executive Penny Thompson highlighted the vital role that the College of Social Work will play as the guardian of excellence in social work after the GSCC merges with the Health Professions Council. Children's Minister Tim

Loughton talked about his desire to see a confident profession where social workers trusted their judgement, rather than relying on bureaucracy and processes to make decisions.

We recently exhibited at two Compass Jobs Fairs and Community Care Live Children and Families. These events drew big audiences of social workers, social work students and prospective students, many of whom had questions for us. The most popular topics were about [how to register as a fully qualified social worker following course completion](#), the [transfer of the GSCC's functions to the HPC](#) and [registration renewal](#).

In September, Sherry Malik, Director of Strategy and Social Work Education spoke to social workers at Bedford Council. Sherry spoke about the importance of post-



Photograph: Andrew Parsons, 2009

registration training and learning (PRTL), not just as part of the renewals process, but as an important career development opportunity.

Looking ahead to next year, the GSCC will be holding two day events for social workers in March. More details about these events and how to register will be available soon. For updates keep checking the [events pages on the website](#).

Progress on social work reforms



Photograph: GSCC, 2010

The drive to strengthen social work that began when the last Government set up the Social Work Task Force in the wake of public concern about the Baby Peter case continues under the new administration. The Social Work Reform Board has been asked to continue its efforts to ensure implementation of the Task Force's 15 recommendations and Professor Eileen Munro has been tasked to look specifically at social work in child protection to identify ways that social workers can be freed up to do their jobs more effectively.

The GSCC has made a submission to Professor Munro's team

stressing that effective professional regulation must be a part of the process of ensuring that social workers have the values, skills, and knowledge to do the job that society expects of them. You can read the [GSCC submission to Munro](#) on our website.

At its November meeting, the Reform Board agreed to publish a 'one year on' report. It will outline the work done so far and focus attention on some key topics that the board thinks need wider discussion amongst social workers and other stakeholders. These topics include a proposed professional capabilities framework, a new continuing professional development framework, a draft employer's standard, proposals for changes to initial training, and advice about good practice in partnership working. The board is publishing the report so as to stimulate discussion through the first three months of 2011. The GSCC will do all we can to promote the debate to ensure that registrants get the chance to give their views on issues to do with strengthening regulation in support of key reforms – like improved continuing professional development and support for newly qualified social workers.

The other major development is that the College of Social Work has appointed an interim board which is working up plans to set the new college on a proper legal footing and open it up for social workers to join. We strongly support these efforts and are talking to the College about co-operation on joint work that helps to promote the highest standards in social work. We also urge all social workers to support the development of the College, enabling it to become the voice of the profession.

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.