

# **Social Work Reform Board**

# **Building a safe and confident future:**

# **One year on**

**Progress report from the  
Social Work Reform Board**

**December 2010**



## Foreword



**Moira Gibb CBE**

**Chair, Social Work Reform Board**

A year ago the Social Work Task Force's final report was published to strong and widespread support. The Task Force recognised that translating its fifteen recommendations into action to create a safe, confident future for social work would require sustained effort from many people and organisations. It is only through the whole sector working together, with common purpose, over time that we will successfully break free of the vicious circle that currently makes it hard to secure the improvements we all want to see.

The Social Work Reform Board, with representation from all parts of the social work sector, and supported by the Joint Social Work Unit, embodies this commitment to work together. I am immensely grateful to Reform Board members and their organisations for their ongoing commitment to delivering the promise of these reforms. The working groups of the Reform Board, ably chaired by my colleagues Julia Hassall, Helga Pile, Mark Rogers and Hilary Tompsett, have worked with a wide range of people from across the sector to develop the proposals in this report. The contribution of our Social Workers' Reference Group in shaping the direction of social work reform has also been invaluable.

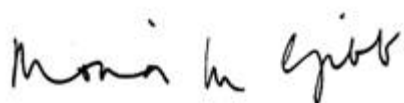
I am also grateful to the government for its support of the reform programme, and for the time and attention of the three Ministers, Paul Burstow, Tim Loughton and Rt Hon David Willetts, whose areas of responsibility it particularly affects. We value their continued support for the changes we are seeking to bring about; support which is vital

at a time of significant policy change and a very difficult financial context for the public sector.

Pressures on frontline social workers have not reduced over the past year. There is no magic bullet and no simple solution to the difficulties that the social work profession faces, and this means that some people will feel discouraged by the pace of change. I believe, however, that the way of working we have adopted, continuing to build consensus and support from the sector and discussing our approaches with frontline social workers and those who use their services, is the only way that we can deliver a reform programme that is effective and sustainable.

The proposals made in this report are work in progress and the sum of much activity and discussion by the hundreds of people who have been involved in our reform process over the past year. We want to test these proposals further with social workers, service users and carers, educators and employers to help shape our future direction and are seeking feedback over the next three months, until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

This report marks a staging post in the journey of social work reform but the proposals within it provide a foundation for helping us, together, to deliver a better future for social work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Moira Gibb'.

**Moira Gibb CBE**

## Section 1: Introduction

**1.1** The Social Work Reform Board, like its predecessor the Social Work Task Force, brings together a wide cross-section of the profession. We are made up of representatives of social workers, educators, service users, carers and employers, and our role is to develop and deliver, together, the national social work reform programme recommended by the Task Force. The government has committed its support to our work and the aims of the Social Work Task Force.

**1.2** This report contains information about the progress of social work reform over the past year and launches proposals which cover five key areas. In developing these proposals our member organisations, through their networks, have drawn on ideas from across the social work sector and there has been wide consensus on improvements needed in the system. We now invite social workers and others in the public, private and voluntary sectors, to consider how they can use our proposals in practice to help social workers make a greater difference to children, adults and families, and to feed back their views to us over the course of the next three months.

**1.3** The reforms proposed in this report are fundamental and long term. They cover the whole career of a social worker from selection onto degree courses, to improving the skills and capacity of those already in the profession. We have involved social workers in the development of our proposals, consulted with our Social Workers' Reference Group, and analysed evidence submitted to the Social Work Task Force. As a result, we know that social workers believe that in order to improve services they need more time to spend working directly with children, adults and families, regular high quality supervision, better education and training, more opportunities for career development and improved IT and support. Hundreds of people from the social work sector have already contributed to developing the proposals in this report and, over the next three months, we want to test them out to be sure that they will work on the ground in all settings and that they will be effective and sustainable.

**1.4** The proposed changes are interrelated, and at their heart is a set of overarching professional standards which will shape what social workers should know and do as students, as newly qualified social workers, and at different stages in their careers. Changes are proposed to the social work degree, including arrangements for planning high quality practice placements, and ensuring that social workers already in the profession, as well as new entrants, have purposeful learning and development to progress their skills and practice throughout their working lives. Standards are also proposed for employers of social workers which set out what they should do to provide a supportive working environment in which social workers can practise effectively. This must include time for reflection and supervision.

**1.5** We will refine these proposals in light of the feedback we receive, and invite relevant organisations in the sector to own, promote and monitor these reforms in the future. There will be ongoing opportunities to shape the direction of social work reform over the coming months and years and we will provide regular progress updates through our reports, website and newsletter.

## Structure of this report

**Section 2** of this report explains the case for social work reform that was built by the Social Work Task Force and the national social work reform programme set up to take forward its recommendations.

**Section 3** of this report considers the current context for social work reform, the significant changes that have happened across the system over the past year, the views of social workers themselves and concludes that reform of social work remains more important than ever.

**Section 4** of this report covers, in brief, the first five proposed reforms from the Social Work Reform Board and what you can do to take them forward in your area. The five reforms are:

- **An overarching professional standards framework** (Social Work Task Force Recommendation 10);
- **Standards for employers** and a **supervision framework** (Recommendations 6 and 7);
- **Principles that should underpin a continuing professional development framework** (Recommendation 9);
- **Proposed requirements for social work education** (Recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 5);
- **Proposals for effective partnership working** (Recommendation 15)

**1.6** You can read more detailed information about our first five proposed reforms in ***Building a Safe and Confident Future: One Year On, Detailed Proposals from the Social Work Reform Board*** which accompanies this report. There is also more information about the Reform Board and the Social Work Task Force in the **annexes of this report** and on our website [www.education.gov.uk/swrb](http://www.education.gov.uk/swrb).

**1.7** Although not explored in detail in this progress report, the Reform Board and its member organisations have also made progress on other Social Work Task Force recommendations. This includes work we have done to promote the Task Force's Health Check with employers and practitioners. The Health Check was published for all employers to use as a means of assessing the health of their social work workforce and to identify areas for improvement in preparation for the Standards for Employers. We are collating examples of successful local and regional implementation of the Health Check to aid learning for employers in all areas. In addition, we are developing plans for a social work supply and demand model, and Skills for Care and the Children's Workforce Development Council are developing proposals for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment and a suite of support arrangements for frontline managers. Our future reports will provide more detail on progress in these areas.

**1.8** We are also greatly encouraged that Local Government Employers and the Trade Unions are developing social work job profiles and model evaluations to support the Task Force's National Social Work Career Structure. They expect to consult on their findings in the coming months prior to adopting them as part of a national agreement.

## Section 2: The Case for Social Work Reform

**2.1** A year ago, the Social Work Task Force made its final recommendations about the reforms that were necessary for the social work profession to practise safely and confidently. Those recommendations had strong support from educators, social workers and employers.

### **The Social Work Task Force said that the social work profession needed to be:**

- confident about its values, purpose and identity;
- working in partnership with people who use its services, so that they can take control of their situation and improve the outcome;
- working cohesively with other professions and agencies in the best interests of people in need of support;
- demonstrating its impact and effectiveness and, therefore, its value to the public;
- committed to continuous improvement, with the training and resources it needs to be effective and a vigorous culture of professional development;
- understood and supported by employers, educators, government, other professionals and the wider public; and
- well led at every level: in frontline practice; in influencing the shape and priorities of local services; in setting and maintaining the highest possible standards within the profession; and in influencing policy developments and priorities at national and political level.

*Facing Up to the Task: the interim report of the Social Work Task Force (July 2009)*

**2.2** Social workers help children and adults to be safe so they can cope and take control of their lives. They can make life better for people who are struggling to manage, feel alone and cannot sort out their problems unaided. People may need the help of a social worker in a wide range of situations such as addiction, mental illness, bereavement, old age, disability, housing problems or because they are children at risk from neglect or abuse. For social workers this brings responsibility and accountability to the children, families, and adults they support, and a shared expectation that they will always act in their best interests.

**2.3** Social work is an intellectually and emotionally demanding job. When people are vulnerable and in greatest need of support, they are often at their most difficult to help. In order to help people effectively, social workers must build open and trusting relationships with the children and adults who use their services. Through these relationships, social workers need to be able to relate to and support service users, while also being able to challenge behaviour and intervene, including through the use of legal powers, when required. Social workers work with an individual and their family, with groups and communities, over an often lengthy period of time. People's lives are not static, they are continuously developing, and social workers need to be aware of developments in the lives of the people they work with and be able to reassess

situations and take action accordingly. In the course of their work with a child, adult or family, a social worker will be required to make, and support service users to make, hundreds of decisions, both small and big. Each situation is unique and the appropriate course of action will rarely be clear cut. This requires social workers to bring together evidence from a wide range of sources and research when making decisions, to reflect critically on their actions, and to follow them up with ongoing support.

**2.4** The context within which social work is carried out is also continuously developing in line with changes in society, changes in the law, and changes in the role of the state in the lives of individuals. There is a valuable and growing evidence base from social work practice and research, as well as from other professions such as health, the police and schools, about what can make a difference to the lives of service users. In order to get the best for children, adults and families, the social work profession will always need to be able to embrace and adapt to change and to lead and drive excellent social work practice. Social workers cannot do this unless they are backed up by a system that gives them high quality education and training, access to research and its practical applications, continuous professional development, appropriate working conditions and respect for the work they do.

**2.5** In 2009, following its extensive review of social work, including considerable consultation with social workers, service users and carers, the Social Work Task Force recognised that, although there was much good practice, too often the system fell short of providing the conditions needed to support social workers to practise effectively.

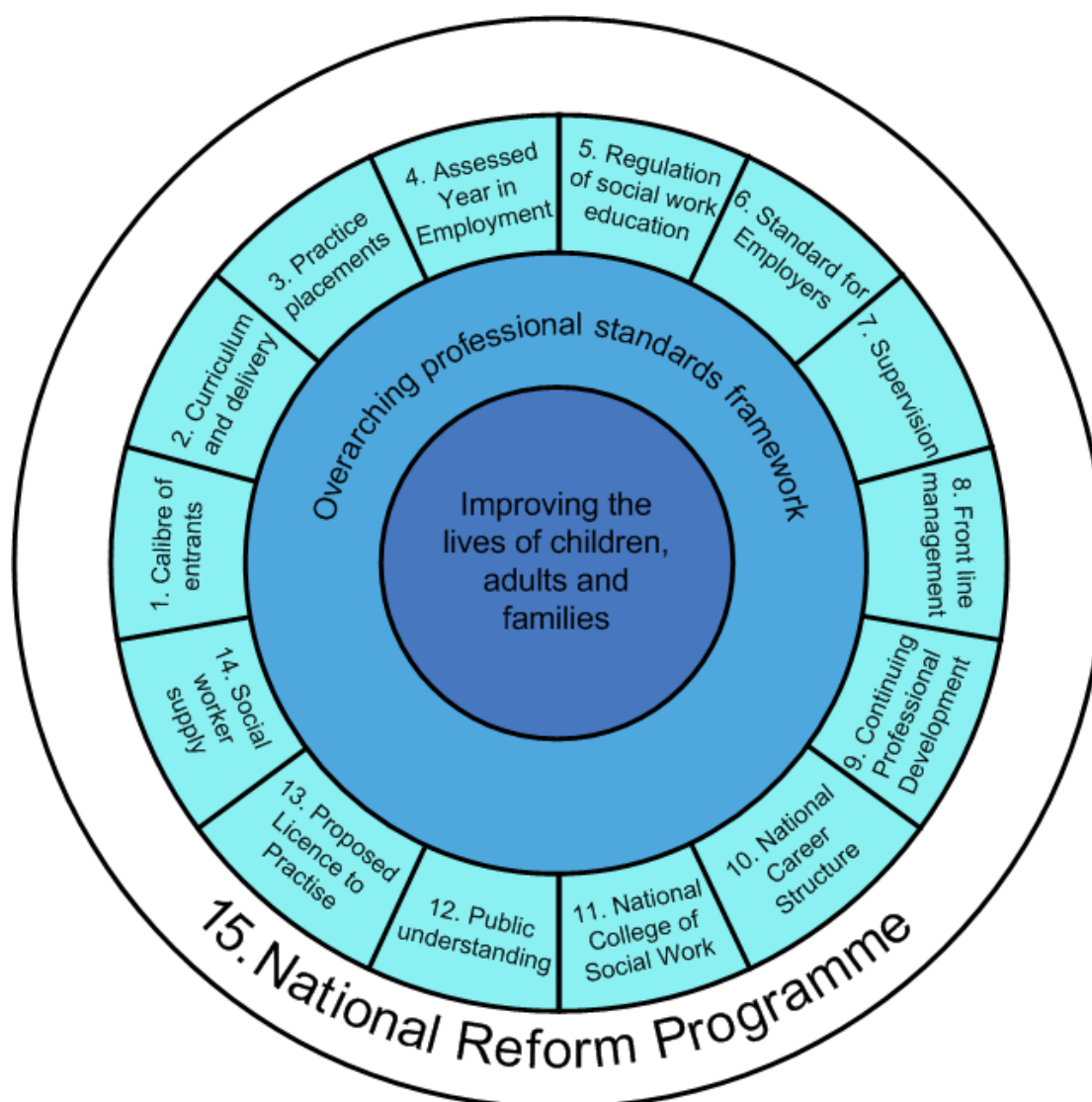
**Social workers told the Task Force that they need:**

- more time to spend working directly with children, adults and families;
- regular high quality supervision and time for critical reflection;
- better education and training;
- more opportunities for career development;
- improved IT and support; and
- stronger professional leadership, standing and voice.

**2.6** The Task Force made fifteen recommendations in its final report which tackle the training, development, regulation and working conditions of social workers and together amount to a comprehensive programme of reform. This social work reform programme is outlined in **Figure 1** overleaf and more information about each of the Task Force's individual recommendations is available in **Annex A** of this report.



**Figure 1: The national reform programme recommended by the Social Work Task Force**

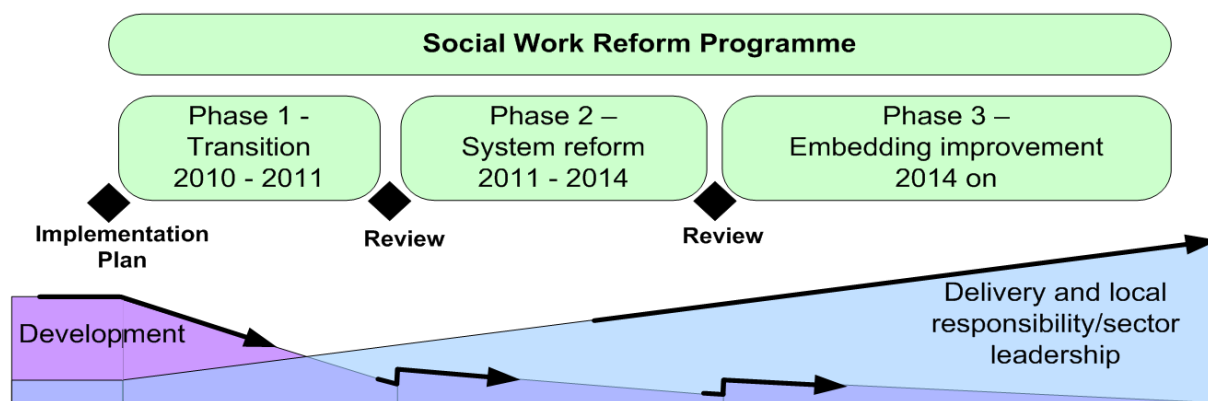


**2.7** The Social Work Task Force was very clear that no single organisation could bring about these essential changes; all parts of the sector need to work together to bring about and embed change. These reforms require local ownership, leadership and drive, and it is our job as the Social Work Reform Board to set a coherent national direction and to oversee the development and implementation of the Task Force’s recommendations nationally, and report on progress made.

**2.8** The Social Work Reform Board is made up of representatives of the profession, educators, service users, carers and employers and is facilitated by government. Our task as the Reform Board is to develop the tools and structures that, over time, will achieve fundamental changes in the ways in which social workers are educated, trained, supported and practice. These reforms need to build on existing good practice and be adopted widely. Through these reforms social workers will be better equipped to carry out their roles confidently and safely, good social workers will be recruited and retained, and future social work practitioners, managers, educators, researchers and leaders will be developed. It will be the responsibility of every social worker, employer and educator to get involved in developing and embedding the reforms.

**2.9** In overseeing social work reform over the coming years, we need to understand, build on and respond to what is happening locally. Whilst the drive for reform of social work is currently nationally led, in the longer term local areas must drive improvements in social work. **Figure 2** sets out the expected timeline for reform of social work and shows how leadership of this reform programme will transfer, over time, from the development process led by the Social Work Reform Board to local leadership in embedding improvement. We will regularly review progress and advise on any further action needed to make reform of social work happen.

**Figure 2: Timeline of social work reform**



**2.10** Further information on the Social Work Reform Board and its structure is in **Annex B** of this report and a timeline of expected developments in the national social work reform programme is in **Annex C**.

## Section 3: The Conditions for Reform

**3.1** Significant changes have taken place since the Task Force reported in late 2009. We are enormously encouraged by the commitment given by this government to implementing the Task Force's recommendations. The government's vision is of a society in which individuals feel both free and powerful enough to help themselves and their own communities. Social workers have a significant role to play in protecting the children, adults and families they work with and empowering them to make positive changes in their lives. The government wants to reduce the bureaucracy and burdens faced by organisations and communities. It has said that in order to bring about change and improve social work services, the sector should be empowered to shape and embed reforms that address the needs of local communities without excessive central prescription and regulation.

**3.2** In November 2010, the government published its vision for adult social care. This recognises the important role of social workers in supporting and protecting adults while empowering them to make their own decisions about shaping and buying services tailored to their needs. The trialling of Social Work Practices and the potential for mutuals and cooperatives in social care means that the settings in which social workers practise and are employed may change significantly over time.

**3.3** The government has also commissioned reviews of a number of services affecting children and families which will have implications for social work reform. The Munro Review of Child Protection is tackling the barriers that prevent children and families' social workers from spending a higher proportion of their time supporting children and families directly. The Family Justice Review is looking at how the family justice system can be made quicker, simpler and fairer and the Allen Review is looking at how early intervention can enable children and young people to build social and emotional capabilities. The Frank Field Review reported this month on ways of tackling poverty by improving the life chances of the poorest children and focusing on early years education. We are working with these reviews and will refine and develop our reform programme in light of their recommendations over the coming months.

**3.4** Constraints on public spending over the next four years will affect many services including social work. Local government, which employs around two thirds of all social workers, will have to make significant savings and make very difficult decisions about the priorities and shape of their future services from next year. From 2012, the funding system for higher education and student support will also change. Higher Education Institutions will replace much of the public block grant for teaching with higher levels of funds flowing from graduate contributions to the costs of their learning. The government will provide long term loans for both full and part time students to cover these costs. We will work with the government to understand the future implications of these funding changes on social work and social worker supply and ensure that the importance of the social work role is understood.

**3.5** In the social work sector itself, organisations that influence and support the delivery of social work are also transforming. The roles of some organisations are changing and other organisations may be merged or cease to exist in the future. There are also two new important players, the College of Social Work and the Health Professions Council. The College of Social Work, whose establishment was recommended by the Social

Work Task Force, is expected to become a powerful voice for social work and to provide leadership for the profession. The College is developing quickly and has recently appointed its Interim Chairs and Board. The Health Professions Council will take on registration of social workers and regulation of social work degree courses from the General Social Care Council. The Health Professions Council will be renamed to reflect this new responsibility which it is expected to take on in 2012. Until this time, the General Social Care Council will continue to regulate social workers and social work degree courses.

**3.6** Social services continue to face significant pressures. Vacancies, especially in child protection services remain very high, and many social workers report that they cannot spend as much time as they would wish with children, adults and families. Some social workers still do not benefit from sufficient good quality supervision or time for reflection, which we know are vital for effective practice. Also, social services IT systems, for the most part, remain difficult and time-consuming to use, although improvements are being made in some areas. Many local authorities are restructuring in the face of resource constraints, and while many difficult decisions will need to be made, it is our hope that key services for children, adults and families will be protected.

**3.7** Engaging in this programme of reform will, of course, be challenging for a number of individuals and organisations. However, the need for social work reform is more acute than ever, and the evidence-based reform programme set out by the Task Force has secured support from across the sector. That momentum must not be lost and it is our job to find practical, affordable and sustainable ways of making change happen.

**3.8** The responsibility for meeting this challenge does not fall to the Social Work Reform Board alone but to all parts of the sector. Securing effective change will require social workers, educators and management to work with service users and carers to drive change locally. The government has said it supports us all in this. Together we need to make sure that funding in the system is used in the most effective way, now and in future.

**3.9** A key driving force in making reform happen will be the College of Social Work. The Social Work Task Force recommended an independent professional College of Social Work to articulate and promote the interests of good social work. It will offer the profession strong, independent leadership, a clear voice in public debate, policy development and delivery, and ownership of professional standards which will underpin reform by requiring higher standards of conduct and performance of both employers and social workers.

**3.10** The Social Care Institute for Excellence has been supporting the setting up of an independent College of Social Work. The College is establishing itself as the strong professional social work body and has this year consulted widely within the sector about its role. The College will be an independent organisation, led and run by social workers and its remit will initially cover England.

**3.11** The College of Social Work exists to ensure that social workers are able to work to the highest possible professional standards, enabling them to help children, adults and families to achieve their potential. Following extensive consultation with social workers, the College's mission is to develop a strong profession, confident about the unique

contributions it makes to the individuals, families and communities it serves, with a clear sense of its values, ethics and purpose. The College will seek to improve and support social work by providing leadership by and for the profession. It will lead the development of the profession and represent it in discussions with organisations that regulate, educate, train, work with and are affected by social work.

**3.12** The College of Social Work aims:

- To be a powerful voice for the social work profession, in discussions with the public, policy makers and the media
- To provide strong leadership for the profession
- To work closely with people who use social work services and their carers, ensuring that their views are incorporated into the overall development of The College
- To be an international centre of excellence for the social work profession

You can find out more about the College of Social Work on its website [www.collegeofsocialwork.org](http://www.collegeofsocialwork.org).

## Section 4: Reform in Action

**4.1** Over the past year we, in the Social Work Reform Board and its working groups, have been working to develop the Social Work Task Force's recommendations and have involved social workers, service users and carers, managers, senior leaders and educators in their design. The Task Force made fifteen recommendations, some of which were complex and will take time to develop. This section of the report sets out, in brief, information about the proposals we have developed in five key areas. These are:

- **An overarching professional standards framework** – which will set out, for the first time, consistent expectations of social workers at every point of their career and will be used to inform the design and implementation of education and training and the national career structure (Social Work Task Force Recommendation 10);
- **Standards for employers** and a **supervision framework** – which set out the responsibilities of employers in respect of their social work workforce (Recommendations 6 and 7);
- **Principles that should underpin a continuing professional development Framework** – aligned the overarching professional standards, to help social workers develop specialist knowledge, improve their practice and progress in their careers (Recommendation 9);
- **Proposed requirements for social work education** – so that student social workers receive high quality preparation for joining the profession (Recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 5); and
- **Proposals for effective partnership working** – between employers and higher education institutions in providing practice placements for degree students and continuing professional development for social workers (Recommendation 15).

**4.2** We propose that the core themes of the overarching professional standards framework, which underpin the whole social work reform programme, should be:

- **PROFESSIONALISM:** Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development.
- **VALUES AND ETHICS:** Apply social work ethical principles and values to guide professional practice.
- **DIVERSITY:** Recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice.
- **RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING:** Advance human rights, and promote social justice and economic well-being.
- **KNOWLEDGE:** Apply knowledge of social sciences, law and social work practice theory.
- **CRITICAL REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS:** Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision-making.
- **INTERVENTION AND SKILLS:** Use judgement and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support and prevent harm, neglect and abuse.

- **CONTEXTS AND ORGANISATIONS:** Engage with, inform, and adapt to changing contexts that shape practice. Operate effectively within own organisational frameworks and contribute to the development of services and organisations. Operate effectively within multi-agency and inter-professional settings.
- **PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP:** Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others through supervision, mentoring, assessing, research, teaching, leadership and management.

**4.3** The Standards for Employers, which we propose all employers of social workers should meet, and which are underpinned by principles of good practice and the requirements of legislation, guidance and codes, are summarised below. The Standards are accompanied by a Supervision Framework that sets out the key elements of effective supervision of social workers and provides guidance for undertaking supervision in different settings.

All employers of social workers in England should:

- Have in place a social work accountability framework informed by knowledge of good social work practice and the experience and expertise of service users, carers and practitioners.
- Use effective workforce planning systems to make sure that the right number of social workers with the right level of skills and experience are available to meet current and future service demands.
- Implement transparent systems to manage workload and case allocation in order to protect service users and practitioners.
- Make sure that social workers can do their job safely and have the practical tools and resources they need to do it effectively. Employers should assess risks and take action to minimise and prevent them.
- Ensure that social workers have regular and appropriate social work supervision.
- Provide opportunities for continuing professional development, as well as access to research and practice guidance.
- Ensure social workers can maintain their professional registration.
- Establish effective partnerships with higher education institutions and other organisations to support the delivery of social work education and CPD.

**4.4** The emerging framework for CPD will encourage social workers to take responsibility for improving their practice and help to create workplaces in which they will be supported and encouraged to learn and develop. The principles underpinning this framework seek to ensure that opportunities for learning are meaningful, plentiful and suited to the needs of the social worker and their area of work whilst being consistently recognised across the country.

**4.5** The proposed requirements for social work education aim to improve the quality and consistency of the social work degrees that lead to registration as a social worker. These include more rigorous selection criteria, standards for practice educators, an integrated curriculum framework based on the overarching professional standards framework, the consistent and substantive involvement of service users and carers in the design and delivery of courses, and transparent, targeted and effective regulation.

**4.6** The proposals for effective partnership working will help to ensure strong partnerships and good collaboration between employers and higher education institutions which is essential for a more strategic approach to workforce needs, as well as the provision of high quality placements and CPD for social workers. Effective partnership working will help to improve initial training and the provision of opportunities for CPD while maximising cost effectiveness and economies of scale at a time of financial constraint and uncertainty.

You can find more detailed information about our proposals in ***Building a Safe and Confident Future: One Year On, Detailed Proposals from the Social Work Reform Board***. We are seeking views on the detail of our proposals until **31<sup>st</sup> March 2011**. There will then be further opportunities to shape the direction of social work reform in the future and we will regularly provide progress updates through our reports, website and newsletter.

**4.7** These five areas of reform are not the only areas of work that we have been developing. In the coming months we will have more to say about the other areas of work we are engaged with, including the national social work supply and demand model, the proposed Assessed and Supported Year in Employment and support for frontline managers. However, the five areas of reform that we are concentrating on in this report are the ones that are now ready for testing by individuals and organisations.

**4.8** The Reform Board really wants these reforms to make a difference, not just now but also in the future. To achieve this, the proposals that we have developed need to be taken on and tried out locally and we are seeking views on them over the next three months. We would like to see these tested in the full range of settings in which social workers work. These reforms relate to England but social work is an international profession and as well as taking account of lessons from abroad, it is also important that we work with the other countries of the UK to make sure that we take account of UK-wide issues and developments.

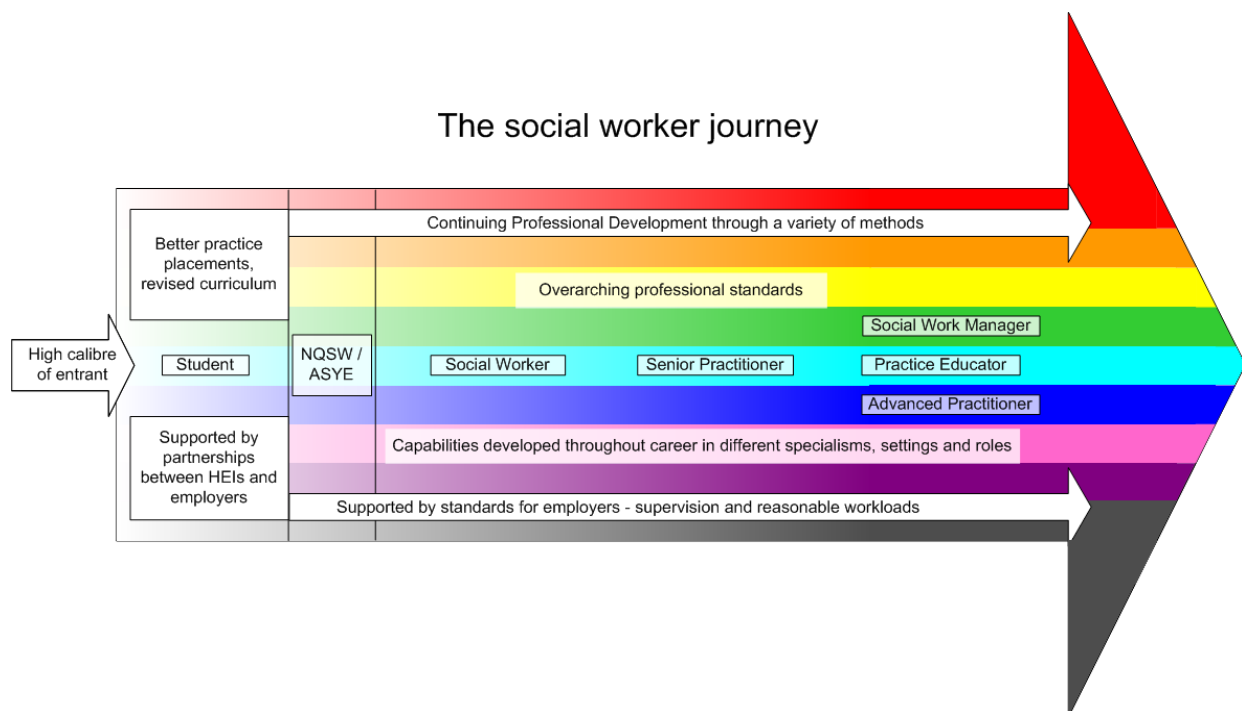
### **The reforms together**

**4.9** Each reform will not work in isolation; they are highly interdependent and their success is contingent on their cumulative impact. The new overarching professional standards framework will form the basis for all standards from entry to the social work degree right the way through to advanced practice and senior roles. The framework will shape the selection of people onto the social work degree, the content of the degree itself and the CPD that social workers will draw on to develop their skills for specialist practice and advance in their careers.



**4.10** The proposals for initial education will influence the way that social work students are selected, educated and prepared for joining the profession. The proposals for partnerships between higher education and employers will improve the quality and provision of practice placements and contribute to subsequent learning opportunities. The proposed Standards for Employers set out clearly the support and opportunities that employers should offer social workers so that they can meet the expectations of them expressed in the overarching professional standards framework. This includes access to CPD, other learning opportunities and regular supervision. **Figure 3** below illustrates how the reforms proposed in this report fit together and how they will impact on social workers.

**Figure 3: The reforms together**



### Making reform happen

**4.11** Although the reform of social work will require long term focus and drive, there are already many examples of good practice on which it can build. In some areas of the country there are already strong and effective partnerships in place between employers and higher education institutions. There are many excellent social work degree courses. Some organisations will find that they already meet the proposed Standards for Employers and their social workers experience good working conditions and feel well supported. Most employers of social workers in the adult and children's sectors are now involved in the Newly Qualified Social Worker programmes and are building on the lessons learned from the programme evaluations to implement them successfully. Through our work we are aiming to get all employers of social workers to the standard of the best so that the conditions for social workers to practise safely, effectively and confidently are in place everywhere.

## What can you do?

If you are a social worker, a service user or carer, or you work in an organisation that employs, trains or educates social workers, some or all of the five proposals we are making in this report may affect you. People from all parts of the social work sector have been involved in the development of these proposals. Now it's time to test how practical, effective and sustainable they are.

We are seeking views and feedback **until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011**. There will be further opportunities to get involved in shaping the direction of social work reform and we will provide regular updates in our reports, website and newsletter.

### You can:

**Find out** more about each proposal in ***Building a Safe and Confident Future: One Year On, Detailed Proposals from the Social Work Reform Board***.

**Think about** how the proposals would work in practice in your area or organisation.

**Test** the proposals to see what works and what doesn't work in your area.

**Tell** us about your views and experiences of testing the proposals.

**Keep in touch** with the latest social work reform developments through visiting our website – [www.education.gov.uk/swrb](http://www.education.gov.uk/swrb) – and through signing up to our newsletter.

We want to understand whether these proposals will work as intended and are particularly interested in hearing from you about:

- Challenges and opportunities in implementing the proposals;
- How well the proposals fit together;
- Cost implications;
- Implications for social workers and organisations in different settings, including those working in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors as well as for independent social workers and those employed by agencies; and
- UK-wide issues.

### You can let us know about your experiences of testing the proposals by:

- Emailing us at: [information.swrb@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:information.swrb@education.gsi.gov.uk);
- Contributing to national and regional meetings, workshops and conferences, details of which will be posted on our website and in our newsletter; and
- Sending your comments to your representative organisations and asking them to submit this feedback to the Reform Board.

A list of all organisations that are members of our Social Work Reform Board is in **Annex B**.

## The Social Work Task Force

The Social Work Task Force conducted an independent review of social work over the course of 2009. Members were selected on the basis of their individual expertise and experience, and included individuals who were able to provide a range of perspectives, including those of service users, front-line social workers and social work leaders.

The Task Force consulted widely before making its recommendations, gathering evidence from all areas of the sector, including from thousands of social workers through regional events and its call for evidence. It established a clear consensus about the changes that are needed, and obtained a strong commitment from employers, educators, the profession and government, to deliver them together. In its third and final report in December 2009, it set out the necessary reforms for social work, in the form of the following fifteen recommendations.

### The Social Work Task Force's 15 recommendations

- 1. Calibre of entrants:** that criteria governing the calibre of entrants to social work education and training be strengthened.
- 2. Curriculum and delivery:** an overhaul of the content and delivery of social work degree courses.
- 3. Practice placements:** that new arrangements be put in place to provide sufficient high quality practice placements, which are properly supervised and assessed, for all social work students.
- 4. Assessed Year in Employment:** the creation of an assessed and supported year in employment as the final stage in becoming a social worker.
- 5. Regulation of social work education:** more transparent and effective regulation of social work education to give greater assurance of consistency and quality.
- 6. Standard for Employers:** the development of a clear national standard for the support social workers should expect from their employers in order to do their jobs effectively.
- 7. Supervision:** the new standard for employers should be supported by clear national requirements for the supervision of social workers.
- 8. Front line management:** the creation of dedicated programmes of training and support for front line social work managers.
- 9. Continuing Professional Development:** the creation of a more coherent and effective national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers, along with mechanisms to encourage a shift in culture which

raises expectations of an entitlement to ongoing learning and development.

- 10. National Career Structure:** the creation of a single, nationally recognised career structure for social work.
- 11. National College of Social Work:** the creation of an independent national college of social work, developed and led by social workers.
- 12. Public Understanding:** a new programme of action on public understanding of social work.
- 13. Licence to Practise:** the development of a licence to practise system for social workers.
- 14. Social Worker Supply:** a new system for forecasting levels of supply and demand for social workers.
- 15. National Reform Programme:** the creation of a single national reform programme for social work.

## Membership of the Social Work Reform Board

The Social Work Reform Board met for the first time in January 2010 and is chaired by Moira Gibb CBE, who also chaired the Social Work Task Force. The member organisations on the Reform Board bring together representatives of social workers, employers, educators and service users to plan how, together, they can make reforms happen and report to government on progress.

The Social Work Reform Board has formed three main working groups to bring together relevant parties to develop plans to make the Social Work Task Force recommendations a reality. The working groups involve the different stakeholders interested in the social work reform programme. Their role is to inform and develop the recommendations and draft proposals for consultation to ensure that final arrangements work in practice. The main working groups focus on education, career development and standards for employers.

The Social Work Reform Board is also informed by the Social Workers' Reference Group, which ensures that the views and perspectives of social workers are at the forefront in developing the reform programme.

The following organisations send representatives to attend Social Work Reform Board meetings:

- A National Voice
- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)
- Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)
- Association of Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts (Aspect)
- Association of Professors of Social Work (APSW)
- British Association of Social Workers (BASW)
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (CAFCASS)
- Children England
- College of Social Work
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
- Department for Education (DfE)
- Department of Health (DH)
- General Social Care Council (GSCC)
- Health Professions Council (HPC)

- Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy & Social Work (SWAP)
- Joint University Council – Social Work Education Committee (JUC-SWEC)
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- Local Government Employers (LGE)
- Mind
- NHS Confederation
- Princess Royal Trust for Carers
- Shaping Our Lives
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)
- Unison
- Universities UK (UUK)

Government officials from the Devolved Administrations have observer status on the Social Work Reform Board and the following organisations also attend its meetings:

- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC)
- Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
- Ofsted
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
- Skills for Care (SfC)
- Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

## Changing contexts and Social Work Reform

### Foundations for system reform

#### In 2010

- *Professor Munro published The Munro Review of Child Protection – Part One: A Systems Analysis*
- *The Department of Health published A Vision for Adult Social Care*
- *The Department of Health published their Public Health White Paper, Healthy Lives, Healthy People: our strategy for public health in England*
- *Frank Field MP published A New Strategy to Abolish Child Poverty*
- Employers carry out the 'health check' recommended by the Social Work Task Force
- The College of Social Work appointed an interim board and co-chairs
- *Building a safe and confident future: One year on* is published setting out proposals in five key areas for reform

### System Reform

#### Spring (up to 31<sup>st</sup> March) 2011

- Feedback on *Building a safe and confident future: One year on* and further development of proposals
- The Reform Board's proposed model for supply and demand will be published
- The Standards for Employers will be finalised
- *Professor Munro will publish her interim report on child protection (January)*
- *Local Government Employers and the Trade Unions expect to consult on the findings of their work on social work job profiles.*
- *Department of Health will consult on new bursary arrangements for students on social work degrees*
- Work will continue on developing proposals for an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
- *Graham Allen MP will provide an interim report on the issue of best practice in early intervention*
- *The consultation on the framework for adult social care will end*
- *The Family Justice Review will publish its interim report*
- Guidance on the calibre of entrants to the social work degree will be published
- Guidance on practice learning and new practice educator standards will be published

### **April 2011 to March 2012**

- College for Social Work legally established
- College will consider its future role in relation to the Reform Board's work on overarching professional standards, continuing professional development (CPD) and the social work degree
- *Professor Munro will publish her final report on child protection (April)*
- Consult on new curriculum framework and guidance for the social work degree
- A new framework for CPD ready for consultation
- *The Health Professions Council will consult on standards of proficiency for social workers*
- *Graham Allen MP will publish his final report on early intervention*

### **From April 2012**

- *Regulation of social work will transfer to the renamed Health Professions Council*
- New curriculum framework and guidance for the social work degree will published taking account of consultation responses

### **From September 2012**

- *Changes to funding of higher education and student finance will come into effect*
- Testing models of assessment for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

### **2013 onwards**

- New practice learning arrangements in place
- HEIs apply the new curriculum framework and guidance
- All practice educators to be registered social workers meeting new practice education benchmark standards

### **2014 onwards**

- Improvements in social work education and training will be embedded





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