

# **PAN DORSET AND WILTSHIRE SOCIAL WORK TEACHING PARTNERSHIP (PDWTP).**

Final Evaluation, June 2020



**Pan-Dorset & Wiltshire**  
Social Work Teaching Partnership

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## Executive Summary

- The SWTP Programme was initially piloted by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) across four partnerships in 2005. There are currently 23 active teaching partnerships, 19 of which currently receive funding. The Social Work Teaching Partnership model is supported by funding in the form of a DfE grant.
- The Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Social Work Teaching Partnership (PDWTP) application was led by the Borough of Poole on behalf of Dorset County Council, Bournemouth Borough Council, Borough of Poole, Wiltshire Council and Bournemouth University (BU). The initial TP funding period ran concurrently with significant reorganisations across Dorset and subsequently, the partnership was led by BCP on behalf of Dorset Council, BCP, Wiltshire Council and Bournemouth University.
- A mixed methods approach was developed to capture data across all work streams, using both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry. This approach was comprised of consultation with stakeholders, quantitative data collection, document review and direct observation.

**Governance:** Relationships between partners have been further developed throughout the funding period. It should be noted that all partners had an history of working collaboratively, which the Teaching Partnership model was able to support and evolve into a program of shared understanding and aims. All partners faced challenges balancing the tensions between the needs of their individual authorities and the partnership, in respect to their own time in addition to the resources available. Regular steering group meetings supported the continuation of this relationship during a period of substantial change when it could have potentially become more disconnected.

Communication amongst the partners is more collaborative due to making the most of technology to work around geographic locations and work patterns. Skype for Business is now in place for steering group meetings, which will support the Teaching Partnership in the move towards remote working. The website and social media presence have the potential to connect practitioners over the Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire area, but both require further consideration and development.

**Admissions:** The development of the admission process builds on a pre-existing strong base and national reputations. The aim of this workstream to significantly improve the experience of candidates, providing a consistently positive experience which involved employers, those with lived experience and practice learning experience. As part of its development, feedback was obtained from candidates to assess the success of the changes, allowing the development to be reactive to the needs of both candidates and employers.

**Placements and Curriculum:** Investing in the redesign of the process and placing focus on recruiting the most appropriate candidates to the course should increase retention rates of students and in turn practice. Relationships built with Local Authorities has already increased confidence in the quality of students as the PDWTP is involved in the rigorous selection process. Students have a real understanding of practice issues and can make an informed choice as to whether they prepared for the challenges of Social Work practice.

The increase in 70- and 100-day placements has meant the partnership is better able to match student preferences to placement offers. At the last Placement Allocation Panel, 17/19 MA students

were offered their first choice of placement. Two were offered their second choice of specific placement but still within their preferred area of work. Each member of the PDWTP runs a programme within their council, which promotes knowledge sharing and helps to create an Open Learning Environment and supports closer collaboration between the field and academia and progressing CPD.

**Academic Delivery:** LPCs have supported this by collating a list of practitioners who would like to co-facilitate with academics and because practitioners are recruited and engaged by LPCs, this role is key to ensuring on-going recruitment of contacts and to the strengthening of existing links, which leads to further embedding into academic and professional practice. To date, 50 practitioners across 3 LAs have signed up and the list is maintained and updated by the TP administrator. This list has allowed greater practitioner involvement in academic delivery, although there have previously been strong practice links, the formalisation of the process has facilitated 29 practitioners to co-facilitate five units across qualifying programmes and one post-graduate programme.

**Practice Support and Development:** At least 50% of all PEs currently used by the partnership have demonstrated capability against Level 2 of PE Professional Standards. BU has delivered additional units including larger courses to meet demand. Wiltshire Council identified the need to strengthen links with BU to increase the number of PEs and placements in the south. All qualified PEs must submit a portfolio to their PEPS panel every 2 years. They have been provided with teaching partnership links and made aware of the proformas to assist in supporting them to complete this.

**Progression:** The Teaching Partnership facilitated further development of CPD frameworks and pathways, in addition to the development of bespoke units. This process has been embedded in the relationships between the university and partners historically and allowed this workstream to complement the activity of other workstreams, supporting the development of clear career pathways and transforming non-accredited CPD. This flexible joint approach has facilitated the development of skills, knowledge, professional leadership and career progression of the workforce. Increasing the involvement of front-line practitioners and managers in curriculum development and teaching/practice development workshops on the BU Social Work programmes. This helps to create greater fusion between academic teaching and statutory social work practice, foster research mindedness and evidence-based practice.

**Workforce and labour market planning:** The success of the partnership and pre-existing relationships between partners is highlighted by high employment rates for social work students within a social work role 12 months after graduation. To enable better analysis of data across the partnership, a standardised data collection progression system (spreadsheet) has been developed. This new standardised approach, incorporating BU's requirements, will enable on-going analysis of recruitment and retention data and the development of BU SW graduates.

Closely linked with the progression and placement workstreams, the teaching partnership has sought to create a hub of activity supporting the recruitment and retention of the workforce. This has involved further development of the CPD framework, ensuring students are supported in transitioning to practice and that clear career pathways support practitioners. Collaboration between partners has allowed for a comprehensive understanding of shared challenges and methods to proactively address these.

**Academics Experience of Practice:** Fifty practitioners across all three Local Authority partners have registered their interest in co-producing and co-delivering academic activities. This process has allowed for greater practitioner input in academic content and delivery and although there have previously been strong practice links, the formalisation of the process has facilitated an increase in collaboration, widening the opportunity for increasing numbers of practitioners across the partnership. These closer practice links have led to the development of practice-based research in multiple areas, and the development of course content. This experience has been viewed as positive by both students and practitioners.

**Lecture Practitioner Consultants (LPC):** The foundation of the bridge to overcome the gap between academia and practice has been laid: an immediate impacts has been increased learning and development opportunities for students, academics and practitioners alike. The LPCs acted as a tool to support the 'Fusion Model' and create stronger links to practice across partnership. Students' experience of teaching has been improved through more practitioners being involved in teaching and practitioners benefited through the tailor-made CPD opportunities, which increase opportunities for career and workforce development.

## 1. Context

The National Centre for Post-Qualifying Social Work and Professional Practice (NCPQSW) was commissioned in April 2019 to conduct an evaluation of the Pan Dorset and Wiltshire Social Work Teaching Partnership (PDWTP). The Teaching Partnership (TP) was a 2-year project, which was led by BCP Council on behalf of Dorset Council, Wiltshire Council, BCP Council and Bournemouth University.

The remit of the evaluation was to contextually capture learning and TP activities to evaluate impact and sustainability. The organisations and their stakeholders are the primary intended audiences for this report.

## 2. Background:

The SWTP model aims to establish, build and support the development of robust relationships between educators and employers to facilitate greater involvement and collaboration between practice and education, ensuring that practitioners are gaining the appropriate knowledge and skillset to undertake the role.

The Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) initially piloted the SWTP programme across four partnerships in 2005. Early indicators supported the development of a second phase of the programme, extending the model to a further eleven partnerships in 2016. The third phase of the programme saw an additional ten partnerships receive funding in 2018.

An unsuccessful application was submitted by the PDWTP in the second phase of the programme, but feedback received from this stage informed further development and restructuring of the application and the proposed partnership model, and funding was successfully received in the third phase of the programme. There are currently 23 active teaching partnerships, 19 of which receive funding. The initial TP funding spans a period of 2 years and partnerships are able to apply for continuation funding towards the end of this period. To date, only 4 teaching partnership have become completely self-funding.

The SWTP model is supported by funding, in the form of a grant from the DfE. New partnerships are required to demonstrate that they meet the eligibility criteria, which are a set of requirements that the DfE expect from perspective partnerships and must then set out specific 'stretch criteria' that the partnership aims to achieve throughout the funding period. Teaching partnerships were allowed a period of eight weeks to develop their partnership model. Applications were required to cover the following work streams:

1. Governance
2. Admissions
3. Placements and Curriculum
4. Academic Delivery
5. Practice Support and Development
6. Workforce and labour market planning
7. Progression
8. Academics Experience of Practice

## Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Social Work Teaching Partnership

The Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Social Work Teaching Partnership application was led by the Borough of Poole on behalf of Dorset County Council, Bournemouth Borough Council, Borough of Poole, Wiltshire Council and BU. The application represented the state of these authorities pre-reorganisation, with the TP funding period running concurrently with significant reorganisations across Dorset. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, nine councils in Dorset established two unitary authorities; Dorset Council replaced Dorset County Council and four district councils, namely Purbeck, East Dorset, West Dorset and North Dorset, and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Councils merged to create a new authority: BCP. From this point onwards, the partnership was led by BCP on behalf of Dorset Council, BCP, Wiltshire Council and BU.



BCP saw the merger of two new large independent authorities, with Christchurch Borough Council moving from Dorset County Council into a newly created authority. It is worth noting that the merger was initially announced in 2015 and this resulted in a period of uncertainty in the local political landscape. As the host organisation, BCP anticipated some logistical challenges during this period, specifically in relation to recruitment and contracting.

Dorset County Council took the restructure as an opportunity to reorganise their social care services, moving away from the pre-existing separation of children's and adults and towards a 'whole life' approach. BCP councils' service transformation sought to unite the structures and services from the three authorities and form one coherent approach, whilst retaining delineation between children's and families and adult services.

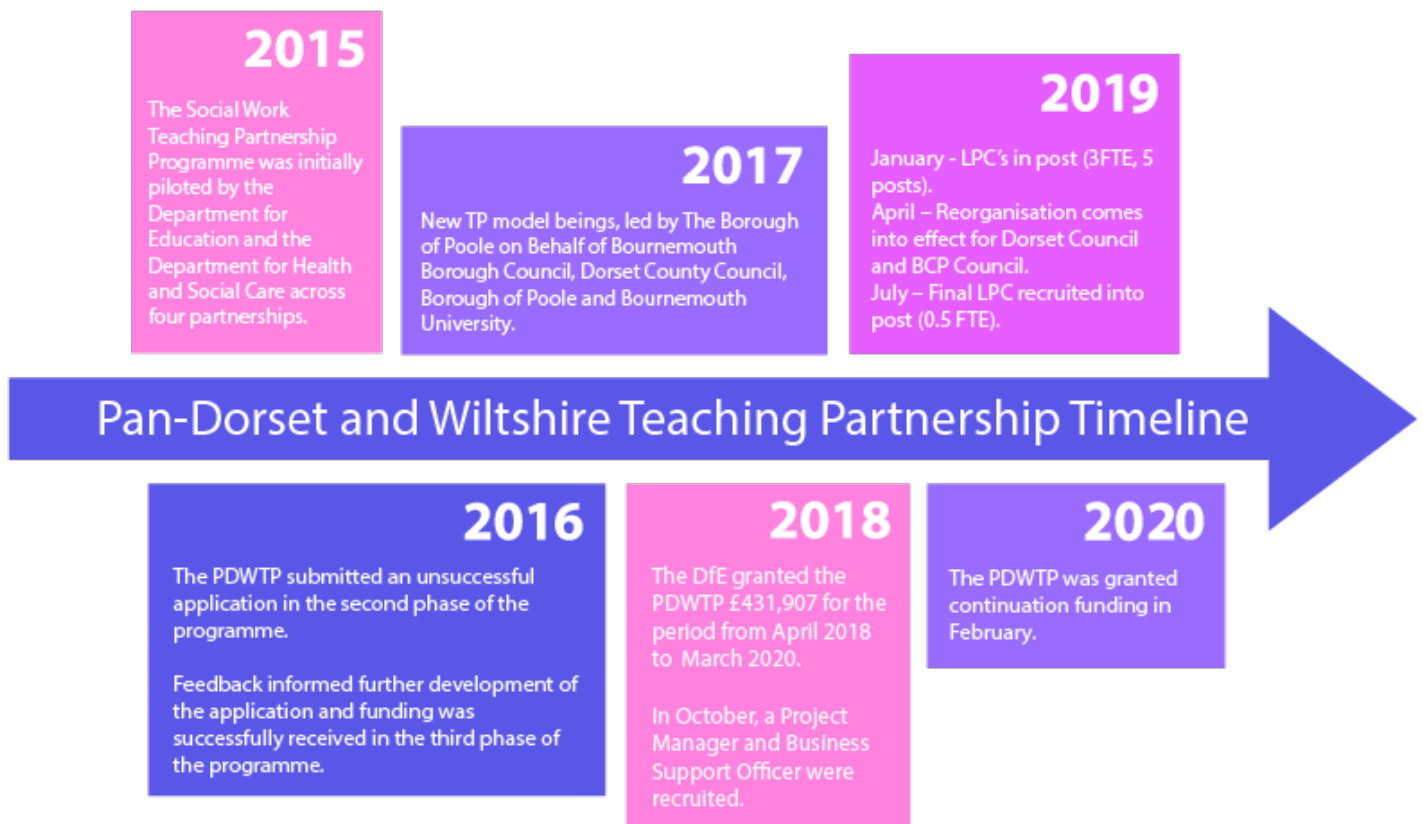
Wiltshire Council had previously become a unitary authority in 2009, undertaking a similar process of reorganising from Wiltshire County Council and four district councils, Kennet, North Wiltshire, Salisbury and West Wiltshire. Wiltshire Council has pre-existing links with a number of HEI's in the South West of England and had been a stakeholder in an unsuccessful application in the second phase of the TP programme with HEI's outside of the PDWTP.

During this same period, a reorganisation also took place within BU, restructuring from distinct qualifying and post-qualifying social work delivery teams, although academics frequently worked across both teams. They combined to create the Department of Social Sciences and Social Work, led by one Head of Department and two deputy heads of department, one of which holds a specific remit for Social Work Education.

## Pan-Dorset Academy of Health and Social Care



Prior to the formation of the Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching partnership, key stakeholders began developing a working partnership under the banner of the Pan-Dorset Academy of Health and Social Care. The aim of the academy was to set out strategic commitments for an integrated approach of health and social care agencies and education and training providers in the Pan-Dorset region to work together to develop and deliver high quality training and education routes for the health and social care workforce.





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**The Pan–Dorset and Wiltshire Social Work Teaching Partnership’s key aims were:**

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- 1.** To improve recruitment and retention across all levels of the social work workforce with clear career pathways from qualifying, ASYE, specialist practice, leadership and management, including a specific career pathway for practice supervisors and practice educators.

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- 2.** To lead in the improvement of qualifying social work education which fully prepares high quality social workers for an area of preferred practice, and provides a consistent regional approach to the quality of ASYE programmes.

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- 3.** To provide two statutory placements for every student relevant to their preferred area of practice by 2020, by increasing the numbers of placements and Practice Educators.

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- 4.** To identify new partnership arrangements with non- LA sector able to deliver placements undertaking statutory functions.

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- 5.** To fully embed the DFE and DoH Knowledge and Skills Statements, in teaching and in practice alongside new and developing national initiatives through innovative approaches to learning and development.

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- 6.** To further develop the involvement of frontline practitioners and their managers and PSW’s currently employed in statutory settings in curriculum development and in providing classroom teaching.

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- 7.** To enable greater opportunities for academic staff to update their knowledge and experience in current frontline practice.

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- 8.** To develop greater strategic links with existing service user participation groups to further develop teaching and learning at both qualifying and post qualifying levels, and governance.

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- 9.** To develop and increase research mindedness and research opportunities within practice in partnership with Bournemouth University

### 3. Evaluation Scope and Method

The evaluation will focus on the activities undertaken by the partnership, seeking to identify key areas of success, as well as consider how challenges and enablers have been or will be addressed and overcome.

#### Method

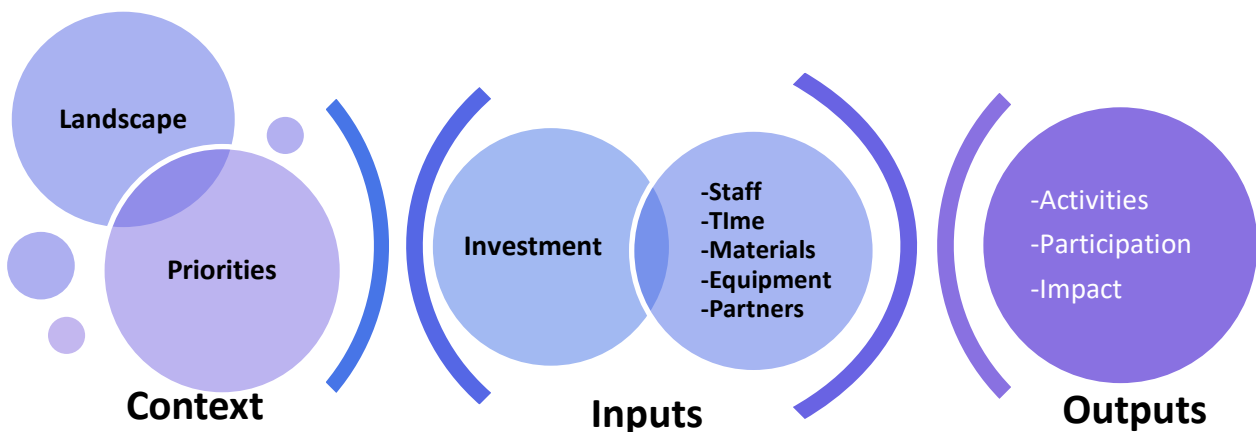
The evaluation activity took place between April 2019 and February 2020.

A mixed methods approach was developed to capture data across all workstreams, using both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry. This approach was comprised of consultation with stakeholders, quantitative data collection, document review and direct observation.

Research tools were developed for each stakeholder group, as well as consultation methods, including focus group guides, a workshop guide, online surveys and semi-structured interview guides. These were based on an evaluation framework, comprising the following topic areas:

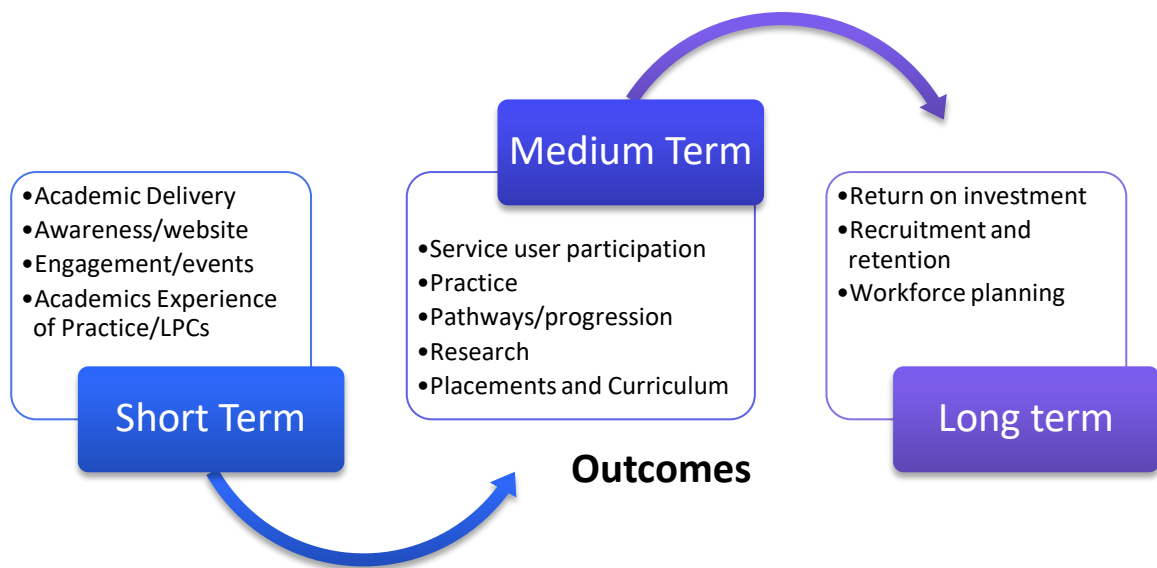
- The wider teaching partnership landscape and PDWTP specified stretch criteria
- Effectiveness of the partnership working and activities
- Benefits, outcomes and sustainability
- Challenges and enablers
- Impact and return on investment

A qualitative analysis was undertaken, with all contributions analysed against the evaluation framework. In-depth case studies were carried out to allow further exploration of immersing issues and results have been interpreted in the context of an impact-focused logic model to allow long-term impact to be considered, in addition to the immediate benefits and outcomes of teaching partnership activities.



A rolling programme of evaluation was undertaken. This included additional mid-point engagement with workforce leads and representatives. An external evaluation of the PDWTP presented unique challenges; evaluations are usually undertaken by the project manager, and this meant there was some degree of duplication of activities, as workforce leads were asked to present the same data multiple times. This led to greater focus on respondents outside the population of the steering group and workforce leads. To ensure respondents confidentiality, it has not been possible to quantify the number or type of stakeholders who put forward a perspective.

Impact will be interpreted in the context of when measurable outcomes could reasonably be anticipated; this is key to understanding the partnership model and obtaining a greater understanding of the long-term return on investment.



The PDWTP was successful in its application for an extension grant and will be funded into 2020. The evaluation has been conducted to support the partnership within this context and will therefore consider how their activities can be best supported moving forward.

Each workstream will be evaluated in isolation as follows;

- Landscape: this section will seek to contextualise the workstream within the wider context of the TP model, including eligibility criteria and the activities of other teaching partnerships.
- Activities: this section will summarise the activities of the PDWTP and exploring the evidence base in relation to the evaluative model, specifically considering the effectiveness of partnership working and activities, benefits, outcomes and sustainability, as well as the challenges and enablers.
- Impact: this section will evaluate the activities and evidence to provide a measure of the impact and the measurable or anticipated outcomes.
- The Lecture Practitioner Consultant (LPC) role will also be considered in its own right and this section will explore the impact of the unique approaches to this role.

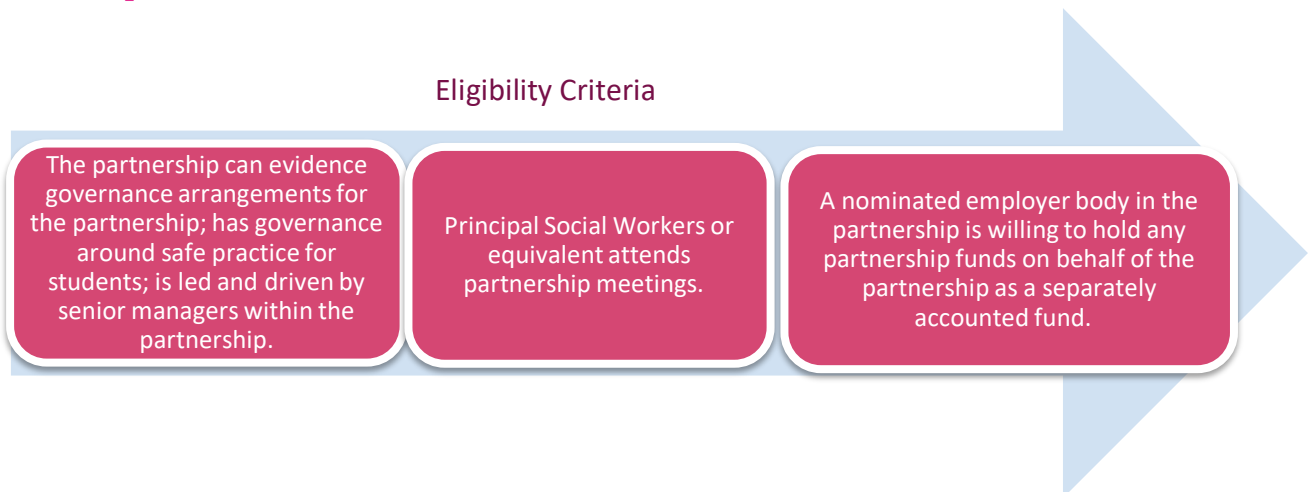
## 4. Results:

The following section will present the data obtained for each workstream. It should be noted that workstreams did not operate in isolation and that activities may have benefitted more than one workstream. In addition to data collected throughout the commissioned period, case studies generated by workforce leads have also been incorporated into this report.

### 4.1 Governance

This section will explore the governance model that the PDWTP employed and the associated approach to the strategic monitoring and management of the partnership.

#### Landscape:



All partnerships in the programme prioritised ensuring that effective governance and management structures were in place and that leaders across partner organisations were committed, with all partnerships continually reviewing and adapting this to ensure robustness. Partnerships often required up to 12 months to develop these structures, partly due to the time taken to recruit the key role of project manager. Most partnerships are governed through an LA led strategic level board and an operational level board, with the latter overseeing the work plan, which is delivered by formalised groups that report into it.

All partnerships had some previously established relationships between partners and have now effectively co-developed delivery plans and associated processes to deliver these plans. Service users have been involved in delivery structures in all partnerships, and their involvement in decision making structures is also increasing, however equal engagement of Children's and Adult's services has proven challenging for most partnerships.

Monitoring performance against eligibility/stretch criteria and evaluation of strategic objectives are underdeveloped in most partnerships, however monitoring processes for delivery of activities is in place in varied ways, with some partnerships relying on the project manager for update reports. Several partnerships have a strategic communication plan focused on key messages for specific

stakeholder groups and all partnerships are developing their own websites as an information dissemination tool.

Many began with a separate working group for each workstream but then amalgamated related working groups and several partnerships started off with larger structures, which were then streamlined as a result of achieving initial goals.

## **Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching Partnership Activities**

Historical, collaborative working between the partners supported governance and management structures within the partnership. These pre-existing relationships allowed the partnership to make steady progress despite the challenges faced due to the reorganisation.

Formal operational level steering groups were undertaken on a regular basis, coordinated by the project manager. Speakers were invited for short periods of time to update the steering group as to the process in areas of the project and these meetings, held primarily at the BU Lansdown campus, were supported by a virtual approach to ensure geographical proximity did not limit engagement.

The project management team identified the impact of LGR preparation as a potential challenge, but despite this they have maintained a stable partnership steering group with only one key change in personnel.

The Lead Officers' Steering group represented Adult's and Children's and Family Services across all three partner authorities and representatives from BU with specialisms in research and education. Each workstream was allocated a named lead, who was charged with reporting to the steering group as to the progress within the individual work stream.

Strategic Level Board: The partnership primarily functioned at the operational level, as a result of the significant restructures that were in process across multiple partners. This led to limited governance and managerial engagement at the strategic level but evidence suggests that the operational steering group effectively and consistently fed back partnership activity and sought this input when required.

*"There was meant to be a Governance Board above the Steering Group, and that was one of the things we were really clear about what we wanted to have in place and including service users, but for various reasons that didn't happen and I think partly that was because of a lot of change in the Senior Managements during the 2 years of the Teaching Partnership."*

This challenge was reflected by other TPs who addressed the issue by creating operational groups. It is acknowledged that greater strategic engagement is preferable, but the operational group provided an effective vehicle to achieve the aims of the partnership.

There is also an acknowledgement of the need for greater input from service users; although this has been seen across individual workstreams, it was not implemented within the governance model at the time of this evaluation. However, the partnership has facilitated greater collaboration between partners and the PIER partnership (Public Involvement in Education and Research), based within BU, to facilitate opportunities for greater input from service users and carers.

**Communication:** Communication amongst the team was more collaborative due to making the most of technology to work around geographic locations and work patterns. Skype for Business was used for steering group meetings and activities were underpinned by a media strategy that sought to facilitate maximum efficacy across several mediums.

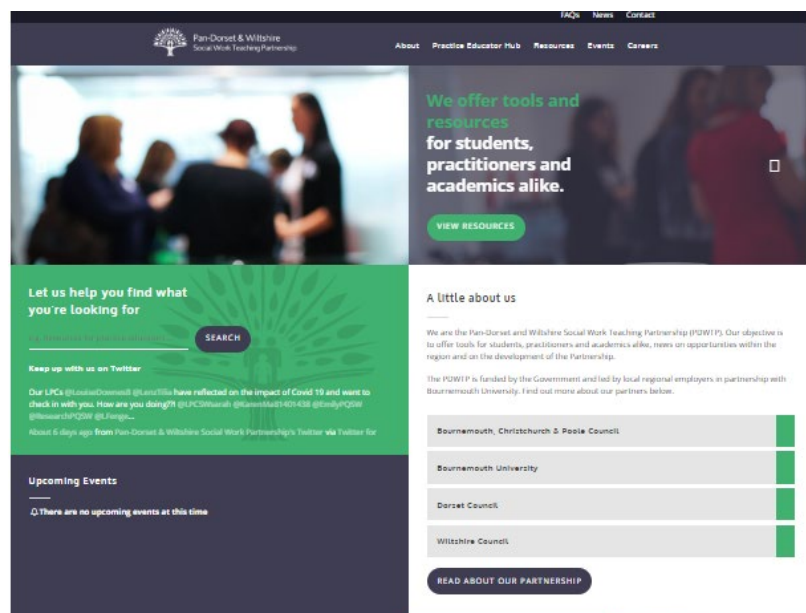
SharePoint: A SharePoint site was developed and supported by the project management team to facilitate collaboration across partners. Using an independent platform to support activities allowed members of the partnership to collaborate, free of the limitation of bespoke internal IT platforms. To some extent, particularly in the early stages of the partnership, members utilised this platform as a shared external drive, where documentation could be stored and retrieved by all members. The project manager, who also utilised the platform to issue task to members and share project risk monitoring, issued permissions for access. Engagement decreased throughout the project, with members reflecting challenges in accessing the site, such as the task driven approach being considered unhelpful and the design not intuitive.

*“I think could have been a bit more effective and people would have used it more if it had been less complicated and less task driven and more about a repository of information and sharing of information, which I think is what originally would have been.”*

There are, however, challenges in collaborating over several organisational structures and differing IT systems. The SharePoint site addressed this in respect to creating a private jointly owned space for partners to collaborate. Feedback suggests that site design was the main barrier to engagement and therefore consideration should be given as to how this could be developed and relaunched as a collaborative area for members moving forward.

## Bespoke Website:

A collaborative website had previously been created by partners, and this was further developed to align more closely with the aims and identity of PDWTP. This partnership took ownership of the website and have invested in long term maintenance. The website provides a method of dissemination of partnership activities to a wider audience. Members of the project management team received training on content management to ensure this skill set was within the partnership and that the website can be updated on an on-going basis.



## Social Media:

The PDWTP has developed a social media strategy to disseminate information about teaching partnership activities. To date @PDWTPSocialWork has 306 followers, primarily Social Work professionals within the partnership area.



## Performance monitoring and project management.

A task and risk-based model was adopted to implement and manage the project. The project management team included a 0.68FTE Project Manager and a 0.5FTE Project BSO. These roles were placed directly under the lead organisation, supported and facilitated by BCP.

**Project BSO:** This role provided a useful resource for the wider partnership, acting as a central repository for information. The administrative support from the PDWTP has provided a point of contact and enabled more accurate data mapping across the partnership. This role provides a key administrative resource which can facilitate a range of activities including supporting events, co-ordinating meetings, website maintenance and database management.

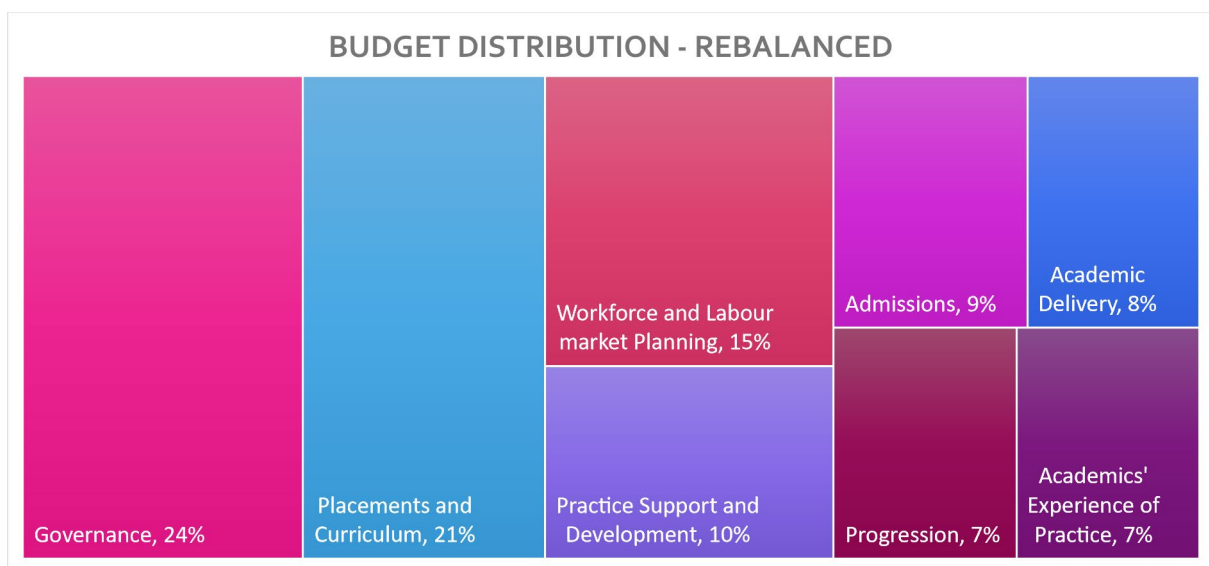
**Project Manager:** This role was significantly impacted by the funding reduction caused by a lack of clarity over the funding period and funding delays. This reduction saw the role reduced from 1FTE to 0.68FTE. To support the governance aims, the project team delivered the following:

- Updating of the project risk register for regular steering group review
- Refinement of the organisation structure to ensure ownership and accountability, as well as clear division of responsibilities
- Completion of recruitment to project posts
- Formalisation of a project board, against the well-known risk of minimal senior staff engagement due to priority of local government reorganisation
- Review of implementation plan
- Production of a realistic finance plan, contract negotiations and agreements
- A Communications Strategy has been developed to improve both internal and external information, shared resources and marketing, and has included a refreshed branding and updated website based on previous partnership work.
- Understanding of individual steering group member aspirations, concerns, and any joint conflicts of interest for the project

Expenditure as recorded:



Below is a rebalanced expenditure model to reflect LPC activity distributed across all work streams, with the exclusion of governance, in contrast to all costs represented in the academic delivery category:



## Barriers:

The primary barriers reflected by the project management team were:

- The time available to carry out all the governance-enablers to a sufficient level to enable joined-up thinking, clarity for all team members, and work on the project aims to progress.
- To avoid further delays or failing to deliver some key objectives, decisions had to be made based on judgement, experience, and advice from colleagues.
- Pressures derived from the fixed deadline nature of the project, and from limitations of the DfE grant, in particular that the budgets could not be rolled over from one year to the next, which had not been understood at the time of submitting the bid.



There was substantial debate regarding the nature of the project management approach, some within the partnership reflected that an alternative approach may have been more effective, finding the task-based approach limiting and would have preferred greater flexibility. The initial funding period has provided greater clarity as to the key elements required to best support continuation funding.

Further development is required regarding communications with a clear strategy of the purpose of each method to ensure a return on investment.

### **Impact:**

Immediate governance impacts observed through the initial funding period:

Relationships between partners have been further developed throughout the funding period. It should be noted that all partners had a history of working collaboratively, which the TP model was able to support and evolve into a program of shared understanding and aims. All partners had the challenge of balancing the tensions of the needs of their individual authorities and the partnership, in respect to their own time, in addition to the resources available. Regular steering group meetings supported the continuation of this relationship during a period of substantial change when it could have potentially become more disconnected.

Communication amongst the partners is more collaborative due to making the most of technology to work around geographic locations and work patterns. Skype for Business is used for steering group meetings, which supported the PDWTP in the move towards remote working. The website and social media presence have the potential to connect practitioners over the Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire area, although both require further consideration.

### **Medium-term impact:**

**Students:** Closer relationships between authorities and HEI's ensure that students are better supported, with more placement opportunities and increased practitioner input in their education.

**Academics:** The steering groups meetings provided a vehicle to regularly connect with lead offers across all partners, supporting further research and course development.

**Practitioners and Local Authority partners:** The process has supported robust relationships across lead offers of all partners, leading to a range of positive impacts on partnership organisation, creating a scale of economy in supporting the development of practitioners, both in training and already in practice.

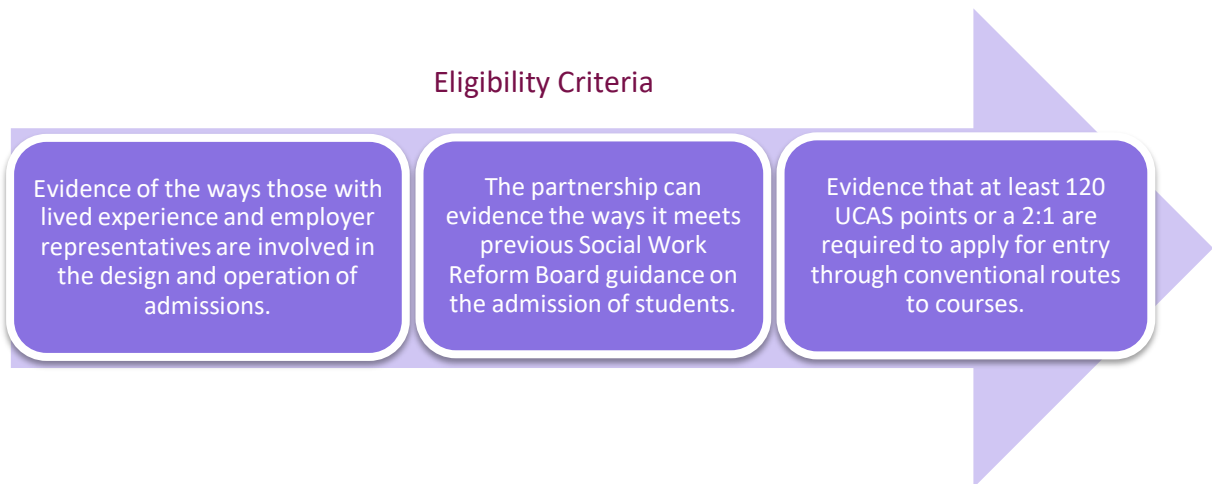
### **Long-term impact:**

The intention is that regular steering group meetings continue with PSW involvement from Adult and Children's Services, WFD leads and academic representatives. This will help to ensure the gains made throughout the funding period are retained and further developed.

## 4.2 Admissions

This section will explore teaching partnership activities in relation to the admissions process for social work candidates, how those with lived experience and employer representatives are involved and how new testing processes assess intellectual ability, social work values and behaviours.

### Landscape:



**Partner involvement.** All partnerships involve a diverse range of SUCs and employer representatives in all aspects of the HEI admissions processes, from design to decision-making and new activities were included in the process, for example 'speed interviews' with SUCs. Partnerships also developed registers of practitioners who were keen to participate in selection days to diversify the experience for potential students.

**Improvements to the admissions processes.** HEIs are recognising that rigorous selection processes may be more effective than entry criteria at identifying those who will make high quality social workers. All partnerships have improved their selection processes to better assess ability, values and behaviours with methods including written assessments, verbal reasoning, discussions, interviews and a role play resource which assesses capability and decision making, as well as an admissions policy update.

**Harmonising the process.** Across all HEIs in the partnership, processes, tools and guidance were reviewed to develop a shared assessment process, building on each other's effective practice. This allowed for a set of guiding principles and assessment tools to contribute to consistency but also variation to fit the character and requirements of each HEI.

## Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching Partnership activities:

The HEI already had a strong track record with regards to admissions on a national level, but was able to enhance the student experience of the process through the PDWTP:

- The partnership developed a plan for the involvement of those with lived experience, as well as employer representatives at all stages of admissions, including in decisions about applicants.
- The partnership is committed to a minimum of 120 UCAS points or a 2:1 requirement to undergraduate and postgraduate courses respectively since Sept 2018, requirements also maintained at clearing.
- The partnership developed and implemented tests at the point of application before an offer to study is made. Tests assess all applicants' intellectual ability, social work values and behaviours. The tests must include written assessment, verbal reasoning, group discussion and scenarios in all cases.
- The PDWPT provided the opportunity to enhance and focus the involvement of those with lived experience. The redesigned interviews for the BA (hons) and MA in Social Work were divided into four parts and developed in close cooperation between the Public Involvement in Education and Research (PIER) Partnership and the BU Qualifying Social Work team.

The development of the admission process builds on a pre-existing strong base and national reputations. The aim of this workstream was to significantly improve the experience of candidates, providing a consistently positive experience which involved employers, those with lived experience and practice learning experience. As part of its development, feedback was obtained from candidates to assess the success of the changes, allowing the development to be reactive to the needs of both candidates and employers.

### Teaching Partnership aims:

- 1. Plan for the involvement of those with lived experience and employer representatives at all stages.*
- 2. Develop and implement tests to assess ability, values and behaviours before an offer is made.*

- Moved from conducting interviews in offices to a professionally presented experience of an assessment centre
- Candidates receive information prior to the day and are asked to prepare by watching a video produced with members of the PIER Partnership
- The inclusion of a written exercise to discuss the benefits and challenges of social work, with focus on the ability to write at the required level, structure an argument and think critically
- Interviews are conducted by the academic team and include a conversation about the video - feedback indicates the interviews are perceived positively

- A review of the PIER Partnership has resulted in the focusing their activities on user led research and building BU's reputation for meaningful involvement and collaborations, resulting in publication of a book chapter
- The PIER Partnership provided objectives that are assessed by BU academics and a representative of SW employers; these are sustainable and effective in terms of selection
- CSWKSS are strongly embedded in teaching
- Development of a computer game in which candidates explore two scenarios: some rooms are designed more positively, and others contain details that are deemed to be problematic - this assesses the candidate's curiosity, ability to reflect on what is observed and value base

## Game based learning – New models of learning

Research exploring the application of reflection in social work practice illustrates that practitioners often undertake Schön's process of 'reflection-in-action' (Ferguson, 2018; Gould, 2010) and reflexivity in practice (Taylor and White, 2010). These processes allow practitioners to critically analyse and adjust their practice iteratively and concurrently to tailor and develop robust person-centred practice. Practitioners should consider how their own sense of self interacts with their perception and interpretation of complex situations, to ensure they reflect the needs and wishes of service users free of personal influence. Negotiation in this context is multifaceted, emphasising the need to create safe spaces to develop this skill set and embed self-reflection into practice throughout both their academic and professional careers.

Building on this work, a digital game is in development which allows the user to experience the processes of financial scamming in real-life scenario-based contexts (Fenge & Melacca, 2018). This has been further adapted as part of the Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching Partnership to support practitioners to identify signs of financial abuse. The work has led to further consideration into how these approaches can be applied in social work practice and education in facilitated group learning and independent self-directed learning (Fenge et al, 2019).

The teaching partnership has contributed to external funding bids to develop this body of work and has played a key role in steering the applicability of the content and learning experience. Practice educators have been engaged in the development of this body of work providing expert input, having formed part of a PELP event, in addition to BA and MA social work students and academics. Further engagement from the LPC role would aid to facilitate application for future external funding and allow co-production underpinned by frontline practice experience.

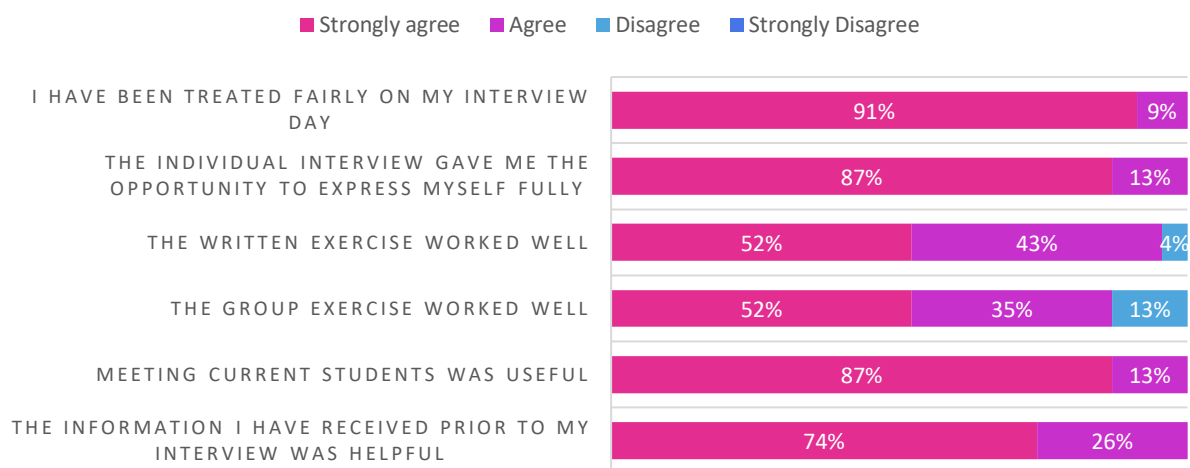
## Impact:

Immediate impacts observed through the initial funding period:

*“The teaching partnership has been firmly embedded in the Open Days and in the Interview Days. So we’ve got practitioners coming there, co-facilitating, and I’m there in LPC role. But certainly there are slides on the teaching partnership, on the presentations and we make a big point and now I can quite confidently talk about how we’ve changed the delivery of the teaching at BU and how the teaching partnership had its influence there.”*

The results are fed back to the admissions team, who then inform the applicants the following day.

### CANDIDATE FEEDBACK- JANUARY 2020



- Applicants say they are more likely to come to BU after the interview day than before
- The written exercise received the most critical feedback of all the exercises - some applicants comment that this task feels pressured and question whether writing skills could be assessed in different ways. However, the question was adapted several times and unfortunately did not significantly improve the feedback.
- Sustainability of involvement of people with lived experience was considered.
- Applicants can ask current students and practitioners questions about the programme and local employers about the realities of practice – this contributes to a low number of students dropping out.
- The small group exercise is often seen by applicants as a challenging task and creates some anxieties, but feedback suggests that it is still generally seen as a positive experience.
- Involvement of people with a lived experience in selection processes: the PIER Partnership have worked with the social work academic team to ensure that people with a lived experience is integral to the BU admissions processes. On the interview day, PIER partners are involved in the assessment of candidates during group activities, written test, on the interviewing panel and in moderating the candidates at the end of the day to decide whether to offer or to reject each application.

- Interviews and group activities: the SWRB recommends that HEIs use observed group activities/exercises as part of their selection process. As part of the interview day, candidates participate in a group activity, which is led and assessed by a member of the social work academic teaching team, a registered social worker from a key statutory partner and a member of the PIER Partnership.

*“The conversations with both students and SW as it gave me an insight into the course and the career.” Candidate 01/20*

*“Thank you for making me feel so relaxed and informed and giving me the potential to show you confidently why I would love to study SW” Candidate 01/20*

### Medium-term impact:

**Students:** Greater collective input in selecting students helps to ensure that the most appropriate candidates are offered places and ones that can make a more -informed decision are more like to stay in practice once qualified.

**Academics:** The admissions process will be continually reviewed with input from all stakeholders, ensuring it is an evolving process that can be reactive to the needs of partners and students.

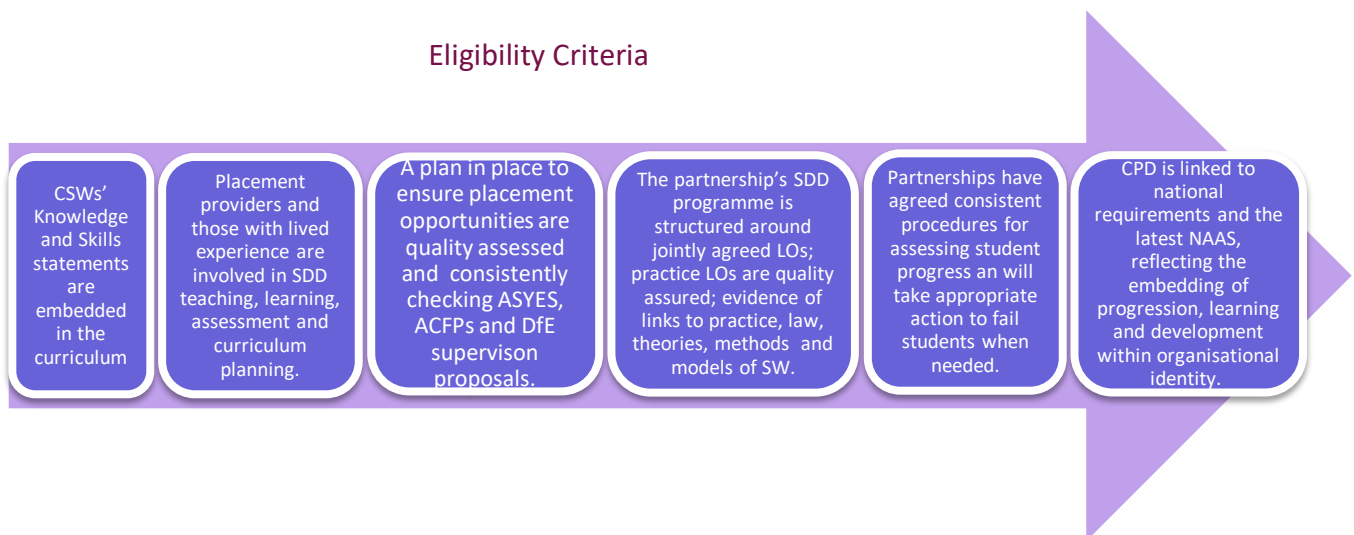
**Practitioners and Local Authority partners:** Increased confidence in the HEI and the quality of students and on-going involvement in the development of the process.

**Long-term impact:** Investing into the redesign of the process and placing focus on recruiting the most appropriate candidates to the course will increase retention rates. Relationships built with LAs has already increased confidence in the quality of students as the PDWTP is involved in the rigorous selection process. Students have a real understanding of practice issues and can make an informed choice as to whether they are up to the challenge of Social Work practice.

## 4.3 Placements and Curriculum

This section will illustrate the activities undertaken to ensure placements are available and supported in students preferred area of practice. It will also explore how greater collaboration between BU, LAs and CPD opportunities have been supported to enhance learning opportunities.

### Landscape:



**Statutory placements for each student.** All SWTPs were able to provide a minimum of one, but it was a struggle for many to achieve the preferred two, statutory placements to each student on social work programmes. Most phase one and two partnerships have embedded enhanced QA systems, as well as ones for student support, which are expected to maintain in the future. Many TPs focussed on retaining funded partnership funded posts, as these have shown to be key drivers to placement quality achievement.

**Curriculum development.** The TPs reported activity in working to increase students understanding of the CSWKSS in future social work programmes, in response to students reporting various levels of understanding. Workshops, masterclasses and CPD modules were all methods used to help embed the CSWKSS, as well as the development of a reflection evaluation learning tool and a Professional Development Career Portfolio, a transferable tool. The increased involvement of teaching consultants in the design and delivery of teaching enabled a closer alignment between academia and practice.

**Frameworks to restructure education opportunities.** One SWTP intended to establish a Professional Development Learning Centre and another SWTP established eight centres to support student practice. Other work is being carried out to develop a sufficiency model to support delivery of CPD programmes. With high demand for the PE pathways in one SWTP, there were delays due to lack of capacity and a lack of ability to begin modules in the timeframe.

## Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching Partnership Activities:

The PDWTP aimed to achieve the following stretch criteria during the funding period:

- Partnerships offering both of their statutory placements relevant to students' preferred areas of practice in contrasting settings from AY 2018-19 will be prioritised in the assessment of applications.
- Programmes providing units in child and family and adult areas of practice will also be prioritised.
- All placement students are guaranteed statutory placements relevant to their preferred area of practice, which they are offered from AY 2018-19. In child and family settings, these will offer all students significant experience of using the statutory framework for child and family social work. In adult services, students will have experience of using statutory frameworks for adult social care in delivering outcome-focused, personalised responses
- The partnership can evidence enhanced collaboration between employers and HEIs to undertake long term planning for training and development of the SW workforce throughout their careers.

**Placements:** The partnership has used innovative methods to expand the range of 70- and 100-day placements and to be able to offer all students two statutory placements that are relevant to their preferred practice area. LPCs from each council worked creatively to engage teams that had not previously taken students and looked at how they could make changes here. In response, to the increasing demand of placements, all councils have responded with a mixed approach to meet these needs.

*"We explored the Dols Team as well and they weren't able to take a student but what they have done is offered a shadowing opportunity so that start of their learning, there's shadowing opportunities available. We've also got placements in the Shared Lives Team, which we didn't have before. That is the teaching partnership having that sort of positive influence on how Local Authorities are boarding out those placements." (LPC)*

*'that link for us has helped increase the number of placements. I think that's been slow, but I know in Adults we've got 11 placements starting in January and that's the most we've ever had.'*

**Increase in offering statutory placements in preferred area of practice:** The increase in 70 and 100-day placements has meant the PDWTP is better able to match student preferences to placement offers. At the last Placement Allocation Panel, 17/19 MA students were offered their first choice of placement. Two were offered their second choice of specific placement but still within their preferred area of work.

**Prioritisation of programmes:** The research focussed LPC is embedded in BU, working with other LPCs to undertake a needs analysis around what was on offer from BU and highlighted two areas that would benefit from further development. The first was critical analysis and the second legal literacy.



LPCs rewrote the law module which incorporated units for Children’s and Adults services and updated the legislation references to include current case law and application of the Children Act and Care Act/Mental Capacity Act, which is explored in more detail later.

### Enhanced collaboration between employers/HEIs:

The PDWTP has been proactive at planning and implementing a programme of masterclasses, delivered by academics and experts for all Social Work practitioners and students. Each event has demonstrated very high levels of attendance and have been well received.

<b>Name of event:</b>	<b>Event Type:</b>
<b>PELP Good Vs Meaningful feedback – Valuing Service User feedback</b>	PELP CPD event
<b>World Mental Health Day: Suicide Prevention</b>	Masterclass
<b>Whole family working</b>	Masterclass
<b>County Lines</b>	Masterclass
<b>Adult Safeguarding – a Strengths-based approach</b>	Masterclass
<b>Evidence-based interventions that improve outcomes for families and children</b>	Masterclass
<b>CPD, Progression and the Changing Landscape of SW in England</b>	Masterclass
<b>Risk and Resilience</b>	Masterclass
<b>Vicarious Trauma and Well-being</b>	Masterclass
<b>Supporting Students to Manage Risk</b>	PELP CPD event
<b>Social Work; A Survival Guide – The 2019 Christmas Lecture by David Emery</b>	Masterclass
<b>Importance of considering sexual well-being in professional practice</b>	Masterclass
<b>Working effectively with adults who self-neglect with Professor Michael Preston-Shoot</b>	Masterclass
<b>Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)</b>	Masterclass
<b>Various</b>	Journals Clubs
<b>Practice Assessors workshop</b>	Workshop
<b>IPOP</b>	Course
<b>Lunch and Learn sessions</b>	
<b>Social Work Managers Workshop (KSS and PCF)</b>	Workshop

The TP has a programme of regular events to support the Practice Education agenda (PELP) and funding has meant that the PDWTP have been able to invite speakers in, hold specialist events and invest in resources. This is an example of how the TP programme has been able to integrate into pre-existing activity to further enhance the quality of the provision and should not be interpreted as a business-as-usual activity.

### Impact:

Immediate impacts observed through the initial funding period:

LPCs within BCP encouraged multiple services to open up to taking students and also spoke to team managers and teams to help their understanding of the impact (both positive and negative) and requirements of taking students. Unit 1 of BU’s Practice Education course has provided extra places to increase provision of Work Based Supervisors (WBS).

LPCs in Wiltshire organised a day where a coach drove students to the main offices and areas such as Salisbury to help combat the misconception that Wiltshire is not accessible from Bournemouth and hope this will encourage students to apply for positions there. Wiltshire's Principal Social Workers also host and appear at many partnership events with hopes to increase placements.

Each member of the PDWTP runs a programme within their council, which promotes knowledge sharing and helps to create an Open Learning Environment and supports closer collaboration between the field and academia and progressing CPD.

BCP: Tea, Toast and Theory,  
Lunch and Learns, PE  
sessions, ASYE sessions

Dorset: Manager  
workshops, PE focus group,  
NQSW development days

Wiltshire: Journal Clubs,  
PEPS Support, PE Forums

### Medium-term impact:

**Students:** There is a proposal for the LPCs and lecturers to deliver a specialist bespoke unit for the teaching partnership population. The Needs Analysis allowed consideration of the needs of post-qualifying education priorities and the development of the EPL unit.

**Academics:** The research focussed LPC compiled a database of experienced and interested practitioners that can be accessed for events, research purposes, training, workshops and other activities. Each member of the PDWTP runs a programme within their councils, which promotes knowledge sharing and helps to create an Open Learning Environment, which supports closer collaboration between the field and academia and progressing CPD.

**Practitioners and Local Authority Partners:** Collaboration between LAs and BU to undertake long term planning for training and development of the workforce including:

- Open day planned for professionals who would like to return to Social Work.
- LPCs to give a talk on requirements,
- The local Engagement Officer from SW England will be speaking
- Talks by Professional Leads and Principal Social Workers.
- Events will be supported by allied organisations such as Unison, BASW, Sage publishers and RiP(fA).

The Teaching Partnership hopes to capture data about the local untapped workforce and be flexible about how they recruit and support future Social Workers.

### Long-term impact

The PDWTP has a subgroup to publicise, embed and promote the PEPS for Practice Educators. This group meet at least three times per year to hold a standardisation panel to review PEPS portfolios for our local Work-Based Supervisors and Practice Educators, ensuring consistency across the partnership and promoting good practice.

## 4.4 Academic Delivery

This section will explore how practitioners and those with lived experience were encouraged and enabled to be a part of the entire teaching process on the initial education academic programmes, as well as how quality assurance measures were put in place to ensure quality of delivery.

### Landscape:



**Practitioner involvement in education programmes.** One SWTP delivered workshops for 40 PEs who were then able to get involved with academic delivery and a postgraduate PE programmes was also developed. There were delays for co-delivery between PEs and lecturers in another partnership, but they were able to offer effective delivery training to PEs in the hope of future collaboration. They also developed a register of practitioners keen to participate in teaching or give input into modules.

**Recruitment.** One SWTP recruited a Consultant Academic Social Work Practitioner with hopes to develop a critical approach to practice and training to increase communication skills was offered to social workers. Another partnership ended up with 37 teaching consultants who were able to model social work values and behaviours and with many of these in part-time roles, more practitioners could get involved and share their specialist knowledge.

**Involvement of service users.** One SWTP formed a 'service user reflection and feedback tool' for students to gain feedback during placements and 54% of students reported that at least one service user was involved in their training. Another partnership appointed services user representatives to the board with hopes to strengthen the service users' forum. One partnership formed Peer Review Inspection Teams including key stakeholders responsible for the quality of placements, and also developed a 360-degree teaching evaluation tool including SUC and employer feedback.

**Quality assurance.** One partnership appointed a quality assurance and standards managers, whilst another formed a Practice Assessment Panel and put in place a new system for evaluating placements. Early indications suggested that overall student satisfaction had increased.

This section will explore how practitioners and those with lived experience were encouraged and enabled to be a part of the entire teaching process on the initial education academic programmes, as well as how quality assurance measures were put in place to ensure quality of delivery.

### **Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching Partnership Activities:**

The partnership aimed to demonstrate an increase in the amount of child and family practitioner and adult practitioner teaching on the initial education academic programme in 2018-19 compared to existing baselines. Enhancing readiness to practice by meeting the standards defined by Social Work England. Part of the LPC role is to help coordinate input of practitioners in teaching.

Practitioners are an inherent part of the degree experience, but the Law and Social Policy Unit stands out. This unit is led by the LPC based at BU and delivered in partnership with other LPCs and practitioners from all partners. Students can now access Court of Protection hearings and meet a judge who provides the students with an introduction to the courts. These activities ensure students understand legislation in theory and practice and provide an in-depth learning experience, giving a holistic understanding of social work practice from a law perspective. Other units are now also involving practitioners, with academics introducing a subject from research and a theoretical perspective and sharing lived experiences with practitioners bringing the content to life.

The ambition is to include a wider range of practitioners and cover specialist areas like sexually harmful behaviour, domestic violence or substance misuse. The outcome should be sustained or improved student satisfaction, as well as improved readiness of graduates entering practice.

*“embedding that learning culture has probably been the most enjoyable and those links with university, the expression of interest, that’s amazing because what is good is that now it is open up to a wider audience of people and guest lecturers and practitioners. It was a difficult time to do an expression of interest into lecturing during a restructure, that we have it out there is great and that we need to revisit that and keep going, these are the lecturers and practitioners who are interested, we need to do it again and keep widening that group and expertise’*

Feedback from the students suggests practitioner input is well received, with comments showing that students find the course very interesting as it covers a wide range of information that it is presented with clarity. The involvement of practitioners is well perceived and illustrates the application of law into practice well. The PDWTP is working with a judge in the court of protection and a family judge to help improve legal literacy.

*“The teaching partnership has expanded the existing pool of practitioners to engage in delivery by providing a formal process and centrally held list. Partners had strong pre-existing links and a high level of engagement to support practitioner involvement. The teaching partnership funding has allowed the development of an expression of interest form, which are collated and processed by the teaching partnership administrator. This allows this activity to continue and lists to remain current. The activity also provides an opportunity for professional*

*development for individual practitioners and facilitated greater input from Local Authorities in regard to both the content and delivery.”*

*‘Because of an already established relationship, there will be a route in for some of our practitioners, so there’s the expression of interest form that’s going around so that some of our practitioners can go and be involved’ (LPC).*

There are, however, logistical challenges to achieving this across all partners that may need further consideration to ensure all partners are able to engage in the process.

*“a barrier of that is distance for a lot of our, anyone that’s not based down in the South it’s a long way to go. We have other universities that are closer to us, where practitioners can go and deliver lectures or they’ve already got established, they’ve done it before, so they carry on doing it, so that’s been tough.”*

## **Impact:**

Immediate impacts observed through the initial funding period:

LPCs have supported this by collating a list of practitioners who would like to co-facilitate with academics and because practitioners are recruited and engaged by LPCs, this role is key to ensuring on-going recruitment of contacts and to the strengthening of existing links, which leads to further embedding into academic and professional practice. To date, 50 practitioners across 3 LAs have signed up and the list is maintained and updated by the TP administrator. This list has allowed greater practitioner involvement in academic delivery and the formalisation of the process has facilitated 29 practitioners to co-facilitate five units across qualifying programmes and one post-graduate programme. These closer practice links have led to the development of practice-based research in multiple areas, as explored in more detail below. In the feedback, 90% or more of students rate academic delivery as at least ‘good’.

## **Medium-term impact:**

**Students:** Practice-based and informed curriculum and learning experience.

**Academics:** Closer relationships with, and increased input from, practitioners to support the development of units and frameworks.

**Practitioners and local authorities:** Further supports the curriculum development as a joint enterprise between local authorities and HEI’s and offers an opportunity for professional development for practitioners.

**Long-term impact:** The effectiveness of this resource-heavy approach will need to be established through a more in-depth piece of work. The PDWTP plans to hold an event aimed at practitioners to bring together their learning, reflect on ways to improve further and identify the key elements of academic teaching where involvement of practitioners has the greatest impact and strengthen these.

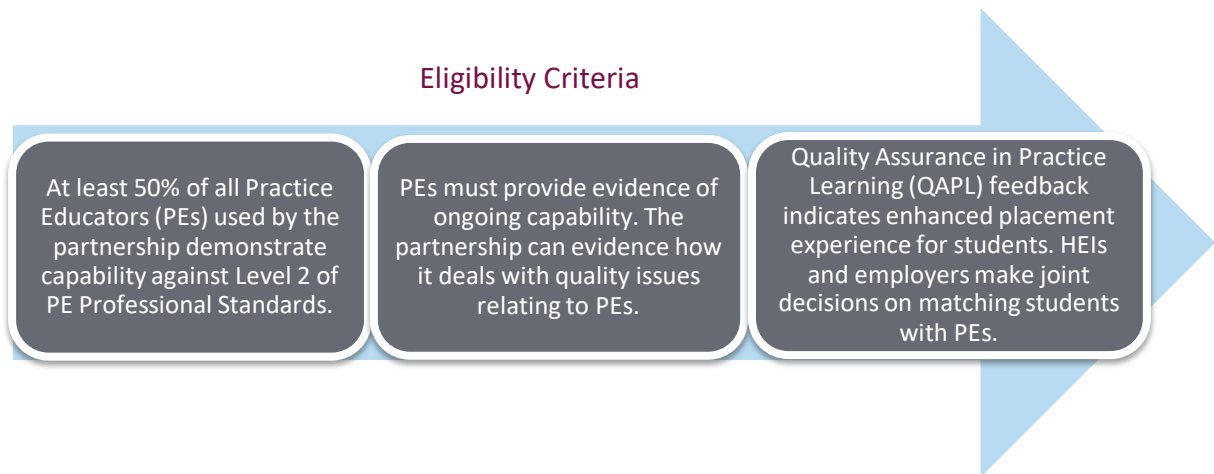
*‘Practitioners now get to lecture at university and feel good about that, like they’re giving something back, students get that practical example of what that feels like for people...you need to visit that every 6 months minimum*

*to see who can deliver... I think that expression of interest was a really good opening...it needs to continue.'*

## 4.5 Practice Support and Development

This section will discuss how students are supported and developed throughout their placements, as well as through experienced social workers involvement in curriculum development.

### Landscape:



There is some cross over with this workstream and the Placements and Curriculum and the Academic Delivery workstreams in terms of the overall plan. Many teaching partnerships were focused on retaining the capacity for a higher number of PEs. This was partly achieved by work to increase numbers of highly trained PEs as well as new approaches to student support, such as recruiting specialist practice education coordinators or supervisor roles which directly support students and PEs. Funding has also been used to provide PEPS training, which led to an increase in the existing pool of qualified PEs, and workshops have been held for existing PEs.

Some partnerships focused considerable resources on developing a partnership level progression framework, reviewed against the KSS. Most of these frameworks develop or refine pathways for experienced social workers (e.g. practice education; leadership and management).

### Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching Partnership Activities:

- The partnership developed a credible plan for ensuring that students will be supported and developed throughout their placements by a broad set of child and family and adult practitioners appropriate to their placements. It committed to using no more than 20% independent PEs by March 2019.
- The partnership can evidence how experienced, effective child and family, and adult social workers (whether or not PEs) are involved in curriculum development
- All those supporting and developing students must be familiar with the CSWs' Knowledge and Skills statements.

There has been an increase in both the number of courses and of PE's in training across the partnership. The administrative support from the PDWTP has provided a point of contact and enabled more accurate data mapping across the partnership, allowing us to monitor those PE's due

to complete the QA process, remove those PE's not currently active from the list and identify those who were being unused for students, although due to changes in roles within teams and the re-organisation in the LAs, some of the PEs were no longer able to provide the role to a student.

A review of the Practice Education PQ CPD programme has been undertaken by the BU programme lead and an experienced LPC in BCP Council. Together, they have undertaken research with a PE focus group to consider how the partnership can develop a more consistent approach to supporting and developing PEs. This is an example of practitioners as PEs being involved in curriculum development with BU.

## Practice Educator Pathway Evaluation

Practice educators from across the partnership were invited to participate in a focus group designed to explore the role, motivators to undertake the role, barriers in practice and intention to continue. The Practice Educator programme offered in conjunction with the teaching partnership utilised a joint teaching approach between BU academics and an LPC specialising in practice education. The teaching partnership has facilitated this joint on-going evaluation as the LPC role allowed greater participation in the research process, drawing together BU facilities, academic research approaches and facilitation and respondent recruitment and retention. Although all BU units engage in an ongoing programme of evaluation, this activity had a far wider scope, exploring issues around CPD development and pathways, recruitment and retention, professional identity and variance across local authorities.

Key findings:

- Strong intention to continue dependent on capacity
- Recognised as key in ensuring the recruitment of new workers who have undertaken a statutory placement within a Local authority
- Capacity and caseload are key barriers to taking new placements
- The majority of participants had undertaken PE CPD units at BU, reflecting the strength of the unit being a balance of theory and practice examples
- Practice Education as a unique PD pathway, is not a necessary link with leadership and management aspirations although required in most pathways. However, the skill sets may be complementary.
- Reorganisations often negatively affect capacity for engagement in placements in the short term due to uncertainty. However, successful reorganisations can provide greater confidence in taking on students when embedded into practice.

It is suggested that, should the capacity exist, a questionnaire be undertaken across the partnership to look further at the PE role, pathways and support mechanisms. This should have a specific focus on creating a feedback loop between academia and practice and ensuring capacity to ensure a constant supply of new practitioners who are prepared for practice.



## Impact:

Immediate impacts observed through the initial funding period:

At least 50% of all PEs currently used by the partnership have demonstrated capability against Level 2 of PE Professional Standards. BU has delivered additional units including larger courses to meet demand. Wiltshire Council identified the need to strengthen links with BU to increase the number of PEs and placements in the south. All qualified Practice Educators must submit a portfolio to their PEPS panel every 2 years. They have been provided with teaching partnership link sand made aware of the proformas to assist in supporting them to complete this.

## Medium term impact:

**Students:** The Practice Educator programme offered in conjunction with the teaching partnership utilised a joint teaching approach between BU academics and an LPC specialising in practice education. An increased number of high-quality practice educators will allow students to undertake placements within their desired field, receiving appropriate support in practice.

**Academics:** The teaching partnership has facilitated a joint on-going evaluation drawing together BU facilities, academic research approaches and facilitation and respondent recruitment and retention.

**Practitioners and local authorities:** The teaching partnership has facilitated LPCs to provide a range of support to both existing Practice Educators and those undertaking the programme. In addition to providing mentoring and support, the LPCs have worked to enhance pre-existing PELP Group meetings to ensure that these opportunities can be reactive to the needs of practice across the partnership.

**Long term impact:** All the LPC's have provided more regular mentoring groups for both existing PEs and those currently undertaking the Practice Educator Qualification. PEs in training are all provided with experienced PEs as mentor/assessors, and they have bought additional resources to help support this. The PELP Group meets regularly during the academic year with all LA and BU partners to gain oversight of on-going CPD support to PEs and placement supervisors, monitor training needs and hold a PEPS panel to review portfolios

## 4.6 Workforce and labour market planning

This section will explore the CPD framework the TP put in place to enable social workers to develop career pathways and how practitioners have been supported to access CPD opportunities for this. It will also explore how a collaborative approach can be integral to adapting to the pressures of the regional labour markets.

### Landscape:



Workforce analysis took place in most partnerships; many then designed new progression pathways and developed new accredited learning to support this. Others focused on developing new structures to bring people together across the partnerships e.g. Centres of Excellence, Geographical Hubs. There is evidence of all partnerships adapting their existing local CPD through additional learning opportunities.

Different approaches were used to address issues such as high caseloads, high use of expensive agency staff and the high turnover of experienced social workers. These methods included joint advertising of vacancies and recruitment fairs, new systems to monitor and manage caseloads and return to work schemes.

Some partnerships focused resources on developing a partnership level progression framework, reviewed against the KSS. Few partnerships developed a pathway for existing staff to become qualified social workers and these partnerships have also developed accredited learning within their progression frameworks.

The tackling of important issues in the workforce is a high priority for all partnerships, however many have struggled to deliver what they had planned. Recruitment and retention continue to be key issues that most partnerships are working on.

### Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching Partnership Activities:

- The partnership has a plan for embedding the CSWs' Knowledge and Skills statements, ASYE requirements, ACFP and DfE supervisor proposals into practitioner CPD from Sept 2019.

- The partnership aimed to produce an improved medium-term labour market plan (3-5 years). Implementing the plan will attract more students into social work training and posts and retain higher numbers of practitioners with local and regional employers.

The Teaching Partnership collaboration has resulted in a better understanding of the nature of labour market pressures and identifying steps that will be taken to make improvements to the supply, recruitment and retention of qualified social workers.

All members of the PDWTP are implementing national requirements regarding knowledge and skills statements (KSS), for: children and family practitioners (2015), social workers in adults services (2015), practice supervisors in adult social work (2018) and child and family practice supervisors (2015).

The KSS for SW practitioners are now embedded by employers into support, development and assessment of NQSWs undertaking their ASYE and BU has embedded them into qualifying programmes so students become familiar with expectations. The teaching partnership commits to embedding the KSS for practice supervisors by building on this shared experience of working together and by making use of local, shared resources as well as national programmes.

- Return to Social Work Event (see images below). As part of a larger campaign, BU hosted a drop-in event that offered ex social workers, who had taken a career break for whatever reason, the chance to re-register as a social worker, receive advice and guidance and hear from professionals in the field. Representatives from BCP Council, Dorset Council, Wiltshire Council and Social Work England, as well as Bournemouth University and other key partners were available to provide advice and information. There were also talks delivered by knowledge experts regarding key changes in law, theory and practice. The event was very well received, with a report on ITV Meridian news and many people put their names down to re-register.



- Bus trip to Salisbury. Team managers and senior practitioners in Wiltshire have welcomed this initiative and have volunteered to be involved on the day, in order to forge closer links with BU and encourage Bournemouth students to apply for positions in the area.

- Learning and recruitment events. An event was organised in conjunction with Wiltshire Council HR, PSW and Recruitment Champion Group with BU. A BU academic from the TP steering group delivered a lecture on Children and Risk alongside two staff who completed workshops on contextual safeguarding and children at the heart. A collaborative 'Return to Social Work' campaign was designed and run in the TP area.

*"LPC's are based in the local authorities so probably one of the enablers which comes out of perhaps...is that I've been able to get on and run lots of different projects and they've all been given the green light, so we've managed to set up quite a diverse range of CPD opportunities for staff which has been really good."*

- Journal club. In Wiltshire the LPC has organised and facilitated a regular journal club in each of the three main hubs. This has given practitioners access to local and appropriate CPD activity and enabled greater understanding of their role.

*"I ran Journal Club. And in Wiltshire the Child Care and Adult Care Teams are based in the same building but on different floors and they come along to Journal Club and they found out that they didn't know so much about the other teams. And they wouldn't have had that opportunity to talk to each other – even though they could at any time"*

**Barriers:** A significant barrier is that employers are in competition with each other for a finite number of candidates. The impact of local government reorganisation across Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole has been significant during the lifetime of the PDWTP and this has impacted on availability of data regarding turnover of staff in 'old', now defunct local authorities.

## Impact:

Immediate impacts observed through the initial funding period:

Closely linked with the progression and placements workstreams the PDWTP has sought to create a hub of activity supporting the recruitment and retention of the workforce. This has involved further development of the CPD framework, ensuring students are supported transitioning to practice and practitioners are supported by clear career pathways. Collaboration between partners has allowed a comprehensive understanding of shared challenges and ways to proactively address these.

### Medium-term impact:

**Students:** The number of students admitted to qualifying programmes can be linked to the workforce demands over the wider partnership area, increasing the opportunity for preferred placements and employment after graduation.

**Academics:** Academics have been able to engage in a wider range of learning and recruitment events including a 'Return to Social Work' event. This has allowed further consideration of the return to practice model and has supported CPD plans that are informed by employer demand

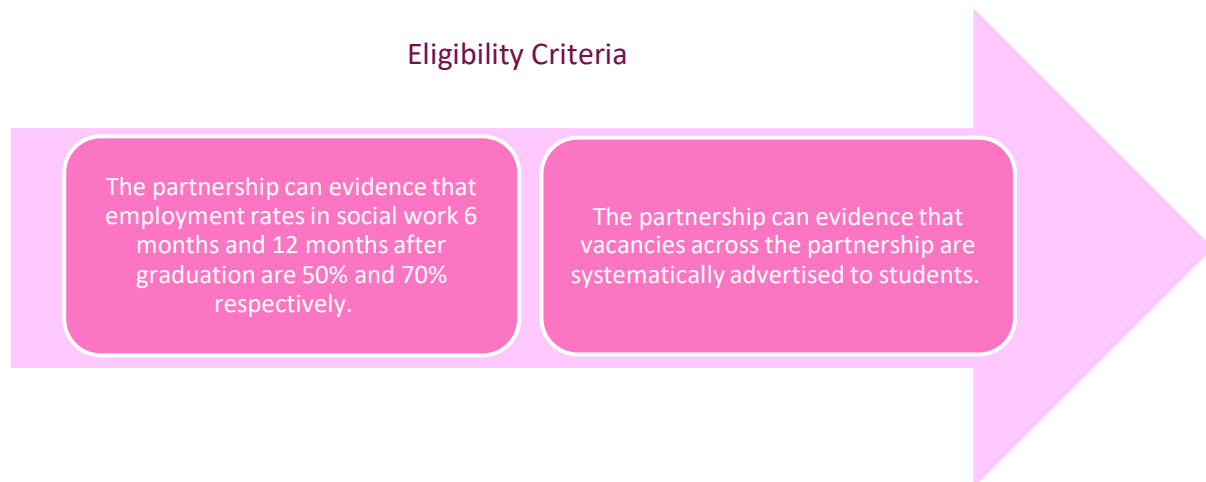
**Practitioners and local authorities:** All partners are committed to working cooperatively to address specific challenges and progressing recommendations from workforce analysis.

**Long term impact:** Recruitment and retention of the Social Work workforce is an on-going challenge experienced nationally and requires a longitudinal approach to address. Partners have demonstrated a clear willingness to work collaboratively to tackle labour market pressures.

## 4.7 Progression

This section will discuss the work that has been carried out to increase employment rates in social work, particularly by ensuring that partnership vacancies are systematically advertised to students. It will also discuss how final year students have been supported in their transition to qualified practitioner.

### Landscape:



Many partnerships developed clearer progression pathways covering ASYE, specialisms and management and leadership. All were able to review or develop new accredited learning to support these pathways, which reflect the expected standards. Several partnerships developed various leadership and management qualifications to further support progression. A few partnerships developed a pathway for existing staff to become qualified social workers and some have developed significant new accredited and non-accredited learning provision, providing a wider range of learning opportunities.

One partnership has been able to provide evidence of staff receiving promotions as a result of specific workforce development.

### Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching Partnership Activities:

- They developed a credible plan to deliver AY 2019-20 employment rates in social work of at least 70% and 80% 6 months and 12 months respectively after graduation and at least the same in the following academic year.
- The partnership can evidence that a system is in place to support final year students in their transition to qualified practitioner, above and beyond final placement arrangements.

The PDWTP facilitated further development of CPD frameworks and pathways, in addition to the development of bespoke units. This process has been embedded in the relationships between the university and partners historically and allowed this workstream to compliment the activity of other workstreams, supporting the development of clearer career pathways and transforming non-

accredited CPD. This flexible joint approach has facilitated the development of skills, knowledge, professional leadership and career progression of the workforce.

A recent masterclass arranged by the PDWTP heard presentations from an academic and LPC, in which awareness was raised of the risk of suicide. The session was well received and contributed to development of practitioners' skills and knowledge to deliver consistent and evidence-based practice. Working with BU has enriched students with feedback suggesting that they feel better prepared and more knowledgeable about the challenges and demands of front-line social work practice.

BCP Council Staff Survey results 2019: Children's services staff were overwhelmingly positive about the learning and development opportunities available to them. There is a large cohort of practitioners delivering practice-learning workshops on the BU Social Work programmes and they are increasing the number of staff participating in PQ study and PE programmes.

**Employment Rates:** The PDWTP aimed to capture regular and reliable data of BU Social Work graduates who gain employment in the Teaching Partnership LA's, and enable analysis of the career journey in the partnership area. It was to cover recruitment and retention statistics, acknowledging that we are, losing social workers two to three years post ASYE nationally.

Over the last two years of the Teaching Partnership, BCP Council's Children's Social Care have recruited 26 Bournemouth University social work graduates, retaining all but three practitioners post ASYE year; the remaining 23 are developing their careers in BCP. Formal tracking processes are being developed for social work graduates once they qualify and complete their ASYE. Over the last two years there has been an increase in the number of social work graduates remaining, with practitioners able to progress their careers and their CPD due to units provided by BU and masterclasses and events developed through the Teaching Partnership. 11/12 of the Step Up cohort took up positions in the LAs and are still in post.

- BCP are increasing offers of statutory placements to students, with Step Up to Social Work students all have statutory first placements and offering a supportive and attractive ASYE programme to all social work graduates.
- Wiltshire is developing more placement opportunities and social work career opportunities over the next 12 months and have hosted a range of masterclasses and recruitment events.
- Dorset Council Children's Social Care have recruited 6 social work graduates from BU over the last two years of the Teaching Partnership and continue to host students on placement.

**Evaluation of the ASYE Programme First Stage – a scoping exercise:** Social work academics were invited to begin an evaluation of the ASYE Programme for NQSWs employed by a Local Authority. The first stage – approached by the academics as a scoping exercise - was undertaken with fifteen NQSWs in the latter part of a support day led by their Principal Social Worker. NQSWs perceive benefits from the level of support being offered and this includes professional supervision and training events/opportunities. Equally, the impact of the e-portfolio on workload planning is identified as an issue for further exploration.

## Impact:

Immediate impacts observed through the initial funding period

A needs analysis of the qualified workforce was undertaken to gain better insight into the CPD requirements of practitioners, the results were analysed and were used to inform the development of pathways and units offered by the partnership. This activity was also supported by a focus group undertaken with Practice Educators across the partnership which was utilised to further explore the CPD needs of practitioners and preferred pathways. Joint working with LPCs allowed this intelligence to be shared between the partnership and university. Non-accredited CPD has been transformed by the teaching partnership. Some of this was undertaken by LPCs who are able to ensure that KSS is explicit in their planning, delivery and resources used.

The success of the partnership and pre-existing relationships between partners is highlighted by high employment rates for social work students within a social work role 12 months after graduation. To enable better analysis of data across the partnership, a standardised data collection progression system (a spreadsheet) has been developed. This new standardised approach incorporating BU's requirements will enable on-going analysis of recruitment and retention data and the development of BU SW graduates.

### Medium term impact:

**Students:** There is a robust system in place to support final year students transition into practice functioning across all partners. Students can be confident of a range employment and placement opportunities.

**Academics:** Joint working supports the ongoing development of CPD frameworks and bespoke units. The teaching partnership model can support cross partner units and facilitation.

**Practitioners and local authorities:** Supporting the recruitment and retention of the workforce, with final year students being supported with their transition into practice.

**Long term impact:** The benefits of the work undertaken within this workstream are anticipated to be of a longitudinal nature, ensuring the on-going provision of a high-quality workforce. Greater focus on the progression and career pathways of those already in practice will help address the national issues associated with staff retention.



## 4.8 Academics Experience of Practice

This section will explore the ways in which academic staff were increasingly supported to have protected time in practice, as well as how practitioners became involved in teaching specialist elements of the curriculum and supported to do so by practitioners.

### Landscape:



Most partnerships have supported academics to spend more time refreshing their experience and observing practice, although this was not particularly consistent. However, academic theory and research were successfully brought together in addressing 'real-life' practice issues after ways of embedding joint working between practitioners and academics were developed (such as Centres of Excellence and Learning Hubs). Conferences and learning events also furthered the spirit of the academics in practice workstream.

This strand has also helped in developing the curriculum as bringing academics and practitioners together to inform the development of academic content and practice teaching.

A research based culture and research in practice activity have been developed, most often involving academics supporting practitioner research through both formal processes, such as a 'practitioner-research programme', to more informal activity encouraging research based activity.

Consistent release of staff for CPD training around critical thinking and applied research was not often evident, however, data returns suggest that protected time is commonly provided for at least 10% of HEI teaching staff and suggest an increase in the protected time in a few partnerships as a result of the TP.

### Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching Partnership Activities:

#### Building on what was already there:

*'As a team we always have been extremely well linked to practice which is something that we can be very proud of. I personally would not want to paint a picture where it looks as if the TP has had the need to improve on this or actually did so. Having the LPC is a big added value which will have a positive impact on teaching which should not be underestimated.'*

The Fusion model at BU aims to bring all academics towards a balance between Practice – Research – Education.

**The undergraduate teaching team at the HEI is deeply connected to practice through:**

- ☆ Practice research
- ☆ Mentoring of practitioners
- ☆ Practitioner involvement in teaching and collaboration for student learning
- ☆ Placement visits to social work students
- ☆ Joint facilitated events for the work force (ie practice educator conferences and masterclasses)
- ☆ Consultant membership at Children Safeguarding Boards/Learning Hubs
- ☆ Working partnerships with Bournemouth County Courts
- ☆ Paid and volunteering positions within Social Care

**Strengthening the links:**

LPC/Academics meetings: Regular (approx. monthly) meet-ups have been very successful, and critical discussions about academia and practice are emerging with both sides keen to develop true partnership working. During the shared lunch meet-ups, individual academics have linked up with LPCs to arrange the individuals themselves now manage shadowing of practitioners. Academics from undergraduate and postgraduate programmes both attend and the on-going meetings suggest that this is now embedded for the future.

**Broadening academics experience of Practice:** From the shared meetings, many opportunities have arisen where academics are able to get involved in practice related activities. One of these is the Practice Development Fortnight in BCP Council. Academics from BU undertook joint visits with practitioners and senior managers to families and children, as well as services within the LA. This brought academics and senior managers back into the ‘front line’ of practice and will inform future teaching at the HEI and strengthen collaboration.

*‘Visiting the Adoption Services as part of the Practice Fortnight was very valuable - I had no experience in that field and seeing the processes; the relationship-based approaches have been enlightening.’*

Strong collaboration is now established with the local County Courts and two judges are involved with BU, with one offering weekly visits to the Court of Protection to students and academics. Research projects are planned on a wide range of issues for Children and Adult Safeguarding matters that impact on day-to-day Social Work Practice.

BU academics are also involved in strategic support around practice development in Local Authorities and are attending the Children Safeguarding Board meetings to offer an exchange of knowledge, expertise and research mindedness.

**Practitioner input in academia:** Practitioners are encouraged and enabled through the Teaching Partnership be part of academic activities such as teaching, research and admissions processes. The aim of practitioner involvement is to enhance student experience and ensure that the necessary and appropriate skills are taught, in addition to theory, models and critical thinking. An example of this is the Law and Social Policy unit, which is led and taught by an LPC to ensure students know the “right

law”, the applications in practice and the ethical dimensions around decision-making. Seven practitioners co-facilitated the teaching and learning for the students and offered first hand practice experience.

Practitioners have also shared that opportunities to teach have reminded them why they became Social Workers in the first place and has reignited their passion for practice.

*‘Co-facilitating teaching has been great fun, remembering the basics, values and ethics of Social Work has re sparked my enthusiasm for the job.’*

Several modules and units at the HEI have been co-produced with LPCs who brought their practice expertise and wisdom of current practice issues. The LPCs based in Adult Services have collaborated with an academic to design a module surrounding adult safeguarding to ensure that the realisms of practice are incorporated into the theoretical and legal frameworks.

The above efforts have linked academics and practitioners closely together and produced learning content that will be used in future teaching.

*‘The database of practitioners has been extremely useful. Having the information of Social Worker’s expertise and experience to match it to the intended learning outcomes of a unit has enabled me to make contact with the right person.’*

**Research in Practice and Practice Research:** Research is one of the three pillars of the Fusion Model of BU, and LPCs are actively undertaking research with the support and expertise of academics.

One PDWTP research project focussed on Vicarious Trauma for Social Workers and what it is that keeps professionals in the social work career. The research was undertaken by two LPCs with the support of academic staff at BU. The research focussed on what social workers need in practice to remain in the profession and what HEIs need to offer to adequately equip students. Furthermore, it also helped inform employers across the PDWTP to ensure that social workers have the right support, including reflective supervision, counselling and peer support.

*Student feedback: ‘Hearing about the LPCs research on County Lines, learning about the legislative tools and assessments has prepared me to deal with the subject on placement. I could really link my knowledge to the further training I received in the Early Intervention team.’*

The practitioner-based research aims to enhance the co-production of policy for recruitment and retention in Local Authorities in future.

## **Impact:**

Immediate impacts observed through the initial funding period

Fifty practitioners across all three Local Authority partners have registered their interest in co-producing and co-delivering academic activities. This process has allowed greater practitioner input in academic content and delivery, although there have previously been strong practice links, the formalisation of the process has facilitated an increase in collaboration, widening the opportunity to an increasing number of practitioners across the partnership. These closer practice links have led to

the development of practice-based research in multiple areas, and the development of course content. This experience has been viewed as positive by both students and practitioners.

### Medium-term impact:

The building of strong relationships and structures.

**Students:** experience of teaching will be intrinsically linked with Social Work practice. Their learning will take a clear focus on their future career and prepare them the opportunities and challenges ahead.

**Academics:** will have stronger links to practice and BU will be able to build upon its Fusion Model, fulfilling its vision.

**Practitioners:** will form an integral part of LAs learning cultures, be research-minded and valued for their expertise in practice.

### Long term impact: Maintaining the bridge between academia and practice.

True partnership thinking and acting is envisaged through academic experience of practice. The exchange of academic and practice knowledge will influence teaching, as well as front line work. Being able to learn from and with each other, as well as the development of research for future practice, whilst considering the demands on the workforce. This will enable Social Work educators and practitioners to meet the needs of service users in a changing socio-economic landscape.

## 4.9 Lecture Practitioner Consultants (LPC)

This section will explore the unique role of LPCs in the Teaching Partnership, how they collaborated across the LAs and the HEI to meet the learning and development needs of students, academics and practitioners through creative engagement.

### Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching Partnership Activities:

**The Team:** The LPCs within the PDWTP had all come from roles within statutory services or with a strong PE background. All LPCs were registered Social Workers and the requirement for recruitment was not just to hold a Masters degree (or equivalent) but to be an experienced frontline practitioner. The LPC team came from adult and children's services backgrounds and each team member had a significant interest in academia, learning and development, which put them in a unique position to help bridge the gap between academia and practice and build strong relationships between the Local Authorities and the HEI. The LPCs were seen to have credibility within both settings and could speak with authority in lectures about practice, whilst discussing academic papers with practitioners.

**Communication:** A barrier for collaboration in other TPs had been a lack of knowledge of 'who does what' within the different partner organisations. Within the PDWTP this was mitigated by the LPC role as 0.5 FTE roles were based in each Children and Adult Services department in each of the LA partners. In addition to this, there was a 1FTE LPC based at the HEI, which meant that the team could communicate in and out of the partner organisations and the LPCs were an effective tool for this.

*"The link with the University has been really positive and Tilia's role has definitely been that having a researcher based in the Uni has been really important to help bridge – or just those introductions"*

**Learning and development:** The LA based LPCs often acted as the voice of the practitioner; in the early stages of the TP, the LPCs went around the teams to introduce themselves and gathered ideas for CPD opportunities.

*"And they could tell us and the LPCs asked: 'What do you want?' So we were able to put on training and development opportunities that the practitioners wanted, not what Ofsted wanted, or the Government wanted, or what senior managers wanted, but what practitioners felt they needed. We've been able to make more of a roots up approach, rather than a top down approach."*

Out of this emerged the Journal Clubs/ Lunch and Learns/ Tea Toast and Theory offers; each of them unique to the LA, meeting the needs of the practitioners and flexible in their approach. Those learning events run monthly to bi-monthly and are practitioner led with the aim to support research mindedness and evidence-based practice.

**Master Classes:** Practitioners and managers were able to link in directly with the LPCs and inform and design learning opportunities. One of the significant successes of this approach was the Master Classes that the LPC team organised. Most events were accessible for practitioners across the TP and

the subjects ranged from suicide and mental health to self-neglect and adverse childhood experiences. These members of these presenting their innovative research to practitioners to help change practice, and having this forum has helped bring it out and break down the barriers between practice and academia. LPCs were able to reach out to academics and experts to deliver learning and development to the staff groups and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

*“the response from the lecturers in kind of integrating with us in the master classes – it’s really productive to make those links between practice and academia.”*

*“I think we’ve put on a great array of masterclasses and the positive feedback we’ve had from those has been really encouraging”*

544 practitioners attended 14 Master Classes across the partnership and smaller events were held at individual LA level, which were supported by LPCs and academics.

The majority of PDWTP events were run at minimum expenditure, as facilities at the HEI or the LAs were available for use. The organisation of events was mostly undertaken by the LPCs with support from the TP administrator and the ethos of the events was ‘from practitioners- for practitioners’. Practitioners from all partners were able to attend, which enabled for networking and the sharing of experiences and expertise across the partnership. However, the Master Classes were not just a tool to bring together practitioners from different LAs, as they also broke down the traditional separation between Adult and Children’s Services. Learning together in a ‘whole family’ and systemic approach brought cross-fertilisation of ideas and context that is not achieved in mandatory LA training events. In this sense, the events did not just offer learning opportunities, but also opportunities for career development and practice support through greater collaboration between services.

*“It’s ambitious and challenging to get Adults and Children’s working effectively together but we’re making headway. It needs to be breaking down barriers and we need to keep chipping away at it to promote that whole family approach. And that masterclass was good because we had Children’s and Adult’s practitioners in the room together.”*

**Teaching:** Due to their expertise in children and adult safeguarding in particular, the LPC team became an integral part of teaching at BU. All LPCs co-facilitated sessions for the students, which included:

- Developing a mandatory Adult Safeguarding update
- Children’s Services Assessment work
- Signs of Safety and strength based approaches

Students on the MA and Step Up to Social Work courses had 30 hours face-to-face teaching input from the LPCs, which focussed on the pieces of legislation essential for Social Work frontline practice. Students commented that the LPCs were able to link the theory and legislation to practice and ‘make it real’ by encouraging critical discussion around ethical application of the law.

**Research:** All LPCs had expressed an interest in research and were keen to develop their research mind. The team developed a number of research projects that were practice-led, further taking the messages from practitioners forward.

Alongside the aforementioned focus group with PEs, the BCP based LPC undertook a focus group with students to evaluate their experiences on placement. The findings were presented at a PELP event to ensure double loop learning, with the LPC acting as an ambassador for the students.

Further practice research was undertaken by the BU based LPC into criminal exploitation and County Lines. This research aimed to inform practice and academia alike as the area is generally under researched and no practice wisdom has been established around this relatively new phenomena. Consequent findings were shared with students on BA and MA courses, as well as training offered to practitioners. The LPC was able to publish an article with Community Care and this has to date had over 10.000 clicks to access directly. Furthermore, this LPC was invited to speak in 2 radio interviews, one TV news interview and a HR magazine interview. There is now ongoing work with a theatre company who are developing a play aimed at young people on the subject of criminal exploitation.

Another piece of research, stemming from the Learning Needs analysis was undertaken by the BU based LPC and the Wiltshire LPC. Together they focussed on the impact of vicarious trauma on Social Workers and why Social Workers remain in the profession. This research aims to inform LA partners in their recruitment and retention strategy.

## Barriers:

The LPCs in the LAs had been in 0.5 FTE positions linked to Adult's or Children's Services. However, 4 LPCs also had substantive posts within the LAs. This increased the ability to communicate and keep to the TP aim of linking practice and academia. However, it also brought to light difficulties which are explored in the case study below:

### Case Study:

The PDWTP has been: 'inspiring for colleagues during quite a difficult time, understanding that we went through a restructure half way through the partnership was quite a challenge but through all of that the PDWTP has been able to bridge some gaps between Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, drawing them together as much as possible by working across the whole borough.'

'...timing, I think timing is everything if this, within BCP if this teaching partnership had come across now things are bit more settled, people know where they're at, people have that job security or whatever's happening is settling, people have more space, more understanding for, you know developing staff and all of those bits, practitioners have more headspace, they know who's managing them and they're just beginning to understand their management style' – embedding and recruiting delay, overarching issue 'so they have that idea of okay well I can do you know, lunch and learns, you know.'

The 'main barrier has been we introduced a teaching partnership in a massive restructure, that's been huge in affecting the effectiveness of what we were trying to achieve, it was very anxiety provoking, you've got managers applying for jobs, not knowing if they've got job securities, not knowing what team they were in, so that impact on their thought processes... It's not conducive of a nice environment if people are competing for the same job, it's quite a challenging thing.' The anxieties around job security and concerns over how management structures and remits might change meant that they were not thinking about 'something like practice education portfolios. It also meant that the staff were not necessarily receiving support from their managers, who were also struggling with these same anxieties. I did drop-ins in every office across the BCP, thinking people are going to come but what's going through on their mind is job security, so it affects everything... anything else just goes by the wayside.'

Considering the above challenges, the LPCs made significant use of the resources within the team and supported each other well. The "roots up" approach from practitioner level enabled not just the growing of a learning culture, but it also helped to make sense of uncertainty. Many acknowledged that the LPC role may have been more effective in a time of stability across the workforce and with a greater understanding of the aims and objectives of the PDWTP through the levels of management.



## Impact:

The foundation of the bridge to overcome the gap between academia and practice has been laid; immediate impacts observed through the initial funding period were increased learning and development opportunities for students, academics and practitioners alike. The LPCs were a tool to support the 'Fusion Model' at BU and create stronger links to practice across the partnership. Student's experience of teaching has improved through increased practitioners involvement in teaching and practitioners have benefited from the tailor-made CPD opportunities, which have helped with career and workforce development.

### Medium-term impact:

**Students:** increased practitioner input in teaching makes the delivered theoretical content practice-relevant. Increased PE numbers mean that there is greater choice for placements and enhanced support.

**Academics:** closer links to practice mean greater opportunities for research. Close proximity to practice enables academics to develop teaching materials relevant for future professionals.

**Practitioners:** bespoke CPD opportunities and accredited academic courses support the profession in a holistic way. Practitioners have become more research-minded and significant emphasis has been placed on understanding the needs of the profession.

### Long-term impact:

Social Work must meet the needs of a changing society and respond to political, environmental and global issues. Research mindedness, the ability to adapt through learning cultures and collaboration between HEIs and LAs has helped to put the profession into a position where this is possible. LPCs are in the unique bridging position to strengthen the links between academia and practice and bring students, academics and practitioners together in one umbrella-learning organisation; learning with, from and for each other.

## Discussion:

The PDWTP set out to achieve 9 key aims and has managed to achieve all of these to some degree, through various innovative methods. Firstly, it aimed to improve recruitment and retention numbers, and so put in place clear career pathways across all levels of the social work workforce, and increased opportunities for practitioners to access CPD units, masterclasses and events. Students are also provided with a more accurate understanding of practice issues and are more able to make an informed choice as to whether they are up to the challenge of practice. This, alongside an increased focus on recruiting the most appropriate candidates to the SW courses and new formal tracking processes for social work graduates once they complete their ASYE, has already led to increased retention of NQSWs.

The practitioner-based research aimed to further enhance the co-production of policy for recruitment and retention in LAs in future and this role has also allowed for greater participation in research with a very wide scope for activities, drawing together BU facilities to explore issues around CPD development and pathways, recruitment and retention and variance across local authorities. Furthermore, team managers and senior practitioners have welcomed various initiatives and learning and recruitment events that have had positive impacts.

The partnership aimed to develop research-mindedness and research opportunities across practice, in partnership with BU. Research projects were planned on a wide range of issues for Children and Adult Safeguarding matters that impact on day-to-day Social Work Practice and closer practice links have also led to the development of practice-based research in multiple areas. Research carried out within the PDWTP has informed academia, as well as being shared with students and as training offered to practitioners. Research has also been carried out that has been useful in informing LA partners on their recruitment and retention strategy and which discusses what social workers need to remain in the profession, as well as how HEIs can best equip students.

The PDWTP also aimed to improve social work education to establish adequately prepared, high quality social workers. Practitioners have become an inherent part of the degree experience; many units are now involving practitioners, which helps to 'bring the curriculum content to life'. The list of interested practitioners keen to co-facilitate with academics, alongside the formalisation of the process, has facilitated 29 practitioners to co-facilitate six units across SW programmes so far. Student experience of teaching has been improved through this increase in practitioners, managers and PSW's involvement in curriculum and teaching. Student's access to the Court of Protection hearings and to the judge, who provides them with an introduction to the courts, has improved the legal literacy of students and provides a holistic understanding of social work practice from a law perspective.

Each member of the PDWTP runs a programme within their council, which promotes knowledge sharing and supports closer collaboration between the field and academia. There have been other collaborations between LAs and BU to aid the development of the workforce including: Return to Social Work campaign; talks by LPCs, Professional Leads and Principal Social Workers; and events supported by allied organisations. This has helped to create an 'Open Learning Environment'.

The KSS for SW practitioners are now embedded by employers into support, development and

assessment of NQSWs undertaking their ASYE and BU has embedded them into qualifying programmes so students become familiar with expectations. This is also the case for practice supervisors by making use of local, shared resources as well as national programmes. Increased opportunities for academic staff to update their own knowledge and experience in current practice through many practice related activities, as well as through visits with practitioners and senior managers to families and children, has brought academics back into the front line of practice to help inform future teaching.

The innovative methods used by LPCs to encourage more teams to take students on placement has meant that many more students were able to complete two statutory placements that are relevant to their preferred practice area, which was another aim at the outset of the PDWTP. The PDWTP has a subgroup to publicise, embed and promote the PEPS for Practice Educators. This group has helped to ensure consistency across the partnership and helps to promote good practice. The TP has also run various PE courses and the increase in high quality PEs has also enabled even more students to undertake placements and be supported appropriately in doing so. It is too early to identify the full scale of impact on students from the activities of the PDWTP but this impact will become clearer as they move into becoming practising social workers.

The development of greater strategic links with existing service user groups through collaboration between partners and the PIER partnership has created opportunities for greater input from service users and carers. The enhanced focus on the involvement of those with lived experience, particularly in the redesigned admissions process, has had many benefits such as an improved confidence in the quality of students accepted onto the SW courses; PIER partners are involved in the assessment of candidates, on the interviewing panel and in moderating the candidates to decide whether to offer or to reject each application.

## Conclusion

The Department for Education (DfE) introduced the Social Work Teaching Partnership (SWTP) model as a method of improving the quality of social work practice. The government developed this programme to help build stronger links between HEIs and LAs, facilitate greater collaboration between academia and practice, improve the quality of education received by social work students and overall, to help social workers carry out their professional roles more effectively (Narey, 2014). This evaluation has been framed around the progress the PDWTP has made in each of the 8 relevant workstreams; it considered the activities, successes, barriers overcome and lessons learned throughout the 2-year period. Overall, the data presented in this evaluation confirms that the PDWTP has achieved its aims to a high standard and that the engagement of all partners has led this project to success. The extensive amount of evidence from students, practitioners and academics demonstrates the benefits of the PDWTP across all partners and shows that it has been a worthwhile investment for the DfE.

Although there were pre-existing relationships and activities, these have been brought to new levels and an open learning environment has been developed which will allow for even further discussion and development in the future. At the end of the initial TP funding period, the PDWTP applied for

continuation funding and this was successfully granted in February 2020. Many of the activities developed by the PDWTP are fully embedded and are expected to continue; the intention is that the regular steering group meetings will continue and this will help ensure the gains that have been made are retained and further developed. It appears that the tackling of important issues in the workforce, such as recruitment and retention, will remain a high priority for the PDWTP and that this continuation funding will allow for further consideration to be given to communications strategies within the partnership to aid progress in these areas.

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## Glossary

ASYE - Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

AY - Academic Year

BCP - Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council

BSO - Business Support Officer

CPD - Continuing Professional Development

CSWKSS - Chief Social Workers' Knowledge and Skills Statements

DfE - Department for Education

DHSC - Department of Health and Social Care

HEIs - Higher Education Institutions

LA - Local Authority

LGR - Local Government Reorganisation

LPC - Lecturer Practitioner Consultant

NAAS - National Assessment and Accreditation System

NCPQSWPP - The National Centre for Post-Qualifying Social Work and Professional Practice

NQSW - Newly Qualified Social Worker

PDWTP - Pan-Dorset and Wiltshire Social Work Teaching Partnership

PE - Practice Educator

PELP - Practice Educator Learning Partnership

PEP - Practice Educator Portfolio

PSW - Principal Social Worker

SUC - Service Users and Carers

SWRB - Social Workers' Registration Board

SWTP - Social Work Teaching Partnerships

WFD - Workforce Development