Skills for Care ASYE longitudinal study
Report one – Social worker and supervisor surveys
Autumn 2015
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Executive summary

Skills for Care is the employer-led workforce development body for adult social care in England. We have embarked upon this longitudinal research project to monitor the effect of the ASYE upon one of the earliest cohorts to undertake it. We will be attempting to measure how it influences both practice and retention within the profession.

Key findings from the first year of this study include:

The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)

Whilst three-quarters of the respondents to the Social Worker survey were reportedly working at the ‘Social Worker’ level, one in seven was reportedly working at the ‘Experienced Social Worker’ level which, considering the length of time since qualification, may be higher than expected. By contrast, just over half of the respondents to the Supervisor survey were working at the ‘Advanced Social Worker’ level and one in six at the ‘Principal Social Worker’ level.

It is concerning to find that only half of the respondents to the Social Worker survey had their job description linked to the PCF (with two-fifths not knowing whether they had or not). We had anticipated a greater integration of the PCF in job descriptions and will continue to monitor this over the course of this study in the expectation of seeing an increase over time. The results from the Supervisor survey suggest that some employers may have started making the links between the PCF and job descriptions amongst their newest staff members first before rolling it out across the organisation.

More encouragingly, the majority of the respondents to both the Social Worker and Supervisor surveys described the Capability Statements as being appropriate to their role, with ‘Professionalism’ and ‘Values and ethics’ scoring most highly. Seven in ten of the respondents to the Social Worker survey said they had made reference to them in the previous three months and most felt they helped to understand what was expected of them in their role. Two-thirds of them said that they were being used to help determine their CPD needs. This was very reassuring.

It is disappointing that only a fifth of the respondents to both the Social Worker and Supervisor surveys felt that their employer had ‘fully embedded’ the PCF into its appraisal and performance management system, especially given the support that Skills for Care has been offering employers in relation to this. However, usage of the PCF and Capability Statements by the respondents to the Social Worker survey was reassuring, with seven in ten having referred to them during the preceding three months.
Support and supervision

Some of the elements that one might have expected to see covered by reflective supervision do not appear to be embedded across the board. Skills for Care is giving consideration to how employers can be helped to improve upon this. There were a number of discrepancies between what the respondents to the Social Worker survey reported receiving during their reflective supervision and what the respondents to the Supervisor survey reported delivering. Employers must take note of this as a potential communication issue between social workers and supervisors.

It is concerning that a third of the respondents to the Social Worker survey reported not having a Personal Development Plan (PDP) as this will potentially impact upon retention and developing professional practice. Interestingly, over half of the respondents to the Supervisor survey claimed that their social worker supervisees had a PDP, which again may raise an issue of communication for employers. The positive news is that those that do have PDPs were generally linking them to wider organisational processes and were having them regularly reviewed.

Keeping up-to-date

The majority of the respondents to the Social Worker survey were keeping up-to-date with new and emerging thinking in social work practice via training courses, workshops and conferences, as well as via peer to peer information sharing. Three quarters were also relying on information provided by their employer.

Levels of usage of the sources listed were generally the same or higher amongst the respondents to the Supervisor survey.

The Employer Standards

In general the respondents to the Social Worker survey indicated that their employers were meeting the Employer Standards. However, it is concerning to find that in relation to Standards 2 (Effective workforce planning) and 3 (Safe workloads and case allocation) less than half reported their employer meeting them. We would hope that over the course of this study we will witness an improvement in these figures as the Standards become more embedded in practice.

Furthermore, a small number of these respondents felt that their employer wasn’t taking their level of experience into account when allocating their cases. This is clearly an area that requires continued improvement.
Views on the ASYE

It was encouraging to note that four-fifths of the respondents to the Social Worker survey felt that the AYSE had prepared them ‘very’ or ‘fairly well’ for the transition from student to social worker. Two-fifths said that it had influenced their confidence levels in practice ‘a lot’ and half said it had influenced their confidence ‘a little’.

Furthermore, nine out of ten said the ASYE had prepared them ‘very’ of ‘fairly well’ for the on-going HCPC re-registration requirements (compared with four-fifths who said that their employer had prepared them).

Capability and confidence

Levels of perceived capability and confidence amongst the respondents to the Social Worker survey were high. On a scale of one to ten, where one equalled ‘not at all capable’ and ten equalled ‘totally capable’, the majority of respondents placed themselves at seven or higher. Over 90% reported being confident in managing both the complexity and volume of their caseload.

The majority of the respondents to the Supervisor survey were experienced, with more than half having been a supervisor for more than five years.

Job satisfaction and career prospects

Job satisfaction amongst the respondents to the Social Worker survey was high. Nine out of ten said that they were enjoying their jobs ‘very much’ or ‘quite enjoying’ them and 85% saw their profession as a ‘rewarding career’ that they would recommend to others.

Satisfaction with professional support received from colleagues, the friendliness of other staff in the workplace, the accessibility of line managers and being able to fulfil the HCPC re-registration requirements were described as ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfactory by at least nine out of ten of these respondents.

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

Overall respondents to the social Worker survey seemed to be satisfied with how the ASYE and their employer had prepared them for the on-going requirements of the HCPC.
The future

Looking to the future, seven in ten Social Worker respondents expect to be doing the same role in twelve months’ time, whilst over a third expect to have received a promotion. None of the respondents expect to have left the profession within a year.
Introduction

Skills for Care is the employer-led workforce development body for adult social care in England.

Building on an evaluation of the first year of the implementation of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), undertaken by HOST Policy Research on behalf of Skills for Care\(^1\), this project aims to track and measure the difference that the ASYE makes to social work practice and retention over time.

We are working with 24 employers\(^2\) to track and measure the impact of the ASYE on social work practice and the benefits for employers and employees over time. The employers all volunteered to take part in the study and were selected to provide geographical spread and representation from different employment settings with varying sized groups of eligible social workers (those who undertook the ASYE during 2012/13 and whose ASYE was completed by March 2014 or shortly afterwards).

The three year study comprises of the following elements:

1. A six monthly electronic survey for employers to tell us some basic, factual information about the (eligible) social workers they employ. This includes:
   • Name, job title and email address
   • When they completed their ASYE
   • What professional level they are working at
   • What team they are assigned to
   • Details about their supervisor

2. An annual electronic survey for (eligible) social workers. The core questions will remain the same each year, but we will add a short section each year to reflect the prevailing context of social work. The core questions relate to:
   • The type of work they are involved in
   • Use of the PCF
   • Issues relating to professional confidence / development / resilience
   • Self-confidence and experience
   • Job satisfaction
   • Career path and expectations


\(^2\) Details about the participating organisations can be found in Appendix A
3. An annual electronic survey to supervisors of the (eligible) social workers. This survey focuses on:
   • Their role as a supervisor
   • Use of the PCF
   • Use of the Standards for employers

This report includes the results of the first social worker and supervisor surveys which were undertaken in October 2014. Subsequent surveys are due to take place in October/November 2015 and 2016 and the report will be updated each year accordingly.

Where possible, we have included comparisons with data from other sources to provide further context to this data. This includes the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC), ASYE registration data and the HOST evaluation.

Notes:

1. This study has been more time consuming to administer and manage than anticipated. Despite commitment from the 24 employers involved, responses from the social workers and supervisors have been difficult to obtain, despite chasing, and the response rates are lower than we had hoped for.

   This experience mirrors other social work research projects we have been involved in and also wider experiences within the adult social care sector. As resources become more and more stretched and workloads increase participating in research can be viewed as a luxury that many cannot find the time for.

   The employers in this study are offered a small financial incentive for their support in keeping the records up-to-date and encouraging their employees to participate. The social workers and supervisors invited to take part in the study receive no financial incentive, but are advised that their participation contributes towards developments in the future of the sector and are provided with a certificate for their CPD portfolio.

2. It should be remembered that the social workers participating in this study were amongst the first to complete the ASYE (and their supervisors amongst the first to oversee it). We should therefore not be surprised to find that there are still areas for improvement. However, in subsequent years we would hope to see a gradual improvement in the results as the ASYE becomes more fully embedded in practice.

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3 For the purposes of this report we have taken the decision to include data from the initial and interim surveys from the HOST evaluation, but exclude data from the final surveys. This is because the final surveys were only completed by 32 Social Worker respondents and 49 Supervisor respondents and were therefore only indicative of opinion. We believe that including this data in comparison with the survey collected during the Longitudinal study could potentially be misleading.

4 Either £1,000 or £1,500 a year, depending on the number of eligible social workers they employ.
Part one – Social worker survey results

1.1 About the respondents

Surveys were sent out to 116 social workers employed across 24 organisations in October 2014. Of these, 70 responded giving a response rate of 62%.

The majority of the respondents were female. Approximately one third were in their twenties, a third were in their thirties and a third were aged 40 plus (a younger age profile than the respondents of the Supervisor survey – see p.35). The majority described themselves as White.

The respondents were fairly well aligned with data held by Skills for Care relating to ASYE registrations for 2013/14 and 2014/15. The age profile was slightly younger than the overall registrants and there were slightly more respondents describing themselves as White than amongst the registrants.

Compared with the overall estimated adult social care social worker population in England as profiled by the NMDS-SC the gender profile of the respondents is approximately the same. However, the respondents are significantly younger, reflecting their newly qualified status. The respondents slightly over-represent those describing their ethnicity as White (87% compared with 80%) and under-represent those describing themselves as Black (4% compared with 11%).

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5 Unpublished data

6 www.skillsforcare.org.uk/stateof2014
Seven in ten respondents had completed their ASYE during 2013 and the remainder during 2014.

Just over half of the respondents were members of The College of Social Work (TCSW). This compares with just two-fifths of the respondents to the Supervisor survey.
The majority of the respondents were employed full-time and all had permanent work contracts.

Compared with the overall estimated adult social care social worker population in England as profiled by the NMDS-SC\textsuperscript{7} the respondents over-represent those employed full-time (93\% compared with 71\%).

\textsuperscript{7} [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/stateof2014](www.skillsforcare.org.uk/stateof2014)
1.2 The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)

Three-quarters of the respondents were working at ‘Social Worker’ level and one in seven at ‘Experienced’ social worker. By comparison, seven in ten of their supervisors were working at ‘Advanced Social Worker’ level or above (see p.43).

Half of the respondents had their job description linked to the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). However, one in seven had not and two-fifths did not know whether it had been or not.

There was widespread agreement by the respondents that the Capability Statements were appropriate to their current role. Three-quarters described them as ‘very appropriate’ and a fifth as ‘fairly appropriate’. This compares with three-fifths who described them as ‘very
appropriate’ and two-fifths who described them as ‘fairly appropriate’ during the initial survey of the HOST evaluation (n=106). Just 1% described them as ‘not appropriate’.

When looking at the individual Capability Statements, ‘Professionalism’ and ‘Values and ethics’ were deemed ‘very suitable’ by approximately four-fifths of the respondents. ‘Diversity’, ‘Knowledge’, Rights, justice and economic well-being’, and ‘Intervention and skills’ were deemed ‘very suitable’ by approximately three-quarters of the respondents and ‘Critical reflection and analysis’ and ‘Contexts and relationships’ and were deemed ‘very suitable by approximately seven in ten respondents. The only Statement to have considerably lower levels of respondents rating it as ‘very suitable’ was ‘Professional leadership’ (47%).

The same question was asked in the interim survey of the HOST evaluation. Whilst most of the results were broadly similar, with very small increases noted between that and the current survey, the number of respondents describing the ‘Professionalism’ statement as ‘very suitable’ rose from 76% to 81%.

The recent review of the Professional Capabilities Statement by The College of Social Work\(^8\) echoes our findings in relation to perceived appropriateness of the Capability Statements.

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\(^8\) [https://www.basw.co.uk/resource/?id=4085](https://www.basw.co.uk/resource/?id=4085)
A fifth of the respondents said that their employer had ‘fully’ embedded the PCF and its domains in its appraisal and performance management system. Just over half said the employer had ‘partially’ embedded them, but approximately one in seven said they had not been embedded and the same amount did not know whether this had happened or not.
Seven in ten respondents had referred to the PCF and Capability Statements in the past three months (i.e. they disagreed with the statement “I haven’t referred to them in the past three months”).

Approximately nine in ten respondents agreed that the PCF and Capability Statements “…help me understand what is required of someone in my role”. This was confirmed by the respondents to the Supervisor survey (see p.45).
Two-thirds of the respondents agreed that they are using the PCF and Capability Statements to “…help determine my CPD needs”. Slightly more of the respondents to the Supervisor survey believed this to be the case (see p.45).
1.3 Support and supervision

Reflective supervision can include a vast range of activities. The majority of respondents reported that for them it had included discussion of their training and development needs, support on difficult cases, general management of their workload, reflection on individual cases as well as reference to policies and procedures. These were the same top five activities reported in the HOST evaluation interim survey, but in this survey the percentage of social workers reporting each was between 7% and 20% higher suggesting that these things have become more embedded.

Two-thirds of respondents reported receiving support aimed at ensuring emotional well-being and resilience. This was slightly higher than the number reporting this in the HOST evaluation interim survey (64% compared with 58%).

Approximately half of the respondents mentioned consideration of feedback from people who use services and carers and receiving constructive challenge to their practice. This was considerably more than the number reporting this in the HOST evaluation interim report (49% compared with 33%).

Two-fifths of respondents had explored their performance in relation to the PCF and linking this with CPD. A quarter had received help in applying theory to practice and a fifth had looked at models for developing reflection. Each of these was lower than the number reporting this in the HOST evaluation interim survey.
It is interesting to note that there are a number of discrepancies between what the social worker respondents claim to be receiving in their reflective supervision sessions and what the supervisor respondents claim to be providing (see p.46).

When asked about the amount of support being provided to enable to respondents to develop their skills and knowledge to the level expected of someone in their role half said that they had received ‘a great deal’ and just under half said they had received ‘a little’. 4% said they had not received much help or support.

Two-thirds of the respondents had a personal development plan (PDP) but a third had not. Of those who had one, most had been linked to their employers appraisal process, were being regularly reviewed and updated and set out their training needs.
1.4 Keeping up-to-date

Respondents were provided with a number of methods of keeping up-to-date with new and emerging thinking in social work practice to explore which were most commonly being used.

Almost all were making use of training courses, workshops and conferences and sharing information amongst their peers. Three-quarters were receiving information from their employer and two-thirds were regularly looking at relevant websites (such as SCIE, Skills for Care and the Department of Health). Over half also read relevant journals (such as Community Care, the British Journal of Social Work and the Journal of Integrated Care). Less than half were members of The College of Social Work and a quarter were referring to Skills for Care’s website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods used to keep up-to-date with new/emerging thinking in social work (n=70)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training courses, workshops, conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information shared with colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house information provided by my employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I regularly look at relevant websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I regularly read relevant journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a member of The College of Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I regularly look at Skills for Care’s website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Other’ sources used to keep up-to-date included [comments made by five respondents]:

- Watching appropriate programmes on TV (i.e. Panorama, the news).
- Attending the social work forum group.
- Reading reports online (i.e. Guardian website, general Google searches).

The supervisor survey included a similar question about the sources used to inform their role. Their usage of the various sources was slightly higher than the social workers (see p.41).
A similar question was asked in the initial and interim surveys in the HOST evaluation. It is encouraging that in the current survey levels of reported usage, where comparable, are significantly higher.
1.5 The Employer Standards

Respondents were asked to state how much they agreed or disagreed that their employer was meeting each of the Employer Standards. The majority agreed that their employer was meeting Standard 7 (Ensures social workers can maintain their professional registration) and four-fifths agreed that they were meeting Standards 6 (Provides opportunities for continuing professional development, as well as access to research and practice guidance) and 5 (Ensure that social workers have regular and appropriate social work supervision).

Three-quarters agreed that their employer was meeting Standard 8 (Establishes effective partnerships with higher education institutions and other organisations to support the delivery of social work education and continuing professional development).

Two-thirds of respondents agreed that their employer was meeting Standards 1 (has in place a social work accountability framework informed by knowledge of good social work practice and the experience and expertise of service users, carers and practitioners) and 4 (Makes sure that social workers can do their jobs safely and have the practical tools and resources they need to practice effectively. Assess risks and take action to minimise and prevent them).

Less than half of the respondents agreed that their employer was meeting Standards 2 (Uses effective workforce planning systems to make sure that the right number of social workers, with the right level of skills and experience, are available to meet current and future service demands) and 3 (Implements transparent systems to manage workload and case allocation in order to protect service users and practitioners).

This question was also included in the supervisor survey. The results of that were more positive than the social worker respondents, particularly in relation to Standards 1, 3 and 4 (see p.49-50).

Following on from the results in relation to Standard 3 (Implements transparent systems to manage workload and case allocation in order to protect service users and practitioners) where only 40% agreed their employer was meeting the Standard, it was not surprising to find that only two-fifths of respondents felt that their employer took their level of experience into account to ‘a great extent’ when allocating their cases. Almost half felt that the employer took their experience into account ‘to a limited extent’ but one in eight felt this was not taken account of at all.
1.6 The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)

A quarter of respondents felt that the ASYE had prepared them ‘very well’ for the transition from student to social worker and almost three-fifths that it had prepared them ‘fairly well’. However, one in six said it had not prepared them very well and 1% that it hadn’t prepared them at all.

The ASYE appears to have had a greater impact on levels of confidence in practice, with two-fifths saying it had influenced it ‘a lot’ and over half that it had influenced it ‘a little’. 4% felt that it had had no influence. The HOST evaluation also found that one of the main benefits of taking part in the ASYE reported by the social workers in the initial survey was the ‘development of professional confidence’ (79%).
Respondents were asked about which aspects of the ASYE had most helped them. Some answers were linked to supervision and the others to what could broadly be described as ‘support’. Below is a summary of the things that were mentioned [comments were made by 66 respondents]:

- Reduced/protected caseload.
- Increased/regular supervision.
- Direct observations of practice.
- Opportunity for critical reflection.
- Attending support groups at University/within employer setting/opportunities to meet with more experienced colleagues/building support networks/access to mentors/peer support.
- Help with managing and addressing emotions/stress.
- Regular training sessions/workshops/action learning sets.
- Using the PCF domains as a template to work towards.
- Using it to evidence and formalise continuous professional development.

Despite some reticence in the responses to the closed question about the ASYE assisting with the transition from academia to the workplace (see top of page 24), there was an overwhelming sense from the comments made that this was the case.

“[The AYSE was the] consolidation of learning from undergraduate degree and [gave me the opportunity for] further learning about ‘self’ as a resource, including stress management and developing emotional intelligence. I really felt that undertaking the ASYE allowed me to apply theory to practice and for this to remain relevant and become a bedrock for my continued practice development.”

**Social Worker from a Local Authority in the North of England**

Respondents were also asked which aspects of the ASYE had been least helpful. These appear to largely reflect the timing of the surveys (i.e. it being the first year of the ASYE) and the associated confusion / lack of understanding in some areas. Below is a summary of the things that were mentioned [comments were made by 56 respondents]:

- Lack of clarity about what needed to be done by supervisor/employer/what the ASYE really means (i.e. protected development time, caseloads, etc).
- A feeling that it was too generic/not tightly defined enough and therefore open to different interpretation.
- A sense that some people were treating it as something to ‘get through’ rather than exploiting the opportunities it provides.
- A feeling that there was too much emphasis on the written work/portfolio, especially (for some) on top of a gruelling degree (some also argued that the ASYE repeated elements of the final year of the degree).
- Some suggested that the ASYE would work better as the second year of employment.
- A lack of opportunities to gain more experience in safeguarding/complex areas of practice.
- For those who had already got some social work experience (i.e. as a social work assistant) the ASYE felt like it was something imposed upon them that wasn’t necessary.
- Some argued that the expectation to participate in study time/action learning/etc was too high (that they didn’t want to do so much), whilst others complained that it was unrealistic given workloads (that they would have liked to have done more).
- In some employment settings the ASYE for adults and for children’s services were linked and this was not perceived to be helpful as the two areas encompass quite different issues.

There was a sense that some of these social workers had suffered from being amongst the first cohorts to undertake the ASYE when perhaps some of the procedures had not been embedded within their employment settings.

“[The downside was] not having a clear cut outcome other than to get through it. There was no syllabus, and it felt very much that it had been rushed into practice earlier than anticipated and that this caused a great deal of stress and alterations to what was being expected throughout the year.”

Social worker from a local authority in the Midlands
1.7 Self-confidence

Respondents were asked to rate themselves on a scale of one to ten, where one equals ‘not at all capable’ and ten equals ‘totally capable’. The majority placed themselves at seven or higher, indicating good levels of confidence, with one in ten rating themselves ‘totally capable’.

Levels of confidence in managing the volume and complexity of the workload were also high. Over 90% reported being confident in managing both the volume and complexity of their workload. However, one in fourteen reported not being confident in each of these areas.
Respondents were asked what could be done to improve their confidence in managing the volume of their caseload. Few suggestions were made\textsuperscript{10}, but generally the theme was that caseloads needed to be smaller in order to be more manageable.

Similarly, respondents were asked for suggestions for improving their confidence in managing the complexity of their caseload. Again, few social workers took the opportunity to make suggestions\textsuperscript{11}, but the feeling was that having more support from peers and more experienced social workers could help in exploring the dilemmas and challenges encountered.

\textsuperscript{10} Only 4 respondents commented

\textsuperscript{11} Only 3 respondents commented
1.8 Job satisfaction

Almost two-fifths of the respondents said that, taking everything into consideration, they were ‘very much’ enjoying their job and half were ‘quite enjoying it’. Unfortunately one in ten reported not enjoying their job much.

Respondents were then asked to consider various aspects of their job and rate their satisfaction with them [see graph overleaf]. Almost all reported being satisfied (‘very’ or ‘fairly’) with the professional support that they are receiving from colleagues, being able to access their line manager when they need to and the friendliness of other staff in their workplace.

Almost nine out of ten also reported satisfaction with being able to fulfil the registration requirements of the HCPC, the support and guidance provided by their line manager, working as part of a team and working in partnership with service users.

Four-fifths reported satisfaction with the opportunities they’ve had to put their own social work values into practice, the ability to transmit these values to workers in other professions and access to CPD.

Three-quarters reported satisfaction with their ability to cope with the complexity of their caseload and also with widening their knowledge of different areas of social work practice.

Two-thirds reported satisfaction with their employment conditions and the amount of contact they have with service users and carers.
Three-fifths reported satisfaction with their prospects for career advancement/promotion and their ability to cope with the volume of their workload.
1.9 The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

Respondents were asked about how well they felt the ASYE and their employer had prepared them for the on-going requirements of re-registration with the HCPC. Three in ten felt that both the ASYE and their employer had prepared them ‘very well’. Slightly more rated the ASYE as preparing them ‘quite well’ than their employer had (57% vs 53%). One in ten said that the ASYE hadn’t prepared them very well and this rose to a fifth in relation to preparation from the employer.

We asked respondents what other support would help them with the re-registration requirements of the HCPC. Below is a summary of their responses [[comments were made by 25 respondents]:

- More help with accessing training and development.
- More time for reflective practice.
- More time for CPD/mandatory levels of training so that everyone has equal opportunities.
- More discussion around capabilities during supervision sessions.
- Tying the employer’s appraisal system into the PCF and the HCPC requirements.
- A more structured approach to CPD (i.e. a portfolio with specific date targets to meet so that things don’t slip once the ASYE has been completed) / clearer guidance about what is required in the portfolio of evidence (i.e. sample versions of portfolios).
1.10 Career paths

Respondents were given a series of statements relating to the future of their career and their expectations relating to it and were asked them to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with them [see graph below].

Overwhelmingly they rated their profession as being important to them. More than four-fifths agreed that their profession is a rewarding career and that it is a central part of their life.

Around two-thirds agreed that it would be difficult for them to change career now and that they would recommend it to others as a career.

Three-fifths agreed that changing career would involve considerable sacrifice, that their career is integral to their self-image and that they are certain that they know which direction their career is going in. A similar number also agreed that they were likely to move to another organisation in order to further their career.

Half agreed that they would not want to work in another profession and 70% disagreed with the statement “I would leave my profession if I could”.

![Agreement with statements relating to career path / expectations](image_url)

- Working in my current profession is important to me: 64% Agree strongly, 41% Agree, 3% Neither, 1% Disagree
- I think my profession is a rewarding career: 29% Agree strongly, 66% Agree, 13% Neither, 1% Disagree
- My career is a central interest in my life: 37% Agree strongly, 44% Agree, 11% Neither, 7% Disagree
- Changing my career would be difficult for me to do now: 14% Agree strongly, 54% Agree, 17% Neither, 14% Disagree
- I would recommend my profession as a career: 21% Agree strongly, 43% Agree, 24% Neither, 9% Disagree
- Changing my career now would involve a considerable sacrifice: 22% Agree strongly, 41% Agree, 26% Neither, 13% Disagree
- Pursuing my career is important to my self-image: 29% Agree strongly, 41% Agree, 20% Neither, 16% Disagree
- I know where my career is going: 19% Agree strongly, 51% Agree, 20% Neither, 17% Disagree
- My career is likely to take me to work for other organisations beyond this one: 21% Agree strongly, 39% Agree, 31% Neither, 9% Disagree
- I would not want to work outside my profession: 20% Agree strongly, 31% Agree, 30% Neither, 14% Disagree
- I would leave my profession if I could: 18% Agree strongly, 28% Agree, 41% Neither, 20% Disagree
When asked what they envisaged doing in twelve months’ time, half of the respondents said that they expected to be in the same role within the same team/organisation. Three in ten thought they would have been promoted to a more senior role in the same team/organisation and one in six thought they would be doing the same role, but in a different organisation with a further 6% stating that they expect to be in a more senior role in a different organisation. None of the respondents expected to have left the profession.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations of what they will be doing in 12 months time</th>
<th>(n=70)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same role in same team/organisation</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More senior role in same team/organisation</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same role in different team/organisation</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More senior role in different team/organisation</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something completely different (not SW)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey was concluded by asking respondents how they anticipate using their experiences to provide support and development opportunities for others. Below is a summary of their responses [comments were made by 50 respondents]:

- Already supervising/mentoring/inducting/shadowing/buddying new staff.
- Promoting social work values to peers (social workers and beyond).
- Passing on things learnt in training to colleagues.
- A desire to become a Practice Educator/ASYE Assessor/Mentor/be more involved in training.

“I feel lucky to have gone straight from my last university placement into a job role and then completed the ASYE in the first year of qualifying. I feel this has helped me as my learning is still fresh in my mind.”

Social worker from the Midlands
“I will encourage other unqualified staff to think about completing their professional training.”

Social worker from the South of England

“I feel I have been an ardent advocate of change in how the organisation structures supervision and development for staff, in a move away from case work management lead supervision.”

Social worker from the Midlands
2.1 About the respondents

Surveys were sent out to 107 supervisors of the social workers in the study. Of these 49 responded giving a response rate of 46%.

Three-quarters of the respondents were female. One in ten were in their twenties or thirties, two-fifths were in their forties and half were aged 50 plus (an older age profile than for the social workers, reflecting their experience in the workplace). The majority described themselves as White.

Compared with the overall estimated adult social care social worker population in England as profiled by the NMDS-SC there were slightly more male supervisors amongst the respondents (27% compared with 21%). The age profile was roughly comparable with the NMDS-SC profile, but the respondents slightly over-represented those describing their ethnicity as White (88% compared with 80%) and under-represented those describing themselves as Black (6% compared with 11%).
Nine out of ten respondents were registered social workers. Of these, all were registered with the HCPC.

Only two-fifths were members of the College of Social work (compared with over half of the respondents to the social worker survey).

There was a wide spread in the number of social workers being supervised. However, the mean, mode and median values were all very similar with the average being 5 (mean) or 6 (mode and median).
2.2 The role of supervisor

The majority of supervisors were experienced. Over half of the respondents had been a supervisor of social workers for five or more years. Three in ten had done it for three-five years and one in seven for 1-2 years. Only 2% had been supervising social workers for less than a year.

There were fairly high levels of support for social workers in relation to holistic assessment of supervisees practice, but there is scope for more support in relation to the delivery of reflective supervision and developing reflective practice amongst supervisees (one in five have not received help with these) and with how the PCF can be used to identify learning needs (three in ten have not help with this). Support for supervisors appears to have increased from the initial survey of the HOST evaluation where only three-fifths (61%) reported having had training for their role in the ASYE.
Respondents were asked what further learning and development needs they have to progress as a supervisor. Below is a summary of their responses [comments were made by 29 respondents]. Most of these could be classed as process or procedural issues rather than professional development issues.

- Mental Capacity Act.
- Risk management.
- Managing/addressing poor performance/HR issues.
- Understanding/using/applying the PCF within supervision.
- Networks with other supervisors to share good practice/ideas/challenges.
- Ensuring reflective practice.
- Stress management.
- Leadership and management.
- Managing difficult/challenging behaviour.
- Implementing the impact of the Care Act.
- Self-neglect.
- Safeguarding.

Four-fifths of respondents feel that they are getting enough supervision and support from their employer to help them deliver reflective professional supervision.¹²

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¹² At first this could seem at odds with the results to the question on Learning and Development opportunities. However, someone may feel that they have adequate access to training but do not have adequate supervision to undertake their role (or vice versa).
Respondents who said they weren’t receiving enough supervision and support from their employer to deliver reflective supervision gave the following reasons for their answer [comments were made by 11 respondents]:

- A focus on processes and performance.
- Managers not having time to understand how best to support supervisors.
- Supervision feeling like a target which needs to be achieved rather than a functioning action which supports practice.
- A lack of social workers in management/lack of continuity in management.
- Lack of training.
2.3 Keeping up-to-date

As with the social worker survey, respondents were provided with a number of methods of keeping informed with things they need to know in their role as supervisor to explore which were most commonly being used. Levels of usage of the sources listed were generally the same or higher amongst respondents to the supervisor survey than the social worker survey (almost two-fifths regularly look at Skills for Care’s website compared with a quarter of social workers, for example).

![Bar chart showing sources used to inform role as a supervisor]

‘Other’ sources mentioned include [comments were made by nine respondents]:

- Students.
- Private Clinical Supervision.
- Membership of social work training and education panels/groups.
- Monitoring media to keep up-to-date on social policy and possible outcomes of statutory interventions.
- Academic books.
- Health-related publications.
- Reading around specific issues (i.e. mental health social work).
Two-fifths of respondents were members of the College of Social Work (compared with 53% of the respondents to the social worker survey).
2.4 The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)

Just over half of the respondents were working at the ‘Advanced social worker’ level and one in six at the ‘Principal social worker’ level. Almost all of the supervisors were working at levels above ‘Social Worker’, reflecting their experience in the profession.

Almost a fifth of the respondents did not know what level their role was set at (compared with just 3% of the social workers in the study).

![Level of current role graph](image)

A fifth said that their employer had linked all job descriptions to the PCF, a third that some had been linked and one in six that none had been linked. Three in ten did not know whether it had been or not.

![Whether employer has linked job descriptions to the PCF graph](image)
There was widespread agreement that the capability statements were suitable to their current role. The proportion of respondents describing them as ‘very suitable’ has increased since the interim survey of the HOST evaluation.

There were similar levels of positivity when asked about the suitability of the capability statements to their supervisees. Respondents to the supervisor survey were slightly more likely than the respondents to the social worker survey to see the capability statements as being relevant to those working as social workers.
A fifth of respondents said that their employer had ‘fully' embedded the PCF and its domains into its appraisal and performance management system. Three-fifths said the employer had ‘partially' embedded them and a fifth that they had not been embedded. There was more certainty amongst the answers given to this question by the respondents to the Supervisor survey than amongst the respondents to the social worker survey.

Three-quarters of respondents felt that the social workers they supervise are using the PCF and capability statements to determine their CPD needs (compared with 68% of the respondents to the social worker survey). 85% of the supervisors agreed that the PCF and Capability Statements helped social workers understand what's required of someone in their role (which was almost exactly the same as the result from the social worker survey).
2.5 Reflective supervision

Reflective supervision can include a vast range of activities. The majority of supervisors reported it including support to ensure emotional well-being and resilience, discussion of learning and development needs, advice or guidance on more difficult cases and workload management, as well as policies and procedures.

Three-quarters said they had included constructive challenge and slightly fewer had included discussion of models for developing reflection during and following practice.

Two-thirds of respondents reported providing help with applying theory, performance against the PCF and links to CPD, evaluation of feedback from people who use services and carers and a review and reflection on each case. Half mentioned consideration of feedback from people who use services and carers and slightly fewer mentioned receiving constructive challenge to their practice.
Respondents noted a number of other things covered by reflective supervision. These included:

- Health and safety/lone working.
- Stress/time management/well-being.
- Managing change.
- Values.
- Developments/changes to policy/legislation (including putting it into the context of the role).

In general there has been an increase in the proportion of supervisors reporting these elements of reflective supervision since the interim survey of the HOST evaluation.

It is interesting to note that there are a number of discrepancies between what the respondents to the supervisor survey claim to be providing in their reflective supervision sessions and what the respondents to the social worker survey claim to be receiving. The most notable of these differences were:

- ‘Models for developing reflection during and following practice’ – 21% of social worker respondents said they received this compared with 71% of supervisor respondents who said they delivered this.
- ‘Help in applying theoretical approaches/explanations of practice’ – 24% of social worker respondents said they received this compared with 65% of supervisor respondents who said they delivered this.
- ‘Provision of constructive challenge’ – 46% of social worker respondents said they received this compared with 76% of supervisor respondents who said they delivered this.

Over half of the respondents reported that ‘all’ of their social worker supervisees have personal development plans (PDPs). Three in ten said ‘some’ of them have them, but one in six said that none of them do. Interestingly, a third of the social worker respondents claimed not to have a PDP.

Amongst those that have PDPs, the majority are linked to the organisation’s appraisal process, are regularly reviewed and updated and set out how learning and development needs will be met. These are similar to the results of the social worker survey.
Personal Development Plans (PDPs)...
(n=49 for 'Have one' and 42 for remaining options)

- Have one
  - No: 16%
  - Some: 29%
  - All: 55%

- Linked to organisational appraisal process
  - No: 5%
  - Yes: 95%

- Regularly reviewed and updated
  - No: 5%
  - Yes: 95%

- Details learning needs will be met through formal training and/or individually designed CPD
  - No: 5%
  - Yes: 95%
2.6 The Employer Standards

As in the social worker survey, respondents were asked to state how much they agreed or disagreed that their employer was meeting each of the Employer Standards.

The majority agreed that their employer was meeting Standards 5 (Ensure that social workers have regular and appropriate social work supervision), 6 (Provides opportunities for continuing professional development, as well as access to research and practice guidance) and 7 (Ensures social workers can maintain their professional registration).

Three-quarters agreed that they were meeting Standards 1 (Has in place a social work accountability framework informed by knowledge of good social work practice and the experience and expertise of service users, carers and practitioners), 4 (Makes sure that social workers can do their jobs safely and have the practical tools and resources they need to practice effectively. Assess risks and take action to minimise and prevent them) and 8 (Establishes effective partnerships with higher education institutions and other organisations to support the delivery of social work education and continuing professional development).

Just over half agreed that their employer was meeting Standards 2 (Uses effective workforce planning systems to make sure that the right number of social workers, with the right level of skills and experience, are available to meet current and future service demands) and 3 (Implements transparent systems to manage workload and case allocation in order to protect service users and practitioners).

The results given by the respondents to the supervisor survey were more positive than those by the respondents to the social Worker survey, particularly in relation to Standards 4 (18% more agreed that their employer is meeting this Standard), 3 (17% more agreed) and 1 (10% more agreed).
Extent to which agree/disagree the employer is meeting the Employer Standards

1 - Clear social work accountability framework
   - Agree strongly: 16%
   - Agree: 69%
   - Neither: 18%
   - Disagree: 6%

2 - Effective workforce planning
   - Agree strongly: 12%
   - Agree: 43%
   - Neither: 18%
   - Disagree: 22%
   - Disagree strongly: 2%

3 - Safe workloads and case allocation
   - Agree strongly: 12%
   - Agree: 45%
   - Neither: 20%
   - Disagree: 20%
   - Disagree strongly: 2%

4 - Managing risks and resources
   - Agree strongly: 18%
   - Agree: 66%
   - Neither: 14%
   - Disagree: 12%

5 - Effective and appropriate supervision
   - Agree strongly: 41%
   - Agree: 47%
   - Neither: 3%
   - Disagree: 8%

6 - Continuing professional development
   - Agree strongly: 35%
   - Agree: 61%
   - Neither: 6%
   - Disagree: 8%

7 - Professional registration
   - Agree strongly: 37%
   - Agree: 61%
   - Neither: 10%
   - Disagree: 2%

8 - Effective partnerships
   - Agree strongly: 31%
   - Agree: 47%
   - Neither: 20%
   - Disagree: 2%
Appendix A – The organisations involved in the study

24 employers are signed up to this study. We would like to thank them all for taking part and for supporting Skills for Care as the employer-led workforce development body for the adult social care sector.

- Bedford Borough Council
- Birmingham Council
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Bracknell Forest Council
- Calderdale MBC
- Creative Support
- Devon County Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Enable
- Enfield Council
- Hillingdon, London Borough of
- Jewish Care
- Kent County Council
- Leeds City Council
- Lincolnshire
- Marie Curie Cancer Care
- Milton Keynes
- Nottingham City Council
- Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
- Southampton City Council
- Southend Borough Council
- Thurrock Council
- Torbay & Southern Devon Healthcare & NHS Trust
- Warrington Borough Council
NB: the categories ‘1-4 SWs’ and ‘5+ SWs’ refers to the number of eligible social workers employed by the organisation at the point of recruitment into the study.

\(^{13}\) To be eligible for the study social worker had to have completed their ASYE by March 2013. In reality a few slipped beyond this.
Skills for Care
West Gate
6 Grace Street
Leeds
LS1 2RP

Telephone: 0113 245 1716
Email: info@skillsforcare.org.uk
Web: www.skillsforcare.org.uk