

## Education and Training Committee – 14 November 2013

### Review of the Health and Care Profession Council's approval visits to social work pre-registration education and training programmes in the 2012–13 academic year

#### Executive summary and recommendations

#### **Introduction**

This paper is intended to provide the Committee with analysis of the first year of visits to social work education and training programmes in England. It details and analyses outcomes from the schedule of visits, and makes comparisons to the approval visit outcomes for the other 15 professions that the HCPC regulates.

The paper also provides background to the transfer in regulatory function from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to the HCPC and details of the work that was undertaken to review the data received from the GSCC when the HCPC Register for social workers in England opened on 1 August 2012. An update on our on-going work to facilitate the approval visit process is also included.

#### **Decision**

The Committee is asked to discuss and approve the report for dissemination to stakeholders.

#### **Background information**

- Council Paper , 19 June 2012 – Social worker in England pre-registration programmes – approval and monitoring processes,  
Council Paper, 4 July 2013 – Social Work Student Suitability Scheme Update,

#### **Resource implications**

None

#### **Financial implications**

None

#### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – List of tables and graphs
- Appendix 2 – List of programmes visited and outcomes
- Appendix 3 – Suggested schedule for a joint College of Social Work endorsement and Health and Care Professions Council approval event

#### **Date of paper**

17 October 2013

Review of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) approval visits to social work pre-registration education and training programmes in the 2012–13 academic year

Draft - subject to ETC approval

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## Section one – Introduction

### **About this document**

This paper focuses primarily on the schedule of approval visits undertaken by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) to pre-registration social work education and training programmes delivered by education providers in England. It details and analyses the outcomes from these approval visits.

The paper also provides background to the transfer of regulatory function from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to the HCPC, and provides details of the work that was undertaken to review the data which was transferred following the opening of the HCPC Register for social workers in England on 1 August 2012.

The paper draws on:

- qualitative review of Education Department records;
- quantitative data drawn from operational records held by the Education Department to describe some of the key features of the implementation of the approval process; and
- quantitative and qualitative review of visitors' reports produced after each approval visit.

The data used in this report is correct as of 31 August 2013.

### **Overview of the approval process**

We visit all education and training programmes that we approve to ensure that:

- the programme meets or continues to meet our standards of education and training (SETs);
- those who complete the programme are able to meet or continue to meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register; and
- all programmes and education providers are assessed fairly and consistently.

Prior to the visit itself, we ask education providers to submit documentation to us which supports how they meet our standards. Included within this is standard documentation which we must receive and mapping documents which show how the evidence provided meets our SETs.

When we carry out an approval visit, we are represented by a visit panel. This panel is normally made up of two visitors. At least one visitor is from the same part of the Register as the profession with which the programme is concerned, and one visitor will have experience of education settings. A member of the Education Department known as the “education executive” also forms part of the panel.

For all social work approval visits in the 2012–13 academic year, we also included a third, experienced, visitor from another profession on the visit panel.. We use this approach whenever new professions are regulated by us. It ensures visitors from new professions are appropriately supported and that we are consistent in the application of our standards of education and training across all of the 16 professions that we regulate.

We sometimes send more than one HCPC panel to approval visits. This is usually the case where education providers are seeking approval for a number of programmes delivered at more than one academic level (undergraduate and post graduate) or where there are significant differences in the models of training proposed (eg employment based routes).

Throughout the visit, we meet with programme staff, students, senior managers and placement providers. We relate all of our discussions and decisions on approval back to our standards.

### **Visitors' reports**

Visitors' reports detail the visitors' recommendation about whether a programme should be granted open-ended approval or have on-going (or transitional) approval reconfirmed. Their recommendation is based upon whether a programme meets all of the SETs. Visitors can make one of four recommendations to the Education and Training Committee.

- Approval of a programme without any conditions.
- Approval of a programme subject to all conditions being met.
- Non-approval of a new programme.
- Withdrawal of approval from a currently approved (or transitionally approved) programme.

Conditions are requirements made of an education provider, by our Education and Training Committee, which must be met before a programme can be recommended for approval. When conditions are set on a programme, these are detailed in the visitors' report. There are 57 specific standards which visitors can set conditions against. It is possible to set more than one condition against each standard. Education providers have two opportunities to meet conditions prior to a final visitor recommendation being made to our Education and Training Committee.

For more information regarding the visitors' reports considered by this paper, please visit our website at [www.hcpc-uk.org/education/programmes/approvalreports/](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/programmes/approvalreports/), where all visitors' reports are published. A list of all social work programmes visited over the period covered in this paper can be found in appendix 2.

## Section two – Transfer of social work programmes in England

### **Transfer of regulation**

As part of its review of arm's length bodies, the government decided to abolish the General Social Care Council (GSCC) and transfer most of its regulatory functions to the Health Professions Council (HPC). To reflect this new remit, the HPC's name changed to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). This change was contained within the Health and Social Care Act (2012). The GSCC closed on 31 July 2012 and the HCPC became the statutory regulator for social workers in England from 1 August 2012.

As part of the transfer, the HCPC became responsible for approving and monitoring pre-registration social work programmes in England and publishing a list of approved programmes. We also publish a list of approved social work programmes in England which are no longer delivered, but were approved for set historic periods. The HCPC did not assume responsibility for the post-qualifying (PQ) framework that was maintained by the GSCC.

Following the transfer, the HCPC also became responsible for approving approved mental health professional (AMHP) education and training programmes in England<sup>1</sup>.

### **The broader context of social work education**

Our approach to the approval and monitoring of social work programmes in England has been developed and implemented with due consideration to the broader changes in the sector at the time of transfer. These changes related primarily to the recommendations made by the Social Work Task Force (SWTF) and the work of the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB). This has resulted in the creation of The College of Social Work and the introduction of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) for social workers in England. Other changes have been made to the funding and administrative arrangements in place regarding the Education Support Grant and undergraduate and postgraduate student bursaries. Where necessary, we have made adjustments and enhancements to our own processes to ensure education providers are appropriately supported in this time of transition.

### **Transitional approval**

All pre-registration social work programmes in England which were approved by the GSCC at the point of transfer were subsequently approved by the HCPC from 1 August 2012. This approval is transitional, which means that programmes remain approved by us until that approval is formally agreed or withdrawn by the HCPC following an assessment against our standards.

At its meeting of 19 June 2012, the Council agreed that all transitionally approved pre-registration social work programmes in England would be required to complete the approval process. This was deemed the most effective mechanism to assess each transitionally approved programme against our standards of education and training. Approval visits were scheduled over a three year period with the first visits commencing in the 2012-13 academic year.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper does not review approval visits to AMHP programmes. These approval visits will commence in the 2013–14 academic year, following the publication of the HCPC's Approval criteria for approved mental health professional (AMHP) programmes in August 2013.

Programmes which successfully complete the approval process would then be granted open ended approval, subject to meeting our on-going monitoring requirements.

The Education and Training Committee also decided that programmes would not be required to engage with our monitoring processes prior to their scheduled approval visit. The Committee noted that all education providers were making significant changes to their programmes in line with the recommendations of the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB). It was decided that asking education providers to evidence these changes via our monitoring processes as the changes were made, rather than presenting a “new” programme at an approval visit, would create an unnecessary administrative burden for both education providers and the HCPC.

### **Communications**

Prior to, and soon after the transfer, we wrote to social work education providers outlining the approval process, and what their responsibilities would be following the transfer. We also advised education providers of the academic year in which we planned to visit their programme(s) and prompted them to engage with us regarding the scheduling of an approval visit.

As part of our normal operating procedures, we allocated an education executive to manage each approval visit from the HCPC’s perspective (approximately six months prior to the visit date). This provided social work education providers with a single point of contact when seeking advice regarding our standards and the organisation of the approval visit. We also used the pre-visit scheduling process to clarify and update any data we held regarding programme records and contacts.

We delivered a seminar for education providers delivering social work programmes at several locations around England. The seminar introduced the HCPC, the Education Department, the approval process, and how regulation with the HCPC would impact on transitionally approved programmes. We invited all social work education providers to attend these seminars. 79 per cent of education providers that were due to be visited in the 2012–13 academic year attended one of these seminars. We will continue to deliver profession specific seminars for social work education providers in the 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years.

### **Student Suitability Scheme**

The student suitability scheme came into effect on 1 August 2012, when the HCPC took over the regularity functions of the GSCC. At its meeting on 19 June 2012 the HCPC Council agreed to introduce a new suitability scheme to deal with concerns about social work students in England. This is because the Council recognises that the social work community, including education providers, employers and placement providers, may face additional challenges during the transition to the new system of quality assurance by the HCPC. This follows our decision that social work students in England should not be registered by the HCPC. The HCPC Council reached this decision after considering the responses to a consultation and the findings of the literature review we commissioned.

Specifically, the scheme enables the HCPC to:

- provide an opinion, in exceptional circumstances, to a social work education provider on whether an applicant is of suitable character to be admitted to a programme;
- investigate where we consider that the education provider has failed to deal with a credible complaint about a student appropriately;
- consider the outcomes of an education provider's fitness to practise procedures to determine whether a student should be prohibited from a programme;
- maintain a record of students who are not permitted to participate in a social work programme in England; and
- manage open cases concerning individuals applying to be on the student register maintained by the GSCC and those individuals who are on the GSCC student register.

When a transitionally approved programme is approved by the Education and Training Committee it can no longer access the scheme. The reason being that once approved, we are satisfied that the programme meets the SETs and therefore has robust systems in place to manage concerns about students.

As of 31 August 2013, 43 programmes have now completed the approval process and were granted approval on an open-ended basis, subject to meeting our on-going monitoring requirements. As a result, these programmes can no longer access the scheme. Any enquiries received by the HCPC regarding students from these approved programmes will now be referred back to the specific education provider to address.

Between 1 August 2012 and 31 May 2013, 16 new cases concerning student social workers were received. These cases included:

- two cases from education providers concerning applicants to programmes;
- four cases referred directly to the HCPC rather than to the education provider in the first instance; and
- ten education provider referrals concerning students who have been removed from programmes.

No cases have required consideration by an Assessment Panel or Adjudicator to date. Whilst the issues raised may have required action by the individual education provider, they are not of a nature that would require inclusion on the prohibited list.

## Section three – Transfer of data from the GSCC

### **The process of the data transfer**

A joint requirements document was produced between the HCPC and the GSCC to facilitate the transfer of programme data between the two organisations. This document detailed the programme information that was to be transferred and set out the processes of liaison, preparation and delivery which were necessary to complete the transfer. The GSCC contacted each education provider prior to transfer with a list of programmes that they approved and the programme information that would be passed over to the HCPC.

### **Amendments to the data post transfer**

In total, 282 programme records were transferred from the GSCC. After amendments were made to these records, 249 of the programmes, delivered by 82 education providers, were transitionally approved.

There are several reasons for the initial reduction of programme numbers.

Firstly, 14 records were changed or merged due to the differences in the way the two organisations recorded data. For example, the GSCC recorded both “full time employment” and “part time employment” routes as a mode of study, but we only record the mode “work based learning”.

Secondly, we also ascertained that six programmes never recruited students following approval by the GSCC and thirteen programmes were closed prior to the transfer.

A further 45 programmes were also identified as closing or already closed but appeared in the records transferred by the GSCC because:

- 26 programmes had taken their last intake of students before the transfer, but still had a throughput of students; and
- 19 programmes informed us that they took their last intake of students in the 2012–13 academic year (post transfer).

We considered programmes with any throughput of students post transfer as transitionally approved.

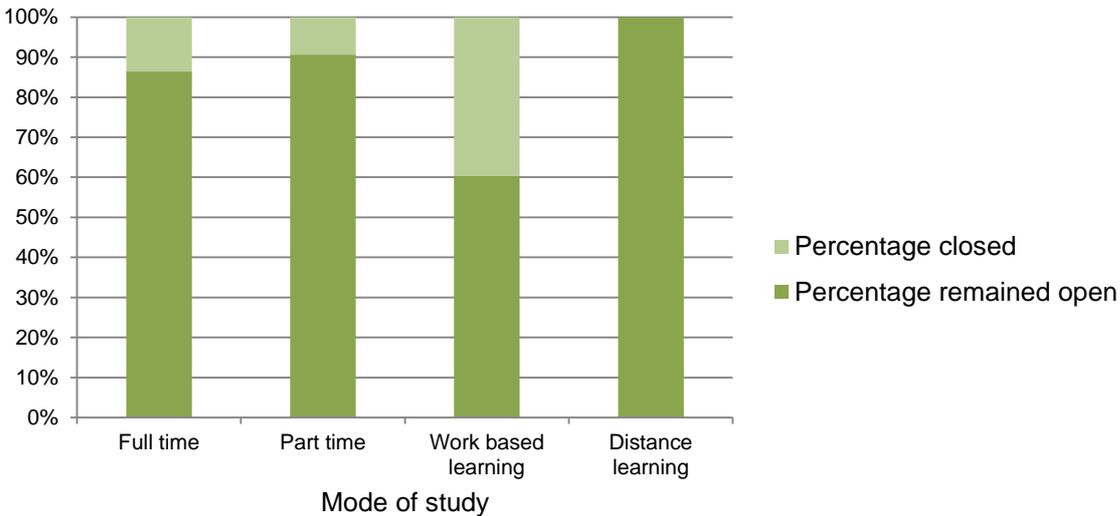
In total, 26 education providers closed programmes. Of these education providers, three stopped running their social work provision entirely. We also found that education providers delivering more than one programme closed some programmes but kept others open.

Some education providers informed us that they were closing a programme and replacing it with another. However, in some cases the programme had been fundamentally redesigned yet retained the same name. This did not constitute a formal closure for the purpose of managing our records. A programme was only considered closed and replaced by another programme if there was a change to the programme name.

**Table 1 Breakdown of closed transitionally approved programmes - by mode of study**

Mode of study	Number of transitionally approved programmes	Number of transitionally approved programmes closed	Percentage of programmes closed for each mode
Full time	169	23	14
Part time	31	3	9
Work based learning	48	19	40
Distance learning	1	0	0

**Graph 1 Breakdown of closed transitionally approved programmes - by mode of study**



In total, there was a 12% decrease in the number of approved and transitionally approved programmes at the end of the 2012-13 academic year. A higher proportion of work based learning programmes closed compared to either full time or part time programmes. In total, eleven education providers stopped delivering their work based learning provision entirely. Some education providers informed us that they had never delivered a work based route.

We are still expecting some closures of transitionally approved programmes in the 2013–14 and 2014–15 academic years, but we expect a reduction in the number of changes to the list of programmes transferred as a result of our work to clarify programme records.. Many education providers scheduled to be visited in the 2013–14 and 2014–15 academic years have already contacted us to close programmes.

## Section four – Approval visits to social work programmes in 2012–13

### Visit scheduling

We asked education providers to request visit dates in the relevant academic year in our initial correspondence at the point of transfer. By January 2013, we had scheduled approval visits for all three academic years. All of the approval visits for the 2012-13 academic year took place between February and June 2013. This was due to our requirement for at least six months' notice of an approval visit and education providers being unable to submit visit request forms until after the transfer of regulatory function on 1 August 2012.

To produce our approval visit schedule for practitioner psychologist and hearing aid dispenser programmes we conducted a paper-based exercise to identify significant programme changes. However, we did not undertake this process with transitionally approved programmes for social workers in England. We understood that most programmes would be undergoing change in terms of delivery, considering overarching changes to social work education following the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force.

Given the amount of changes within the sector we decided to only assess “new” versions of programmes against our standards. Any “old” versions of programmes would not be assessed as these were either closed completely or closed to any new intakes.

Instead, the scheduling of approval visits to programmes for social workers in England took a range of factors into consideration:

- the GSCC quality assurance evidence and assessment at the point of transfer;
- the existing GSCC re-approval cycle;
- the demand for placements within regions; and
- the size and frequency of student cohorts and the entire provision within each education provider.

We considered undertaking a visit sooner if:

- a new programme was proposed for approval and the education provider wanted us to review both the transitionally approved programme(s) and the new programme together;
- a transitionally approved programme closed and was not replaced;
- a transitionally approved programme closed and was replaced by a new programme;
- a change to a transitionally approved programme affected the way the programme was recorded on our website (e.g. change in validating body, mode of study, programme name); and
- a concern was raised about a transitionally approved programme through a complaint or via the student suitability scheme.

We did not need to move many approval visits as part of our scheduling process. In total, six approval visits were brought forward by at least a year, which represent nine per cent of the approval visits originally scheduled for the 2013–14 and 2014–15 academic years.

### Approval visits and outcomes

In total, we visited 72 social work programmes at 20 education providers in the 2012–13 academic year. Of these programmes, 52 were transitionally approved, and 20 were new programmes. We set conditions on all of the programmes we visited. By 31 August 2013, 62 of these programmes had met the conditions set and were approved by the Education and training Committee (ETC). The remaining ten programmes were recommended for approval by the Committee in either September or October 2013. 158 programmes remain transitionally approved following our first year of visits to programmes for social workers in England.

On average, we considered four programmes at each visit, three transitionally approved programmes and one new programme. Eight of the twenty new programmes that we considered were direct replacements for existing programmes. There were several reasons for these replacements, such as the change of validating body and the change of programme name. Other new programmes were often at different academic levels to transitionally approved programmes. For example, there were nine new postgraduate level programmes visited at five education providers.

We often visited programmes at joint events with the College of Social Work (TCSW) and institutional internal validation. The HCPC and TCSW remained independent in reaching our decisions. However, we did collaborate to produce a suggested agenda for joint approval visits. This was designed assist the education provider in facilitating the event and to ensure it was as effective as possible for both the HCPC and TSCW. A copy of the joint visit agenda can be found at appendix 3.

**Table 2 Summary of outcomes for social work programmes and all programmes visited in 2012–13**

	<b>Social work programmes</b>	<b>All other programmes</b>
Number of programmes visited	72	53
Approval of a programme without any conditions	0%	6%
Approval of a programme subject to all conditions being met	86%	91%
Non-approval of a new programme	0%	0%
Pending	14%	4%
Withdrawal of approval from a currently approved programme	0%	0%

The only difference of note is that six per cent of all other programmes were approved without any conditions. This represents three programmes, two of which were approved programmes that we visited as a result of major changes to the programme. The third programme was a new programme, but was also an exit point to one of the two programmes mentioned above.

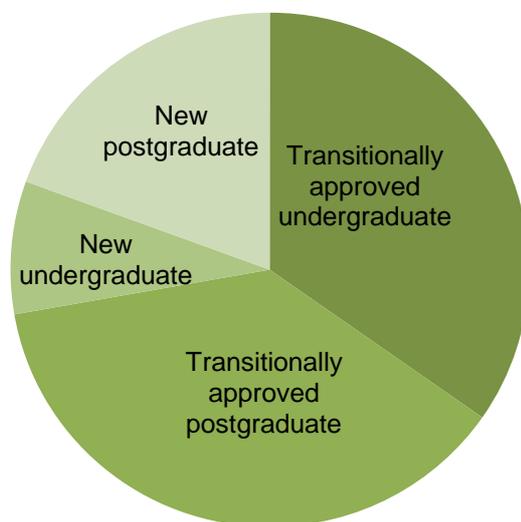
Generally, we set more conditions for new programmes and programmes from new professions than we set for new programmes from existing professions or approved programmes that are visited as a result of our monitoring processes. This is because new programmes and programmes from new professions are less familiar with our regulatory requirements.

Importantly, none of these visit outcomes are indicative of a specific risk profile for the profession or a particular difficulty in engaging with our broad standards and flexible processes.

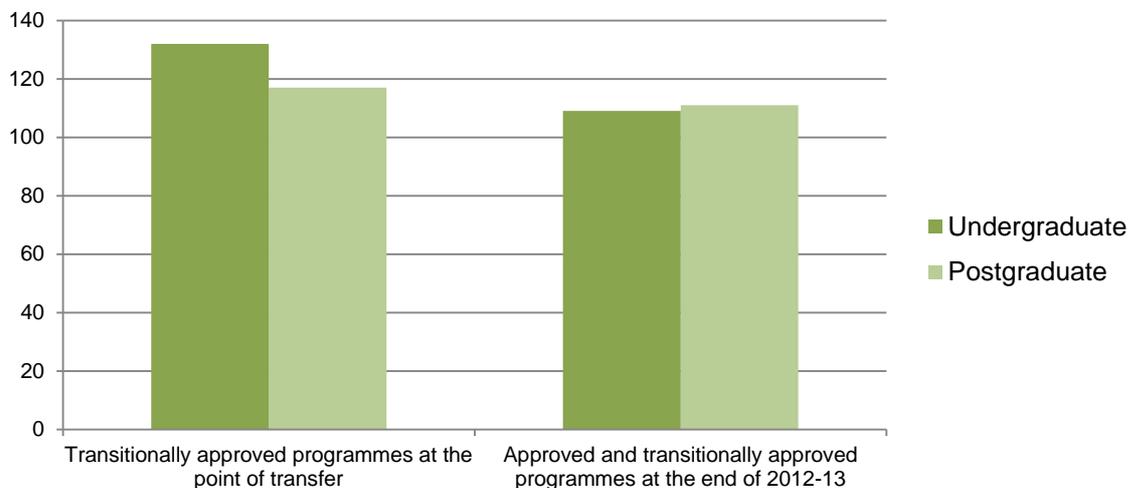
### Level of programme awards

We visited 52 transitionally approved programmes for social workers in England and 20 new programmes. Of these programmes, 31 were delivered at undergraduate level and 41 were at delivered postgraduate level.

**Graph 2 Social work programmes visited - by qualification level and approval status**



**Graph 3 Comparison of programme numbers at the point of transfer and at the end of the 2012–13 - by qualification level**



Graph 3 shows the number of transitionally approved programmes at the point of transfer against the number of approved or transitionally approved programmes at the end of the 2012–13 academic year. From the graph, it is clear that there has been a reduction in both undergraduate and postgraduate provision.

Although the postgraduate figure is higher, twelve of the 41 programmes are postgraduate diploma level exit points for Masters level programmes. When this is factored in, the split between undergraduate and postgraduate level programmes visited in the 2012-13 academic year is almost even.

### Conditions

Conditions are requirements made of an education provider by our Education and Training Committee which must be met before a programme can be recommended for approval. Conditions are linked to the SETs and require changes to the programme to ensure the threshold standards are met.

There were areas where we consistently set conditions for social work programmes in 2012-13. However, it is important to note that, as our standards are flexible, it does mean education providers are able to design their programmes to meet them in different ways. This means we assess programmes on a case by case basis against our SETs. As such, there were other conditions applied during our first year of approval visits to social work programmes that we have not analysed in this report as they were specific to individual programmes.

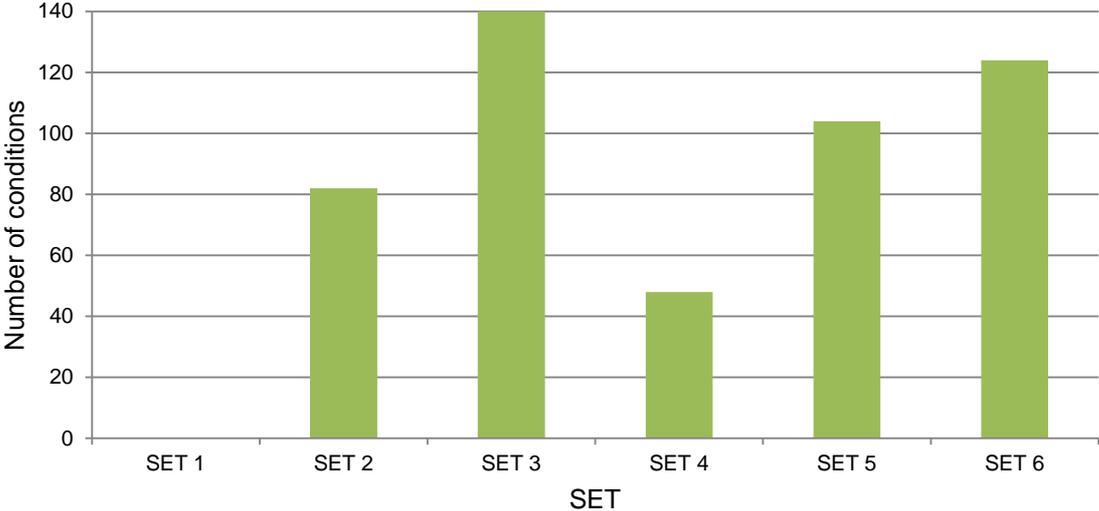
**Table 3 Number of conditions set on social work programmes compared to programmes from other professions - by reason for visit**

SET	Social work programmes		Approved programmes visited as a result of major change		New programmes from other professions	
	Total number of conditions	Average number of conditions per programme	Total number of conditions	Average number of conditions per programme	Total number of conditions	Average number of conditions per programme
SET 1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
SET 2	82	1.1	24	0.9	24	0.9
SET 3	140	1.9	29	1.1	61	2.3
SET 4	48	0.7	12	0.5	24	0.9
SET 5	104	1.4	17	0.7	53	2.0
SET 6	124	1.7	49	1.9	50	1.9
Total	498	6.9	131	5.0	212	7.9

Table 3 illustrates that the average number of conditions set for social work programmes is broadly comparable with new programmes from other professions, with on average, one fewer condition set per programme. The broad SET areas are also similar, with the most significant difference being the average number of conditions set for SET 5. For this standard, an average of 1.4 conditions were set for social work programmes and an average of 2.0 conditions were set for new programmes from other professions.

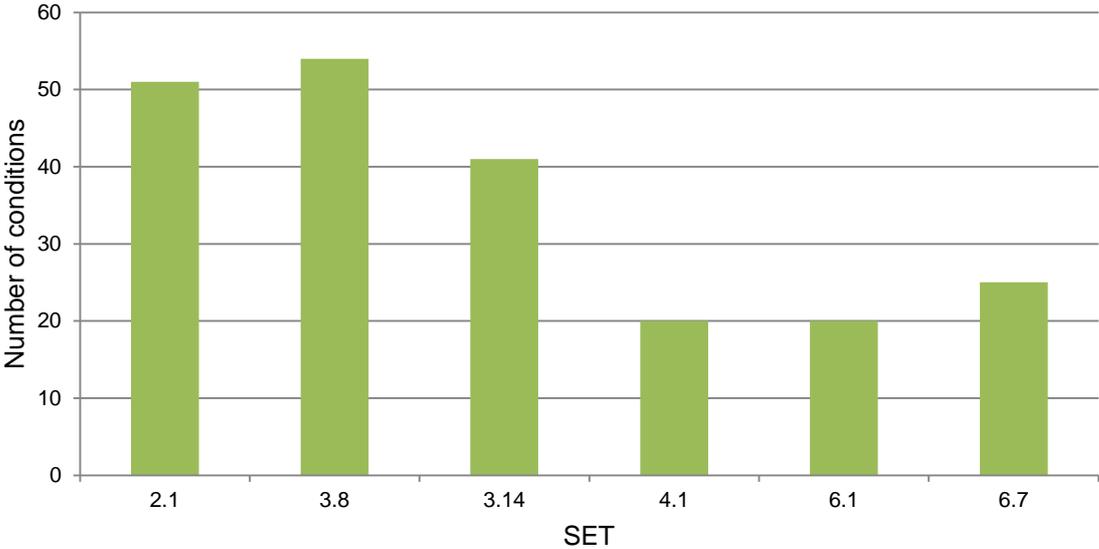
We can also see from this table that there were fewer conditions set on average for approved programmes visited as a result of major change. Previous analysis in our Annual Report 2012<sup>2</sup> also shows that new programmes and new profession programmes routinely attract a higher number of conditions. Approval visits that are initiated by our major change or annual monitoring processes can be focused on particular SET areas and approved programmes are also more familiar with the application of our standards than new programmes and new profession programmes.

**Graph 4 Number of conditions for social work programmes in 2012–13 - by SET**



Graph 4 illustrates that conditions were most often applied to SET 3 (programme management and resources), SET 6 (assessment), SET 5 (practice placements) and SET 2 (admissions). Conditions for SET 4, 5 and 6 often focused on fundamental areas of programme design, management and delivery. In contrast, conditions placed on SET 2 and 3 frequently related to the clarity and completeness of programme documentation.

**Graph 5 The six SETs with the most conditions set for social work programmes in 2012–13**



<sup>2</sup> The Education annual report 2012 is available on our website at <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003FEEEducationannualreport2012.pdf>

## **Curriculum and Assessment**

The curriculum standards ensure that individuals who complete the programme meet the profession specific standards of proficiency (SOPs) and are fit to practice. The assessment standards ensure that students meet the requirements of the programme and our SOPs and are assessed fairly and consistently.

Conditions regarding the assessment of the programme often related to how the assessment strategy and design ensures that individuals completing the programme meet our SOPs. This resulted in a high number of conditions against SETs 4.1 and 6.1 as Graph 5 illustrates. SET 4.1 is the standard that requires education providers to ensure that the SOPs for the profession are delivered within the curriculum. SET 6.1 is the standard that requires education providers to ensure that students are appropriately assessed so they meet the SOPs when they complete the programme. Consequently, when we set a condition for SET 4.1, we will often also set a condition for SET 6.1. This is because if it is not clear where one or more of the SOPs is being delivered through learning outcomes, it will also be difficult to see where it is assessed.

We ask education providers to map each SOP directly to specific learning outcomes in specific modules. In some cases education providers had not clearly demonstrated through this mapping how the curriculum and learning outcomes align to the SOPs. When this exercise is not completed with sufficient detail, it is difficult for visitors to make a judgement that the SOPs as a whole are being delivered and assessed in the programme. There were also occasions where the visitors were not clear where one or more specific SOPs were being delivered based on the curriculum content. In both cases, conditions were set requiring education providers to submit additional evidence to demonstrate how their programme learning outcomes and assessments ensured students met the SOPs upon completion of the programme.

We set more conditions for social work programmes against the SETs which relate to our SOPs when compared to programmes from other professions. Many social work programmes decided to redesign their curriculum to take into account not only the HCPC's SOPs, but also The College of Social Work's Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). It was also the first time that education providers mapped their programmes to the HCPC SOPs.

In comparison to the assessment standards discussed above, there was less of a correlation between the reasons for conditions applied to SET 6.7. This standard requires education providers to ensure "assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme." When setting conditions in relation to this standard, visitors often required further clarity from education providers regarding reassessment, condonement and student progression policies. Often, these issues stemmed from inconsistencies with how such policies were stated in programme documentation and how they were actually applied in practice.

Another trend to note regarding SET 6.7 related to the practice placement elements of the programme and is often an area where conditions are set for new programmes from other professions. In some cases, education providers combined all of their practice placements into a "zero credit module".

It was occasionally unclear from the documentation whether a student needed to pass this module in order to progress through the programme, or how they would retake elements of the module if required. In other cases, conditions applied in this area related to assessing a student's "readiness for practice". This is an assessment carried out by some education providers before students are allowed on placement. Although the process for carrying out this assessment differed across education providers, the consistent issue, which resulted in conditions, often related to the difference in how the procedure was documented and how it was actually applied.

Interestingly, social work programmes received fewer conditions than new programmes from other professions in relation to SETs 6.9 and 6.11, which relate to aegrotat awards not providing eligibility for admission to the Register and the appropriate appointment of external examiners respectively. These are policies that need to be reflected in the assessment regulations for the programme.

### **Practice placements**

The practice placement standards ensure that education providers retain overall responsibility for practice learning. This includes how placements are managed and monitored, assessments, providing support and information to students and practice placement providers and ensuring that there are systems in place to effectively support placements.

SET 5 was an area in which a high proportion of conditions were applied. This trend has been seen in the analysis of other new professions (such as practitioner psychologists, hearing aid dispensers and paramedics) and where new programmes from existing professions are seeking approval with us. Practice placements are the area of approved programmes where education providers must work with the most stakeholders and invest the most resources. In this context, a higher proportion of conditions (21%) applied to practice placements for social work programmes is an expected trend.

SETs 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 examine the provision of placement educators in practice placements. These standards specifically focus on whether there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff who have relevant skills and knowledge, undertake appropriate training and are appropriately registered. In order to approve a programme we must be satisfied the education provider is able to take responsibility for all aspects of the programme's delivery, including practice placements. Education providers must demonstrate that the quality assurance mechanisms in place are robust, formally documented and are appropriate to manage placements of an on-going basis. The mechanisms must ensure all practice placements provide teaching and learning environments appropriate to the needs of the student and the aims of the programme. There were 41 conditions set for these four standards. It was often the case that the policies and procedures in place to manage the quality of placement provision were not fully developed or formalised within the documentation.

We also set 16 conditions for SET 5.2, which relates to the number, duration and range of placements, and 18 conditions for SET 5.11, which is about ensuring all parties involved with the practice placements are fully prepared. These two areas highlight key aspects of placement management which must be in place to meet our standards. Visitors must be satisfied that sufficient opportunities are available for students to access practice placements and that there is an appropriate range of placements available.

They must also be satisfied that the education provider has appropriate measures in place to ensure all parties involved with the placement experience are sufficiently prepared to support the placement effectively.

### **Programme management and Admissions**

SET 3 is intended to ensure that the programme is managed effectively and that the resources available to the academic, support and placement staff are appropriate. Ultimately, this SET area is to ensure the programme can provide students with an appropriate teaching and learning experience.

Graphs 4 and 5 illustrate that although programme management and resources (SET 3) attracted the highest number of conditions, this was most often concerning SET 3.8 and 3.14.

SET 3.14 requires an education provider to ensure that “where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.” In discussions with education providers there was often a fundamental misunderstanding of this standard. Sometimes education providers assumed that this standard only applies to students that would be physically manipulated by other students as part of their training. For example, professions such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy may teach manual handling techniques in physical role play sessions.

However, this standard can also apply to programmes where students take part in role play sessions, or sessions where they share personal information (as examples), in care or psychological professions. Our standards of education and training guidance document states that “this SET is mainly concerned with preventing physical injuries and preventing or managing emotional distress”. As a result of conditions set for this standard, many education providers have developed a consent form and policy which ensures that students know that they are able to opt out of sessions if they choose to. This is one way that education providers may be able to meet this standard.

SET 3.8 and SET 2.1 could be considered together when looking at Graph 5. The majority of conditions set for these standards required education providers to update documentation to reflect the change in regulator for social workers in England, along with other changes in the profession. We also frequently set conditions for SETs 2.1 and 3.8 for new programmes from other professions.

SET 2.1 requires education providers to ensure that “the admissions procedures give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.” SET 3.8 requires the education provider to ensure “the resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.” The conditions set for SET 2.1 were often to ensure the information for applicants was correct, such as information on the education provider’s website and in advertising materials. The conditions set for SET 3.8 were often to ensure that the resources designed to support learning for students were accurate, such as handbooks and module guides.

Sometimes, issues with programmes meeting these standards stemmed from education providers misunderstanding the differences in the role of the HCPC and TCSW.

The two organisations have different roles and requirements as the regulator and the professional body respectively. For example, each organisation has different requirements for student learning. The HCPC has SOPs for social workers in England and TCSW has the PCF.

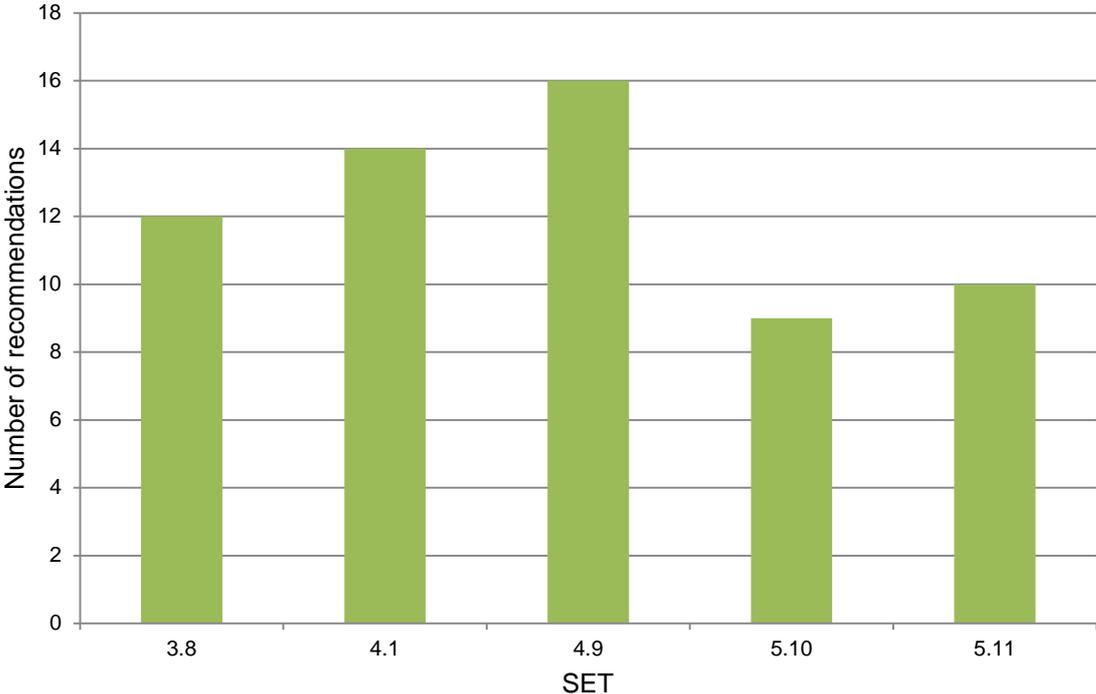
An education provider may be able to demonstrate that by adhering to professional body curriculum guidance they are meeting specific SETs and delivering the SOPs but they must ensure that the link to HCPC standards is clear and well-reasoned.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations are observations about the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for approval or on-going approval. Recommendations are normally made to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular SET has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

We made 1.7 recommendations on average per social work programme, and 0.7 recommendations on average per programme for all other professions. This difference would be expected for a profession meeting the SETs for the first time.

**Graph 6 The five SETs with the most recommendations made for social work programmes in 2012–13**



The direct link between conditions against SET 4.1 and SET 6.1 was not reflected in recommendations made against these SETs. There were fourteen recommendations made against SET 4.1 with only six against SET 6.1. For recommendations against SET 4.1, we were satisfied that programmes met this standard and that students completing the programme would meet the SOPs for social workers in England. These recommendations were usually based around how explicitly the SOPs were reflected in the information for students. We expect registrants to consider the SOPs as part of their professional development, so it is beneficial for students to understand what they are learning in the context of the SOPs.

All of the recommendations against SET 4.9 were due to education providers informing us that there may be changes to interprofessional learning (IPL) in the future. Usually there was no IPL on these programmes and this standard is only relevant to programmes when there is IPL. We made recommendations where the education provider had told us of plans to introduce IPL to remind them to consider this standard when making changes and to inform the HCPC if changes are made.

SET 5.10 requires “regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider”. The majority of recommendations against this standard were concerned with education providers ensuring equity in their relationships with non-statutory and statutory practice placements. Often statutory placements were more involved with a programme’s planning and design due to their historical involvement with the programme. Non-statutory organisations were not always as involved with programme development for several reasons. Firstly, they were often not so longstanding in their involvement with education providers. They also may not always be able to offer placements year-to-year due to resourcing issues and were often fewer in number compared to statutory placements.

There were several different recommendations against SET 5.11, a standard which ensures all parties involved are fully prepared for the placement. There were no apparent trends across these recommendations, with the exception that several recommendations were made to ensure practice placement providers fully understand their role in supporting students to meet the SOPs and that this is reflected in placement audit documentation.

## **Conclusions**

Following the successful data cleanse exercise undertaken in 2012-13 we will continue to liaise with education providers over the next two academic years to ensure that the records we hold for their programmes are accurate. We have seen a high proportion of the work based learning programmes which were transferred to the HCPC close in 2012-13. This was often due to education providers who deliver a number of programmes closing some, but not all, of their programmes.

The split between undergraduate and postgraduate programmes for social workers in England has changed slightly since the transfer in regulation. Again, this is linked to education providers with a number of programmes considering their provision as a whole and closing several programmes accordingly.

All of the programmes visited in 2012-13 were recommended for approval subject to meeting conditions. Although we set a similar number of conditions for social work programmes when compared to new programmes from other professions, there were differences in which SETs these conditions related to. Social work programmes generally received more conditions against SETs which are linked to the standards of proficiency for the profession. This is expected as it was the first opportunity for education provider to map their social work programmes to these standards. These standards also differ from previous regulatory requirements and other curriculum frameworks. In addition, there were a broad range of conditions set for social work programmes, with only 14 out of the 57 SETs receiving no conditions across all social work programmes visited. Many conditions were linked to issues with programme documentation, such as the presence of out of date terminology, lack of clarity with SETs and SOPs mapping, and well established policies and procedures not being reflected clearly.

There were also issues identified in relation to key areas of programme delivery, which have been discussed in detail as part of this paper. These included issues with the management of practice placements, the design and delivery of the curriculum and assessment, specific areas within the admissions process and the effective management of programmes.

These outcomes are expected as this is the first time social work programmes in England were required to engage with our standards. Furthermore, these outcomes reflect a common trend we have noted previously for other new professions regulated by the HCPC. It is also important to note that the number of conditions set for social work programmes and new programmes from other professions are broadly comparable. This indicates that none of the standards applied to social work programmes are indicative of a specific risk profile for the profession or a particular difficulty in engaging with our broad standards and flexible processes.

Importantly, all social work programmes which were visited in the 2012-13 academic year have now successfully completed the approval process. In doing so they have demonstrated how they meet our standards of education and training. Where necessary they have implemented changes to their programmes to ensure our regulatory requirements are met, responding specifically to any conditions set on approval outlined in the visitors' reports. The open-ended approval granted to these programmes will remain in place, subject to meeting our on-going monitoring requirements.

We will continue to review the outcomes from our approval visits to social work programmes on a regular basis throughout the next two academic years.

## Appendix 1 – List of tables and graphs

### List of tables

Table 1 Breakdown of closed transitionally approved programmes - by mode of study

Table 2 Summary of outcomes for social work programmes and all programmes visited in 2012–13

Table 3 Number of conditions set on social work programmes compared to programmes from other professions - by reason for visit

### List of graphs

Graph 1 Breakdown of closed transitionally approved programmes - by mode of study

Graph 2 Social work programmes visited - by qualification level and approval status

Graph 3 Comparison of programme numbers at the point of transfer and at the end of the 2012–13 - by qualification level

Graph 4 Number of conditions for social work programmes in 2012–13 – by SET

Graph 5 The six SETs with the most conditions set for social work programmes in 2012–13

Graph 6 The five SETs with the most recommendations made for social work programmes in 2012–13

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## Appendix 2 – List of programmes visited and outcomes

All HCPC reports on programme approval are published on our website. If you would like more information regarding one of the approval visits listed below, please see our website at [www.hcpc-uk.org](http://www.hcpc-uk.org)

<b>Education provider</b>	<b>Programme name</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Visit date</b>	<b>Status at 31 August 2013</b>
Sheffield Hallam University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	13 February 2013	Approved
Sheffield Hallam University	BSc (Hons) Applied Nursing (Learning Disability) and Generic Social Work	Full Time	13 February 2013	Approved
Sheffield Hallam University	Masters In Social Work	Full Time	13 February 2013	Approved
Sheffield Hallam University	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	13 February 2013	Approved
Liverpool Hope University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	07 March 2013	Approved
Liverpool Hope University	MA in Social Work	Full Time	07 March 2013	Approved
Liverpool Hope University	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	07 March 2013	Approved
Coventry University	BA (Hons) in Social Work	Full Time	13 March 2013	Approved
Coventry University	BA (Hons) in Social Work	Work Based learning	13 March 2013	Approved
Coventry University	MA Social Work	Full Time	13 March 2013	Approved
Coventry University	MA Social Work	Work Based learning	13 March 2013	Approved
London South Bank University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	13 March 2013	Approved
London South Bank University	MA Social Work	Full Time	13 March 2013	Approved
London South Bank University	MA Social Work	Work Based learning	13 March 2013	Approved
London South Bank University	PG Dip Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	13 March 2013	Approved

London South Bank University	PG Dip Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Work Based learning	13 March 2013	Approved
University of Manchester	MA in Social Work	Full Time	19 March 2013	Approved
University of Manchester	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	19 March 2013	Approved
University of Central Lancashire	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	11 April 2013	Approved
University of Central Lancashire	BA (Hons) Social Work	Work Based learning	11 April 2013	Approved
University of Central Lancashire	MA in Social Work	Full Time	11 April 2013	Approved
University of Central Lancashire	MA in Social Work	Work Based learning	11 April 2013	Approved
University of Central Lancashire	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	11 April 2013	Approved
University of Central Lancashire	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Work Based learning	11 April 2013	Approved
Bradford College	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	17 April 2013	Approved
Bradford College	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	17 April 2013	Approved
University of Chester	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	17 April 2013	Approved
University of Chester	MA Social Work	Full Time	17 April 2013	Approved
University of Chester	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	17 April 2013	Approved
Teesside University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	17 April 2013	Approved
Teesside University	MA Social Work (Pre-Qualifying)	Full Time	17 April 2013	Approved
Teesside University	Postgraduate Diploma Social Work	Full Time	17 April 2013	Approved
The City of Liverpool College	BA (Hons) in Social Work	Full Time	23 April 2013	Approved
Edge Hill University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	24 April 2013	Approved
Edge Hill University	BSc (Hons) Children's Nursing and Social Work	Full Time	24 April 2013	Approved

Edge Hill University	BSc (Hons) Learning Disabilities Nursing and Social Work	Full Time	24 April 2013	Approved
University of Salford	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	30 April 2013	Approved
University of Salford	BSc (Hons) Integrated Practice Learning Disabilities Nursing and Social Work	Full Time	30 April 2013	Approved
University of Salford	MA in Social Work	Full Time	30 April 2013	Approved
University of Salford	MA in Social Work	Part Time	30 April 2013	Approved
Manchester Metropolitan University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	01 May 2013	Approved
Manchester Metropolitan University	MA Social Work	Full Time	01 May 2013	Approved
Manchester Metropolitan University	PG Dip Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	01 May 2013	Approved
Anglia Ruskin University	BA (Hons) Social Work (Cambridge)	Full Time	02 May 2013	Approved
Anglia Ruskin University	BA (Hons) Social Work (Chelmsford)	Full Time	02 May 2013	Approved
Anglia Ruskin University	BA (Hons) Social Work (Chelmsford)	Part Time	02 May 2013	Approved
Anglia Ruskin University	BA (Hons) Social Work (Peterborough)	Part Time	02 May 2013	Approved
Anglia Ruskin University	MA Social Work (Cambridge)	Full Time	02 May 2013	Approved
Anglia Ruskin University	MA Social Work (Chelmsford)	Full Time	02 May 2013	Approved
University of Cumbria	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	08 May 2013	Approved
University of Cumbria	MA Social Work	Full Time	08 May 2013	Approved
Liverpool John Moores University	BA (Hons) in Social Work	Full Time	14 May 2013	Approved
Liverpool John Moores University	MA in Social Work	Full Time	14 May 2013	Approved
Liverpool John Moores University	Postgraduate Diploma Social Work (Step up to Social Work)	Work Based learning	14 May 2013	Approved
University of Lancaster	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	15 May 2013	Pending - Approved 12 September 2013
University of Lancaster	MA Social Work	Full Time	15 May 2013	Pending - Approved 12 September 2013

University of Lancaster	MA Social Work with Religious Studies	Full Time	15 May 2013	Pending - Approved 12 September 2013
University of Lancaster	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work	Full Time	15 May 2013	Pending - Approved 12 September 2013
Nottingham Trent University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	22 May 2013	Approved
Nottingham Trent University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Work Based learning	22 May 2013	Approved
Nottingham Trent University	MA Social Work	Full Time	22 May 2013	Approved
Nottingham Trent University	MA Social Work	Work Based learning	22 May 2013	Approved
Nottingham Trent University	PGDip in Social Work (Masters exit route only)	Full Time	22 May 2013	Approved
Nottingham Trent University	PGDip in Social Work (Masters exit route only)	Work Based learning	22 May 2013	Approved
University of Hull	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	05 June 2013	Pending - Approved 10 October 2013
University of Hull	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	05 June 2013	Pending - Approved 10 October 2013
University of Hull	Masters Award in Social Work	Full Time	05 June 2013	Pending - Approved 10 October 2013
University of Hull	Masters Award in Social Work	Part Time	05 June 2013	Pending - Approved 10 October 2013
University of Hull	Post Graduate Diploma Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	05 June 2013	Pending - Approved 10 October 2013
University of Hull	Post Graduate Diploma Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Part Time	05 June 2013	Pending - Approved 10 October 2013
University of East London	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	19 June 2013	Approved
University of East London	MA in Social Work	Full Time	19 June 2013	Approved

### Appendix 3 – Suggested schedule for a joint College of Social Work endorsement and Health and Care Professions Council approval event

Where HEIs have chosen to seek TCSW endorsement alongside HCPC approval through a joint event, both organisations will wish to coordinate the agenda as far as possible to reduce the burden on HEIs. However the TCSW has agreed that it would wish to conclude their visit in one day, wherever possible, whereas HCPC visits are scheduled over 2 days.

The schedule attached sets out one way in which programmes may be able to organise a joint visit event in a way that meets the needs of both TCSW and the HCPC. **It is the responsibility of the programme to check that the agenda below meets the needs of the HCPC visiting team and TCSW reviewers prior to finalising any arrangements.**

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## Agenda

Day one	
<b>12.00pm</b>	<b>Working lunch and HCPC private meeting</b>
	As an independent regulator, the HCPC must come to its decisions independently, which is why private meetings are scheduled throughout the event. This specific meeting will be used to discuss the documentation and agree the detailed points of discussion in the various meetings.
<b>2.00pm</b>	<b>Joint panel meeting</b>
	This meeting allows the HCPC panel and the other joint panel members (eg chair, secretary, quality assurance personnel, professional body representatives) to agree the detailed points of discussion for the meetings with the senior team, students, programme team and practice placement providers and general approach to the event.
<b>2.30pm</b>	<b>Facilities and resources</b>
	A tour allows the HCPC panel to determine whether the learning resources available are appropriate to support the programme. The tour may include specialist teaching areas, the library and IT facilities.  This meeting can be conducted in different ways (via a physical tour of facilities, a virtual tour or documentary evidence of resources available). Alternative arrangements can be discussed with the education executive allocated for your visit.
<b>3.30pm</b>	<b>Meeting with students</b>
	This meeting allows the HCPC panel to gauge the students' experience of the programme. Ideally, this meeting should include student representatives. Any issues raised will be discussed with the programme team in their separate meeting on day two.  For new programmes where there are no current students, the HCPC panel would like to meet with students from an existing course in the same subject area.
<b>4.30pm</b>	<b>Meeting with senior staff (eg senior managers, Deans / Heads of School / Faculty, senior managers from funding / commissioning bodies)</b>
	This meeting allows the HCPC panel to discuss issues with those responsible for the resourcing and financing (as opposed to the delivery) of the programme. For programmes delivered in partnership, the HCPC panel would like to meet with senior representatives from the other bodies.
<b>5.30pm</b>	<b>Finish</b>
Day two	
<b>9.30 am</b>	<b>Joint panel meeting</b>
	This meeting allows the HCPC panel and any other panel

	members, (eg internal/external validation) to feedback their findings from day one and for all parties (including TCSW) to reconfirm the detailed points of discussion for the meetings and general approach to the day.	
<b>10.00 am</b>	<b>Meeting with practice placement providers and practice educators</b>	
	This meeting allows the HCPC and TCSW panel to discuss issues with the practice placement providers, managers and educators responsible for practice placements and for contributions to the design and delivery of the programme.	
<b>11.00 am</b>	<b>Meeting with programme team (including the programme leader, tutors, and placement coordinator)</b>	
	This meeting allows the HCPC and TCSW panel to discuss issues with those responsible for the day-to-day management and delivery of the programme. If the education provider wishes to give a presentation, then this should be incorporated here.	
<b>1.00 pm</b>	<b>Meeting with service user and carer representatives</b>	
	This meeting gives the HCPC and TCSW panel the opportunity to talk to service users and carers who are involve in various aspects of the programme to give their views about the programme and how they are supported in contributing to its delivery, (eg admissions and selection, design and delivery, assessment and evaluation).	
<b>1.45 pm</b>	<b>Working lunch and TCSW meeting with students</b>	<b>Working lunch and HCPC private meeting</b>
	This meeting allows the TCSW panel to hear the students' experience of the programme. Ideally, this should include student representatives from each current cohort and possibly any ex-students who are able to attend.	During their working lunch, the HCPC panel will meet privately to allow the visitors to agree the recommended outcome of the approval visit including any conditions and recommendations. If there are any unresolved issues, the HCPC panel reserves the right to recall individuals at this stage, to investigate matters further.
<b>2.45 pm</b>	<b>TCSW private meeting</b>	
	The TCSW endorsement team will meet privately to review the evidence they have gained from the above meetings and to consider their recommendations and what feedback will be given to the programme. If there are any unresolved issues the team reserves the right to recall individuals at this stage for	

	further discussion.	
<b>3.45 pm</b>	<b>Joint panel meeting</b>	
	This meeting allows the HCPC panel and TCSW team and any other panel members (eg internal/external validation) to feedback the visitors recommended outcome to the joint panel and discuss how the conclusions from the visit will be delivered to the programme team.	
<b>4.00 pm</b>	<b>Feedback to the programme team</b>	
	<p>The HCPC panel will give informal feedback, if appropriate, on the visitors' recommended outcome for the approval visit. However, please note that this is not a requirement of the Health and Social Work Professions Order 2001. If appropriate, details of any conditions and recommendations will be given verbally.</p> <p>At the end of the visit TCSW Reviewers will provide informal feedback to the programme team where appropriate and confirm agreed time-scales and next steps.</p> <p>Other internal or external validation panel members would also feedback at this point, if in attendance.</p>	
<b>4.30 pm</b>	<b>Finish</b>	