

Building a Safe and Confident Future:

Implementing the recommendations
of the Social Work Task Force

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A joint implementation plan from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Department of Health and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in partnership with the Social Work Reform Board

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Ministerial Foreword



Every day high quality social work makes a big difference, not only to the safety, prospects and life chances of individuals, but also to the stability and equity of our society. As a society we need to ensure we have a workforce of good quality social workers, who have the resources to make this difference every day.

In December 2009, the Social Work Task Force made fifteen focused recommendations for the fundamental reform of the system that supports social workers in England. This plan describes how the government is working with employers, higher education institutions, the profession itself and people who use social work services to put those recommendations into effect. It sets out our priorities and ambitions for that reform programme and is intended to act as a route map to support the partnership approach to reform which is being developed through the Social Work Reform Board, and which must be replicated at local level.

Helping children, families and adults who are in crisis or in difficult or dangerous situations to be safe, to cope and to take control of their lives again requires exceptional professional judgement. Social workers have to be highly skilled in their interactions and must draw on a sound professional understanding of social work. And they have to be able to do all of this while sustaining strong partnerships with the children or adults they are working with, and their families: sometimes they will be the only people offering the stability and consistency that is badly needed.

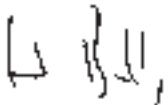
At the same time, social workers must be able to make and to defend complex professional judgements about when legal powers should be used to ensure that people are safe. They need to be able to draw in the different skills of other professionals to support their clients. And they must be able to handle the very considerable personal and emotional impact of the cases on which they work.

Social workers must take responsibility, individually and as a profession for developing and demonstrating these high levels of skill and judgement. But, they cannot be expected to do so alone. Higher education institutions, employers and the government – with the support of the regulator and of workforce development bodies – must all, also, take responsibility for developing a culture of strong professional skills and continuing professional development, and for ensuring that social workers have the support they need to practice safely and effectively. We must be transparent and open about the ways we are doing this with the people who use social work services, as well as with practitioners and student social workers, as we shape reform and put a stronger system in place. We must do this in a context where people from different

professional backgrounds need to work closely together to do their best for the communities they serve.

The Social Work Task Force established a clear consensus about the changes that are needed, and obtained a strong commitment from employers, educators, the profession and from Government departments to deliver them together. They took particular steps to engage a wide cross section of the profession. This engagement must continue, to ensure that the reform programme is informed by a real understanding of the impact on the front line.

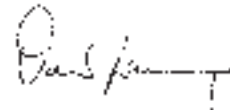
Reform will take time and will not always be straightforward. At a time of considerable economic uncertainty we must ensure, more than ever, that our efforts are focused, based on clear and shared expectations, and make the best use of resources. But we must also recognise that high quality social work has both economic and wider benefits to society, and make every effort to prioritise the investment that will allow those benefits to be realised. This plan is therefore supported by more than £200 million that we will invest in social work recruitment, education and workforce development in 2010/11 in order to establish a firm foundation for the long term reform programme that is needed.



Ed Balls,
Secretary of State for
Children, Schools and Families



Andy Burnham
Secretary of State
for Health



David Lammy
Minister for
Higher Education

Executive summary

1. In December 2009, the Government accepted the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force for a programme of comprehensive reform for social work in England. In its report, 'Building a safe, confident future' the Task Force described social work as a profession which is essential to the nation, but which has been trapped in a 'vicious circle' of problems which undermine efforts to improve.
2. This Implementation Plan explains how the Government is now working, with employers, social work educators, the social work profession, and with people who use social work services, to develop that reform programme and put it in place. It provides a route map for improvement – setting clear milestones for those who must work together to develop and deliver reforms, and giving current and future social workers, people who use their services, professionals who work with social workers and members of the public, clarity about the changes they should expect and when they should expect to see them.

The purpose and value of social work

3. The Task Force was established at a time of considerable public criticism of social workers. In response to concerns about low levels of understanding of the purpose and value of social work by the media and members of the public, the Task Force developed a clear and simple description of what social work is, and what social workers do:

Social work *helps adults and children to be safe, so that they can cope and take control of their lives again.*

Social workers *[can] make life better for people in crisis who are struggling to cope, feel alone and cannot sort out their problems unaided.*¹

4. This description makes a strong case for the value of the profession not only for the individuals who use social work services, but also for the whole of society. If they are to be able to live up to these expectations, social workers need to be able to demonstrate high quality professional skills and judgement, and they need education and a work environment which enables them to exercise those skills and judgement.

The Task Force's recommendations for a reformed system

5. The Task Force was clear that the profession, employers, social work educators and government all have responsibility for ensuring that social workers can live up to these expectations. They made 15 focused recommendations for reform which come together

¹ Public Description of Social Work, Social Work Task Force July 2009

to create a clear picture of the system that must be in place to support social work, including:

- an independent College of Social Work which takes responsibility for high standards of practice, promotes a strong culture of professional development and establishes a powerful voice for the profession
- a career framework for social workers which encourages excellent social workers to stay in front line practice and is reflected in pay arrangements, underpinned by clear understanding of what should be expected of social workers at each stage in their education and career
- a reviewed initial training curriculum framework and an assessed first year in employment for new social workers, coupled with a focus on recruiting the most suitable potential entrants to the profession and a commitment to their development
- standards for employers which ensure that social workers have manageable workloads and high quality supervision, and action to develop a culture of continuing professional development which is well supported by employers and higher education institutions and ensures that social workers have the skills and support they need to practice safely and effectively
- and, once these key elements are in place, the introduction of a 'licence to practise' model of regulation which can ensure that the highest standards of practice are maintained by members of the profession and supported by their employers.²

How the Task Force's recommendations will be delivered

6. In response to the Task Force's work, employers, higher education institutions, the social work profession, government departments, workforce development bodies, regulators and people who use social work services have all recognised their joint interest in ensuring that these reforms are delivered.
7. To support them to work together, the Government has established the Social Work Reform Board. The Board will have a critical role in driving reform and will report publically and to Ministers on progress.
8. The reform programme will require sustained commitment from all partners, over a number of years. To establish the firmest possible foundation for this, this Implementation Plan is accompanied by a commitment to government investment of more than £200m in 2010–11. This investment is additional to core funding for social work in higher education, local government and the NHS. It will be used to support recruitment, student bursaries and practice placements, workforce development, improvement of IT in children's services, piloting of new career grades and supporting employers to remodel

² Introduction of this change to regulation, which we expect to begin from September 2016, will be dependent on a strong model for delivery of the Assessed Year in Employment being in place, and the system having the capacity to give social workers the support they need to meet regulatory expectations. The government will conduct and consult on a full options and impact assessment for the changes to the regulation system.

services. It also includes funding to support the profession in establishing the independent College, and resources for delivery of the reform programme.

9. Building on this strong foundation, the reform programme will need to be carefully planned and phased to build on the strengths in the current system and to protect the delivery of essential services while new approaches are tested and put in place. Reforms must also be taken forward in ways which recognise their interdependence; in combination they promise to make a significant difference.
10. Reform for the profession must result in concrete improvements to adult and children's services. As the Task Force recommended, it must be underpinned by the development of a supply strategy for social work which enables us to ensure that sufficient numbers of high quality social workers are being recruited, educated and retained.
11. Adults, children, young people, families and carers who have experience of social workers must be fully involved in the development of the reforms and in their delivery. Their perspectives and expectations must have a direct impact on the selection of individual social workers, their education and performance management and on the future development of the profession.
12. This is a reform programme to strengthen social work in England. However, it is important to recognise that social work is an international profession and we must retain the flexibility for social workers to train and work in, and for employers to recruit from, the rest of the UK, Europe and the world.

What will happen, when

13. Some of the changes that the Task Force has recommended can and must make a difference immediately. Others need extensive consultation and will take longer to put in place. Chapters 2 to 6 of this Implementation Plan look at each of the Task Force's recommendations in turn and describe the progress that is already being made, what will happen next year and the ambitions and milestones for the future.

Starting out (chapter 2)

14. Strengthened entry requirements for university entrance will be put in place for entrants from September 2012. Employers are also encouraged to develop 'grow your own' entry routes, and the new employment-based *Step up to Social Work* programme³ will be piloted in statutory children's services from September 2010.
15. The initial education curriculum, the length and expectations of practice placements and the impact of the current bursary system will be reviewed, with new arrangements to be phased in from September 2012.
16. New social workers in statutory and voluntary settings will continue to be able to access Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQS) support through their employers in 2010–11. Building on these programmes, CWDC and Skills for Care will work together, through the

³ Subject to its approval by GSCC

Reform Board, to develop an assessment model for the new Assessed Year in Employment, which will be piloted from 2012 and we expect to be in place fully by September 2016.

17. From summer 2010, GSCC will make its regulation of higher education institutions more transparent, including by publishing inspection reports and judgements online. To ensure consistently high quality education, a new regulatory framework will be put in place for initial social work education (undergraduate and masters) from September 2012.

Time, resources and support (chapter 3)

18. Employers will work with others on the reform board, with support from the government and workforce development organisations to ensure that social workers have the support they need to practice effectively.
19. In 2010–11, we expect all employers of social workers to work with their staff to conduct a local 'health check' of the support they have in place, and to take action for improvement where necessary, using the tool that was developed by the Task Force.⁴
20. Employers will work together and with other Reform Board members to develop the Standard for Employers that the Task Force recommended, including national standards for supervision. This will put clear expectations in place for the support that social workers need to practice effectively. We expect it to be rolled out by all relevant employers from April 2011.
21. To further improve children's social care records and the IT systems used for them, and to ensure that they support good professional practice, the DCSF will make a £15m grant to Local Authorities in 2010–11. In addition, work at national level to reduce national prescription and support local authorities to take ownership of and improve their local Integrated Children's System (ICS) will continue, including to support sharing of good practice and to develop further guidance on simplifying local systems and improving usability.
22. The Social Work Manager support programme that the Task Force recommended will be developed, building on current programmes that support front line managers, with pilots beginning early in 2011.

Career structure and continuing professional development (chapter 4)

23. Consultation on the new framework for Continuing Professional Development in social work will begin from summer 2010 and be followed by phased introduction starting in 2011. A core plank of the new framework will be a new Masters in Social Work Practice, which will be piloted from September 2011.
24. The career sub-group of the Reform Board have already begun to develop a career structure for social workers which will encourage the best practitioners to stay in front line practice. Local Government Employers and trade unions have begun to work together to

⁴ The Task Force's 'health check' can be found on the website of the Social Work Reform Board: www.dcsf.gov.uk/swrb

establish how progression grades for social workers can be built into local government pay arrangements. New national assessment arrangements for the Advanced Social Professional Status will be piloted in children's services from summer 2010.

Leadership and public understanding (chapter 5)

25. Work is underway to establish an independent College of Social Work, recruitment of the interim chair will begin in March 2010 and the College is expected to be established as a fully functioning independent organisation by April 2011. Like the Royal Colleges in the health sector the College of Social Work will help give the profession the standing it deserves and the status it needs to influence national policy making and public debate.
26. Social work and social workers continue to receive considerable media attention, demonstrating the critical importance of, and public interest in, the quality and capacity of the profession. The *Help Give Them a Voice* and *Be the Difference* recruitment campaigns which the government supported in 2009 have improved public understanding of the profession and led to over 53,000 expressions of interest in becoming a social worker.

Regulation and supply (chapter 6)

27. As capacity is developed in other parts of the system, the Government will also work with GSCC to introduce the 'licence to practise' arrangements for professional regulation which the Task Force has recommended. Licensing will be linked to 'protected title' in social work so that, eventually, social workers will not be able to practise as social workers unless they are licensed.
28. This will mean that after graduation they will need to have completed their assessed year in employment to obtain their licence and will no longer be awarded 'protected title' simply as a result of passing their initial training course. They will also need to demonstrate, periodically, that they are maintaining 'licensed' standard.
29. Introduction of this change to regulation, which we expect to apply from September 2016, will be dependent on a strong model for delivery of the Assessed Year in Employment being in place, and the system having the capacity to give social workers the support they need to meet regulatory expectations. The government will conduct and consult on a full options and impact assessment for the changes to the regulation system, including further work to determine whether and how the licence should also be linked to particular CPD requirements or the career structure, before taking forward legislation.
30. A key role of the Social Work Reform Board will be to consider how a model for understanding supply and demand can be developed from the understanding of the system that we have now, and can work in a system which lacks strong national levers around supply and demand. The Social Work Reform Board will work to:
 - build a model for demand which draws on feedback from the employer health check exercise and employers' reports of demand; and

- build a system understanding of supply and demand and test those assumptions, and consult with the sector on how to make this accessible for use at local and regional level.

31. Improvements will be made to the data available about social worker supply and demand in children's and adult services, including new national indicators for vacancy and turnover rates in children's services.

Delivering the reform programme

32. The Task Force sent a strong message to the Government and its partners that this reform programme must establish a purposeful and cohesive system, with a clear focus on the improvement of social work as a single profession. It argued strongly for *'rationalisation of the delivery organisations, partnerships and standard setting mechanisms ... if the profession is to become more effective, it needs to be supported by organisations which are more strongly focused on the improvement of social work.'*

33. Chapter 7, therefore, addresses the 'how' and 'ways of working' of the reform programme. It identifies the ways in which government will work with partners on the Social Work Reform Board to establish shared expectations about what needs to be achieved and clear accountabilities within the system, and how social workers and the children, young people, families, adults and carers who use social work services will be involved. It sets out the approach that will be taken to rationalise standards; establish effective partnerships at national, regional and local level; and to secure best value from the resources in the system.

34. This reform programme will be taken forward in three phases, over the next 5–10 years:

Phase one – Transition	2010–11
Phase two – System Reform	2011–2014
Phase three – Embedding Improvement	2014 and beyond

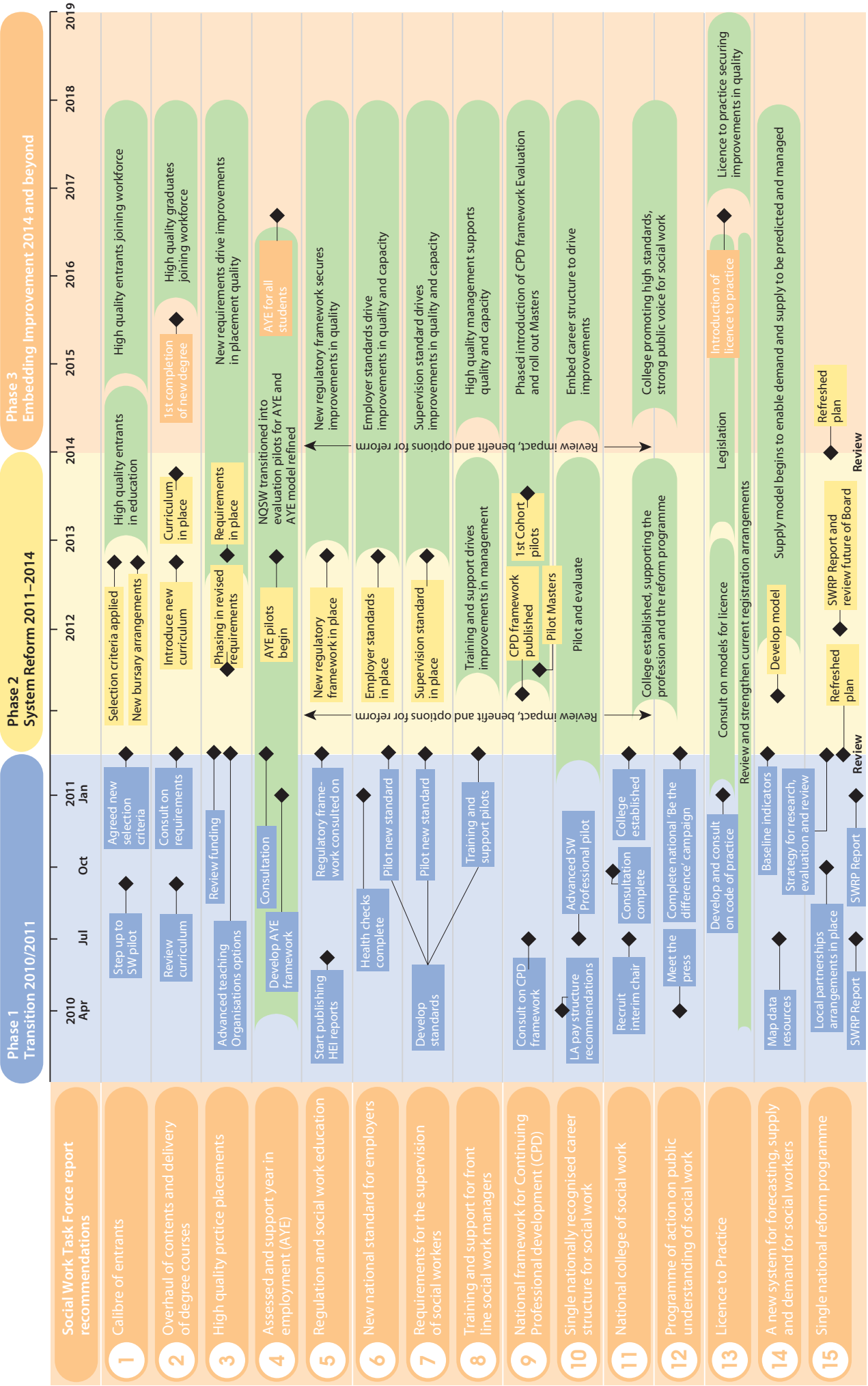
35. Progress and priorities will be assessed at key points in the programme, with this Implementation Plan being refreshed for the first time early in 2011 to confirm funding arrangements for phase two.

36. It is essential that the reform programme is underpinned by clarity about what success will look like and that the impact of the reforms is kept under regular review so that priorities can be adjusted as improvements are realised or circumstances change. To support this, the government will work with partners on the Reform Board to put in place a research and evaluation strategy which allows all partners to be clear about the impact on key indicators of success, including:

- supply of social workers and vacancy/turnover rates;
- how social workers report their job satisfaction and workload;

- how employers report their satisfaction with social workers and their impact on the quality of service;
- the success of HEIs in recruiting and educating students who go on to do well in the workplace; and
- how users of services and members of the public report their experience and perceptions of social workers.

Social Work Reform Programme



Milestones and activities to be confirmed following review in early 2011

Milestones and activities to be confirmed following review in early 2014

Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this document

- 1.1.1** Putting social work on a strong and confident footing for the future, so that people who need support from social workers can rely on high quality services, is a critical priority for the government, for the profession itself and for those who employ and educate social workers. This document marks the start of the comprehensive reform programme recommended by the Social Work Task Force, which will require sustained commitment over the next five to ten years. It sets out how we will all work together – and with people who use social work services – to deliver the reforms required.
- 1.1.2** Some of the Task Force's recommendations must and will make a difference immediately. Others must be developed through extensive consultation and will take longer to put in place. All must also build on the good practice and innovative working already in the system. This document is intended to provide a route map for improvement of social work in England. It sets clear milestones for those who must work together to deliver and develop reform, giving current and future social workers, and people who use their services, clarity about the changes they should expect and when they should expect to see them. It has been developed with members of the new Social Work Reform Board which ministers have appointed to drive and oversee the reform programme.
- 1.1.3** To establish the firmest possible foundation for reform, this Implementation Plan is accompanied by a commitment to government investment of more than £200m in 2010–11⁵. The Implementation Plan will be refreshed early in 2011 to take stock of progress and maintain momentum, and to confirm funding commitments for subsequent years.

5 Combined DCSF and DH funding, in addition to core funding for university programmes and local services and on top of the £237m Social Care Reform Grant and the £147m DH contribution to the Area Based Grant for adult social care. The funding includes continuation of current funding for student bursaries and practice placements, for Newly Qualified Social Work programmes in adult and children's services and for the children's recruitment, retention and remodelling programmes led by CWDC. In addition, it includes a new Local Social Work Improvement Fund of £23m for children's services, a £15m grant to local authorities for further improvement to IT systems in children's social care and funding the College Development Group to support the establishment of a College of Social Work

1.2 The Social Work Task Force

- 1.2.1** The Social Work Task Force was established in December 2008, at a time of considerable public concern about the quality of social work in England. Its remit related to social work as a single profession, covering both children's and adult services. Its work was also informed by the recommendations of Lord Laming's report, *The Protection of Children in England* (March 2009) and by the investigations of the Children and Families Parliamentary Select Committee into training and development of children and families social workers (July 2009). In formulating its recommendations the Task Force took evidence from, and consulted widely with, social workers and their employers, people who use social work services, academics and others who work with or have expertise in social work.
- 1.2.2** The Task Force wrote to Ministers in May 2009 with an immediate response to the recommendations of Lord Laming and to set out its views on the future of the Integrated Children's System in children's services. It published a more substantive interim report, *Facing up to the task*, in July 2009 which summarised the findings of its evidence gathering and consultation and defined the problems that needed to be addressed. The Task Force's final report, *Building a safe, confident future*, made 15 clear recommendations for comprehensive reform in social work. These were accepted by the Government in December 2009⁶.
- 1.2.3** To inform its work, the Task Force also commissioned the first ever comprehensive investigation into social workers' workload and use of time.⁷ This survey which is published alongside this document resulted in 1153 replies – making it the largest ever survey of social work workloads in England. Diaries were kept for one week between March – June 2009. 63% of the social workers worked in Local Authority children's services, 25% in adult services, 2% in merged services and 12% in the voluntary and independent sector.

⁶ The Task Force's reports, and the Government's responses can be found at www.dcsf.gov.uk/swtf

⁷ Baginsky et al 2010 *Messages from the frontline: findings from the 2009 Survey and Interviews with Senior Managers*. This can be found at www.dcsf.gov.uk/swtf

- Almost half of respondents worked more than their contracted hours, with 9% working more than 9 hours overtime per week
- More than 25% reported they were receiving supervision less frequently than every 4 weeks
- They spent an average of 73% of their time on client related work, as part of this 22% of their time was spent on recording
- Those working in children's services gave ICS as the single most difficult factor in their professional life
- Just over 20% reported holding more than 20 active cases, although the way caseloads were defined varied
- 70% of frontline social workers in adult services were satisfied with their jobs compared to 56% in children's services

1.3 From current improvements to comprehensive reform

1.3.1 Government, employers, educators and the profession did not wait for the Task Force's recommendations before acting to address the challenges affecting social work. As a result of the investment, initiatives and new ways of working that have been put in place in recent years, we are already beginning to see signs of improvement.

1.3.2 For example:

- The Government's national social worker recruitment campaigns, *Help give them a voice* and *Be the Difference* used celebrity actors and real life examples to engage with the public about the reality of the work of social workers with adults and children, and to attract people to the profession. 53,000 people have registered with the Children's Workforce Development Council for further information on how to become a social worker.
- In September 2009 all new graduate social workers entering statutory and voluntary sector roles in adult and children's services were, for the first time, able to access support and enhanced supervision through the new Newly Qualified Social Worker programme administered by the Children's Workforce Development Council and Skills for Care.
- 600 qualified social workers have registered an interest in coming back to working with children and families through CWDC's Return to Social Work initiative; training programmes have begun in several local authorities.
- UK-wide applications to social work and social policy degree courses had risen by over 40% this year – one of the largest increases across all degree subjects.⁸

⁸ Application numbers, UCAS, February 2010: 52,238 applications and increase of 41% over previous year. This figure refers to number of applications made rather than number of applicants. Applications to approved social work degree courses are counted in the same category by UCAS as some other social policy degrees

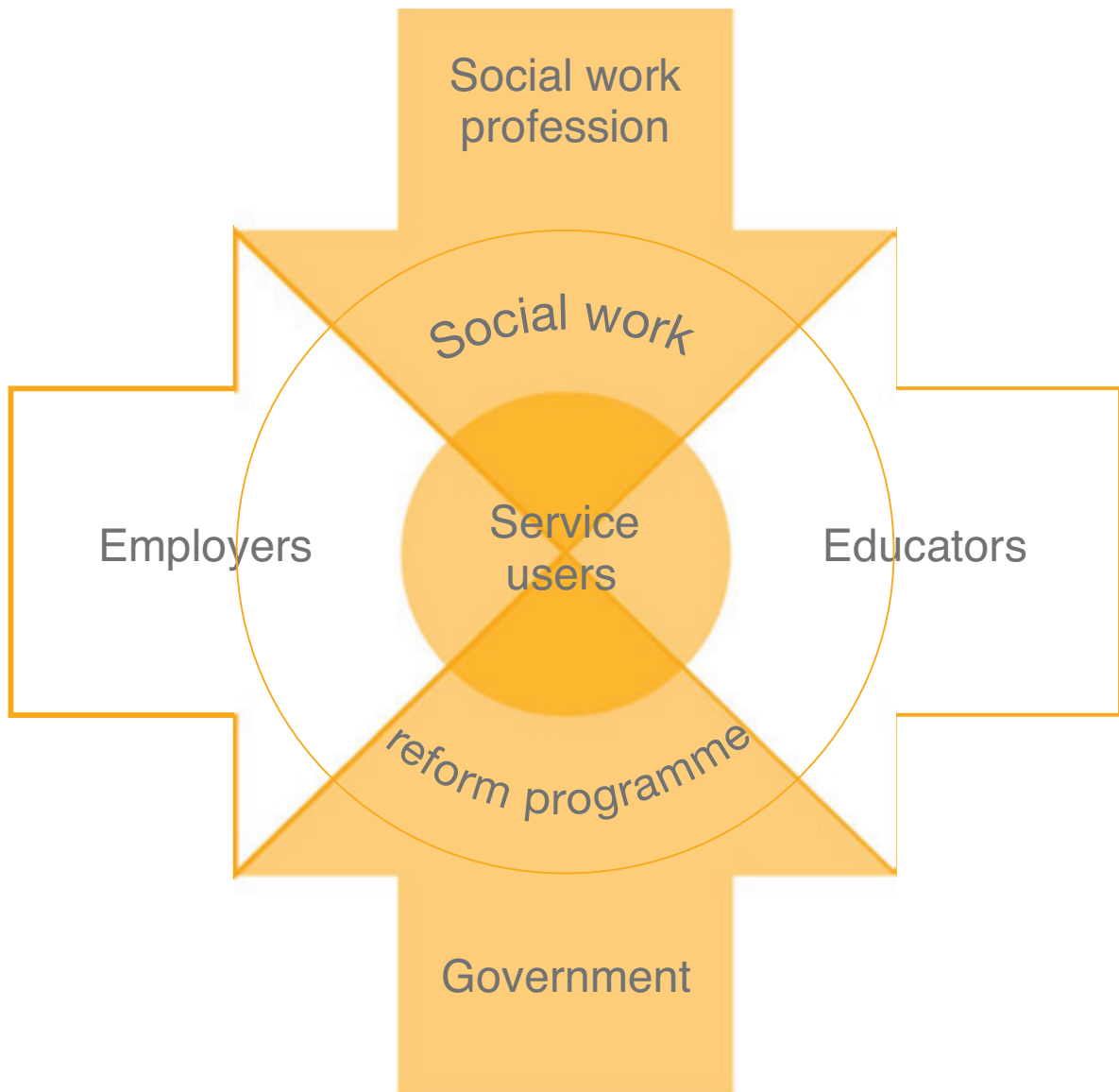
- Improvements have been made to the quality and quantity of practice learning, with an additional 551 placements, 570 additional practice educators and the development of national quality standards as a result of the work of the Social Work Development Partnership.
- The General Social Care Council has put in place new leadership and increased capacity in its investigation function. The GSCC will play a full and active role in this reform programme and its work to strengthen its conduct function will continue.
- In June 2009, in response to the Social Work Task Force's first report, the DCSF changed its approach to the regulation of IT systems in children's social work and no longer requires that local systems should comply with central specifications. It has embarked on a programme of support to local authorities to ensure that systems support high quality professional practice. This includes work with expert social workers and their managers to develop guidance for local authorities about how their computer systems can be simplified and how usability can be improved.

1.3.3 In taking forward the Task Force's recommendations, we need to build on these improvements, and good and innovative work in many settings and higher education institutions, to ensure that there is a strong and sustainable system in place to support social workers to practice at the highest possible level.

1.3.4 This will require a partnership approach to reform. Employers, social work educators and the profession all need to take responsibility for establishing high expectations of social work and putting in place the system that can deliver them. To do so they will require strong leadership and support from government and will need to engage closely with service users and front line social workers as the reforms are developed and put in place.

1.3.5 To support them to work together to do this, the Government has established the Social Work Reform Board which brings together employers, educators, the profession and service users. The Board will have a critical role in driving reform and will report publically and to Ministers on progress.

Figure 1.1: All parts of the system must work together to reform social work and improve service users' experience



- 1.3.6** Service users – adults, children, young people, families and carers – must be fully involved in the development of the reforms and in their delivery. Their perspectives, expectations and experiences must have a direct impact on the selection of individual social workers, their education and performance management and on the way that the profession develops.
- 1.3.7** This is a reform programme to strengthen social work in England. However, it is important to recognise that social work is an international profession – reforms must be put in place in consultation with other UK nations and we must retain the flexibility for social workers to train and work in, and for employers to recruit from, the rest of the UK, Europe and the world.
- 1.3.8** Reform will only be successful if social workers themselves participate fully in shaping and driving it. The independent College of Social Work will play a critical role in helping them

to do that, but the Reform Board and its individual members will work actively to consult with and involve current social workers, and social work students, as the detail of the reforms are developed and put in place.

1.3.9 In recognition of the need to maintain momentum for social work reform, to consult fully on key developments and to secure long term commitment from all partners, there will be a phased approach to the delivery of the reforms described in this document:

- 2010–11: Phase one – **Transition** (investment and programmes to address the priority issues; quick wins that strengthen the system; intensive work to develop the partnership approach, tools and standards which will establish shared expectations to guide future work).
- 2011–2014: Phase two – **System Reform** (putting in place the key elements of the new system and continuing investment and intervention to build capacity in the workforce).
- 2014 and beyond: Phase three – **Embedding Improvement** (consolidating reform to establish a system which delivers consistently high quality social work and can respond effectively to new challenges).

Figure 1.2: Phased reform programme



1.3.10 The detail of how future milestones will be reached and key reforms implemented must be worked out in partnership between government, the profession, employers and educators. 2010–11 will be an important transitional year in which development work will be supported by investment to lay the foundations of future reform. The timeline at the end of this chapter sets out the key milestones throughout the full period of the reform programme. The Implementation Plan will be refreshed early in 2011 to take stock of progress and maintain momentum, and to confirm funding commitments and milestones for subsequent years.

1.4 The purpose and value of social work as a single profession

1.4.1 To support its work, the Social Work Task Force developed a simple public description of what social work is, and what social workers do.

Public description of social work⁹

Social work helps adults and children to be safe so they can cope and take control of their lives again

Social workers [can] make life better for people in crisis who are struggling to cope, feel alone and cannot sort out their problems unaided

How social workers do this depends on the circumstances. Usually they work in partnership with the people they are supporting – check out what they need, find what will help them, build their confidence, and open doors to other services. Sometimes, in extreme situations such as where people are at risk of harm or in danger of hurting others, social workers have to take stronger action to protect them – they have the legal powers and duties to do this.

You may think you already do this for your friends and family but social workers have specialist training in fully analysing problems and unmet needs, in how people develop and relate to each other, in understanding the challenging circumstances some people face, and in how best to help them cope and make progress. They are qualified to tell when people are in danger of being harmed or harming others and know when and how to use their legal powers and responsibilities in these situations.

You may think that you'll never need a social worker but there is a wide range of situations where you or your family might need one, such as:

- caring for family members;
- having problems with family relationships and conflict;
- struggling with the challenges of growing old;
- suffering serious personal troubles and mental distress;
- having drug and alcohol problems;
- facing difficulties as a result of disability;
- being isolated within the community; or
- having practical problems with money or housing.

1.4.2 A clear understanding of the work that society needs social workers for, and the ways in which their effective practice can improve peoples' lives, must underpin every aspect of the reform programme. The Task Force was clear that social work should remain a single profession, with initial education laying the foundations for social workers who should then be able to specialise within adult or children's services – or to transfer their skills and knowledge between the two – as their careers develop. The strong framework for continuing professional development and the national career structure they recommended will need to be developed in ways which enable this. The Task Force recognised in its report that social work practice is underpinned by principles of equality, justice and human rights. These principles must be applied to all areas of the reform programme.

⁹ Facing up to the task, Social Work Task Force, July 2009

- 1.4.3** The Task Force was also clear that professionals themselves should take personal responsibility for their continuing development and for developing specialist knowledge and a strong understanding of the evidence that underpins effective practice – with the support of their employers and access to high quality opportunities. Development might involve moving between research, teaching and practice, as well as progressing to advanced or specialist roles in front line practice and developing the skills to educate and supervise students and front line colleagues. The Government is committed to working with HEFCE and higher education institutions to ensure that social work education remains appropriately prioritised, within the context of wider funding pressures.
- 1.4.4** Building on a clear and common understanding of the contribution the social work profession can make, it is also essential to understand the skills that social workers need in the different service settings in which they work. The following sections set out the key aspects of social work which are important in adult and children’s services, and describe the sector-specific support to employers which will be taken forward by Skills for Care (for adult social work and social care) and the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) in children’s services, as part of the wider reform programme. The Government recognises that employers need support to play a full role in this reform programme, whilst they also ensure the effective delivery of social work services at a time of high pressures in children’s services, changes in the delivery of adult social care services, and worrying vacancy and turnover rates.

1.5 Social work in adult services

- 1.5.1** In adult services, social workers are essential to the delivery of personalised services and to achieving better outcomes with adults of all ages who need services, support or protection. Social work is focussed on supporting independence, promoting choice and control for people facing difficulties due to disability, mental health problems, effects of age, substance misuse, and other circumstances.
- 1.5.2** To support the most effective use of social work skills, and building on the Task Force’s public description of social work (above), the Department of Health, working with Skills for Care, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and Social Care Association have developed a statement of the role of social work in adult services¹⁰. The statement is the result of consultation with social workers, their managers and educators and the General Social Care Council and Social Care Institute for Excellence. The statement sets out the role of social work in delivering personalised services, to achieve better outcomes for people who use services. It covers social work’s unique contribution, knowledge, skills and values and outlines the types of roles and tasks social workers will perform in the future.
- 1.5.3** As well as assessment, care planning and review and adult safeguarding, social workers may also offer advice to self-funders and engage in community development and work to create safe, healthy and prosperous communities. Social work can make a strong contribution to the role of local authorities, to bring together local agencies to shape

¹⁰ The Future of Social Work in Adult Social Services in England, March 2010 www.dh.gov.uk/en/socialcare/dh_098322

services to meet community need, as outlined in the Local Government White Paper: Strong and Prosperous Communities.

- 1.5.4** Changes in legislation are developing new roles and ways of working for which a social worker's distinct knowledge and skill set make social work the clear profession of choice. For example, the Mental Capacity Act enshrines the assumption of capacity except in specific circumstances where it can be deemed to not apply and there is, therefore, a need for a professional to work with a person using services to undertake an assessment in their best interests. Social workers are well equipped to work in a person centred manner, to support people to manage their own affairs where possible and to assist in finding solutions, which balance choice and control for the individual and their family and social networks.

Developing the adult workforce to deliver better services

"People value a social work approach based on challenging the broader barriers they face, they place particular value on social work's social approach, the social work relationship, and the personal positive qualities they associate with social work. These include warmth, respect, being non judgemental, listening, treating people with equality, being trustworthy, open, honest and reliable and communicating well. People value the support that social workers offer as well as their ability to help them access and deal with other services and agencies." (Shaping Our Lives National User Network)

- 1.5.5** *Working to Put People First: The strategy for the Adult Social Care Workforce in England* was published in April 2009. It outlines the workforce implications of *Putting People First* and provides a high level framework to support the transformation of the adult social care workforce¹¹. The strategy sets out six strategic workforce themes:

- Leadership
- Recruitment, retention and career pathways
- Workforce remodelling and commissioning
- Workforce development
- Joint and integrated working between social and health care and other services
- Workforce regulation – assuring public safety and raising the standards of care in the social care workforce.

- 1.5.6** Since the launch of *Working to Put People First: The strategy for the Adult Social Care Workforce in England* the Department of Health has been working with its partners in the social care sector to ensure the strategy is taken forward by a broad coalition. With local leadership by Directors of Adult Social Services, supported by ADASS, the Department is bringing together at national level work on the actions set out under each of the strategic themes. Each work stream is focusing on taking forward the key activities as set out in the strategy and involves representatives from employers, the social care workforce and people who use services.

¹¹ *Putting People First* DH Dec 2007; *Working to Put People First* April 2009 www.dh.gov.uk

1.5.7 Implementation of Working to Put People First is supported by the Department of Health's £147m contribution to the Area Based Grant for local authorities and the £237m social care reform grant. Local authorities will be able to draw on this funding for social work reforms related to this national reform programme. In addition, there will be on-going support for employers and social workers in adult services:

- *The Future of Social Work in Adult Social Services in England* will be used as the basis for further work to develop the role of social work in adult services; in particular, ADASS intends to publish advice to their members on commissioning their social work workforce.
- The Newly Qualified Social Worker programme will continue to be funded through Skills for Care, and will support employers to develop their social work workforce – developing over time into the Assessed Year in Employment.
- The National Skills Academy for social care will support leadership and management for the social care sector as a whole.

1.6 Social work in children's services

1.6.1 In children's services, social workers have a critical role to play as part of the integrated workforce dedicated to improving outcomes for all children and young people. The 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy¹² set out a vision for an integrated children's workforce that is ambitious for children and young people, respected for what it does, committed to working with other professionals and excellent in its practice. The reform programme outlined in this document is key in enabling social workers to be part of this vision.

1.6.2 Social workers work in a variety of roles with children, young people and families in complex social circumstances. They support children with disabilities and those in the youth justice system, children in care, teenage parents and those dealing with substance misuse and other challenges. CWDC, in discussion with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), and consultation with employers and social workers, has developed a succinct description of the role of social workers in statutory settings with children, young people and families. This covers the roles and tasks the social workers perform, and the skills and knowledge they need¹³.

1.6.3 Although safeguarding children and young people is everyone's responsibility child protection and safeguarding are at the heart of social work practice, and social workers working for local authorities have a unique role in carrying out key statutory responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. These include making difficult judgements to intervene to prevent a child being harmed or from suffering further harm, carrying out the duties of corporate parent for children in care and working with children and families involved in civil and criminal court proceedings. Cafcass

¹² 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy, DCSF, December 2008 www.dcsf.gov.uk

¹³ www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/social-work/role-and-tasks

children's guardians have a very specific role to play in representing children's interests in care proceedings and in ensuring that the voice of the child is heard.

- 1.6.4** The *Protection of Children in England: action plan – The Government's response to Lord Laming* set out the Government's commitment to deliver improvements in safeguarding practice following the publication of Lord Laming's report, *The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report*, in March 2009. The *Government's Response to Lord Laming: One Year On* is published in parallel with this document and sets out priorities for the year ahead. Social workers are also central to supporting children in care, working in partnership with their carers and their parents. This reform programme will help achieve the vision for better outcomes and experiences for children in care as set out in *Care Matters: Time to Deliver for Children in Care* and will be supported by guidance on care planning, which will be published shortly.
- 1.6.5** As well as working with children and families in crisis, social workers play an important part in supporting parents, working closely with other organisations and professionals. They can make an important contribution to early intervention and prevention, including through Family Intervention Pilots, Sure Start children's centres and extended services. They work with mothers, fathers and families experiencing difficulties by building on family strengths, particularly in relation to stability, permanence and resilience. DCSF published a Think Family Toolkit in September 2009 to support local authorities and their workforce in making sure services offer a co-ordinated response to families with additional needs. It is critical that social workers in adult and children's services are able to work together effectively to address needs in families and to provide continuity to disabled young people and others requiring social work services as they move into adulthood.

Supporting employers in children's services

- 1.6.6** Although social workers play important roles in the third and private sectors, the majority of social workers working with children and families are employed by local authorities, who are the providers and commissioners of statutory social work services. This implementation plan is launched at a time when statutory social work services for children and families delivered by local authorities face some significant pressures. Local authorities find social workers with children and families their most difficult recruitment and retention challenge. Some areas have seen increases in referrals to social work services, contributing to high workloads and long working weeks for social workers. At the same time, local authorities, through Children's Trusts, are working to deliver increasingly integrated children's services, where social workers work alongside, and in partnership with, different professionals and agencies.
- 1.6.7** As part of the funding package that supports this Implementation Plan, DCSF will spend more than £100m to support social work improvement in children's services in 2010–11, including:

- continuing CWDC's **recruitment, retention and remodelling programme for children's social workers**. This will include continuing to make the newly qualified social worker programme available to all new social workers in statutory and third sector services; the Return to Social Work programme; and the new Advanced Social Work Professional role for which assessments will begin in the summer. Piloting of Social Work Practices will also continue.
- a **£15m capital grant** to support further local improvements to IT in children's social care and simplification of local integrated children's systems
- a new **Local Social Work Improvement Fund of £23m**. Local authorities will receive this money from CWDC and be able to use it to put in place local solutions which help to reduce pressure on front line social workers and will build capacity for reform and improvement. We will expect local authorities to consult with social workers, using the 'health check' developed by the Social Work Task Force, and local safeguarding partners in deciding how to use it. Examples of how it might be used include:
 - to set up dedicated social worker led 'initial pathway support' teams to improve assessment and management of referrals to children's social care and to work with universal services to improve assessment and use of CAF to meet children's needs¹⁴;
 - other examples of remodelling which will increase the time that social workers in the hardest pressed teams can spend with children and families;
 - to create new roles (including the new Advanced Social Work Professional) to keep experienced staff on the front line;
 - to support 'grow your own' schemes which make the most of local talent and practice placements to improve the quality and number of social workers in future years.

¹⁴ More detail on this approach is set out *The Government's Response to Lord Laming – One Year On* www.dcsf.gov.uk/nsdu

The Task Force's fifteen recommendations for comprehensive reform

1. **Calibre of entrants:** that criteria governing the calibre of entrants to social work education and training be strengthened.
2. **Curriculum and delivery:** an overhaul of the content and delivery of social work degree courses.
3. **Practice placements:** that new arrangements be put in place to provide sufficient high quality practice placements, which are properly supervised and assessed, for all social work students.
4. **Assessed Year in Employment:** the creation of an assessed and supported year in employment as the final stage in becoming a social worker.
5. **Regulation of social work education:** more transparent and effective regulation of social work education to give greater assurance of consistency and quality.
6. **Standard for Employers:** the development of a clear national standard for the support social workers should expect from their employers in order to do their jobs effectively.
7. **Supervision:** the new standard for employers should be supported by clear national requirements for the supervision of social workers.
8. **Front line management:** the creation of dedicated programmes of training and support for front line social work managers.
9. **Continuing Professional Development:** the creation of a more coherent and effective national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers, along with mechanisms to encourage a shift in culture which raises expectations of an entitlement to ongoing learning and development.
10. **National Career Structure:** the creation of a single, nationally recognised career structure for social work.
11. **National College of Social Work:** the creation of an independent national college of social work, developed and led by social workers.
12. **Public Understanding:** a new programme of action on public understanding of social work.
13. **Licence to Practise:** the development of a licence to practise system for social workers.
14. **Social Worker Supply:** a new system for forecasting levels of supply and demand for social workers.
15. **National Reform Programme:** the creation of a single national reform programme for social work.

Chapter two: Starting out

This chapter describes the ways in which higher education institutions, employers, the profession and the Government will work together – in consultation with social workers, students and service users – to strengthen initial social work education and develop a new Assessed Year in Employment. This will include:

- immediate action to improve the quality and availability of practice learning placements and to make regulation more transparent
- a new work-based entry route 'Step up to Social Work' which will be piloted from September 2010
- strengthened entry criteria and new bursary arrangements for students joining courses from 2012
- a new social work curriculum framework which will be available from September 2012 and mandatory from September 2013 (including revised requirements for practice placements)
- continued support for social workers in their first year in employment through the Newly Qualified Social Work programmes, with piloting of models for the new Assessed Year in Employment from September 2012. We expect the Assessed Year in Employment to become mandatory for those wishing to practice as a social worker from 2016
- To support these changes, a new regulatory framework in place for initial social work education (undergraduate and masters) from September 2012.

2.1 Recommendations 1 to 5

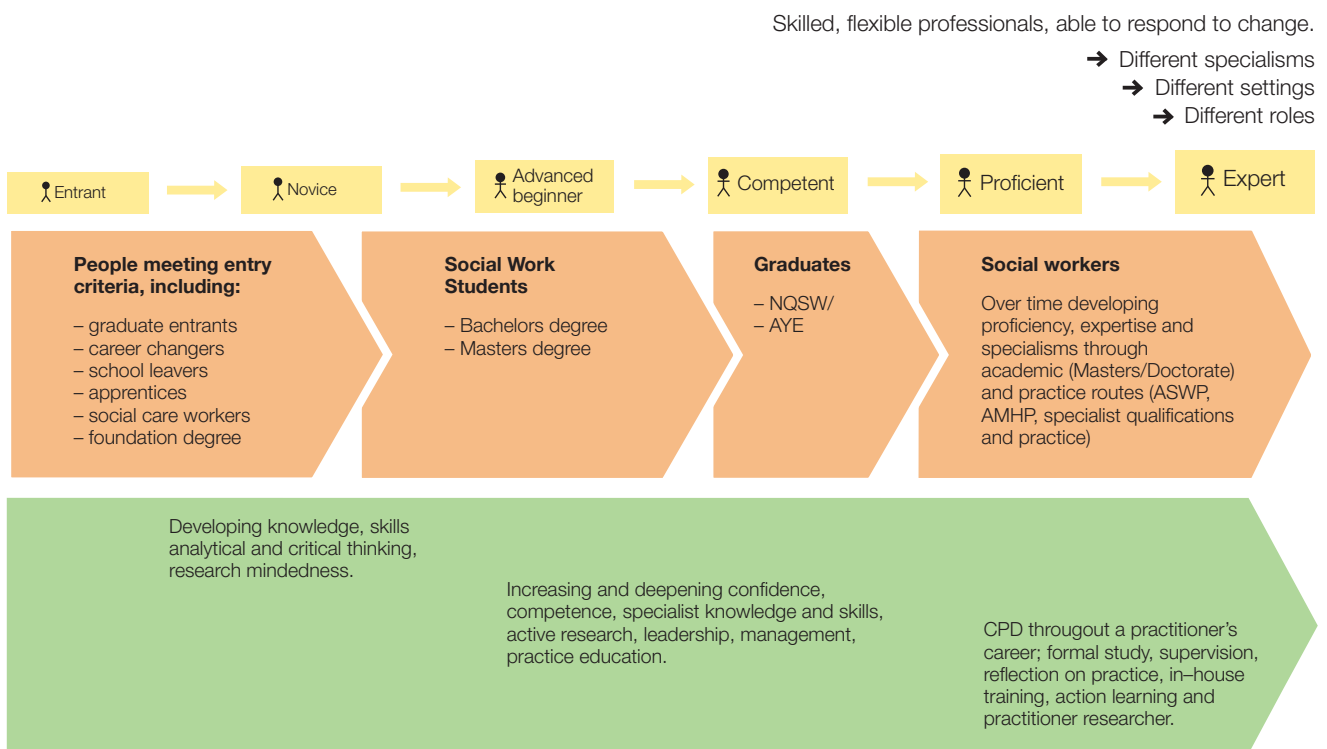
2.1.1 The Social Work Task Force made the following recommendations, in relation to initial social work education:

1. **Calibre of entrants:** that criteria governing the calibre of entrants to social work education and training be strengthened.
2. **Curriculum and delivery:** an overhaul of the content and delivery of social work degree courses.

3. **Practice placements:** that new arrangements be put in place to provide sufficient high quality practice placements, which are properly supervised and assessed, for all social work students.
4. **Assessed Year in Employment:** the creation of an assessed and supported year in employment as the final stage in becoming a social worker.
5. **Regulation of social work education:** more transparent and effective regulation of social work education to give greater assurance of consistency and quality.

2.1.2 This Chapter brings together a range of actions which together will build a strengthened entry route into the social work profession, developing a clear continuum of professional development within which social workers can build on strong initial education to develop their expertise and specialist skills and knowledge, in different settings, throughout their careers.

Figure 2.1: Continuum of professional development



2.2 Calibre of entrants

Recommendation 1.

Calibre of Entrants: that criteria governing the calibre of entrants to social work education and training be strengthened.

New entry criteria

- 2.2.1** Higher education institutions, employers and GSCC are working, through the Social Work Reform Board, to develop and consult on new criteria for the selection of candidates for initial social work education at undergraduate and masters level. **The new criteria should be agreed by March 2011 and in place for all candidates entering social work education from September 2012.**
- 2.2.2** Social work courses have a strong track record for attracting and developing students from diverse backgrounds. The new criteria will be developed taking account of the use of appropriate contextual criteria to help ensure that candidates with high potential are not missed. They will need to ensure that students are selected on the basis of their capacity to develop the mixture of analytical ability and the practical and empathetic skills that they will need as professional social workers.

'Grow your own' and employment based training

- 2.2.3** The government will continue to support employers to develop 'grow your own' schemes to encourage entrants to the workforce from a wide range of backgrounds – supported by *Grow your own social workers – Tool Kit*¹⁵.
- 2.2.4** **From 2010/11, funding will be made available directly to employers** in statutory children's services as part of new enhanced and more flexible funding arrangements for social work development in children's services. This will replace the CWDC Graduate Recruitment Scheme. In adult services, funding is available as part of the annual £147m DH workforce contribution to the local authority Area Based Grant.
- 2.2.5** In addition, **a new employment-based training route, Step Up To Social Work will be piloted in children's services from September 2010** (subject to its approval by GSCC). In its first year, it will provide opportunities for 200 high level graduates with relevant qualifications and experience of working with children to qualify as social workers more quickly and to receive financial support while training.

Student bursaries

- 2.2.6** Financial support to students plays an important role in ensuring that potential social workers can participate in professional education – the government spends £72m on social work student bursaries each year. However, it is critical that this investment represents value for money by motivating student social workers to complete their training and enter the workforce. **The Government will review the student bursary system and consult on an approach which better incentivises completion of qualifying education and entry into the workforce.**
- 2.2.7** New bursary arrangements are expected to be in place for new students beginning their courses from September 2012. Existing arrangements will continue until qualification for current students and those joining in 2010 and 2011.

¹⁵ <http://www.gsc.org.uk/Publications/Grow-Your-Own-Social-Workers-a-Toolkit>, GSCC, 2010

Training and development for the wider social care workforce

- 2.2.8** It is also important that there are high quality training and development opportunities for others in the social care and children's workforces. For those with potential to study in higher education, these should provide opportunities to move on into social work and the career framework will need to reflect this.
- 2.2.9** The government is currently investing in apprenticeships in social care and in Care First Careers, a scheme to encourage unemployed young people into the social care workforce. Good progress is being made on increasing social care apprenticeships as part of the Government's wider commitment to increase the number of apprentices, particularly in the public sector. The number of apprenticeship completions increased by 60% in 2009 compared to the previous year.

Recruitment

- 2.2.10** Building on the success of the Government's national social worker recruitment campaigns in 2009, we will continue to fund national activity to attract people to consider the profession as a career choice. In 2010 this will include a further round of television advertising, partnership working with employers on recruitment activity, and work to improve the public's understanding of social work.

Interdependencies: The quality and number of entrants into social work education and the quality of their education and preparation for the workforce is a critical dependency for the whole of the system. The impact of these changes will need to be monitored closely and will contribute to the development of a supply strategy (recommendation 14).

2.3 Curriculum and delivery

Recommendation 2.

Curriculum and Delivery: an overhaul of the content and delivery of social work degree courses.

Review of the Curriculum

- 2.3.1** The review of the curriculum framework for initial social work education will take place during 2010–11. **New requirements and guidance will be published for consultation in spring 2011.** It should be possible for higher education institutions to begin to adopt the new curriculum for the 2012 intake and we expect it to be in use in all approved higher education institutions from September 2013.
- 2.3.1** Employers, higher education institutions, the profession and government will work together, through the Social Work Reform Board to ensure that the new curriculum is based on shared and agreed expectations of the outcomes, skills, knowledge and qualities

expected of social work graduates, and that the right balance is struck between core requirements and flexibility. Service users, carers, employers and practitioners will contribute to the design of the new curriculum and also play an important role in delivering it – so that students benefit directly from their experience and expertise. The Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work (HEA swap) has offered to produce and disseminate guidance to support the introduction of the agreed new curriculum working closely with others on the Reform Board.

Length of practice placements

- 2.3.2** The review of the curriculum will also consider the appropriate lengths of practice placements. Any decision to reduce the required number of practice learning days will have implications for curriculum design and resources – potentially freeing up more time for teaching knowledge and skills development in the university.
- 2.3.3** Work is already underway and will be taken forward in parallel to improve the quality of practice placements as set out under recommendation 3 below – it is essential that this is carefully managed so that it does not reduce the availability of practice placements.

Supporting implementation

- 2.3.4** Some higher education institutions will be in a better place than others to address changes to the curriculum and it will be important that introduction is properly managed and well-supported. The recently published *Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy*¹⁶ – set out the direction of travel for higher education. It supports greater employer engagement with the higher education sector, promoting more relevant provision, widening access and encouraging a greater diversity of models of learning. The strategy also recognises the reality of the current economic circumstances and the constraints on public finances. Government departments, employers, higher education institutions and funding authorities (HEFCE, Skills Funding Agency, DH, DCSF, BIS) will work closely together to manage any funding implications.

Interdependencies: The review of the curriculum will be taken forward in parallel with work to develop the Assessed Year in Employment (recommendation 4), a clear career structure for social workers (recommendation 10) and the standard for licence to practise (recommendation 13), so that a clear and graduated set of expectations of students and social workers can be developed and articulated.

¹⁶ Higher Ambitions: the future of universities in a knowledge economy, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, November 2009 www.bis.gov.uk

2.4 Practice Placements

Recommendation 3.

Practice Placements: that new arrangements be put in place to provide sufficient high quality practice placements, which are properly supervised and assessed, for all social work students.

Review of practice learning requirements

- 2.4.1** The Government will continue to fund practice placements under current arrangements in 2010–11. In consultation with the Social Work Reform Board, it will review and consult on funding arrangements for future years to ensure that investment promotes high quality and sufficient numbers of practice placements, including taking into account recommendations about the appropriate length of placement as part of the review of the curriculum.
- 2.4.2** **We expect revised practice learning requirements to be in place for the 2012 intake** – it will be essential that these can secure both the quality and quantity of placements needed to properly prepare students for practice and that the responsibilities of higher education institutions and employers are clear.

Quality of placements

- 2.4.3** From October 2010, all higher education institutions will be required to audit placements against nationally agreed quality benchmarks¹⁷. These have been put in place by GSCC to ensure that from the perspective of all participants, including students and practice educators, the placement meets the GSCC and DH requirements for the planning and provision of practice learning.
- 2.4.4** Under the current model, practice learning is assessed by practice educators in the placement setting. A new framework for those assessors has been developed by the Skills for Care, CWDC and the GSCC, through the Social Work Development Partnership. This will be considered by the Social Work Reform Board this year with a view to phasing in new requirements from September 2011. All assessors of the 2013 intake will be expected to meet these standards.
- 2.4.5** As part of the development of the career structure for social workers (recommendation 10) **a new career grade of Practice Educator will be developed and consulted on, building from the work on the new practice learning framework.**

Quantity of placements

- 2.4.6** It is essential that higher education institutions and employers (including the voluntary and independent sector) can exercise shared responsibility for ensuring the provision of

¹⁷ Quality Standards for Practice Learning, www.skillsforcare.org.uk/socialwork/practiceplacements/sw_national_projects.aspx

sufficient high quality practice placements across the country. **The Government will ask the Social Work Reform Board to develop and endorse formal guidance on the partnerships which need to be in place at local level to allocate and audit placements and explore innovative approaches in placement provision.** From September 2012, we will ask the GSCC to ensure that such arrangements are in place and working effectively as part of the accreditation process.

2.4.7 National organisations, such as the NSPCC and CAF/CASS, are also important providers of practice placements. The Social Work Development Partnership worked with 10 national organisations to improve their capacity to do this – a network has been established and this together with the outcomes which have been achieved provides a legacy which will enable national organisations to continue their valuable contribution in providing high quality placements.

Advanced Teaching Organisations

2.4.8 During 2010–11, the Social Work Reform Board will begin to develop options for introducing Advanced Teaching Organisations which will further encourage best practice in the provision of practice placements. The status could be tied to incentives or rewards and be awarded to agencies (from the statutory, voluntary or private sectors) which demonstrate expertise and a track record in providing good quality placements. Full consultation and cost benefit analysis would be taken forward before any model was introduced.

Interdependencies: This section identifies some immediate actions to improve the provision of practice placements. The medium/long term objectives described will be dependent on, and need to be developed in parallel with, the new curriculum (recommendation 2) and the career structure (recommendation 10). It is also essential that employers are committed to, and have the capacity to, support the social workers of the future and that this is addressed as part of the standard for employers (recommendation 6).

2.5 Assessed Year in Employment

Recommendation 4.

Assessed Year in Employment: the creation of an assessed and supported year in employment as the final stage in becoming a social worker.

Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQS) programmes

2.5.1 The first year in employment is a critical time in a social worker's development and the value of a formal programme of support and development has been demonstrated

through the very high take up of Newly Qualified Social Work (NQSW) programmes in children and adult services in their first years¹⁸.

2.5.2 The government will continue to fund employers in statutory children's and adult services, and the third sector, to engage in NQSW pilot programmes.

Developing the model for the Assessed Year in Employment

2.5.3 The introduction of the Assessed Year in Employment will build on and embed the support provided through the NQSW programmes, and introduce a consistent standard against which new social workers' knowledge and competency can be judged at the end of their first year. This will be developed by Skills for Care and CWDC, in partnership with employers, higher education institutions and the profession, through a working group of the Social Work Reform Board. We expect to be able to pilot **models for the Assessed Year in Employment from 2012.**

2.5.4 Legislation will be required to make the Assessed Year in Employment the final stage in becoming a social worker. This will be introduced as part of other provisions for a new 'licence to practice' which will build on current registration requirements (recommendation 13). The Newly Qualified Social Worker programmes will increase the capacity of the system to deliver the Assessed Year and it is anticipated that current or similar programmes will continue until it is introduced. **We expect that all social work graduates will be required to complete the Assessed Year in Employment before receiving a Licence to Practise from 2016.**

Assessment for returners and social workers from overseas

2.5.5 The assessment will also provide a clear benchmark for support to, and assessment of, returners to the workforce. This will build on the Return to Social Work programme which is currently supporting local authorities to offer refresher training workshops to people who want to come back to social work with children and families. As part of this work, we will consider the needs of and implications for those trained in other parts of the UK and within and outside the European Economic Area (EEA). For those trained in the EEA we will continue to take into account our legal obligations under EU law.

Interdependencies: The development of the standard to underpin the assessed year will be taken forward in parallel with, and feed into, the review of the curriculum (recommendation 2), work to develop a clear career structure for social workers (recommendation 10) and the standard for licence to practice (recommendation 13), so that a clear and graduated set of expectations of students and social workers can be developed and articulated.

¹⁸ CWDC and Skills for Care offer NQSW programmes for social workers in children's and adult services respectively. These are underpinned by outcome statements setting out what social workers are expected to know, understand and be able to do by the end of their first year in employment. Employers receive funding to ensure that NQSWs have a managed workload, time set aside for training and development and regular supervision. 144 employers – local authorities and third sector organisations – are involved with CWDC's programme, and have registered 3,000 NQSWs since it began in 2008. 1,000 NQSWs, working for 109 local authority and NHS employers, are taking part in the first year of Skills for Care's programme.

2.6 Regulation of Social Work Education

Recommendation 5.

Regulation of Social Work Education: more transparent and effective regulation of social work education to give greater assurance of consistency and quality.

Improving information about the quality of courses

- 2.6.1** From summer 2010, GSCC will be publishing its annual monitoring reports of social work degree courses on its website. This will provide transparent information to students, employers and the public about the quality of course provision, and act as a major motivator for improvements.
- 2.6.2** GSCC is also acting to improve the quality of its monitoring judgements by scrutinising more closely the evidence presented by higher education institutions that they are meeting current requirements¹⁹, particularly with respect to allocation of resources and provision of practice learning.
- 2.6.3** The GSCC and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) are working together to ensure that data about entrants to approved social work degree courses can be shared in the future. This will reduce the data burden to higher education institutions in reporting to the GSCC and provide more accurate information about social work students to inform the development of the supply model and regulatory decision making.

Strengthening regulation

- 2.6.4** **During 2010–11, GSCC will work with members of the Social Work Reform Board to develop and consult on a revised regulatory framework for initial social work education.** This will include a new set of agreed requirements against which quality and consistency of social work courses can be assured. The framework will be developed in line with the Government's Better Regulation principles to ensure that weaker providers are identified and appropriately challenged by GSCC to improve and that the burden of regulation on those higher education institutions which are performing well is not increased.
- 2.6.5** **We expect that the new regulatory framework will be in place from September 2012.** The new curriculum (recommendation 2) will be introduced within this new framework.

Interdependencies: The new regulatory framework will be put in place early but in such a way so that it can adapt to the standards/outcomes which are agreed as part of the review of the curriculum (recommendation 2) and new arrangements for practice learning (recommendation 3). This will mean that it is clear to higher education institutions what they will need to do secure accreditation for their new courses, enabling introduction of the curriculum to be effectively managed and any burdens issues to be addressed.

¹⁹ Approval of courses for the social work degree, Rules, GSCC, 2002.

Chapter three:

Time, resources and support

This chapter sets out the steps that need to be taken by employers, in consultation with others on the reform board and with support from the Government and workforce development organisations to ensure that social workers have the support they need to practice effectively. These include:

- working with staff to conduct the Task Force's 'health check' and respond to their findings during 2010–11;
- developing the new Standard for Employers, including national standards for supervision, to be rolled out from April 2011; and
- improving local IT systems in children's services in ways which support high quality practice (supported by DCSF through funding and a national improvement programme).

It also sets out plans for the new development programme for front line managers, with pilots beginning before spring 2011.

3.1 Recommendations 6, 7 and 8

3.1.1 The Social Work Task Force made the following recommendations in relation to workload management and the support social workers need from their employers:

6. **Standard for Employers:** the development of a clear national standard for the support social workers should expect from their employers in order to do their jobs effectively.
7. **Supervision:** the new standard for employers should be supported by clear national requirements for the supervision of social workers.
8. **Front line management:** the creation of dedicated programmes of training and support for front line social work managers.

3.1.2 The Task Force's Social Worker Workload Survey²⁰ showed almost half of respondents worked more than their contracted hours, with 9 per cent working more than 9 hours overtime per week, while more than 25 per cent reported they were receiving supervision less frequently than every four weeks. These and other findings, together with the widely recognised recruitment and retention difficulties, demonstrate that all too often social

²⁰ Baginsky et al, *Messages from the frontline* www.dcsf.gov.uk/swtf

workers are not getting the time, resources and support they need. The measures set out in this chapter will establish clear, shared expectations of what that support should be and ensure that it is put into place.

3.2 Standard for Employers

Recommendation 6.

Standard for Employers: the development of a clear national standard for the support social workers should expect from their employers in order to do their jobs effectively.

Work load management

3.2.1 In advance of agreement of a national standard for employers, the Task Force developed a 'health check' tool to help employers work with their social workers to review the working conditions they have in place. The tool will support local appraisal and solutions in relation to five key objectives:

- Effective workload management;
- Pro-active workflow management;
- Having the right tools to do the job;
- Healthy work place;
- Effective Service Delivery.

3.2.2 The Social Work Reform Board will shortly write to employers and social workers encouraging **every local authority, and other social work service providers, to complete their first health check as soon as possible during 2010–11**, and to establish a cycle for revisiting the health check thereafter. The health check should enable teams and organisations to establish a benchmark from which to plan improvement activity. The Board will also encourage organisations to develop a model for reporting health check assessments appropriately within the local context (for example to Lead Members in local authorities) in order to raise the profile and importance of social work reform, and to consider publishing their reports.

Developing the standard for employers

3.2.3 The best employers already have good support in place for their social workers. During 2010–11 national representatives of employers, along with the profession, higher education institutions and service users represented on the Social Work Reform Board will work to develop and consult on a new standard for the support that employers of social workers should have in place, and a mechanism for assuring that standard in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors.

3.2.4 We expect that the new standard, including supervision requirements, will be rolled out by all relevant employers on a phased basis from April 2011. As the Task Force recommended, it should cover:

- how workforce levels are managed and needs predicted;
- how workflow is managed;
- provision of supervision at individual and team level;
- practical tools and conditions;
- access to research and practice guidance; and,
- practice awareness amongst local leaders, directors and managers.

In parallel with work on initial education and practice learning (recommendations 1–5) the Social Work Reform Board will look at how the standard can reflect the employers' responsibilities for developing the social workers of the future, including through practice learning and during the NQSW/Assessed Year in Employment. Development will include work with the inspectorates and the General Social Care Council to clarify the relationship between the new standard and existing frameworks and to prevent duplication or additional burdens.

Improving the Integrated Children's System in children's services

3.2.5 Poorly functioning or difficult to use IT has been a cause of frustration and increased workload for children's social workers in many parts of the country. The Social Work Task Force gave early advice to the Government about this, which included an endorsement of the need for high quality electronic records. In July 2009, DCSF Ministers accepted its recommendations about how the department's approach to Integrated Children's System (ICS), should be reformed, and emphasised the Government's commitment to supporting improvement of the ICS as a tool to support effective social work practice.

3.2.6 In July DCSF removed the requirement for local ICS systems to be compliant with the national specifications before funding could be received. This freed local authorities to adapt their systems, and to make their own decisions about how their system should support statutory requirements and local practice.

3.2.7 The DCSF has been working with an Expert Panel of ICS users from local authorities to develop guidance on simplification to support improvement of local system. It has established a forum bringing together users of the different ICS systems to share experiences and good practice in supplier procurement and management. Significant progress has been made since the summer in helping local authorities to improve the usability of their local systems.

3.2.8 Two packages of improvement guidance have been published, shortly to be followed by another²¹. In 2010–11, the DCSF will maintain this national ICS improvement programme to continue to facilitate the identification and sharing of good practice with and between

²¹ The Strategic Manager's guide; Using ICS to record the evidence of whether a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm; Consolidating Plans and Reviews; and Guidance on ICS Recording formats, forthcoming at www.dcsf.gov.uk/ecm/ics

local authorities, through groups of users and managers, conferences, guidance and case studies.

- 3.2.9** ICS improvement should be seen as a core aspect of the local strategy for social work improvement in children's services; employers are responsible for ensuring that their local ICS is an effective tool in supporting good practice. In 2010–11, this will be supported by a £15m capital grant to local authorities for them to spend on improvement of children's social care IT; we will encourage them to spend this collaboratively in order to provide value for money.

Interdependencies: The Employers' Standard is a key plank of the reform programme, offering assurance to social workers that they will get the support they need to practice effectively, as well as access to the benefits of the reform programme, such as the new continuing professional development framework (recommendation 9). It will be essential that this confidence is in place to enable the licence to practise (recommendation 12) to be introduced.

3.3 Supervision

Recommendation 7.

Supervision: the new standard for employers should be supported by clear national requirements for the supervision of social workers.

Improving the quality and frequency of supervision

- 3.3.1** The Task Force advised that it would expect frequency of supervision to be normally weekly during the first six weeks of employment, then fortnightly for the rest of the first six months. After six months in post, this would move to a minimum of monthly supervision, with each session at least an hour and a half of uninterrupted time. They also said that, where the line manager is not a social worker, professional support should be provided by an experienced supervisor. This guidance has been reflected in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* and it should also inform practice in adult services and other settings in which social workers are employed in social work roles.
- 3.3.2** *Providing effective supervision*²² gives guidance to employers and social workers in adult and children's services about the quality and content of effective supervision. Protected time for supervision – and support for supervisors – is an important part of the NQSW pilot programmes. CWDC has developed further guidance specifically for supervisors of social workers on its NQSW and Early Professional Development programmes. This underpins training that is offered to everyone acting as a supervisor on these

²² *Providing Effective Supervision*, CWDC and Skills for Care, 2007

programmes. Skills for Care offers action learning sets for managers of NQSWs in adult services.

- 3.3.3** As part of developing support programmes for managers (recommendation 8), Skills for Care and CWDC will work with higher education institutions, employers and the profession to refresh existing guidance on supervision to identify any additional support measures that are needed to improve quality of supervision or the capacity of employers and managers to provide it. This will help employers meet new national requirements for provision of supervision.

Developing national requirements

- 3.3.4** Clear national requirements for provision of supervision will be developed as part of the employers' standard (recommendation 6, above). This must meet the Task Force's ambition of ensuring that all organisations employing social workers are required to make a positive, unambiguous commitment to a strong supervision culture, to be achieved through:
- a clear supervision policy;
 - effective training and performance management for supervisors;
 - strong leadership and example from senior managers;
 - monitoring of the actual frequency and quality of supervision against clear statements of what is expected; and
 - compliance with established guidance on the features of good supervision.
- 3.3.5** The Reform Board, working with the inspectorates, will make recommendations about how the supervision aspect of the employer's standard can best be monitored and enforced.

Interdependencies: The supervision standard will be a key element of the Employers' Standard (recommendation 6). High quality supervision is essential to social workers' ability to practice effectively, make sound judgements and manage the emotional impact of their work.

3.4 Front Line Management

Recommendation 8.

Front Line Management: the creation of dedicated programmes of training and support for front line social work managers.

Current training opportunities

- 3.4.1** Employers and managers have access to a range of leadership and management programmes through the existing Post Qualifying framework. Induction standards for managers in adult social care²³ provide a clear starting point for the competence that social work managers should be able to develop and demonstrate, and training for supervisors of new social workers is an integral aspect of the Newly Qualified Social Worker programmes in children's and adult services. In addition, CWDC is developing a front line manager support programme in children's services which will be available to all authorities in 2010–11.
- 3.4.2** **Building on this work, CWDC, Skills for Care and the National Skills Academy for Social Care (NSASC) will work together, in consultation with members of the Social Work Reform Board, to develop a dedicated programme of training and support for front line managers, with pilots beginning before Spring 2011.**
- 3.4.3** The programme will be developed in consultation with social workers, employers, current managers and service users. As the Task Force recommended, it will be designed to meet the different needs of:
- **aspiring** managers;
 - **newly appointed** managers; and,
 - **established** managers.

Interdependencies: this work must be developed in parallel with thinking about the place of managers and expectations of them within the new career structure (recommendation 9).

²³ *Adult Social Care Manager Induction Standards, Skills for Care, 2007*

Chapter four:

Professional development and career progression

This chapter describes the steps being taken to develop a national career structure for social workers, which supports progression on the front line, and to establish a coherent framework for professional development:

- consultation on the new continuing professional development framework will begin from summer 2010
- a new practice-based Masters for social workers will be piloted from September 2011
- new national assessment arrangements for the Advanced Social Professional Status will be piloted in children's services from Summer 2010
- the Social Work Reform Board has begun work to develop a full national career structure and the expectations of social workers at each stage in their career
- in parallel, local government employers and unions are working together through the Joint National Council to establish how progression routes can be built into local government pay arrangements

4.1 Recommendations 9 and 10

4.1.1 The Social Work Task Force made the following recommendations in relation to professional development and career progression:

8. **Continuing Professional Development:** the creation of a more coherent and effective national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers, along with mechanisms to encourage a shift in culture which raises expectations of an entitlement to ongoing learning and development.
9. **National Career Structure:** the creation of a single, nationally recognised career structure for social work.

4.2 Continuing Professional Development

Recommendation 9.

Continuing Professional Development: the creation of a more coherent and effective national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers, along with mechanisms to encourage a shift in culture which raises expectations of an entitlement to ongoing learning and development.

- 4.2.1** Social workers currently have access to a wide range of options for continuing professional development, including the courses accredited through the GSCC's post qualifying framework, and training and development associated with Newly Qualified Social Worker programmes in adult and children's services and the Early Professional Development programme in children's services.
- 4.2.2** The new framework for continuing professional development (CPD) will build on existing programmes but provide opportunities for all social workers from the newly qualified to the most experienced, and with different levels of academic qualification, to continue learning and development throughout their careers and for this to be recognised and valued across the country. It will be based on revised agreed outcomes for social workers at different stages of their careers; will enable workers to achieve CPD in a variety of ways according to their needs and interests and be transparent and easy to understand. It will importantly support more experienced workers to develop as advanced practitioners, leaders and managers.
- 4.2.3** The education group of the Social Work Reform Board is beginning to develop principles on which a new CPD framework should be based. **These will be developed further for consultation in Summer 2010** and will address implications for alignment across the countries of the UK as well as any European and international implications.
- 4.2.4** **A core plank of the CPD framework will be a new Masters in Social Work Practice which we expect to be piloted from September 2011²⁴.** This qualification will build on the lessons from the current post qualifying courses to develop a national and standardised award which will be practice-based, practice-driven and accessible to all social workers. The Masters in Social Work Practice will enhance specialist skills and knowledge, underpinned by more advanced analytical and conceptual thinking to deliver the best possible outcomes for children, families and adults and to enable social workers to develop as leaders and managers. It will be an integral part of the new flexible and accessible continuing professional development framework, as that is developed and put in place.

²⁴ This is a revised timescale for implementation to allow the Masters in Social Work Practice to be firmly embedded in wider work to develop the CPD framework, and to align the work with the academic calendar.

4.2.5 As the Task Force recommended, the new continuing professional development framework will seek to:

- enable social workers to continue to develop specialist skills, knowledge and practice, and to develop as leaders and managers (in both adult and children's services);
- enable and support those without degree level qualifications to continue to pursue CPD to degree level and above;
- help develop the next generation of social work academics and innovative practitioners (through, for example, opportunities to achieve qualifications at Doctoral level);
- inform performance appraisal systems;
- support social workers in making progress through the nationally recognised career structure which is also to be developed (recommendation 10);
- produce consistent outcomes that are accepted as valid across the country – while allowing the appropriate levels of choice and flexibility in methods and styles of learning and development; and,
- help bind together research, education and frontline practice so that these are all mutually supportive and remain so in the future.

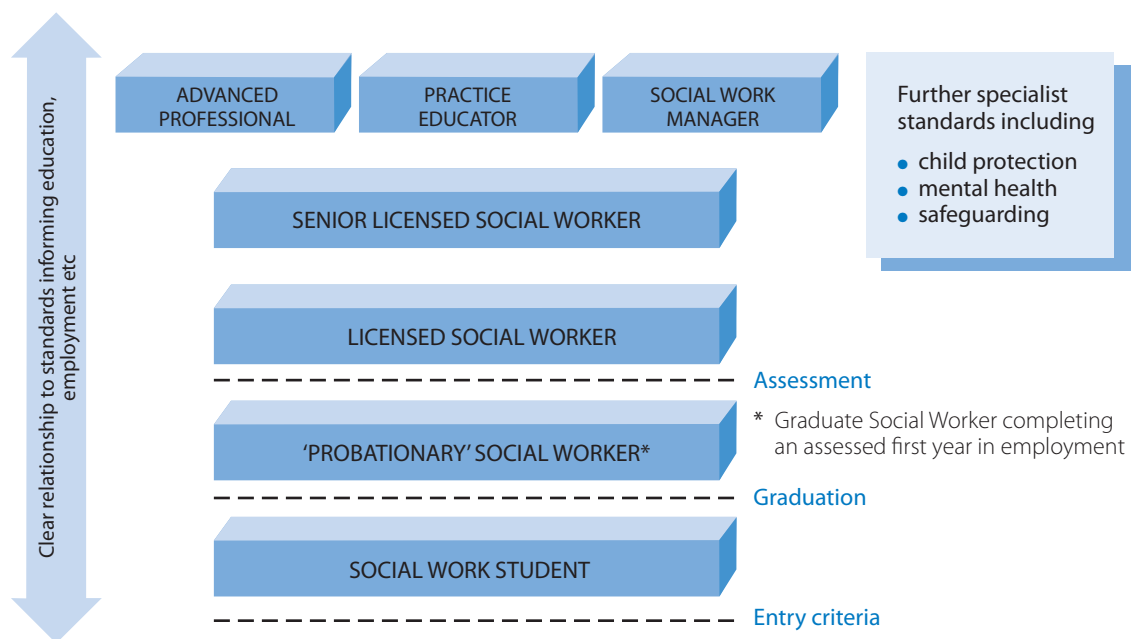
4.2.6 It is likely that the new framework will be phased in over a number of years – to ensure it can be effectively resourced and so that introduction can be aligned with, and respond to, developments in other areas of the reform programme. The Government will continue to support existing education, training and development routes, such as the Post Qualifying courses accredited by GSCC, Newly Qualified Social Work and Early Professional Development programmes which many social workers are currently undertaking and which are contributing to professional development and improved knowledge and skills. As the new framework is developed, it is important that there is clarity about how existing programmes and qualifications will be recognised under new arrangements.

Interdependencies: The framework will need to be developed alongside other recommendations and work streams including the Employers' Standard (Recommendation 6); the National Career Structure (recommendation 10) and Licence to Practise (recommendation 13). Work must link with the decisions made about the Assessed Year in Employment and the social work degree curriculum and delivery (recommendations 1–5).

4.3 National Career Structure

Recommendation 10.
 National Career Structure: the creation of a single, nationally recognised career structure for social work.

Figure 4.1: “A clear career structure with clear expectations at key points.”
 Building a safe, confident future, Social Work Task Force



The Task Force proposed the following starting point for work to develop a national career structure in social work, which can be aligned with the educational and regulation requirements.

- 4.3.1** The career structure for social work will need to introduce opportunities for progression on the front line and to ensure that there are clear and shared expectations of social workers, from the beginning of their training and throughout their career, and that they are appropriately rewarded for their skills and expertise. In addition, there should be clear routes into the profession, including for people joining the profession through work-based routes. It is also important that there are 'exit points' at which people who train as social workers but are not suited to the demands of the professional role are able to use their skills and knowledge in other parts of the workforce.
- 4.3.2** The career group of the Social Work Reform Board has begun to work to develop the career structure. Their starting point is to examine and build on existing models and standards, including the new Advanced Social Work Professional (ASWP), the Approved Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP) role, and consultant social worker roles that have

been developed in some areas, as well as outcome standards from the NQSW and Early Professional Development programmes.

- 4.3.3 The new Advanced Social Work Professional (ASWP) status will be piloted in children's services from this summer. Local authorities will be invited to nominate candidates to be assessed against a set of high level standards linked to a national assessment process, which will determine who will be accredited. There will be flexibility for employers to determine how best to deploy social workers with accredited ASWP status to meet local needs and priorities. This pilot in children's services, which will be managed by the Children's Workforce Development Council, will inform development of the career structure and advanced roles across for the whole workforce.
- 4.3.4 A working group of the Joint National Council which sets pay and conditions of local government employees has taken on the Task Force's challenge to reflect the developing national career structure in the local government pay structure. The working group was set up in January 2010 and will make its first recommendations in March 2010.

Interdependencies: work on this recommendation must be informed by, and will underpin the system created as a result of, most of the other recommendations. The Task Force also argued that a clear set of expectations of social workers at each stage of their career could serve as a focus for rationalisation of many of the other standards and expectations which they argued contribute to inefficiency or confusion in social work. This is discussed further in chapter 7.

Chapter five: Professional leadership and public understanding

This chapter describes the progress that has been made towards **establishing an independent College of Social Work**:

- recruitment of the interim chair will begin in March 2010
- the College is expected to be established as a fully functioning independent organisation by April 2011

It also describes the progress and further planned activities to improve **public understanding of social work**, including:

- work by the Local Government Association to support local government social workers, managers and press officers to develop constructive relationships with local press;
- continuing the successful *Be the Difference* recruitment campaign which has generated interest from more than 50,000 potential social workers and members of the public.

5.1 Recommendations 11 and 12

5.1.1 The Social Work Task Force made the following recommendations in relation to professional leadership and public understanding:

11. National College of Social Work: the creation of an independent national college of social work, developed and led by social workers.

12. Public Understanding: a new programme of action on public understanding of social work.

5.2 National College of Social Work

Recommendation 11.

National College of Social Work: the creation of an independent national college of social work, developed and led by social workers.

- 5.2.1** Ministers have already indicated their strong support for the profession's ambitions for a strong and independent College of Social Work. The government believes that an authoritative voice which can speak for social work and demonstrate strong commitment and high standards of excellence within the profession will be an essential element of a healthy system. Like the Royal Colleges in the health sector, the College of Social Work will help give the profession the standing it deserves and the status it needs to influence national policy making and public debate. To this end ministers have already expressed their support for the idea of the college becoming a Royal College in due course.
- 5.2.2** To support the profession in establishing the College, the Government has asked the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to facilitate a College Development group which is bringing together social workers, professional bodies and unions to guide the early stages of the setting up of the College²⁵. To ensure the College begins its work on a secure footing Government is providing funds for development, consultation and initial activity in the current and next financial years.
- 5.2.3** The College Development Group has agreed the following aspirations for the new college:
- **Pride:** Having pride in and bringing pride to the profession
 - **Excellence:** Enabling and guarding excellence in the profession
 - **Service Users and Carers as partners:** Valuing the contribution of people who use services and their carers
 - **Independence:** Being independent and willing to challenge when necessary
 - **Led by the profession:** Using the expertise of the profession/members
 - **Starting from strengths:** Building on existing good practice in the UK and overseas
 - **Leadership:** Providing leadership to the profession
 - **Collaborative:** Working collaboratively with allied professions, and with organisations affecting the professions
 - **Coherence:** Bringing coherence and clarity to the profession
- 5.2.4** The Development Group has agreed a two-stage process to establish the college:
- Stage 1: Initial scoping and appointment of the Interim Chair and Interim Board. Overseen by the Development Group, and to be completed by July 2010.
 - Stage 2: Establishment of the college as a legal entity, overseen by the Interim Chair and Board. To begin in June/July 2010 and be complete by March 2011.

²⁵ Membership of the development group currently comprises; 2 social workers from the Social Work Task Force; ADASS; ADCS; Aspect; Association of Professors of Social Work; BASW; SCIE; JUCSWEC; Unison; GSCC; CWDC; CAFCASS; Skills for Care. The group is convened by Allan Bowman, Chair of SCIE and observers are invited from DH, DCSF and the devolved administrations. At the time of writing BASW are balloting their members on a recommendation that BASW launches a College of Social Work across the UK. BASW's further engagement will be shaped by the outcome of the ballot.

5.2.5 The Development Group anticipates that the College will be established as a fully functioning independent organisation by April 2011, and that it may be able to undertake initial activities from Autumn 2010. Key milestones will include:

- **May/June 2010:** Appointment of Interim Chair (a two year appointment to guide the college into establishment as a legal entity)
- **April – October 2010:** Consultation events and web based consultation with social workers and service user and carer organisations
- **September 2010:** Appointment of Interim Board members (two year appointments to work with the Interim Chair)
- **November 2010 – March 2011:** Interim Board to establish college as a legal entity, including appointing first Chair and Board members

Interdependencies: The College needs to be up and running as quickly as possible, so that it can begin to play a strong role on the Social Work Reform Board and in contributing to the work that will be taken forward in 2010–11. The interim chair will be able to begin to establish this important role as soon as he or she is in post.

5.3 Public Understanding

Recommendation 12.

Public Understanding: a new programme of action on public understanding of social work.

5.3.1 The Task Force called for a programme of action on public understanding of social work, but were also instrumental in improving understanding through their reports and activities. The final report of the Social Work Task Force, *Building a safe, confident future*, was widely and accurately reported in general media reports as well as in more depth in the specialist press. In recent months there has been an increasing number of press and media reports about the realities of social work, including television coverage of social work teams in both Coventry and Cheshire. Increasingly there is a social work practitioner or academic voice included within coverage of tragic or contentious events.

5.3.2 In 2010–11, the Government will continue to support the “Help give them a voice” and the prize-winning “Be the Difference” recruitment campaigns which, in 2009, have raised awareness of what social workers do, as well as increasing interest in social work as a career – 53,000 individuals have registered their interest in becoming a social worker as a result of these campaigns²⁶.

²⁶ CWDC’s Be the Difference campaign won the Copywriting Award at the 2009 Awards for National Newspaper Advertising. Since 2009, 53,000 people have registered an interest in becoming a social worker as a result of these campaigns via the internet or the Be the Difference phone line

- 5.3.3** The Local Government Association have developed a “Meet the Press”²⁷ leaflet and have run a workshop/training session for local government social workers, managers and press officers on developing a constructive relationship with local press. They will consider further development of this programme, depending on its impact and interest from local government.
- 5.3.4** Changing perceptions is a long task and the responsibility of all SWRB members. Taking up leadership of this strand of the reform programme will be an early task for the College.

Interdependencies: improved understanding of social work and its value will be important to the success of the reform programme as a whole. The improvements in quality and capacity to which all of the recommendations will contribute should also contribute to improved public experience and perceptions of social workers and their work.

²⁷ Local Government Association, *Giving social work a voice: how to improve social workers' relationship with the media*, March 2010

Chapter six:

An effectively and proportionately managed and regulated system

This chapter clarifies the Government's expectations in relation to the licence to practise and describes the consultation and regulatory impact assessment process that will be taken forward before it is introduced. We expect introduction to begin from 2016.

It also describes the approach that will be taken, led by the Reform Board, to developing a strategic understanding of supply and demand for adult and children's social workers.

6.1 Recommendations 13 and 14

6.1.1 The Social Work Task Force made the following recommendations in relation to regulation and supply:

13. **Licence to Practise:** the development of a licence to practise system for social workers.

14. **Social Worker Supply:** a new system for forecasting levels of supply and demand for social workers.

6.2 Licence to practise

Recommendation 13.

Licence to practise: the development of a licence to practise system for social work.

6.2.1 Social workers are regulated by the General Social Care Council (GSCC)²⁸. The GSCC holds a register and codes of practice, and approves courses in relevant social work. If a person is not on the register they are committing an offence if they use the protected title of 'social worker' to describe themselves. A key part of the GSCC's work is to hold to account social workers who have breached the code of practice. All these activities – registration, investigation of alleged misconduct and ensuring that universities provide

²⁸ The legislation upon which this regulation is based (the Care Standards Act 2000) says that "it shall be the duty of the Council to promote high standards of conduct and practice amongst social care workers and high standards in their training".

training to the required standard – are for the purpose of ensuring that the public is protected and that service users get the best possible social work support.

- 6.2.2** Since summer 2009, the GSCC has made good progress in responding to the review of its conduct functions by the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence. It has put in place new leadership and increased capacity to handle conduct referrals. As part of this, during 2010, the GSCC will be developing and consulting on changes to its existing conduct rules, but it has also begun to consider the options for moving to a system that rather than primarily focussing on alleged social worker misconduct, considers a social worker's fitness to practise as a whole.
- 6.2.3** The government will also work with GSCC to develop the 'licence to practise' arrangements for professional regulation, which we expect to begin **from September 2016**. When the licence is introduced, it will be linked to 'protected title' in social work so that, eventually, social workers will not be able to practise as social workers unless they are licensed. After graduation they will need to have completed their Assessed Year in Employment to obtain their licence and will not be awarded 'protected title' until they have done this. Social workers will also need to demonstrate, periodically, that they are maintaining 'licensed' standard.
- 6.2.4** Introduction of this change to regulation will be dependent on a strong model for delivery of the Assessed Year in Employment being in place, and the system having the capacity to give social workers the support they need to meet regulatory expectations. Until the licence system is in place, current registration arrangements will be maintained and graduates of approved social work degree courses will continue to be able to apply for registration, as at present.
- 6.2.5** The Government will conduct and consult on a full options and impact assessment for the changes to the regulation system, including undertaking further work with the Reform Board to determine whether and how the licence should also be linked to particular professional development requirements or the career structure, before taking forward legislation. Development will include work to understand the needs of and implications for those trained elsewhere in the UK and within and outside the European Economic Area (EEA). For those trained in the EEA the Government will continue to take into account its legal obligations under EU law.
- 6.2.6** In the context of the development of the standard for employers, and to build on the work it has already done in response to the recommendation of Lord Laming, the **GSCC will review its Codes of Practice for Social Care Workers and Employers**, having regard in particular to their purpose in the context of the new reform programme, their relationship to the new Employers' Standard and also to the service inspection frameworks of CQC and Ofsted. GSCC will then act on the outcome of this review in consultation with DH, DCSF and other key partners. The Codes of Practice are UK-wide and the GSCC's work will be taken forward in conjunction with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
- 6.2.7** It is important that the employers of social workers are clear about their responsibilities to refer cases of alleged misconduct to the GSCC and when and how to do so. Therefore in

2010–11 GSCC will also develop, and take forward, a programme of employer engagement to ensure that employers of social workers understand when and how they should be notifying the GSCC about possible social worker misconduct. Working with the GSCC, employers and the profession, the Government will consider if there are any aspects of an employer's responsibility for reporting concerns about conduct to the GSCC which need to be underpinned by legislation.

Interdependencies: This work must be very closely aligned with that to develop the Assessed Year in Employment (recommendation 4), the employers' standard (recommendation 5), the CPD framework (recommendation 8) and national career structure (recommendation 9). A licensing system which restricts what social workers could be asked to do, either in their first year in employment or at other stages in their career would have implications for supply – the development of the supply strategy (recommendation 14) will help the system to understand and manage this.

6.3 Social worker supply

Recommendation 14.

Social Worker Supply: a new system for forecasting levels of supply and demand for social workers.

- 6.3.1** It is essential that employers continue to develop their capacity to plan for the workforce they need, and work with local higher education institutions to contribute to the supply of new social workers, including through providing practice learning opportunities.
- 6.3.2** Creation of a national system for forecasting supply and demand for social workers will be dependent on high quality reliable information, about the supply of social workers and the need for them. It will take some years to get to that point from the current low baseline. However, it is important that mechanisms to secure the fastest possible progress are built into the design of the reform programme.
- 6.3.3** Work is underway to map current data sources and put in place arrangements for better handling without creating disproportionate burdens on those supplying data.
- 6.3.4** As set out in chapter two, GSCC has now reached agreement with the Higher Education Statistics Agency about a model of data collection which will improve the quality of data about initial education courses, while reducing the burden on higher education institutions in providing this information.
- 6.3.5** In 2010–11 work will be taken forward to develop baselines for new indicators on turnover and supply in children's social work (also taking account of the need for the same understanding in adult services).

- 6.3.6** A key role of the Social Work Reform Board will be to consider how a model for predictions and managing supply and demand can be developed from the understanding of the system that we have now, and can work in a system which lacks strong national levers around supply and demand. Members of the Social Work Reform Board will work with the Joint Social Work Unit to:
- build a model for demand which draws on feedback from the employer 'health check' exercise and employers' reports of demand;
 - build a system understanding of supply and demand and test those assumptions, and consult with the sector on how to make this accessible for use at local and regional level; and
 - improve the data available to refine the model and improve usefulness.

Interdependencies: the reform programme will put in place a system which is better able to influence and respond to changes in the supply and demand for social workers. The supply model will be critical to making these connections and ensuring that the implications of changes within the system, and externally, are understood and managed.

Chapter seven: Delivering reform

This chapter addresses the 'how' and 'ways of working' of the reform programme. It identifies the ways in which the Government will work with partners on the Social Work Reform Board to establish shared expectations about what needs to be achieved and clear accountabilities within the system, and how social workers and the children, young people, families, adults and carers who use social work services will be involved. It sets out the approach that will be taken to rationalise standards; establish effective partnerships at national, regional and local level; and to secure best value from the resources in the system.

It is essential that the reform programme is underpinned by a clarity about what success will look like and that the impact of the reforms is kept under regular review so that priorities can be adjusted as improvements are realised or circumstances change. To support this, the Government will work with partners on the Reform Board to put in place a research and evaluation strategy which allows all partners to be clear about the impact on key indicators of success, including:

- supply of social workers and vacancy/turnover rates;
- how social workers report their job satisfaction and workload;
- how employers report their satisfaction with social workers and their impact on the quality of service;
- the success of higher education institutions in recruiting and educating students who go on to do well in the workplace; and
- how users of services and members of the public report their experience and perceptions of social workers.

7.1 Recommendation 15

- 7.1.1** The Social Work Task Force's fifteenth and final recommendation was that its other recommendations should be taken forward through a single national reform programme for social work, over the next five to ten years:

Recommendation 15.

National Reform Programme: the creation of a single national reform programme for social work.

7.2 The Social Work Reform Board

- 7.2.1** On receipt of the Task Force's recommendations, the Government invited Moira Gibb, the Task Force chair, to appoint a Social Work Reform Board consisting of representatives of employers, higher education institutions, the profession, the regulator, service users and government departments, together with workforce development organisations, inspectorates and funding organisations.
- 7.2.2** That Board is now in operation and finalising its membership to include strong and supported contributions from service users and front line practitioners. It hears regular reports from the College Development Group and will have a seat for the College of Social Work as soon as it is established. Working groups of the Reform Board have already begun to work on the detail of reform in relation to education and the career structure and to develop the standard for employers. They have contributed to the time lines and milestones set out in this document.
- 7.2.3** It will be critical that the Board maintains the momentum for reform which has been established, and holds each of its members to account for the progress that they are making and the ways in which they are working together. Through its regular published reports, the Board will be able to offer public challenge to the Government, and to members or constituencies, if progress is not being made.
- 7.2.4** The actions, commitments and aspirations described in this implementation plan will set the direction of the reform programme that the Social Work Reform Board will drive and oversee and the Board will review its terms of reference in light of them, in response to this report.
- 7.2.5** It is also essential that these new ways of working are embedded into the reformed system we are creating. That means that government, employers, educators and the profession (including through the College, when it is established) must challenge each other to ensure that:
- social workers and users of services are fully involved in the design of reform, and also in the delivery of key elements of the system;
 - partners are able to overcome organisational boundaries or perspectives in order to contribute constructively with a clear focus on improving social work; and

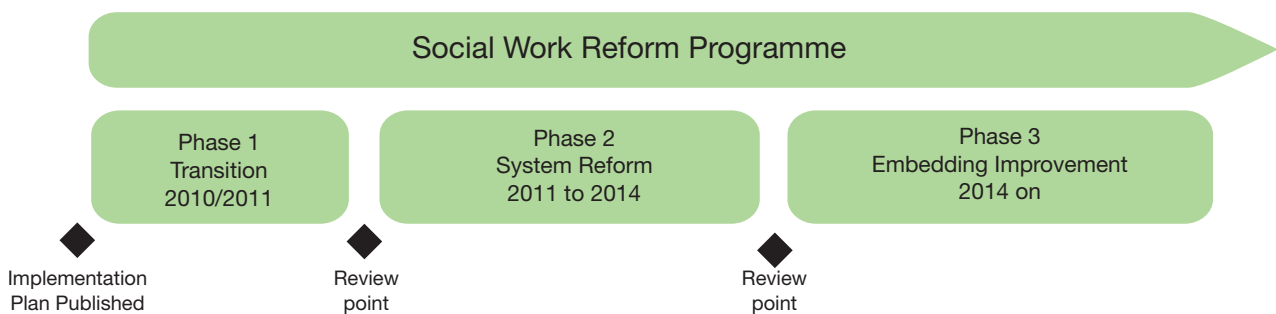
- reform is designed and delivered in ways which make best use of and secure best value from public investment.

7.3 A phased approach to reform

7.3.1 The Social Work Task Force was clear that it was recommending a programme of work which will take ten years to have full impact in some areas. This document identifies many improvements which are being put into place immediately and others which must be developed and delivered through extensive consultation and will take longer to implement.

7.3.2 We will need a phased approach to reform to ensure that the strengths in the current system are built on and improvement is felt quickly, whilst also ensuring that momentum is maintained and change is planned so that it can embed effectively over the medium and longer term.

- Phase one – **Transition**: laying the foundations for the reform programme through programmes and investment which address priority issues; quick wins that strengthen the system; intensive work to build the partnership approach tools and standards which will establish shared expectations to guide future work: 2010–11
- Phase two – **System Reform**: putting in place the key elements of the new system and continuing investment and intervention to building capacity in the workforce: 2011–14
- Phase three – **Embedding Improvement**: consolidating reform to establish a system which delivers consistently high quality social work and can respond effectively to new challenges: 2014–15 and beyond



7.3.3 Over this time period, improvements will be made and circumstances will change. It is important that progress and priorities in social work reform are regularly reviewed. Section 7.9 discusses further the strategy that will be put in place to ensure that impact is measured and evaluated.

7.3.4 This Implementation Plan will be refreshed in early 2011 to account for progress made and to confirm funding arrangements for activity in phase two. Throughout the time period of the reform programme, the Social Work Reform Board's reports to Ministers will provide a mechanism for evaluating progress and making recommendations about how priorities should be re-adjusted if necessary.

7.4 Securing best value in investment

- 7.4.1** The success of this reform programme will depend on the commitment of all partners to achieving best value for the resources they are investing in social workers, social work services and workforce development. It will be critical that employers and higher education institutions are able to prioritise the development of social workers even when making difficult decisions about the best use of public funding. Improved confidence and quality in the delivery of social work services will have long term value in reducing need and the costs of services in other areas.
- 7.4.2** Similarly, it is important that government prioritises and achieves best value from its investment in social work reform, in line with the objectives of this reform programme. To establish the firmest possible foundation for this, this Implementation Plan is accompanied by a commitment to government investment of over £200m in 2010–11. This investment is additional to core funding for social work in higher education, local government and the NHS. It will be used to support recruitment, student bursaries and practice placements, workforce development, improvement of IT in children's services, piloting of new career grades and supporting employers to remodel services. It also includes funding to support the profession in establishing the independent College, and resources for delivery of the reform programme.
- 7.4.3** As part of the refresh of this Implementation Plan in 2011 the Government will confirm its plans for investment in social work in the spending period 2011–14. In future years, the government will look to maintain the priority of its investment in social work reform, whilst also seeking to secure best value for that investment, in line with the objectives of the reform programme. In particular, the reviews of funding for bursaries and practice placements will be important aspects of government's commitment to ensuring that its investment in social work promotes quality, as well as capacity, in the workforce and is well aligned with and supportive of the objectives of the reform programme.

7.5 Shared expectations and rationalised standards

- 7.5.1** The Task Force made clear that the current proliferation of standards, outcome statements and standard setting mechanisms relating to aspects of social work conduct, performance, initial training and continuing professional development – together with a lack of clarity about the standard of support that social workers should expect from their employers – contributes to 'confusion and inefficiencies in workforce improvement'. They also mean that individuals and organisations within the system lack clarity about what is expected of them or what they should do to improve.
- 7.5.2** The Task Force's recommendations themselves will generate a number of new potential standards in the workforce. The relationship between these standards, and the GSCC Codes of Practice and Code for Employers must be worked out and rationalised in a way which means that social work will continue to be regulated fairly and proportionately. The relationship to National Occupational Standards for social workers must also be rational and clear. Together, this should come together to create a framework of clear and shared

expectations of everyone in the system. If this does not happen, there is a risk that new standards and expectations will only compound existing problems.

- 7.5.3** To provide a clear focus for the work, **the Government will ask the Social Work Reform Board to develop a single and authoritative publication which brings together all the standards or expectations of social workers, the education system and employers and explains clearly how they inter-relate.** This should explain how they will contribute to the Task Force's objective that "all aspects of the system... are designed to support social workers in developing their careers and competencies, underpinned by a shared understanding of what they are expected to achieve." The publication should carry the endorsement of the profession and all parts of the sector.

7.6 Establishing effective partnership, and clear responsibilities, at national and local level

- 7.6.1** The social work profession, employers and educators need to work together at national, regional and local, and in a number of different ways: to give strong and shared messages about reform; to collaborate in developing aspects of a reformed system; and to deliver key elements of the system.
- 7.6.2** For joint working to be successful, everyone must be clear what they are responsible for. They must understand who they are accountable to, and what steps will be taken if they do not fulfil their responsibilities. The system overall must require and support organisations to work together at both strategic and operational level to take a wide and long-term view in their planning and actions.
- 7.6.3** Partnership at national level is driven through the Reform Board. The Board will also advise on local and regional partnership arrangements to reflect the high level of commitment and focus demonstrated through the Board. Its advice will build on the best of what currently exists. It will require the high level of commitment and focus demonstrated by leaders through the Board to be reflected at regional and local level. The longer term objectives around education, research and career development will require partnerships that move beyond the current relationships built around practice placements, to focus on wider strategic engagement to develop the next generation of professionals. Universities UK, as the representative organisation for the heads of universities, and social work employers, are committed to addressing the issues outlined in the Task Force's report and are currently developing a proposed new partnership statement, which will support delivery of the reform programme.
- 7.6.4** Effective partnership arrangements are necessary to ensure that enough social workers are trained to meet the needs of service users across England, and that their education is of a high standard. This includes practice placements and support from practice educators in the workplace. Close working between employers and higher education institutions is also key to securing high quality continuing professional development opportunities for those already in the workforce, and will be essential to delivering the Assessed Year in Employment. To achieve these goals it is also important that higher education institutions collaborate and co-operate with each other, and that employers do likewise.

7.6.5 The Government will ask the Social Work Reform Board to recommend, by December 2010, a national framework setting out expectations, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms to underpin sub-national arrangements for how local employers and higher education institutions work and plan together on questions of education, continuing professional development and workforce supply.

7.6.6 Advice from the board will enable a move from a place where partnership arrangements are variable in their effectiveness and often depend on the commitment of individuals to one where there are transparent expectations of the outcomes required, a shared understanding of who is responsible for what, and clearly understood and enforced lines of accountability.

7.7 The roles of government delivery organisations/workforce development bodies

7.7.1 The Social Work Task Force commented on the number of organisations surrounding social work and the potential for there to be a lack of clarity around roles and remits, leading to confusion. All the bodies concerned with workforce development for social workers must be clear about their role in social work reform and work in partnership with the other organisations and the Reform Board to support the consistent and strategic programme laid out in this Plan. Each of CWDC, Skills for Care, SCIE and the National Skills Academy have particular and joint actions in both developing parts of the national reform programme and supporting employers to put in place their own local reforms, and through that to deliver a more effective and higher quality service for the people who use social work services.

7.7.2 These organisations will need to develop new ways of engaging with each other and with local employers during 2010–2011. DH and DCSF will support them to do this, so that the social work workforce receives high quality and efficient support for improvement.

7.8 Involving social workers, students and people who have experience of social work services

7.8.1 It is essential that all parts of the reform programme reflect the opinions and views of the people who will experience the changes made over the course of the programme and that there is regular wider communication with social workers, students and the adults, children, young people and families whom social workers work with. This will ensure all understand the progress of change and its impact on their individual experience and working life and the channels they can use to get their voices heard. During 2010–11, CWDC and Skills for Care will communicate and consult through a variety of methods with social workers and their employers to understand the impact of the pilots and changes which have already happened and views about how things should develop both locally and nationally.

7.8.2 The Social Work Reform Board is in the process of setting up Practitioner and Service User and Carer Reference Groups to support its work, and three service user and carer

representatives will sit on the Board itself. Board Members will also join the reference groups to hear the views of these wider groups as the various work strands laid out in this plan develop. Every working group of the Reform Board will be expected to involve appropriate user, carer, frontline and student representatives in the development of proposals as well as having wider consultation events.

7.8.3 The College Development Group and in due course the College itself will also model this level of involvement and commitment to partnership with people who use social work services. The College, along with the other organisations who have a membership of front line social workers and social work students, will have a critical role in ensuring that social workers are fully consulted and that their voices are heard on the Board.

7.9 Understanding the impact of reform

7.9.1 This document sets the direction for a reform programme which must continue over the next ten years. A lot will change during that time, as different elements of the reform programme begin to have impact on the capacity, morale and quality of the workforce – and as external factors influence the work that social workers are needed for and the environments within which they work.

7.9.2 It will therefore be essential that all partners in reform are clear about what is being achieved and that progress and priorities are regularly reviewed, to inform the detail of each phase of the reform programme.

7.9.3 To enable this, a strategy for research, evaluation and review will be developed during 2010–11 to support the Social Work Reform Board. This will allow all partners to be clear about the impact that we are having on key indicators of success, including:

- supply of social workers and vacancy and turnover rates;
- how social workers report their job satisfaction and workload;
- how employers report their satisfaction with social workers and their impact on the quality of service;
- the success of higher education institutions in recruiting and educating prospective social workers who will go on to succeed in the workplace; and
- how users of services and members of the public report their experience and perceptions of social workers.

7.9.4 It will also enable intelligence to be gathered as the programme develops and begins to have impact so that the Government and the Social Work Reform Board can stay closely in touch with the effect of reform on the ground.

Annex A: The Social Work Reform Board and people and organisations during change

A number of groups of stakeholders and specific organisations will have important roles on the Social Work Reform Board and in delivery of the reform programme. This section explains the purpose and role of:

- The Social Work Reform Board (SWRB)
- Other key groups and organisations described in this document

Social Work Reform Board (SWRB)

Following the Social Work Task Force report, Ministers announced the formation of the Social Work Reform Board. The Board has an advisory role and reports to Government Ministers in DH, DCSF and BIS. It will make regular published reports.

The Board is made up of representatives of the profession, employers, educators and Government and reflects the need for collective responsibility and commitment. Each organisation sends a senior representative to attend meetings. Their representative may therefore vary between meetings.

Moira Gibb, who chaired the Task Force, chairs the Social Work Reform Board.

Membership of the Social Work Reform Board

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

- Aspect
- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)
- Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)
- Association of Social Work Professors
- British Association of Social Workers (BASW)
- Children England
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (CAFCASS)
- College of Social Work – once interim arrangements established

- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)
- Department of Health (DH)
- General Social Care Council (GSCC)
- Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy & Social Work (SWAP)
- Joint University Council – Social Work Education Committee (JUC-SWEC)
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- Local Government Employers (LGE)
- Mind
- NHS Confederation
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)
- Unison
- Universities UK

Representatives from the following workforce delivery organisations, inspectorates and funding council attend meetings:

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

Devolved administration from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales also receive papers and are welcome to attend all meetings.

The Board supported the Government in developing its implementation plan, and will enable sustained commitment and action from the sector. It takes responsibility for a wider, strategic view of the social work reform programme. Working groups reporting to the Board will make recommendations about the details of important new additions to the social work system recommended by the Task Force.

SWRB Working and Reference Groups

The SWRB has a number of working groups reporting to it. The working groups will develop options for additions to the social work system, such as the licence to practise and the standard for employers. These options will be presented to the SWRB, which will make recommendations to Ministers.

Currently there are three working groups:

- Career development working group
- Education working group
- Employers' standard working group

The SWRB is in the process of setting up Reference Groups for social workers, and for people who use social work services. It is also appointing Board members who are service users or carers.

Groups/organisations described in this document

Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC)

As the sector skills body for the children's workforce, CWDC leads change to ensure that people and volunteers working with children and young people are able to do the best job they can. It is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the DCSF. CWDC's social work programme focuses on attracting people to become social workers with children and families, supporting social workers to develop their careers and enabling employers to reshape their social work teams to meet children and young people's needs. It will have a key role in developing and implementing future social work reforms working with partners in adult social work and through the Social Work Reform Board.

College Development Group

The college development group is taking responsibility for setting up the national college of social work. Membership of the development group currently comprises: 2 social workers from the Social Work Task Force; ADASS; ADCS; Aspect; Association of Professors of Social Work; BASW; SCIE; JUCSWEC; Unison; GSCC; CWDC; CAFCASS; Skills for Care. The group is convened by Allan Bowman, Chair of SCIE and observers are invited from DH, DCSF and the devolved administrations. The group updates the SWRB on its progress, but does not report to it in the same way that the other working groups do, in order to maintain the college's independence.

Educators

Social workers require a wide variety of skills and areas of expertise, and educators are those who teach social work students these skills and help to expand the expertise of qualified social workers. Many educators are found in higher education institutions, but some may be found in practice, providing continuing professional development. Educators are represented on the Social Work Reform Board through Universities UK, the Association of Social Work Professors and others.

Employers

Many social workers are employed by local authorities in statutory settings, but social workers are also employed by third sector and private organisations in a variety of different settings. All employers have a responsibility to support their social workers by providing a good working environment and high quality supervision and continuing professional development (CPD). Employer representatives on the Social Work Reform Board include the Local Government Association, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, Association of Directors of Children's Services, CAFCASS, SOLACE, Children England and Mind.

Government

Three Departments have responsibility for leading the social work reform programme and supporting other partners in reform: Department for Children, Schools and Families, Department of Health and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

General Social Care Council (GSCC)

The GSCC is responsible for setting standards of conduct and practice for social care workers and their employers, for regulating the workforce, and for regulating social work education and training. The GSCC will therefore be responsible for taking forward the Task Force recommendations on better regulation of social work and education, and will have a role in the introduction of the licence to practise.

Joint Social Work Unit (JSWU)

The Joint Social Work Unit, reporting to the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health, takes responsibility for social work workforce reform within Government. The JSWU supported the work of the Social Work Task Force, and also performs a secretariat role for the Social Work Reform Board and its working groups.

The National Skills Academy for Social Care

The National Skills Academy for Social Care is an employer-led organisation supporting training, development and career progression in adult social care in England. It focuses specifically on leadership, management and commissioning. It will help take forward relevant aspects of the social work reform programme.

Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

SCIE works with the social care profession, including social workers, to inform and encourage good practice. It has a role in developing and improving the workforce, and will take responsibility for implementing aspects of social work reform.

Skills for Care

Skills for Care is part of the employer-led Sector Skills Council for Care and Development with specific responsibility for adult social care workforce development in England. Skills for Care

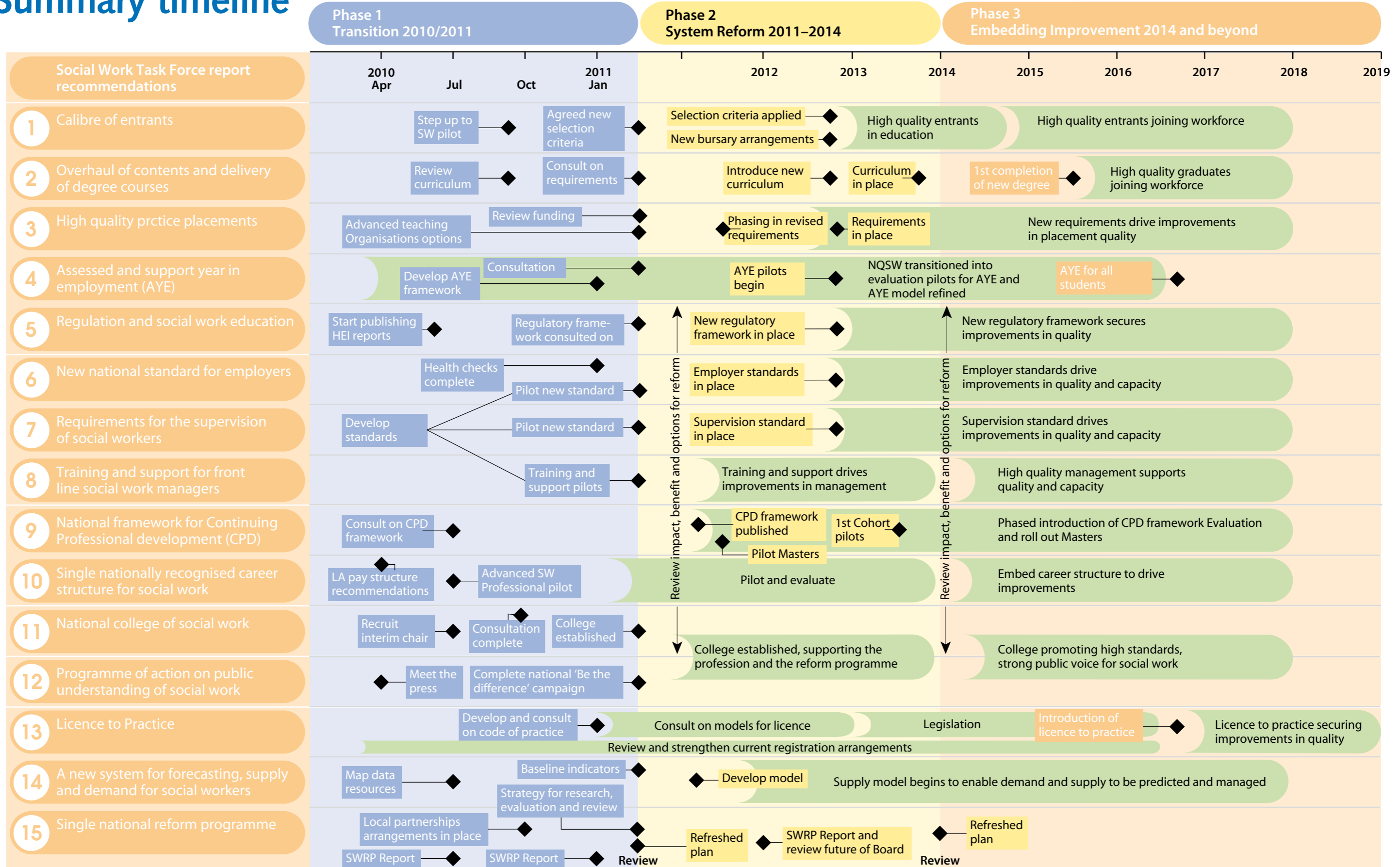
works to ensure the adult social care sector has a modern, flexible and highly skilled workforce to deliver quality care. It is employer led and supports the needs of employers and those of people who use services. Skills for Care takes responsibility for the standards and development needs of the adult social care workforce. It will have a key role in developing and implementing future social work reforms working with partners in children's social work and through the Social Work Reform Board.

Social Work Task Force (SWTF)

The Task Force was a small focused group formed by Government in December 2008 to conduct a 'nuts and bolts' review of social work. Members were selected on the basis of their individual expertise and experience. They included individuals providing a range of perspectives, such as service users, front-line social workers and social work leaders. The Task Force published their final report *Building a safe, confident future* in December 2009, making 15 recommendations for social work reform.

Annex B: Summary timeline

Social Work Reform Programme



Milestones and activities to be confirmed following review in early 2011

Milestones and activities to be confirmed following review in early 2014

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