



The
Higher
Education
Academy

Integrated Children's Services in Higher Education Project (ICS-HE)

Project Summary

May 2008

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The Project Summary draws on

- The ICS-HE Knowledge Review led by Imogen Taylor, University of Sussex
- The ICS-HE Conference Report by Judy McKimm, University of Bedfordshire

Project partners

Higher Education Academy Subject Centres for:

- Social Policy and Social Work (SWAP), Co-ordinator
- Education (ESCalate)
- Health Sciences and Practice
- Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine (MEDEV)
- Psychology

Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC)

Children's Workforce Network (CWN)



<http://icshe.escalate.ac.uk>

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I. Project outline

The government agenda for 'Every Child Matters' requires a step-change in the children's workforce, where the 'team around the child' works interprofessionally to ensure improved outcomes for children, young people and their families. Traditional organisational, professional and disciplinary boundaries must be addressed to ensure collaborative working. Higher education should play a significant role in this process to appropriately align student learning with new ways of working. A large proportion of students in HE will join the children's workforce.

The Integrated Children's Services in Higher Education (ICS-HE) project is one of six one-year employer engagement projects supported by the Higher Education Academy, with funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), to help Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) meet government policy for the workforce to reach targets for attainment at Level 4 and above.

The ICS-HE project was led by the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work (SWAP), in association with the Subject Centres for:

- Education (ESCalate);
- Health Sciences and Practice;
- Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine (MEDEV);
- Psychology.

in collaboration with

- the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC);
- the Children's Workforce Network (CWN).

The ICS-HE project focused on education for integrated children's services to meet the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda. Key disciplines and professions involved include: teaching, early years professionals, careers, nursing, midwifery, medicine, psychology, social work and youth and community work.

The project aimed to bring together relevant subject disciplines and sector bodies to:

- Provide an evidence-based approach to identify effective ways of developing interprofessional curricula and pedagogy for professional practice in children's services;
- Scope existing initiatives and support the development of informed educational policy and practice for professionals who will be working in reconfigured children's services;
- Provide a more coherent response to the Integrated Qualifications Framework (IQF) for the children's workforce across higher education.

The project team identified over 30 organisations to form a Stakeholder Reference Group (including Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), regulatory bodies, academic sector bodies, and professional bodies); established a project website to provide information and resources about the ICS agenda; commissioned a Knowledge Review; published a policy map to guide educators across disciplines, and co-ordinated the planning, design, implementation and reporting of a national conference. This report summarises the outputs and outcomes of the project.

Notes

1. Since the funding base for this work originated from HEFCE, and the SSCs are differently configured elsewhere in the UK, the main focus of activity was in English Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). However, since the thrust of government policy across the UK is for integrated working in children's services, participation from HEIs in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales was included when offered and relevant.
2. At the time of writing this Project Summary, the Knowledge Review and Conference Report were yet to be disseminated. It is hoped and expected that they will impact on HE activity for ICS, but this cannot as yet be ascertained.
3. During the lifespan of the project the application of the Integrated Qualifications Framework (IQF) to HE was just beginning, with consultation under way on procedures. The implications of the IQF for HEIs are not yet clear.
4. Children and young people are referred to here as 'children', although clearly some issues require different approaches in relation to specific age groups.

2. Knowledge Review summary

Researchers at the University of Sussex were commissioned to undertake a Knowledge Review of the higher education response to integrated children's services. The central research question was 'What is known about the nature, contexts and participants in learning in HEI's for practice in integrated children's services that includes students from at least one of the following areas: education and early years, health sciences and practice, medicine and dentistry, psychology, social work, youth and community and staff from at least two of these areas?'

There were three components to this work:

2.1 A Research Review of relevant UK research going back to 1989. Across all participating disciplines 51 abstracts were initially screened on the basis of title and abstract, 28 met the criteria and of these only 12 papers directly address interprofessional education and integrated children's services. The indications are that:

- The ICS agenda in HE is not yet informed by research into new HE practices;
- Research based publications are not emerging consistently from all professions and disciplines involved in the children's workforce, although the absence of identified research does not necessarily reflect low activity;
- There is therefore a dearth of robust evidence about outcomes for students. Outcomes for children, young people and families are rarely discussed;
- The absence of research may reflect an absence of accessible research funding;
- Given the shortage of published work it is difficult to draw conclusions about the characteristics of HE developments for ICS; an exception is the recurring reference to the logistical challenges;
- It is unclear as to the extent to which findings from interprofessional education (IPE) for work with adults can be transferred to work with children (e.g. the professions involved differ);
- In general, issues of 'interprofessional education' and 'learning for integrated children's services' could be better conceptualised and theorised.

2.2 A Practice Survey of 36 HEIs which provide professional education in one or more of the following: education and early years, health sciences and practice, medicine and dentistry, psychology, social work, youth and community.

A framework derived from Activity Theory¹ was used to develop a typology of higher education responses:

- a) Interprofessional students with interprofessional staff
- b) Uniprofessional students with interprofessional staff
- c) Uniprofessional students with uniprofessional staff teaching interprofessional practice
- d) Generic non-professional programmes with interprofessional staff

1. Engestrom, Y. (1995) Innovative organisational learning in medical and legal settings, in: L.M.W. Martin, K. Nelson and E. Tobach (Eds) Perspectives on Activity Theory, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

HE activity

- A wealth of ICS-HE initiatives was identified in the HEIs surveyed;
- Two thirds of the HEIs participating in the survey were post 92 HEIs
- Most activity was at foundation and undergraduate levels, with some at postgraduate/CPD level;
- Participation is shaped by the disciplines represented in each HEI; leadership is most likely to come from social work and early years, followed by nursing and youth & community work;
- ICS-HE developments may be led by ‘brokers’; by cross-HEI appointments or through ‘whole-system’ change led at a senior level;
- ICS-HE developments often used innovative pedagogic approaches and assessment methods. E-learning did not feature strongly;
- In some areas Local Authorities have combined to collaborate with HEIs in partnership for education, training and research.

Challenges and barriers to HE development

- Progression from foundation degrees into professional programmes can be impeded by professional regulations;
- Some programme development is impeded by lack of ‘additional students numbers’;
- Some HEIs considered they might be better able to sustain programmes where students from differing levels were taught together (but assessed separately);
- The purpose of placements in non or pre-professional programmes needs to be clarified; provision may conflict with (scarce) provision of placements for professional programmes;
- The disciplinary organisational base of HE presents a challenge in terms of resources and perspectives;
- There are different views about the transferability of experience from interprofessional education projects for health and social care to the children’s workforce arena.

Issues in stakeholder engagement

- HEIs must engage with a complex range of regional stakeholders (SSCs, employers, FE) as well as regulatory bodies;
- Some HEIs experienced difficulties in sustaining newly created programmes where employers could not maintain release of staff;
- Experiences of support from regulatory bodies to develop interprofessional learning and progression routes are mixed;
- Engaging children, young people and families in the planning and delivery of HE programmes is rare (but there are exemplars on which to build);
- Engagement with voluntary organisations providing services for children and families is limited (in part by their funding capacity);
- Some Local Authorities prefer a CPD model for leadership and management rather than an award-bearing programme.

2.3 An ICS Policy Map showing key relevant policies relevant for HEIs across the disciplines was created and is available at <http://icshe.escalate.ac.uk/1459>

The full version of the Knowledge Review is available at: <http://icshe.escalate.ac.uk/1458>

3. Networking: website, reference group, and conference summary

The project engaged with higher education institutions and other stakeholders through:

- 3.1 A website:** a dedicated site for ICS-HE was established to enable educators, trainers and employers to access information about HE provision for the children's workforce in one place. This includes a policy map, resources, key documentation, links to other web-sites, relevant conferences and the project outputs and reports. <http://icshe.escalate.ac.uk>
- 3.2 A Stakeholder Reference Group:** Representatives of 30 stakeholders, including SSCs, regulatory bodies, academic sector bodies and professional bodies were invited to two meetings. The first (September 2007) raised awareness of the issues for HE in addressing the ICS agenda and the planned activities and outputs of the project. The exchange of information across the stakeholder bodies represented was also useful. The second (February 2008) received and commented on the project reports and recommendations.
- 3.3 A national conference** in November 2007, attended by 200 delegates, including educators and training providers from across HE, practitioner and service user educators and representatives from employer, regulatory, service and professional organisations. The conference provided opportunities to discuss issues and innovative educational practices for the ICS agenda, with keynote speakers from government, from practice and from HE. A wide range of initiatives for ICS at all levels in HE was showcased (foundation degrees, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and CPD), with examples of revised curricula, new ventures in interprofessional learning, new programmes and some 'whole-system' organisational development in HEIs. A panel comprising representatives from a range of disciplines and organisations answered questions. Presentations and notes of the workshops are available on the project website.

The challenges for HEIs in addressing the ICS agenda, identified in the conference report, include:

Stakeholders: HEIs must forge relationships with many organisations (regionally and nationally)

Policy: maintaining the HEI voice at national and regional level in relation to policy and practice, and coping with the misalignment of some policy agendas across health, education and public services

Funding streams: taking account of the contradictions and anomalies of different funding streams for HE

Research: augmenting HE outputs in terms of research on practice and on teaching for ICS, to contribute evidence about what works best

Placements: ensuring quality and quantity of clinical/practice/work-based learning opportunities

Regulatory frameworks: when interprofessional programmes are developed they must map against the 'Common Core' as well as varying QAA benchmarks, professional regulations and standards, which are themselves not always well coordinated

Leadership and management: linking ICS-HE initiatives appropriately with the wide range of programmes in HE

Start-up costs: of larger scale IPE initiatives

Progression: from foundation degrees and transfer between professions

Sustaining programmes: where employers' funding leads to extreme fluctuations in uptake

Surmounting the discipline-base: of HEI structures to mount interprofessional, cross-faculty initiatives

Encouraging participation: from all relevant core disciplines

Developing engagement with children, young people and parents: in the planning and delivery of teaching

Developing frameworks: for conceptual linking of teaching across disciplines e.g. children's development/trajectories, children's rights

The evaluations of the conference were very positive and indicated a desire for continuing opportunities for information exchange and networking.

3.4 Requests for Participation: Other requests for project staff to attend or present to meetings and conferences have followed, including a conference organised by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Professional Associations Research Network on partnerships between HEIs and professional bodies and SSCs; the annual education meeting for the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health; the annual conference of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers; the Joint Social Work Education Conference, and events organised by the CWDC and CWN.

3.5 Integrated Qualifications Framework: At the start of the project, work on the Integrated Qualifications Framework at HE level was only just beginning. However, the project has promoted participation in regional consultations; team members contributed to a national focus group meeting and information about events has been disseminated using the ICS-HE network.

The full version of the Conference Report is available at: <http://icshe.escalate.ac.uk/1579>

4. Conclusions and findings

The concluding section draws together the main findings from the various outputs of the ICS-HE project:

- 4.1 Complex environment:** The complexity of the environment for the children's workforce, and the difficulty of securing effective channels of communication to engage all relevant partners and stakeholders (both within HEIs and externally) at local, regional and national levels is a significant challenge.
- 4.2 Policy landscape and alignment:** The policy landscape can contribute to difficulties in communication and prioritisation. The integrated working agenda that is at the heart of the Government's ICS programme is interpreted differently locally.
- 4.3 Government funding arrangements:** These do not always reflect joined up approaches e.g. the changes to funding for students taking equivalent or lower qualifications (ELQs); funding of student numbers; funding of practice learning; targets for 50% employer-funded additional student numbers raise specific difficulties in the public sector.
- 4.4 Professional regulation and standards:** Dislocation between standards set by professional regulators is a significant barrier to developing interprofessional programmes.
- 4.5 Understanding HE systems, structures, funding and accountability:** One barrier to effective partnership development with stakeholders can be a lack of awareness of how HE works, e.g. institutional autonomy, the timescale to launch new programmes, and the problems caused when new programmes developed in partnership cannot recruit where employers are unable to release staff on a consistent basis.
- 4.6 Extent of HEI response to the ICS-HE agenda:** Although the ICS-HE project did not set out to provide a systematic picture of HE engagement, through the Knowledge Review and the networking activities it is clear that many HEIs have made significant steps to address the ICS agenda at all levels (foundation, degree, postgraduate and CPD). Initiatives include curriculum revisions, specific developments in IPE, new programmes and, in places, 'whole-system' HEI engagement. However, the extent of engagement is uneven; some HEIs have as yet made only preliminary steps to engage with the ICS agenda and/or employers and SSC interests in their regions (reflecting factors such as the existing level of local collaboration, the flexibility of the HEIs and the different priority accorded to this area of work).
- 4.7 Engagement varies across professions and disciplines:** This varies for a variety of reasons (e.g. reluctance to work across disciplinary boundaries and identities; the extent to which a focus on children, young people and families is seen to be 'core'; the extent to which the relevant regulatory bodies have promoted this agenda; the 'space' in the overall curriculum). Research into ICS in terms of both practice and IPE could be enhanced. More work is needed to make the step-change required for all HE to play its full role in the ICS agenda.
- 4.8 Making change happen:** The internal discipline-based structures of HEIs can restrict collaborative work and funding mechanisms do not facilitate sharing budgets or student numbers. Faced with this some HEIs are launching a 'whole system' change in response to the ICS agenda, led or endorsed at senior level, with active engagement of local employers, cross-

faculty appointments, seed funding, links to interdisciplinary research programmes, seminars and teaching. HEFCE Strategic Development Funding has been used creatively by HEI consortia (e.g. the South West Academic Network). This is complex change activity requiring engagement with stakeholders within and outside HEIs. The ICS-HE project has been funded for only one year to February 2008. Beyond this there is clearly a continued need for such cross-sector co-ordination to disseminate and promote an effective higher education response to the needs of the ICS workforce agenda and to develop the evidence base through more research in this under-researched area.

It is anticipated that dissemination of the ICS-HE project reports will further contribute to the change process.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Government departments and Sector Skills Councils** should involve higher education as a strategic partners in researching, developing and implementing policy and practice for the ICS workforce at national, regional and local levels. Where the implementation of new policies might undermine the aim to enhance the children's workforce (e.g. Equivalent or lower qualifications ruling; 50% employer funding for additional student numbers) these should be reviewed.
- 5.2 Regulatory bodies** for all the relevant professions should explore collaboration to harmonise regulatory requirements for the professions, building on initiatives like the *'Joint Statement of interprofessional values underpinning work with children and young people'* (GTC, GSCC, NMC).
- 5.3 Employers, supported by government,** should be encouraged to work with HEIs to develop programmes with a sustainable and robust business case.
- 5.4 Universities** should strengthen their links with the SSCs and employers at regional level. At national level HE engagement could be strengthened through academic sector bodies and the Subject Centres. Within HEIs, efforts should be made to promote learning for integrated children's services; the appointment of an ICS Coordinator to work across departments and faculties and to act as a contact point for external bodies and the IQF would enhance collaboration. The issue of additional student numbers, required to meet the demands of the children's workforce, should be urgently addressed.
- 5.5 Professional, academic and/or regulatory bodies** should commission profession or discipline-specific reviews and seek input from professional, regulatory, sector academic bodies and the relevant Subject Centres, building on work such as the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers paper, Every Child Matters and Teacher Education (Kirk and Broadhead, 2007) and work to enhance discipline-based engagement.
- 5.6 Research funders** should target funding for research into interprofessional work for ICS and into interprofessional learning for ICS to ensure a robust evidence base on the outcomes for students, and to develop the conceptual and theoretical base essential to learning for integrated children's services.
- 5.7 The Quality Assurance Agency** should explore the feasibility of harmonising benchmark statements across disciplines; a focus on interprofessional learning and collaboration might be a place to start. A review on guidance about teaching students at different levels together would be welcome.
- 5.8 Children, young people and families** should be supported to contribute to learning, teaching, assessment and evaluation.

Further work should be undertaken with HEIs and stakeholder groups to **disseminate the findings of the project, research new areas, and promote developments within HEIs**. This would need a new allocation of resource. Specific actions suggested include:

- Develop and extend the information exchanges created in the current project (e.g. website, discussion list, periodic e-bulletin or briefings);
- More work on policy signposting and updating, including the IQF;
- A further national conference;
- Regional conferences linking to regional CWDC work;
- ‘Consultations’ to develop strategic HEI involvement where this has yet to take place;
- Presentations to bodies such as Universities UK and the HE Academy Pro-Vice Chancellor group;
- Funded HE pilots with a focus on developing the ICS agenda and associated independent research;
- Promotion of subject/discipline specific engagements, through bodies such as Council of Heads of Medical Schools and the Council of Deans, especially where engagement is low;
- Links to international/European developments;
- A focused review on leadership and management for ICS within HE;
- Extend HE engagement to disciplines such as law, drama, sports and police studies where there is involvement with children and young people;
- Direct involvement of the CETLs working on IPE, to ensure coordinated responses and to share practice.

The agenda for integrated children’s services includes changing cultures, changing practitioner roles, and introducing new kinds of practitioners. Higher education can contribute to all of these; both educators and graduating students have a significant role to play as change agents to create a new culture for integrated services.

6. Appendix I: Stakeholder Reference Group members

Higher Education Academy Subject Centres for:

- Social Policy and Social Work (SWAP)
- Education (ESCalate)
- Health Sciences and Practice
- Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine (MEDEV)
- Psychology

University of Bedfordshire (*Network Development*)

University of Sussex (*Knowledge Review*)

Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC)

Children's Workforce Network (CWN)

UK Centre for Advancement of Interprofessional Education (CAIPE)

CETL for Interprofessional Learning in the Public Sector, University of Southampton

Department for Children, Schools and Families

Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network

General Social Care Council (GSCC)

General Teaching Council for England (GTCE)

Institute of Career Guidance

Joint University Council Social Work Education Committee (JUC-SWEC)

Nursing and Midwifery Council

Professional Association for Lecturers in Youth & Community Work Education

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

Skills for Justice

Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA)

Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET)

Voice (Advocacy for Children and Young People)



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