



Overview of the Social Work Task Force's 15 recommendations

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The Recommendations

The fifteen recommendations of the Task Force are comprehensive and far reaching, and will affect all stakeholders concerned with the profession, including children's services and adult services. The Task Force recommends a reformed system of initial training and education for social workers; clear, universal and binding standards for employers; a dedicated programme of training and support for managers of frontline social workers; a single, nationally recognised career structure; a national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers; a new system for forecasting levels of demand for social workers; introducing a license to practise, a new programme of action on public understanding of social work; and a single national reform programme for social work.

Recommendations 1-5 are concerned with entry to the social work degree and the standards of the degree.

R1. Calibre of Entrants: Those criteria governing the calibre of entrants to social work education and training be strengthened.

R. 2. Curriculum and Delivery: an overhaul of the content and delivery of social work degree courses.

R 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.

R.4. Assessed Year in Employment: the creation of an assessed and supported year in employment [AYE] as the final stage in becoming a social worker.

R.5. Regulation of Social Work Education: more transparent and effective regulation of social work education to give greater assurance of consistency and quality.

Recommendations 6-8 focus on employer standards.

R.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.

R. 7. Supervision: the new standard for employers should be supported by clear national requirements for the supervision of social workers.

R.8. Front Line Management: the creation of dedicated programmes of training and support for front line social work managers.

Recommendations 9-12 are concerned with strengthening the profession of social work.

R.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. [The CPD framework would build on and include PQ.

The recommendations support the recommendation for a Master in Social Work programme, and they also mention the availability of doctoral studies, particularly in conjunction with preparing future social work academics.] *R.10. National Career Structure:* the creation of a single, nationally recognised career structure for social work. [Social work student › probationary social worker › licensed social worker › senior licensed social worker › advanced professional or practice educator or social work manager].

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

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

Recommendations 13-15 focus on organisational cohesion, including further regulation of social workers (R13); workforce planning (R14); and establishing a single national reform programme (R15).

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

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

R.15. National Reform Programme: the creation of a single national reform programme for social work.

Next Steps

The government has signalled its acceptance of the Report. A new Reform Board will develop and oversee an implementation plan from early 2010. Resources will be required for successful implementation, but these are not the sole requirement. A high standard of leadership will be necessary to ensure that all stakeholders (government, professional associations, regulatory bodies, practitioners, employers, higher education, and service users) collaborate and work constructively on a national basis. Allowing sufficient time to achieve the reforms will be required – up to five years. A forthcoming election and the present economic downturn may well impact on progress towards achieving the goals of the Task Force. However, the Task Force's far reaching recommendations offer the best opportunity so far to improve the quality of social work practice and to establish social work fully as a profession, and it is likely the reform programme will gain widespread support. A time line for implementation must be agreed. Each stakeholder group may wish to consult within its own internal constituency to gather suggestions that could be carried forward to the Reform Board. The Task Force recommendations will benefit present-day students and social work practitioners as well as future social workers. The qualifications of students currently studying for the social work degree and practitioners studying for post qualifying awards should continue to be valued.

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