Executive summary:

In 2014, Council agreed that there should be a review of social work education. This is the first significant review since 2003, and reflects the changing policy and practice landscape for social workers in all employer settings, but particularly in local authorities. Social work education has already been reviewed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Review of Social Work Education (RSWE) is a key action in the Vision and Strategy for Social Services in Scotland (2015) published by Scottish Government.

The approach taken to undertaking the Review was inclusive and collaborative, seeing to engage with the wider workforce and representative groups in a meaningful way, to ensure that the final recommendations will be fit for purpose, reflect the needs and wishes of key stakeholders in social work education, and strengthen the professionalism of social work practice in Scotland.

Phase One of this review is now complete, and key activities have been identified for Phase Two. This report provides a summary of progress for Phase One, outlines the key themes and recommendations and plans for Phase Two.

Recommendations:

That the Council notes:

i) The progress achieved in Phase One of the Review of Social Work Education in Scotland, and the contribution made by key partners in achieving this progress

ii) The draft plan for Phase Two of the Review of Social Work Education in Scotland.
1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 In 2013, SSSC agreed its broad intention to develop a new and different approach to professional learning in Scotland through a learning strategy that addresses qualifying and post-qualifying learning for the social work and social care workforce in Scotland. Other elements being developed concurrently include: the development of a supported first year in practice for newly-qualified social workers and the development of a framework for continuous professional learning. Other work has already been undertaken to review the Standard in Childhood Practice (completed in 2015), and to develop a Chief Social Work Officer Award (first cohort to start in September 2015). The review of social work education is part of this programme of work.

1.2 The Standards in Social Work Education were first approved by Council in 2003, and have subsequently not been formally reviewed. Since that time, the social work landscape has changed significantly, with the introduction of policies and systems which have impacted significantly on social work practice. This includes: Getting It Right For Every Child; the human rights approaches underpinning self-directed support; the need for public service reform; specific responsibilities in Child and Adult Protection; changes to the Children’s Hearing system and criminal justice system; the introduction of mental health tribunals and the integration of health and social care.

1.3 Social work practice is changing in Scotland in response to the policy and system changes, and also in the rest of the UK, with significant reviews of social work education having already taken place in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Council approved a similar review of social work education in Scotland in June 2014.

1.4 The Chief Social Work Advisor published the Vision and Strategy for Social Services in Scotland in early 2015. One of the priorities of the vision and strategy is to: "support and inform Scottish Social Services Council work to review approaches to social work services education to make sure that social services workers joining the workforce have relevant skills, knowledge and values and continuously update them throughout their careers.” In relation to social work, the Vision and Strategy document contains a specific action to “support the implementation of the recommendations agreed as an outcome of the current review of the social work degree.”

1.5 This report is a summary of the activity and findings of the first phase of the Review of Social Work Education in Scotland.

2. **INFORMATION**

2.1 **Preparation for the RSWE**

2.1.1 Prior to the review starting, some initial preparation work was completed to gather information and evidence for the review group to consider.
2.1.2 The current Standard in Social Work Education (SiSWE) was based on the National Occupational Standards (NOS) in Social Work (2002), which were subsequently revised in 2012-13. A mapping exercise was completed to compare and contrast the SiSWE with the revised NOS.

2.1.3 The major finding of this mapping exercise was that there were some discrete gaps, and differences in tone, language and approach, often reflecting changes in policy and practice. The report on the mapping exercise (Gordon and Dunworth 2014) recommended a thorough review and revision of the SiSWE, with expansion to include an increased emphasis on personal capabilities, the wellbeing and resilience of social workers, the role of social workers in integrated settings, and an increased emphasis on supporting people to participate in decision-making processes.

2.1.4 In June 2014, an Ideas Platform was set up. This provided an online open forum for ideas about how social work education could be improved to be shared, commented on and developed. 120 ideas were submitted by 45 respondents, and a range of individuals and organisations submitted more detailed views and ideas by email.

2.1.5 In 2013-14, SSSC commissioned the following research, which provided evidence for the review:


- **Scottish first-line managers’ views of newly qualified social workers’ preparedness for practice; findings from an online Delphi study** Welch, V., Lerpiniere, J. and Young, E. (April 2014), Glasgow, Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland, University of Strathclyde

- **Post qualifying social work learning and development in Scotland: An overview** Gillies, B. (March 2014), Dundee, SSSC

2.1.6 Appendix 1 contains a full list of evidence submitted to the RSWE

2.2 **Approach and Process**

2.2.1 From the outset, this Review was based on a spirit of inquiry, and a clear recognition of the positive impact social work education has had. The focus of the work was to think about how we could do more to ensure that the right people had the right skills, knowledge and values to make a positive contribution to social work practice. We were not starting from a point of believing that social work education was ‘broken’ and needed to be ‘fixed’. A collaborative, inclusive, transparent approach was used, with all evidence available to everyone, and a Yammer group set up for collective consideration of the issues between meetings. Contribution at meetings and constructive challenge was encouraged, and a sense of
collective responsibility for the outcome developed very quickly as a result.

2.2.2 Members of the group came from different perspectives, backgrounds and experiences. They brought themselves, as well as their professional expertise, and in addition to their obvious skills and knowledge, they each brought a very strong commitment to working together to improve social work education. This commitment has been a significant factor in developing the aspirational intent for social work education for the future, and has been a modelling of the ways in which academy, employer, regulator and key stakeholders can positively collaborate in strengthening the social work profession in Scotland.

2.2.3 In June 2014, the membership of the RSWE group was established (Appendix 2), representing the key stakeholder groups with an interest in social work education. The role of the group members was to provide their expertise and contribution to the review, and also to share the review group thinking within their representative group on an ongoing basis, providing a regular feedback loop, and engaging a wider group of people. The purpose of the group was to examine the evidence available (both presented by the SSSC, and sourced by RSWE members), and collectively come to some recommendations about the future of social work education in Scotland. The first meeting of the group was in August 2014, and the last meeting in April 2015 (Appendix 2).

2.2.4 The approach used for the RSWE was non-traditional, and members of the group have described the experience as being participative, collegiate, inspirational, collaborative, hopeful, challenging, having a shared focus and sense of responsibility for the outcome.

2.3 Themes from RSWE Phase One

2.3.1 Early in the Review process it became apparent that this review was not only about the current form and nature of the social work degree but about the form that social work takes now in Scotland and what it may become in the future.

2.3.2 The Institute for Research and Innovation in the Social Services’ (IRISS) project, Imagining the Future, anticipates impending changes and challenges for the social services workforce in Scotland and explores ways of responding to this environment (Musselbrook, 2013). Reliably predicting the future is clearly impossible but it is evident that over the next 10-15 years there are likely to be ‘significant changes’ in the number and demographic of people who need support and the ways in which that support is likely to be offered. In that document Musselbrook (Ibid: p 2) suggests that, “our ambition should be to consider what type of workforce we want and begin to articulate this to build support and resilience”.

2.3.3 This became a central ambition for this review, linking it with the broader review of professional learning that SSSC is conducting as well as workforce planning and policy change.
2.3.4 **Entry**: A shared desire to ensure social work education and social work practice attract the right people emerged as a strong theme from the review. The main issues are encapsulated in the following questions:

- How can access to social work education be widened to include people from different backgrounds and skills sets?
- How can the consistency and robustness of universities’ selection and admissions criteria be enhanced?
- Should the changing demands of the professional social work role require increased entry requirements and more emphasis on experience, resilience and skills?

2.3.5 **Qualifying Programmes**: The RSWE held wide-ranging debates on the philosophy, structure and content of pre-qualifying social work degrees. These acknowledged the many strengths of educational provision, but also the need and opportunity to revise what we do currently and to develop an innovative and cohesive national strategy for social work education.

2.3.6 Key questions related to articulating the social work role and professional identity, meeting the demands of practising in increasingly complex and inter-disciplinary working environments, ensuring that core knowledge, skills and values inform social work degrees across the country and reaffirming our commitment to research-informed social work practice. These are summarised as follows:

- How can the Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE) be revised to reflect changes in policy and practice, including: more clearly articulating the values and role of social work in inter-professional contexts; placing more emphasis on personal capabilities of social workers and enabling practitioners to look after their well-being?
- How might a ‘core curriculum’ be developed to provide consistency across degree programmes in relation to key subject areas, including inter-professional working and managing complexity, whilst retaining flexibility in social work education?
- How might a core curriculum reflect the central importance of research for practice?
- Are additional resources needed to share and develop innovative teaching and learning approaches across universities, for example, to increase the direct involvement of people who have used social services?
- Could perceived gaps between social work education and practice be addressed by: placing greater emphasis on ‘integrated learning’ (academic and practice); increasing preparation for practice learning and applied skills attainment (report writing, interviewing skills and dealing with complexity); and increasing collaboration and exchange between universities, practitioners and employers?
Would a national framework address current availability and quality assurance issues with practice education?

Should a statutory placement for all students be mandatory and should practice teacher registration be introduced?

2.3.7 **Transition and Post-Qualification:** The RSWE group recognised that the skills, knowledge and values social workers need in order to practise effectively are contingent upon having access to improved education and professional development in the transition and post-qualification periods. It was recognised that whilst there are some examples of excellence here, provision across the county is inconsistent and fragmented and its improvement is imperative to nurturing and sustaining the current and future workforce.

2.3.8 The research evidence and RSWE discussions gave rise to the following questions:

- Would a supported first year in practice address current inconsistencies in induction and support arrangements and improve transition for NQSWs?

- Should the Post-Registration, Training and Learning Requirements (PRTL) be revised to overcome the current ‘tick-box’ approach, which captures quantity rather than quality?

- Should a professional development framework with central funding be developed to address the current limited and fragmented post-qualifying social work education provision?

- Could the professional identity of social workers as “practitioner, professional and social scientist” (Croisdale Appleby, 2014) be facilitated through a professional development framework linked to registration?

2.3.9 Inevitably, the responses of the RSWE group members to these questions and themes have varied considerably. There was a high degree of consensus among the group in many areas, for example, in relation to retaining generic pre-qualifying social work education. It was recognised, however, that engaging in wider systemic changes, for example, implementing a core curriculum and developing a national practice learning framework, necessitated further exploration and consideration, not least about their feasibility and funding. As such, the RSWE group recognised that the work undertaken thus far represents a staging post, and additional consultation and research activity is now required before more considered and detailed recommendations can be made. This work will constitute the next phase of RSWE. A summary of the Phase One findings is in draft form and is due to be signed off by the RSWE Group. This will be published on a dedicated page on the SSSC website, along with some short video clips of the views of people who took part in June 2015. The findings will also be communicated to Council Members via BaseCamp.
2.4 The next phase

2.4.1 The RSWE group considered different sources of evidence at each meeting, and it was not until the last two meetings that thinking started to crystallise around the recommendations for activity for the next phase. The group felt that the initial exploratory, broad evidence-gathering phase was over, and the next phase provided an opportunity to do some more focused investigation, with a view to coming to firm recommendations with an implementation plan at the end of the next phase.

2.4.2 The RSWE group collectively agreed that the inclusive, collaborative processes used during the first phase should continue, and while the work of the group should be overseen by a strategic group of key stakeholders, there should be increased opportunity for a wider group of people to engage with and be involved in this work. The structure will comprise a strategic group (with revised membership, to ensure broad representation), several workstreams to take forward the different recommendations from this stage, and a range of methods for the workstream groups and the strategic groups to engage effectively with a wider range of people interested in social work education, both to share learning and to encourage wider contribution of views, ideas and analysis to the work.

2.4.3 **RSWE Strategic Group**: The membership of the RSWE Strategic Group will be reviewed to ensure that stakeholder groups reaffirm that they have the right representation on the group. A new Chair will be identified as Andy Kendrick, Convenor of the Head of Schools of Social Work, is stepping down this summer. For the sake of continuity, we will ensure that many of the current RSWE group continue to be involved in the Strategic Group, or in the Workstreams.

2.4.4 **Workstreams**: There will be three workstreams. One will take forward the focused gathering of additional evidence. There are ten key areas on which the RSWE Group think more information is needed (Appendix 3). Exploration of these questions will be undertaken by partnerships between universities, employers and people who use social work services, and presented to the RSWE Strategic Group.

2.4.5 The second workstream relates to developing a collective understanding about the ‘integrated learning’ approach we want to take to social work education, and how we are going to work together to do this. One of the features of social work education currently is the perceived separation between academic learning and practice learning. There are many examples of excellent collaborations between social work employers and universities, but there are also many more opportunities to increase the sharing of responsibility and accountability across both sectors. This relationship can be reinvigorated and redefined through coming to a collective understanding about what everyone is working together to achieve, and we have called this ‘integrated learning’.

2.4.6 We are not quite sure yet what a model of integrated learning could look like so would want to commission some research into the efficacy of an integrated learning model, exploring ways in which this has been used in
other countries, and also in Scotland, because we know that there are some good examples already. We will use this information to agree a definition of ‘integrated learning’ and develop an options appraisal in relation to transition to an integrated learning model for social work education.

2.4.7 The third workstream will start to look at options for implementation, structures and resources. There are four main areas of exploration and development:

- An options appraisal containing a financial analysis of the funding currently available for social work training in Scotland, costings and an options appraisal for any changes in the delivery of the social work degree will provide us with information about how social work training is currently funded, if there are additional sources of funding that could be accessed, and how much it would cost for different delivery models.

- An options appraisal for a supported first year in practice for newly qualified social workers, including costings, potential models of delivery and an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each model, along with implications for implementation will help inform our recommendation.


- In order to ensure that people stay in the profession for longer, we want to want to gather more evidence about the length of time that social workers stay in employment as (a) social workers and (b) social work managers or other related jobs; explore the extent to which social workers leave employment as a result of stress; identify ways in which the resilience of social workers could be protected and promoted throughout their careers.

2.4.8 The key deliverables for 2015-16 are detailed in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Learning - Output Milestones</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quarter 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish membership, ToR and workstreams for Phase 2 SW Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request bids for partnership grants to develop evidence papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scope brief for Integrated Learning procurement</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>expenditure</th>
<th>Social Work Advisor</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procure supplier for NQSW Scheme Options Appraisal</td>
<td>Work on length of time in practice, resilience and stress is completed and submitted to the SW Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procure supplier to write technical benchmark standards for Social Work and NQSW</td>
<td>NQSW Scheme Options Appraisal submitted to SSSC and SW Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start activity to explore length of time in practice, resilience and stress.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| SW and NQSW Standards approved by Council and the SW Review Board |
| Integrated Learning Model submitted to SSSC and SW Review Board |
| Financial Analysis completed and submitted to SW Review Board |

3. **LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

3.1 SSSC Outcome 1: There is a safe, skilled, confident and flexible workforce with the appropriate values, knowledge and skills to meet the current and future sector needs.

SSSC Outcome 4: Qualifications are fit for purpose

4. **LINK TO RISK REGISTER**

4.1 Risk 5: The work of the SSSC does not increase the skill level and competence of the social services workforce

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The work to review the degree in social work is funded through the Workforce Development Grant from Scottish Government. Significant investment in excess of £126k is being made towards this review in 2015-16. While the majority of the costs cover commissioned work, this results in additional pressures on core staff in servicing contracts, co-ordinating the activities, and supporting the engagement processes we would like to use. This can be managed within existing resources, but may be at risk if there is a reduction in staff capacity for any reason. Additionally, the commissioned work is at risk of not being completed within timescales, if insufficient suppliers respond to the invitation to tender are. These risks will be monitored and managed through the Sector Development Programme Board on a quarterly basis, chaired by the Director, with significant risks and issues being escalated to EMT.

6. **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out.
6.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment is not required at this stage

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

8. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

8.1 Stakeholder engagement is a strong feature of the work underpinning this report and stakeholder involvement has been detailed earlier in the report. The stakeholder engagement plan will be a central pillar of the next phase of the review.

9. IMPACT ON USERS AND CARERS

9.1 People representing service user and carer groups were part of the RSWE Group. The revision of the Social Work degree has the potential to have a significant impact on people who use social work services and their carers, and the work of the RSWE Group has had a focus on ensuring that the future social workers will be even better prepared to meet their needs.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 This report summarises the significant activity undertaken to progress the review of social work education in Scotland in 2014-15. Particular reference has been made to the RSWE Group, and their contribution, support and enthusiasm has positively impacted on the quality of the thinking and ideas that have been generated. The RSWE Group see this as a generational opportunity to enhance social work education and to influence discussion about the direction of the social work profession in Scotland. Some of their comments about being involved in the RSWE Group are included in Appendix 4.

10.2 Council is asked to note the contents of this report and the plans for the next phase.

Contact Officer: Mairi-Anne Macdonald, Director of Sector Development
01382 207201
Appendix 1 Sources of evidence

Note: where no location is given for a resource it is available from the Scottish Social Services Council only.

Brannan, J. (November 2014) Review of the social work degree: Feedback from employers, SWS Organisational Development Standing Committee


Gillies, B. (March 2014) Post qualifying social work learning and development in Scotland: An overview, Dundee, SSSC


Inter-University Service User and Carer Group (2014) Response to e mail consultation

Macdonald, MA (2014) Local authority visits: Main issues


McCulloch, T. and McCusker, P. (December, 2014) Feedback on consultation with Universities about the social work degree, Social Work Degree Review Group meeting, December 8th 2014

Scottish Social Services Council (September 2014) Social work in the 21st Century: Analysis of ideas about social work education submitted to the Social Services Council Challenge website, Dundee, SSSC

Scottish Social Services Council (2014) Social Work Education in England and the Scottish position (summary produced for the Policy Committee on 05 March 2014), Dundee, SSSC

Social Work Review Group meeting minutes. All meeting minutes


Welch, V., Lerpiniere, J. and Young, E. (April 2014) *Scottish first-line managers’ views of newly qualified social workers’ preparedness for practice; findings from an online Delphi study*, Glasgow, Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland, University of Strathclyde

*Minutes of meeting between SSSC and Scottish Children’s Reporters Administration - 6 December 2014*

*Imagining the Future session*, facilitated by Rob Rae, IRISS, January 2014
Appendix 2 Membership of the Review Group

Terms of Reference excerpt: *each group member undertakes to have the necessary experience and influence to adequately represent their particular stakeholder interest. This also recognises that each group member will also bring with them their own professional journey, experiences and views which will bring added value to their unique stakeholder perspective.*

**Members:**

*Chair:* Andy Kendrick  
University of Strathclyde

Audrey Taylor  
NHS Education Scotland

David Rennie  
Scottish Care

Diane White  
Scottish Government

Jill Brannan  
Aberdeenshire Council and Social Work Scotland

Joanne McMeeking  
CELCIS/ University of Strathclyde

John Byrne  
Practitioner, City of Edinburgh Council

Judy Kerr  
University of Stirling

Pearse McCusker  
Glasgow Caledonian University

Robert Peat  
Care Inspectorate

Ros Surtees  
Dumfries and Galloway Council/ScOPT

Surinder K Saroya  
Service User and Carer representative

Tony Miller  
Student Social Worker

Trish McCulloch  
University of Dundee

Mairi-Anne Macdonald  
Scottish Social Services Council

Gordon Brechin  
Office of the Children’s Reporter

John Sawkins  
Service User

*In attendance:*

Karen McLaughlin  
Scottish Social Services Council

Anne Tavendale  
Scottish Social Services Council

Jean Gordon  
Evaluator

Moira Dunworth  
Evaluator

Jenny Bew  
Open University, support to service user
The RSWE group met on the following dates:

19th August 2014
25th September 2014
6th November 2014
9th December 2014
6th January 2015
18th February 2015
18 March 2015
23 April 2015
Appendix 3 Partnership Questions (draft 22/05/15, not yet finalised by RSWE Group)

- **How can universities best select the right people for social work programmes?** We will explore the ways in which Universities currently select students for entry and identify models of best practice in social work and other professions. This will include exploration of the benefits and challenges of introducing a national approach to selection. Maximising the ‘widening access’ agenda is essential while, at the same time, ensuring that students have the appropriate values and the capacity to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding to be effective social workers.

- **How can we maximise the impact of the collective experience of people who have used social work services in the design, development and delivery of social work programmes?** Each university currently works with people who have experience of using social work services, and do this in different ways. Where does this work well in Scotland, and what has been found to work well in other countries and professions in ensuring that care experienced people have a strong voice in the design, development and delivery of social work programmes? Knowing more about this will help strengthen any recommendations in relation to the voice and direct involvement of care experienced people in social work education.

- **Should social work education have a stronger focus on community development and engagement?** Internationally, social workers have a much stronger community development and engagement identity than they do in Scotland and, albeit it is partly covered in some curricula, this does not feature as a significant factor in current social work education or practice. There is significant and increasing emphasis on the role of the social worker in supporting community development in some of the more recent key Scottish Government policies, such as self-directed support. More evidence about the role of social workers in community development internationally will help frame further thinking about how and whether social work should focus more intently on community development and engagement (in education and in practice) in Scotland as a means to supporting active and participative citizenship.

- **Should there be a shared philosophy of learning across all social work programmes and post-qualifying learning?** It would be helpful to explore the potential to develop a shared philosophy of learning across the social work programmes, including how this could be developed. This would ensure that approaches to learning for social work education remain future focused.

- **Should there be a ‘core curriculum’ and what should be in it?** Social work programmes all need to meet the same standards for approval, but each university delivers a different type of programme. There may be scope for all students to benefit from the collective strengths of the social work programmes through universities sharing in the delivery of some modules. There may be benefit in exploring whether
having a ‘core curriculum’ would be of value in delivering a generic social work degree programme, and could become part of the ‘integrated learning’ approach for all students.

- **How much of the qualifying programme should be undertaken with students from other professional groups, and how can these opportunities be maximised?** Inter-professional education is a feature of all of the social work programmes currently, to varying degrees. Finding out more detail about the inter-professional education in each of the universities, and the extent to which inter-professional education is, or should be industry driven, will provide essential evidence. This is an opportunity to rethink inter-professional education in social work programmes. An options appraisal which could be shared with colleagues in other related professions could explore ways in which this could be enhanced, potentially resulting in students experiencing programmes which provide a firm foundation of inter-professional working, while protecting their specific professional development. This would also ensure that all students have access to the same quality and quantity of inter-professional learning.

- **What ‘new’ skills will social workers of the future need?** Social work programmes have traditionally focused on the development of ‘social work skills’, however advances in technology and practice mean that these skills now include: digital literacy, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. Evidence provided to the RSWE pointed to some qualified social workers feeling that they did not have sufficient skills in these emerging areas. Exploring this further will help to identify which ‘new’ skills should be included in social work programmes, and how this can be achieved.

- **What should ‘practice learning’ look like?** Practice learning experiences vary greatly across Scotland. The quality of practice learning provision, whatever shape it may take, can always be improved. Looking more broadly at ‘practice learning’ or ‘work based learning’ in other countries and professions, and using evidence-informed practice will assist in identifying the key challenges and some potential solutions for Scotland.

- **What are the key characteristics of effective university/employer partnerships?** University and employer partnerships exist all over Scotland delivering social work education, and the quality of these partnerships can have a significant impact on the practice experience of students. Understanding the characteristics of effective partnerships, why they work, and thinking about how this learning can be shared, would help to ensure that all university/employer partnerships are as effective as possible.

- **What role can social work education play in developing the concept and practice of social workers as leaders in their own profession, in multi-professional groups, and supporting leadership development in others?** Leadership of self, and of others is a significant factor in all public service work, and particularly in social
work. Because of this, leadership should be embedded throughout social
work education and this will provide the opportunity to explore ways in
which this could happen.
Appendix 4 – RSWE Group – some comments

This is a selection of the views and thoughts of some of the RSWE Group members about their involvement in this phase of the review.

How would you sum up your thoughts and feelings about your involvement in this experience?

This wordle collates people’s responses to this question

What benefits or opportunities have you identified from being involved in this review?

Perhaps to give an insight because I work with different groups and so I can see things from different perspectives Carer and Service User

As a representative of local authority employers it’s been very helpful to have that opportunity to work very closely with other staff in the higher education institutions and I think that through that was a much clearer sense of the whole journey through people qualifying and then coming into employment and how can we, what can employers do that will actually sort of shape that to deliver what we want in the future, so I think that’s a big developmental opportunity for employers. Employer

One of the benefits for me has been the opportunity to come round the table to look at and think about social work education and to locate that within the broader context of contemporary social work practice….to look at it within that kind of broader context and in doing that, you know… discover and to kind of have affirmed we actually all want the same things and there’s that kind of unity of vision and a kind of consensus of voice. For me that’s been, I mean it’s not so much a benefit, it’s just been one of the real rewards to kind of tangibly see that and that’s been very enabling. I think it’s also the…opportunity to be having those conversations round the table. You know, a little of what I do is spending time in classroom with students and I’m out there with practitioners,
service users, policy makers (but) even we’re not always having as open a dialogue as we’ve had here, and for me I’ve been able to hear first-hand some of the misunderstandings that exist, some of the myths that exist. And rather than just, in a sense, clashing over those, being able to have the conversations....that actually move us beyond them and move us forward, so that’s been one of the benefits.

Academic

What have the challenges been?

There’s no doubt there are significant challenges and I think everyone’s been very honest about those. I think it’s important for us, as the review group and with the task of sharing the information and the knowledge that we’ve got so far, to balance the opportunities and the sense of aspiration with an honest appraisal of the challenges that we face. Otherwise there’s no point in us going out there to everyone to seek their views without being acutely aware of the demands that people are facing in terms of how working practices have changed. And in terms of the nature of the social work role, there’s a lot of concern about what social work has become and what social workers have to do these days, so we need to be very clear about, being honest about those challenges and seeking to engage practitioners, employers, service users, carers and other people in trying to encourage that desire to be aspirational and also acknowledging some of the constraints that we face.

Academic

I think a lot of the challenges that I have the group have looked at, and if there were any (other) challenges I did highlight these to them, so they looked at how they could may be address that challenge and it’s a very positive way of making change and that was refreshing.

Service User

I wouldn’t call them challenges, I would say that they’re opportunities, and we got to a point within the review group where we had to actually talk about some of the wicked issues in terms of how we move that forward and we had an opportunity to do that in quite an innovative way and we started to vision what the future for this degree would look like, what the learning would like from the future and that for me allowed us to kind of get over that hurdle in a really creative and passionate way. So for me it’s actually been incredibly valuable and I wouldn’t view it as a challenge....I would use it very much as a real exciting opportunity to come together and think differently.

Stakeholder Partner

What messages would you give your peers about getting involved in the next stage of RSWE?

I think it’s important to be involved because we need to invest in the process and even though that takes a commitment on our part, there’s a risk that without actually engaging in the process we don’t get the outcomes, and the outcomes will be the workers of the future and that’s what we need to invest in.

Employer

For me again it comes back to the sense of this being an opportunity. Everyone I know is worried about social work, and is worried about how it’s going to look
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in the next five years, so what we do now is vitally important to shaping the future of social work and to imagining what that might be.

Academic

I’ve worked on various groups…and some of the groups have been intangible and although I was sitting in the group I wasn’t actually participating, whereas with this I did feel that I was participating, and also being heard by the whole group, and you know they laughed at my jokes as well which was quite good.

Service User

It’s important that everybody who’s involved in the social work profession sees themselves as having some influence because I think in Scotland we need to stand up for social work as a profession and how it works alongside a range of people, service users, carers, other profession.

Academic

The messages that the group has given me being involved in this work is that social work education is at a really exciting, pivotal point in Scotland and we’ve got an opportunity to really grasp that and drive that forward, apply a different and innovative type of learning for social workers and I found it really quite exciting to be part of that.

Stakeholder Partner

Get involved. If there’s anything that’s been clear from this process it’s that we achieve change together - and that doesn’t mean us all coming to these meetings, it means us all kind of saying….let’s take responsibility for the future of social work services for the future of social work education and professional learning. Let’s think about what our contribution is to that and what difference we can make, so for me it’s about collaboratively taking that up and getting involved.

Academic