Career Pathways in Scottish Social Services
A Pilot Study

**Final Report on Research Commissioned by
the Scottish Social Services Council**

By

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June 2003

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Aims and methods

The main aim of this study, commissioned by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), was to explore social workers' career pathways, in order to inform future workforce planning. The objectives were first, to obtain some preliminary data on the factors influencing social workers' career moves, secondly, to increase understanding of workforce mobility and, thirdly, to test out ways of gathering longitudinal data to inform future development of modelling and skills foresight.

As the research was a pilot study, designed to test the feasibility of obtaining similar information from organisations in later, more ambitious studies, the methodology, and its strengths and limitations, are described in some detail.

The original plan was to sample five local authorities and one umbrella voluntary organisation[1]. The former were selected to give a mix of urban and rural areas, and varying social work vacancy rates. The study was to be conducted in two phases. In the first, agencies' personnel sections would be asked to complete a pro-forma sheet supplying basic information about employees' career profiles. In the second, a sample of staff, selected from the Phase One findings, would be invited to return an 'extended' self completion questionnaire. Staff who had left the agencies within the previous two years would be asked to complete a 'leavers' questionnaire'.

In the event however, only two authorities returned the Phase One pro-forma – and some of these included significant gaps in data. Two others cited time and resource difficulties, while a third simply failed to provide any data. The delays in securing Phase One data had a knock-on effect on Phase Two. It was therefore agreed that the 'extended' questionnaires be sent to a random sample of social workers, selected by the employing agency, and that the 'leavers' questionnaire' would be sent to a small sample of staff, from one local authority, who had left during the previous year.

A different approach was used in one local authority which had been unable to complete pro-forma itself. Here the researcher distributed the pro-forma at six SSSC registration events. This yielded a relatively good return rate.

In all, 612 pro-forma were completed, 65 'extended' questionnaires and 6 for 'leavers'. The 612 cases represent about 10% of qualified social workers in Scotland. However, due to missing data, only about half that number was used to analyse some items.

Clearly, personnel records kept by social work agencies are of variable quality, with a significant number being incomplete and out of date. It seems that, in local authorities, records for senior managers are not kept alongside those of other staff: data on most senior staff is missing from our results.

Feedback on the data collection tools indicates they were straightforward to complete and that only very minor amendments would be needed in a larger scale survey.

Time restraints did not allow for face to face interviewing but this would be a useful addition to any future study, proving richer qualitative material.

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[1] An umbrella organisation is one which contains or covers a number of different agencies.

Findings

<u>Phase One</u>

In line with findings from other research about the social services workforce, 72% of the 612 social workers in the sample were women and 28% men. There were more women than men in Community Care teams and more men than women in Criminal Justice. Among those whose age was given, 68% were aged 40 or over, the average age being 44.

Nearly 14% of staff worked part-time, the vast majority working 50% FTE. Not surprisingly, virtually all part-timers were women. There were very few part time social workers in Criminal Justice. The proportion of part-time staff in the voluntary agency was much higher than in the statutory sector (50% as opposed to 12%).

Use of temporary staff varied markedly between individual agencies from 0% to 20%.

Most staff had either a DipSW or a CQSW, with 91% of the sample gaining their first social work qualification in a Scottish institution. The average age at qualification was 31 for both men and women.

Social workers had a wide range of previous employment experience, but jobs in 'caring' predominated; 80% of staff for whom these data were available had worked in that field. Very few people move into social work from an entirely different professional area. Among the 366 staff about whom information on training and previous employment was supplied, four distinct groups were identified - those who were graduates (126), social work trainees or assistants (63), those with an HNC/SVQ3 award (57) and former nurses (22).

These findings suggest that social workers can be most easily recruited from other sections of the social care workforce. A useful strategy would therefore be to ensure that unqualified posts are attractive to suitable candidates, while also developing routes for progression onto professional training. There is some evidence that the number of people entering social work with HNC/SVQ qualifications is growing.

The average length of time staff had worked in their current organisation was 10 years, the average in current post 5.5 years. Men had stayed with the same employer longer than women.

Within the sample of 612: 46% worked in Community Care
- 35% in Children and Families
- 8% in Criminal Justice
- 9% served a mix of user groups
- 2% worked in 'other' areas, such as planning

Children and Families and Criminal Justice were under-represented in the sample, and the findings relating to these teams should be treated with some caution, since they may be atypical. Nevertheless, there was evidence of some significant differences in the composition of the various teams.

Children and Families: (data available for 108 staff). Just over a fifth (22%) had a degree and 24%, an HNC/SVQ3. Seventy per cent were female. For 40%, this was their first post. Average time in previous posts was 3 years. These teams were dominated by two distinct groups - experienced managers who had worked in at least four previous posts within statutory Children and Families teams, and front-line workers who were newly qualified and

relatively inexperienced. There was evidence of a trend to move from Children and Families to Community Care as social workers grew older.

Community Care: (data available for 141 staff). Women made up 83% of this sample. Just under a third had a degree, while 15% had an HNC/SVQ3. Overall, this was a more experienced group of staff than that in Children and Families, over half having at least 10 years post-qualifying experience. Just under a fifth were currently in their first post: the average time in previous posts was, as above, 3 years.

Criminal Justice: (data available for 26 staff). This was the most experienced group, with three quarters having qualified at least 10 years ago. Three quarters were aged 40 or above. Just over a third had a degree and three had an HNC/SVQ. The average time in current post was 9.6 years, far higher than for those working in other areas, and the average service in other posts, 4.7 years. Overall, this was the most stable group.

The Voluntary Sector: (data available for 31). Seventy-seven per cent of this group was female and 70% was aged 40 or above, both slightly higher averages than for the whole sample. Overall they were an experienced workforce, two thirds having qualified at least 10 years previously. Sixty-four per cent had a degree and three people had an HNC. It was a relatively stable group, average time in previous posts being just over 3 years. Most had started out working in local authority settings and had moved over to the voluntary sector.

Phase Two: the 'extended' questionnaire

Sixty-five staff completed the 'extended' questionnaire. In many ways they were similar to the Phase One sample, although overall this was an older group, with more working in Community Care and fewer in 'Other' capacities.

Fifty-five per cent had undertaken a post-qualifying course: a further 57% planned to do so, or would consider it. Forty-eight per cent reported that the availability of post qualifying awards would influence their career choice.

On first qualifying, 60% had intended to remain in social work until retiring, and the vast majority had seen it as a long-term career. Of that 60%, three quarters still intended to stay until retiring, representing about 46% of all respondents. However a quarter no longer wished to stay in social work until retirement and, in all, 9% wanted to finish their social work posts earlier than envisaged at qualification. Conversely, however, 30% now anticipated finishing later than originally planned.

The main factors encouraging staff to stay in social work were commitment to clients (reported by 77%), job satisfaction (73%) and relationships with colleagues (71%). The main factors which 'could discourage' staff from staying were stress and inadequate resources (each reported by almost 75%), followed by salary and departmental structures (each reported by 49%).

As many as 34% of respondents reported plans to look for other work in the near future, with half expecting to stay in local authority social work, under half looking to work in the voluntary sector, and the rest, wanting to move outwith social work. Children and Families staff were most likely to want to leave (40%), compared to 14% in Community Care and none at all in Criminal Justice.

The two main reasons cited for entering social work were, first, a concern for social justice and a desire to help others and, secondly, to secure employment and have a career. Only a small number of respondents reported both motivations.

Social work had met the expectations of 60% of the sample. There was no significant variation according to motivating factor. The numbers were lower in Children and Families teams (less than a third) than Community Care (three quarters) and Criminal Justice (all of whom reported their expectations had been met). The lower level of satisfaction among Children and Families staff corresponds to the higher proportion in these teams planning to move job. Given that this was the youngest staff group, with the longest potential service ahead of them, this is a cause for concern.

Even where expectations had been met overall, social workers reported a number of on-going difficulties or concerns. These included
- Lack of management support
- Significant stress levels
- Staff shortages
- Inadequate resources
- Lack of status/ acknowledgement of the demands of social work.

Similar comments were made by those whose expectations had been disappointed. They were more likely, however, to emphasise changes in the social work task, especially increased administration and paperwork, with correspondingly less time available for direct work with clients. They felt it was now more difficult to 'empower' users and effect social change.

'Leavers' Survey'

There were only six completed leavers' questionnaires, so results need to be treated with caution.

Only two of the six were still in social work, one within the voluntary sector. Three had moved to teaching and one to a promoted post in health. Reasons given for leaving their local authority posts were similar to the concerns listed above.

All had entered social work in order to help people and further social justice. Most reported that the profession had met their expectations; they recalled positive as well as more difficult aspects and some were critical of their current posts. These findings suggest that social workers' career choices are complex, shaped by competing demands and considerations and influenced by 'pull' as well as 'push' factors.

Conclusions

The data presented in this report are incomplete and should be seen as indicators of trends worthy of fuller investigation, rather than definitive findings.

Information about social workers' career pathways is not readily available from local authority personnel records. Appropriate data gathering systems are not in place and staff shortages militate against retrieval of data from a range of sources. Clearly there is a need to set up such systems, involving at least a short-term investment of staff resources.

In the meantime, the most effective means of obtaining full and accurate information is from social workers themselves. The SSSC registration events proved a useful forum for doing so and collection rates could be improved for relatively little increased effort, such as including a focused presentation as part of the event.

The areas with the highest proportion of experienced staff and most stable teams are Criminal Justice and the voluntary sector. Staff in Children and Families were, overall, noticeable younger and less experienced than any other area. There was a trend for staff to move from Children and Families into Community Care or Criminal Justice, and from the statutory into the voluntary sector. Initiatives to recruit new staff to Children and Families are already under way, but these findings indicate a need for measures designed to retain experienced staff as well.

Most social workers had previously worked in some form of social care. The unqualified social care workforce is therefore likely to be a good recruiting ground. This will be more effective if accompanied by the further development of appropriate bridging courses.

Many social workers reported that changes in the nature of the social work task in recent years means that less time can now be spent in creative, direct work with clients. Given that the desire to help others and further social justice was a major reason for many staff entering the profession, this finding reveals a serious mismatch between the motivation and values of staff on the one hand and the nature of their current activities and duties on the other. This has serious implications for staff recruitment, retention and development in the future.

The picture emerging of the current workforce is of a committed staff group, who want to do their best for their clients. Social workers are resilient, and ready to identify the rewards as well as the challenges of their job. However the level of on-going dissatisfaction and stress reported in this study indicates that future workforce development should extend beyond simply trying to increase numbers.

Introduction

This report outlines the findings of a pilot study on the career pathways of qualified social workers. The research was commissioned by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and carried out at the Social Work Research Centre (SWRC), University of Stirling on a part-time basis from January- June 2003. The main aim was to gather longitudinal data illustrating the typical movements of qualified social workers. The objectives were to:

- increase understanding of the mobility of the workforce, i.e. routes by which qualified workers enter social work and move through various posts
- obtain some preliminary data on the considerations which influence these career moves
- test ways of obtaining longitudinal data in a way that can assist and improve existing approaches to modelling/skills foresight. This will build on a model previously developed by TOPSS (Training Organisation for the Personal Social Services).[2]

Background

Developing the Social Work Workforce

The SSSC is a statutory body established under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. It has four main tasks:

- To set up registers of key groups of social services workers
- To publish Codes of Practice for all social services workers and their employers
- To regulate the training and education of the workforce
- To carry out the functions of the National Training Organisation for the Personal Social Services – Workforce Development

SSSC is also charged with estimating future demand for social workers and other social services staff in Scotland and ensuring the development of an appropriately skilled workforce.

A computer model has been developed by the SSSC that simulates the operation of the labour market for people with a social work qualification. This can be used to test various scenarios, for example, the impact of increasing student numbers as against improved staff retention. With increased knowledge about the mobility of the workforce it was expected that these predictions would be more reliable. For example, little is known about how long people stay in one job, what kind of work they did prior to qualification, nor what work they go on to if they leave the profession. A primary objective of this research was to identify some of these data.

The study has been carried out at a time when the shortage of qualified social workers is making it difficult for many authorities to fulfil their statutory duties. A recent review carried out by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) (2003) indicated that there were between 350 and 400 vacancies for social workers. The COSLA review highlighted that better understanding of social workers' career paths and movement between sectors was required to inform workforce planning. However it also concluded that councils should improve practice on Human Resources, for example by collating good quality information on staffing, levels of qualification and turnover.

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[2] SSSC has assumed the functions previously held by TOPPS Scotland

The COSLA report also drew attention to the low status of social work and lower level of remuneration in relation to comparable professions. A mismatch was identified between the demands of the job and the rewards in terms of status, support and salary. The review pointed out that a series of key policy initiatives, notably in youth crime, child protection and mental health would only be effective if sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff were available to implement them.

A specific effect of staff shortages on service provision was highlighted in the Auditor General's report on Youth Crime (Audit Scotland, 2002). Its report drew attention to information collated by the Scottish Executive (2001b, 2001c) in two snapshots surveys which indicated that the vacancy level for qualified social workers in children's services had risen from 6.6% in 2000 to 11.3% in 2001. As a result, cases remained unallocated and the quality of practice suffered. The report's authors attributed the staff shortages to increasing demands on Children and Families teams from child protection work, coinciding with the expansion of posts in specialist teams which became a more attractive option. At 8%, the vacancy rate in services for adult offenders was less severe. Nevertheless the report concluded that social work was becoming a less attractive career option and that unless action was taken to boost recruitment and retention, the effectiveness of new youth crime initiatives would be undermined.

In 2002 the Scottish Executive tackled some of these issues in a Briefing Paper on the Social Services Workforce (Scottish Executive, 2002). The paper set out five strategic aims, including the introduction of a new social work degree at honours level and various ways of developing cross sector training. However, the first aim was to introduce more effective ways of recruiting and retaining staff and to this end a recruitment campaign was announced. The aim was to raise awareness and so improve the public's understanding of the social work and social care task, and to raise the morale of the existing workforce by featuring the positive contribution it made to care. An economic study into the labour market of children's services in Scotland has also been commissioned by the Scottish Executive largely as a result of issues raised in 'For Scotland's Children' (Scottish Executive 2001a).

Since publishing its briefing paper (Scottish Executive, 2002) a range of incentives has been introduced to attract new recruits. The Scottish Executive is offering to pay off up to £9000 in student loans to social work graduates. The special incentive will apply to those who enter training in October 2003 or complete their training from June next year, by which time all entrants to the profession will require to have earned an honours degree. To qualify for the cash, entrants will have to accept a post in one of the areas currently suffering shortages - children's services, criminal justice, or mental health. They would receive £3000 to pay off student loans when they first take up such a post, the same again at the end of their first year, and a final payment at the end of their second year in work (Dinwoodie and Stewart, 2003).

These initiatives parallel developments in England and Wales where the government launched a three-year initiative to encourage more people to enter social work and social care. In October 2001 a targeted £1.5m national newspaper and radio advertising campaign was launched by Health Secretary Alan Milburn with the aim of recruiting more social workers and improving the public's perception of them. In addition, from September 2003 students starting the degree course or DipSW will be eligible for an annual bursary of up to £2,900 plus payment of tuition fees (GSCC, 2003; see also www.socialworkcareers.co.uk).

Alongside these developments at national level, a number of individual local authorities are also devising means of recruiting new staff and developing the workforce. Glasgow City Council is proposing to pay off students' loans to meet debts of up to £9000 for social work entrants from October, or on completing training from June next year (Wilson, 2003). The council also intends to produce a five-year plan aimed at ending a deepening staffing crisis in which 73 vacancies already exist in the Children and Families section, with some 35

vacancies in Community Care. Another authority is focussing on retention by offering financial inducements to existing employees in the form of a loan that only needs to be repaid if the employee does not remain in post for a minimum period.

Of course, these initiatives in individual authorities do not increase the pool of staff from which all are seeking to recruit. To do this, COSLA and the Scottish Executive have collaborated to develop a 'Fast Track' scheme. This will allow suitable graduates to qualify within 15-18 months, and then be recruited to Children and Families' teams.

Social Workers' Motivation and Experience

A number of studies have examined in more detail the experiences and careers of staff working in social work and the reasons why some have decided to leave the profession, for example in the United States (Drake and Yamada, 1996; Dickinson and Perry, 1998; Reagh, 1994) and England (Eborall and Garmeson, 2001). The English study by Eborall and Garmeson includes an extensive literature review of the whole recruitment and retention issue and also includes some in-depth interviews with staff working in the independent sector. The factors contributing to social work staff leaving the profession appear to be common in the US and England. The studies of Dickinson and Perry (1998) in the US and Eborall and Garmeson (2001) in England both cite the loss of job satisfaction and the fear of things going wrong as key reasons for moving outwith the profession.

Little research exists that is specific to Scotland. Perhaps the most relevant is by the National Institute for Social Work (NISW) which undertook a study of the careers and experiences of staff in Scottish social work departments between the years 1993 and 1997 (Buglass et al., 1998). This encompassed respondents in four job types - manager, field worker, home care worker and residential worker. This indicated that there was a substantial degree of job mobility, with half the field workers and managers saying they were likely to look for another job in the next 12 months. However over 80% of managers and 90% of social workers expected to remain in a social work department after their next move. This report concluded that the social care workforce was committed, mature, stable and resilient but warned that some aspects of the working environment could threaten its ability to work effectively. Levels of stress were high, with over 80% of managers and field workers reporting that they had suffered from work related stress in the previous 12 months. Most managers and staff also reported an increase in time spent on administration and in training between the first and second interviews and less time spent in direct contact with service users.

The Changing Nature of Social Work

More recent studies have indicated that these trends are continuing, thus changing the nature of the social work task. For example, experienced social workers interviewed by Jones (2001) reported that increasing administrative burden, pressure of work and focus on assessment meant they were seldom able to establish more than a superficial relationship with individual clients. This reduced job satisfaction and resulted in social workers feeling de-skilled. Levels of stress in social work have been highlighted, with a growing recognition of the threat of violence (Goddard et al. 2002).

Some more critical analyses of the changing role of social work argue that, whilst raising the profile and status of social work is viewed as central to any recruitment strategy, some wider aspects of current social policy undermine this. Jordan (2001) notes a tendency within New Labour discourse to associate social work almost exclusively with social control functions in relation to child protection, criminal justice and mental health. On the other hand, roles

associated with creating opportunities, for example within the Connexions service in England and Wales, are undertaken by people other than social workers, even though they work in a similar way. Even within the social work field, Jones (2001) argues that the voluntary sector is increasingly undertaking the more supportive and enabling work, thus further restricting statutory social work to assessing and managing risk.

A key objective of this research was to begin to explore the extent to which these considerations and others were affecting qualified social workers in Scotland.

Methodology

In addition to obtaining relevant data, one of the purposes of this pilot exercise was to test out the methodology, in particular how feasible it would be to obtain appropriate information from local authorities in subsequent more extensive studies. Therefore the planning and difficulties encountered are of interest in themselves and are reported in some detail. It was acknowledged from the start that the study's success would depend on whether data could be readily accessed from personnel files. In practice local authorities varied considerably in their ability to provide the necessary information, which inevitably impacted on the study's progress.

Initial Plans

In any research of this nature it is necessary to identify the data required and how these are to be gathered. Decisions about the study's design and methodology were made in collaboration with the SSSC staff who commissioned the research. The following were considered essential: current post, employment prior to current post, date present appointment started, date of first social work qualification, subsequent employment, length of active service envisaged at qualification, length of active service envisaged now, whether staff intend to seek employment elsewhere in the near future, and if so what is the preferred job type. Ideally interviews would have been held to explore in more detail the considerations which influenced social workers' career choices. However time did not allow for this, so all data were gathered via questionnaires.

Since this was a pilot study, it was also necessary to decide what proportion of the population would be included. Initially the plan was to gather data on the career pathways of qualified social workers[3] across five of the 32 Scottish local authorities and one umbrella voluntary organisation. In an attempt to get a representative sample, the five local authorities were selected to represent rural/urban areas, and low and relatively high social work vacancy rates.

Data collection was to be carried out in two phases. Firstly, pro-forma sheets asking for basic information about employees' careers were issued to the personnel section in each organisation (see Appendix II). Following on from this, a self-completion questionnaire was to be issued to a sample of staff selected from the first phase (Appendix III). This 'extended' questionnaire was longer than the first phase pro-forma and asked the employee some qualitative as well as extra quantitative questions. At this second phase a further 'leavers' questionnaire was also to be issued to staff who had left the organisation over the previous two years (Appendix IV). In this way we hoped to gather information on the career pathway of employees both into and out of their employment with our sample organisations.

Progress against the methodology

A letter was sent to each of the pilot organisations, inviting them to participate in the study. SSSC provided an accompanying letter to endorse the research and encourage the organisations to take part. One local authority declined to be involved in the research and a replacement was identified. In February, this replacement authority agreed to participate. In each authority social workers were informed that the exercise was taking place and given the

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[3] A Qualified Social Worker is anyone who has graduated from one of the approved courses listed in Appendix I

opportunity to withdraw if they had any objection to information about them being included. All information was in any case provided in anonymised format.

From initial discussions with HR staff it was evident that only basic career information would be held on personnel records, so the first phase pro-forma was designed accordingly. Each organisation was asked to complete these forms in-house but was offered the assistance of a researcher from SWRC if staffing was a problem. All except one local authority were willing for their own staff to carry this out.

The other authority had started the process but found it too time consuming because its records were not up-to-date. It was happy for the researcher to extract the information but warned that this would be a very long, arduous process. This proved correct, so it was decided to make use of the SSSC social worker registration events to issue forms directly to staff members for them to complete themselves, using the Phase Two 'extended' questionnaire to obtain more detailed information. A researcher from SWRC attended the six registration events to issue the questionnaire to the approximate 100 members of staff who attended. To reach the remaining staff who did not attend these events, questionnaires were sent to the various social work offices in this authority's area.

In mid-April another of the initial five local authorities asked to be dropped from the study as the relevant information was not accessible in a database nor were the resources available to trawl personnel files. Unfortunately, this decision came at too late a point in the project for SWRC to assist in gathering the data. Nor was it feasible at this stage to invite another authority to participate in the study. Another local authority failed to provide any data, despite its assurances that they would. As a result, the pilot study has been reduced to the research of career pathways in three local authorities and one umbrella voluntary organisation.

Delays in getting completed forms from our pilot study organisations had a knock-on effect on the issuing of the follow-up Phase Two questionnaires. As described above, the responses to the shorter questionnaires were to be used to identify the most appropriate recipients for the 'extended' version. However, given the delays a different approach was taken. Recipients for the 'extended' questionnaire were identified randomly with the selection being made by the employing organisations themselves. Blank envelopes packed with the questionnaire, covering letter and return envelope were issued to the local authorities and each organisation simply had to select the recipients and address the packs accordingly.

These delays also affected the issue of the questionnaire to former employees. Given the time constraints, it was agreed that this would be issued to a sample of leavers from just one local authority. This questionnaire was issued in the same manner as the 'extended' questionnaire and was sampled from all leavers over the last 12 months. As previously described, the original aim was for a sample of leavers from the previous two years but the local authority we used for this exercise archive their records after one year and to re-open earlier files would have required a great deal of time and effort.

A total of 612 Phase One pro-forma were received, but there were considerable gaps in the data. This resulted in only about half the sample being included in some important aspects of the analysis, for example in relation to current post. In addition, 65 current social workers completed the 'extended' questionnaire which included questions about their career aspirations, experience and plans. Six questionnaires were completed by social workers who had left a local authority's employment in the last year.

Methodology and data issues

Access to Data

Resource issues are clearly a problem in personnel sections as well as with individual social workers. Of the original five local authorities selected for our pilot study only two have provided the pro-forma data we required with the other three all citing time/staff shortages as the reason for their non-involvement. The fact that files were not up to date reflected on-going shortage of staff and made retrieving information for the study a more time consuming process.

Only one of our pilot local authorities managed to provide us with full pro-forma data for all its qualified social work staff. This was in fact very much down to chance: our contact at this authority had recently carried out a survey of all staff as part of a dissertation for a post-graduate qualification so a good deal of the data we required was readily to hand. Pro-forma data from our third local authority is very patchy. It provided us with an electronic file listing all qualified staff. This file had basic information on age, start dates, qualification and so on, but even this had large sections of data missing. A small proportion of staff had their records examined via the pro-forma data gathering exercise but, as already discussed, this authority's personnel records were very poorly updated and we used the 'extended' questionnaire issued at SSSC social worker registration events to gather further information. However, to avoid the risk of double counting, the information collected by the 'extended' questionnaire was not used in the results discussed below.

The one voluntary organisation which participated in the pilot also had insufficient staff to complete the pro-forma data gathering exercise themselves, so it posted the forms on to all relevant staff. The response rate was quite good at around 60%.

There appears to be a common problem with personnel files across all local authorities with regard to information on staff in the most senior positions. In most cases the records of senior staff are not kept alongside those of other personnel. In some instances some information exists but this is very basic, with nothing on career history, qualifications, etc. Are the records of the most senior staff held elsewhere?

Organisational arrangements within local authorities may also make it more difficult to obtain comprehensive information. The substitute local authority had recently undergone a re-structuring exercise with social work divided across two departments. We assumed that the personnel section covered all social workers, but realised too late that we had received data only for Community Care staff, resulting in under-representation of workers in Children and Families and Criminal Justice teams.

In contrast to the difficulties experienced in accessing data through personnel records, the SSSC registration event proved an excellent means of gaining access to a sizeable proportion of qualified staff. It offered the opportunity to talk to them directly to explain the study and hopefully enthuse them enough to complete the survey. The response rate was quite good, and could potentially be a great deal better if distribution of questionnaires were preceded by a more focused presentation. The key advantage of using such events is that we do not have to access information from personnel records, which have proved to be of variable quality and completeness. In addition, the issuing of questionnaires to all staff who attend these information events has implications for any statistical inference that could be made from the results. It would eliminate potential bias by no longer carrying out the pre-selection process.

<u>The Questionnaires</u>

Close liaison with SSSC during the design of the pro-forma and questionnaires has meant that there are no questions which, in hindsight, we wish we had asked but did not. It was thought likely that the factors listed in questions six and seven of the 'extended' questionnaire may not be complete. However, this would have shown up if any of the 'other' category responses appeared in high numbers and none of them did. Three respondents mentioned a 'lack of alternative' as a factor encouraging them to stay in post, and this could perhaps be added as a category in any future questionnaires.

Feedback from our pilot organisations indicated that, overall, the pro-forma sheets were straightforward to complete. However, our analysis of results has highlighted one question that we would re-word were the process to be repeated. We did not explicitly ask for respondent's *first* professional social work qualification in Q3a. The way in which we asked the question on the pro-forma was open to misinterpretation and allowed for later qualifications to be also included. However, this issue was addressed by the time we issued the 'extended' questionnaire.

One other issue would need addressing if the 'extended' questionnaire were to be used in future. Question 12 asks 'how many previous social work posts have you had (excluding current post)?'; question 13 then asks for details of all posts including current post. Unfortunately, some respondents did not include their current post details in the latter question; instead, they answered as if this question were a continuation of question 12. These questions would need re-wording slightly to address this problem.

Analysis

One of the objectives of this research is to test ways of presenting longitudinal data in a way that can assist and improve existing approaches to modelling/skills foresight. This is clearly a two way process, in that any data can be tested in the existing model and, if need be, either the model can be amended or the data can be presented in a different way. Time constraints within this pilot study clearly limit the extent of this two way process. However, through consultation with personnel at SSSC we have identified some key requirements of the data. In the next section we present the frequency counts of the data from Phases One and Two. Following this is a more in-depth analysis looking for any variations in the data, for example by gender, age or client group.

Findings

Results from Phase One Questionnaire

At the cut-off point in early June, data had been collected via the pro-forma from three local authorities and one umbrella voluntary organisation. Table 1 shows, for each organisation, the number of personnel for whom some data are available. There are holes in these data, and this is discussed at greater length later in the report, but the 612 cases we do have represent 9.8% of the total number of qualified social workers in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2001b).

Table 1 – Responses by organisation

	Frequency	%
LA1	235	38.4
LA2	271	44.3
VO1	32	5.2
LA3	74	12.1
Total	**612**	**100.0**

The Social Workers

Women comprise the majority of this sample (72%), a proportion which is broadly in line with the Scottish Executive's finding that women accounted for 74.5% of all staff in social work departments designated as 'social worker'. Not surprisingly, women form a much larger majority of employees in the total workforce, at approximately 85% (Scottish Executive 2001c). In England and Wales this is at 84% (www.doh.gov.uk/public/psstaff.htm).

Table 2 - Gender

	Frequency	%
Female	438	71.6
Male	171	27.9
Total	609	99.5
Missing	3	0.5
Total	**612**	**100.0**

Age information is available for only three-quarters of our respondents. However, judging by the responses we do have, the sample is a mature one with nearly 68% over the age of 40. This is in line with earlier research by the National Institute for Social Work who estimated a figure of 65% over 40 years of age (Buglass 1998). This survey was carried out across the social care work force. The average age of our sample, confined to qualified social workers, is just over 44 years.

Table 3 - Age ranges of SOCIAL WORK staff

	Frequency	%
30 and under	36	7.9
31 to 40	110	24.3
41 to 50	197	43.5
51 to 60	102	22.5
6l and over	8	1.8
Total	453	
Missing	159	
Total	**612**	

<u>Current Post</u>

Looking at employees' current post, nearly 14% (84) of the sample work part-time.

Table 4 - Current post full-time or part-time

	Frequency	**%**
Full-time	526	86.2
Part-time	84	13.8
Total	610	100.0
Missing	2	
Total	**612**	

The vast majority of those working part-time do so for 50% of full-time, with the average being just below 55% of a week. Virtually all part-time staff are female (98%), with 18% of female social workers in part-time posts, compared with only 1% of males. Part-time working is most common among women in their 30s, 20% of whom occupy a part-time post. The proportion was 14% for women in their 20s, 10% in their 40s and 13% for those aged 50 or older. Of those working part time, just over a third were working with Children and Families, a third in Community Care and 8% in Criminal Justice. The remaining 20% were working in posts which encompassed more than one client group e.g. in a drugs and alcohol team or in the voluntary sector. Another noticeable pattern is that while only 12% of local authority employees work part-time, in the voluntary sector this rises to 50%. However, this latter figure should be treated with caution given that only one umbrella voluntary sector organisation has been used for this pilot survey.

Virtually all employees work in their current posts on permanent contracts (nearly 97%). There are however marked differences by organisation in the use of temporary staff. One local authority has none whatsoever, another only 1.3% of staff and the third has over 19% temporary staff. The voluntary organisation has just over 6% staff who are on temporary contracts.

Table 5 – Permanent or temporary staff

	Frequency	**%**
Permanent	591	96.9
Temporary	19	3.1
Total	610	100.0
Missing	2	
Total	**612**	

In nearly 94% of cases a DipSW[4] or equivalent is a requirement or preferred for the current post. The requirement for a DipSW or equivalent qualification in current posts varies between the statutory and voluntary sectors. For the voluntary sector this is needed in 74% of posts while in the statutory sector such a qualification is required in nearly 89% of cases.

Table 6 - DipSW required in current post

	Frequency	**%**
Required	307	87.5
Preferred	22	6.3
No	9	2.6
Total	**351**	100.0
Missing	274	
Total	**612**	

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[4] Diploma in Social Work

Still looking at the current posts, information on the client group served by employees was available for 337 cases. Of these, 46% work in Community Care, 35% with Children and Families, approximately 8% in Criminal Justice and 9% in a post which covers more than one client group. The 'other' group is made up from staff working in strategic services, training or finance areas. These client group proportions should be viewed with a degree of caution. As indicated in the methodology section, one of our pilot local authorities has recently re-organised its social work services and through a misunderstanding we did not receive returns for qualified staff in Children and Families and Criminal Justice. As a result, these two client groups are under-represented in our sample. Scottish Executive statistics for the year 2000 for the total workforce indicated that 62% provided services for adults, 16% for children and 3% worked in Criminal Justice. The proportions for qualified staff would however necessarily be different (Scottish Executive, 2001c).

Table 7 - Current Client Group

	Frequency	**%**
Children and Families	117	35
Community Care	156	46
Criminal Justice	26	8
Generic or combination	32	9
Other	6	2
Total	**337**	

Some further analysis was carried out to see whether any particular characteristics could be identified among social workers working with specific client groups, though because of previously acknowledged gaps in data, the results are offered as an indication of trends to be pursued in future surveys, rather than as robust and reliable findings in themselves. With this caveat, the survey results indicated that younger social workers were more likely to work in Children and Families teams, while the majority of those aged 50 and over were in Community Care teams. Whereas the average age of staff in Children and Families teams was 41, it was 45 for those working with all other client groups. Age range also differed across the statutory and voluntary sector, with staff over 40 accounting for 64% of staff in the statutory sector and 71% of those in a voluntary organisation. Differences in the proportion over 50 was even more marked, with this age group accounting for 22% of staff in the statutory sector and 56% of those working for a voluntary organisation.

Table 8 outlines details on 330 cases where full information was available on age and current client group served by the social worker:

Table 8 - Age of Social Worker by Current Client Group

	Children & Families		**Community Care**		**Criminal Justice**		**Generic/ Other**		**Total**
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Up to 29	12	52	9	39	0	0	2	9	23
30-39	38	44	34	40	6	7	8	9	86
40-49	44	35	55	44	10	8	15	12	124
50 and over	19	20	57	59	8	8	13	13	97
Total	113		155		24		38		330

The information above suggests a clear shift from Children and Families teams to Community Care as social workers become older. Correspondingly, compared with staff in Community Care and Youth Justice, a higher proportion of social workers in Children and Families teams had been qualified for two years or less and fewer for over 10 years. Details are as follows:

Table 9 - Length of Time Qualified by Current Client Group

	Qualified for 2 years or less		Qualified for 5 years or less		% Qualified for 10 years or more	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Children and Families	21	18	40	34	45	39
Community Care	9	6	25	16	82	55
Criminal Justice	3	11	6	11	19	73

Given the complexity of the work in Children and Families teams, it might be a matter for some concern that the qualified workforce is the least experienced. Recruitment strategies such as the Fast Track scheme and paying off student loans on condition that workers join Children and Families teams are likely to further accentuate this trend in the future, suggesting that retention of experienced staff may require equal attention.

In terms of gender, women were more likely than men to work in Community Care teams, with half working in that field, compared with 38% of male colleagues. A higher proportion of men worked in Criminal Justice.

Table 10 - Gender by Current Client Group

	Children and Families		Community Care		Criminal Justice		Generic/ Other		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Men	34	39	33	38	10	11.5	10	11.5	87
Women	82	37	123	53	15	6	10	4	230
Total	**116**	**37**	**156**	**49**	**25**	**8**	**20**	**6**	**317**

 Career Pathways : Routes into Social Work

The previous section began to explore career pathways, looking backwards from the present. In this section we begin at the start, with information on social workers' qualifications and employment prior to undertaking training.

Table 11 provides information on the first social work qualification gained. Questionnaires were to be completed only in relation to staff with a recognised social work qualification, but surprisingly twenty respondents were described as having none.

Table 11 - First professional social work qualification

	Frequency	**%**
Diploma in Social Work	275	45.0
Certificate of Qualification in Social Work	260	42.5
Certificate in Social Service	55	9.0
Certificate in Medical Social Work	1	0.2
Masters in Social Work (US equivalent of DipSW)	1	0.2
NONE	20	3.3
Total	**612**	**100.0**

Information on where their qualification was obtained was available for 340 employees and 308 (91%) of these gained their first qualification in Scotland. One person qualified in the

United States and all of the remainder was obtained from elsewhere in Britain, with one qualification obtained through the Open University.

The average age at which social workers qualified was just over 31 years for both males and females. Some unpublished research by Dundee City Council Social Work Department, involving a questionnaire to Dundee University students, suggests that males are entering social work at a much older age than females; however the results of this pilot survey do not support that finding.

In Table 12 employment prior to undertaking training is listed. This indicates a wide range of experience, but a clear predominance of work which involved an element of caring for others. Of the 318 employees for whom data are available, over 80% previously worked in a care-related post. More than 55% were in posts offering practical care, for example in a residential or a day care setting. In addition nearly 20% were working as social work trainees or assistants and almost 7% were in nursing or occupational therapy. Thus less than a fifth of staff had come from non-care related posts. A closer examination of staff from non-care related posts suggests that very few move into social work from what might be seen as an entirely different professional area. Less than 7% had come from professions such as banking, accountancy, teaching, dentistry or veterinary work.

Table 12 - Post immediately prior to qualifying as a social worker

	Frequency	**%**
Care related posts, e.g. care workers	176	55.3
SW trainee/assistant	63	19.8
Nursing/OT	22	6.9
Secretarial/PA/shop work/bar staff etc.	17	5.3
Teaching/lecturing/tutoring/training	12	3.8
Banking/accountancy	7	2.2
Unknown non-care	7	2.2
Voluntary work	6	1.9
Cleaning/domestic/cook	2	0.6
Veterinary/dentistry/church minister/steelworker/IT/lab technician	6	1.9
Total	318	100.0

Information on other qualifications was available on 366 of the sample. Around 34% of these respondents (n=126) were graduates. A smaller proportion held an HNC (16%) or S/NVQ level 3 (2.5%). A total of 57 people had obtained either an HNC, S/NVQ or both. Graduates and people with qualifications in caring are two distinct populations from which qualified social workers are recruited. Social work trainees or assistants also constitute a group likely to be readily recruited to professional training and employment. Nursing was the only other profession from which any sizeable number of social workers had been recruited. There was therefore some value in examining patterns of training and prior employment for these four specific groups: graduates, social work trainees or social work assistants, holders of HNC/ SVQ and former nurses.

Of 126 **graduates**, 87 were women and 39 men. Thus 22% of male and 20% of female respondents had a degree. Half of this group had qualified in the last 10 years and half before then. Sixty per cent of these 126 graduates were aged 40 or older. Information was obtained on up to three posts prior to undertaking training and across this range, 80-90% were in a care-related field. The minority which were not were mainly in shops, banking or clerical/ administrative work. Prior employment included part-time and vacation work while an undergraduate, but even taking these into account a strong 'caring' element emerged.

Forty-five women and 18 men made up the 63 people working as **social work assistants or trainees** prior to undertaking social work training. Twenty-three were graduates. Half of the graduates who had also been social work trainees or assistants were aged over 50 and a further 20% were in their 40s. They had mostly come into social work in the 70s when several local authorities offered graduate traineeships. Others in this group had taken social work training after working as a social work assistant for several years.

This subgroup was on average older than the sample as a whole, with 80% aged 40 or older and 63% having qualified 10 years ago or more. In most respects the pattern of previous jobs in caring was similar to that among graduates. However going back to the third job before undertaking the course, almost half of those on whom we had information had been working outwith the social care sector. Most were in secretarial or clerical posts but the range of jobs was wide, including library assistant, taxi driver, systems analyst and machinist.

Those with an HNC and/or S/NVQ (57) were the youngest and most recently qualified subgroup. Half were under 40 and half over 40. Forty-three women and 14 men were in this group. All but four had qualified in the past 10 years, 21 (37%) during or since the year 2000. In terms of their previous two posts prior to undertaking social work training, over 90% were in care related jobs. However, almost a third of their jobs prior to that were in other sectors, mostly administrative or retail.

Former nurses accounted for 22 respondents, all but one female. Alongside the social work trainees, they were the oldest group, with around 80% aged 40 and over and a third in their 50s or 60s. Half had qualified in the last 10 years and half before then. Only three had qualified during or since the year 2000. Most previous jobs listed were in nursing.

The predominance of care related work in social workers' employment history is not surprising, since relevant experience is required before embarking on social work training. Apart from nursing, there was little indication of people moving from another 'profession'. This suggests that social workers will be more easily recruited from other sectors of the social care workforce, so that an appropriate broad strategy would be to make unqualified posts attractive to suitable people, while also developing routes for progressing to professional training. In this sample there was some evidence of the HNC/SVQ route growing in that a higher proportion of those qualified during or since the year 2000 had come by this route. Of the 52 most recently qualified staff, 44% (n=23) had an HNC(20) or SVQ(2) or both (1). In comparison 35% (n=18) were graduates.

Career Pathways: Routes through Social Work

Having reviewed some aspects of how people entered social work, we now turn to how they progressed thereafter. However, in parallel with the format of the questionnaire, we shall start at the present post and work backwards, rather than follow them chronologically from the start of their social work careers. We asked for details of posts since qualifying in social work and for how long staff had occupied them.

Some details of social workers' current posts were outlined in the previous section. For clarity, a few are repeated here. The type of work they were undertaking was as follows: Community Care (46%) ; Children and Families (35%); Criminal Justice (8%); Generic/ combination (9%); Other (2%). Thirty two replies related to workers in the voluntary sector, of whom almost half (15) were working in Community Care, just over a quarter (9) with Children and Families and the remainder in a post which served more than one client group.

Overall Length of Time in Current Post

The length of time an employee had worked for their present organisation varied from a few months up to 38 years, with an average of just under 10 years. Table 13 shows the number of employees by total length of service and the length of time in current post. The average for the latter is 5.5 years.

Table 13 - Employees by length of service

	Years as Employee		Years in current post	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
0 to 4 yrs	157	34.8	216	59.2
5 to 9 yrs	111	24.6	94	25.8
10 to 14 yrs	62	13.7	32	8.8
15 to 19 yrs	60	13.3	11	3.0
20-29 yrs	53	11.8	12	3.3
30 yrs and longer	8	1.8	0	0.0
Total	451	100.0	365	100.0
Missing	161		247	
Total	**612**		**612**	

There are also some small variations by gender in length of service with current employer. Males appear to have stayed with their employer for longer periods with nearly 22% serving 20 or more years as opposed to only 10% of females. No gender difference was identified in the length of time in current post. However this did vary according to the nature of the current post, with an average of just over 4 years in Children and Families and Community Care teams but almost 10 years in Criminal Justice.

Continuing to look at employees' previous posts, the average time in post increased to 5.5 years in their current post from 3.6 years in the post immediately prior. The average time in post was even lower at 2.5 years for the next previous post but rises to 2.7 years in the earliest post for which we requested information.

To understand the significance of this kind of aggregate data for career pathways, previous employment patterns have been examined for staff working in the three main statutory sectors: Children and Families, Community Care and Criminal Justice and for those in the voluntary sector.

Children and Families – Statutory Sector

Information on current and previous employment was available on 108 qualified social workers working in statutory Children and Families teams. As already noted, the average age of social workers in Children and Families teams was lower than in other client groups and they had been qualified for less time. Just over a fifth (22%) had a degree and a slightly higher proportion (24%) had an HNC and/or S/NVQ level 3. Seventy per cent of staff were female.

Over two thirds (n=77) were basic grade social workers, the remaining third in a range of management posts, from senior social worker/ team leader to (one) head of service. Half the respondents had been in their present post for two years or less, and only 29% had been there for over five years. Less than 10% had been in post for 10 years or more.

At least one previous post since qualifying was recorded for 64 staff (60%), so for 40% this was their first post. For all but four of the 64, the post immediately before the current post

had been with Children and Families, 28 as field social workers, three as residential workers and the others in a specialist, management or co-ordinating post. All but one of immediately prior jobs was in the statutory sector. An average of 2.3 years had been spent in the previous post, with a third in the post for less than a year and 10% for over five years.

Forty-four staff (41%) had had at least two previous posts since qualifying and 34 (31%) had had at least three. In total, only five of these earlier posts were with a client group other than Children and Families and only one had been outwith the statutory sector. Within each set of posts, half were that of basic grade social worker. The average length of time spent in these earlier posts was three years.

A pattern thus emerges of two distinct groups of staff providing Children and Families services. The first are experienced managers who have worked in at least four jobs in statutory services for Children and Families. The second is newly qualified and relatively inexperienced staff providing the front-line service. Some aspects of these pathways are summarised in Table 14.

Table 14 - Pathways through Children and Families

	Present Post	Previous Post 1	Previous Post 2	Previous Post 3
Field S.W.	78	28	21	16
Residential S.W.	3	3	1	2
Managers/ seniors	24	23	15	10
Co-ordinator/ specialist	3	6	5	3
Outwith Children and Families	0	4	2	3
Total	108	64	44	34

Community Care – Statutory Sector

Information on current and previous employment was available on 141 staff working in Community Care. The vast majority of staff in this sector were women (83%). Just under a third had a degree, while just under 15% had an HNC and/or S/NVQ level 3. This was a more experienced group of staff than that in Children and Families, with only 6% having qualified in the last 2 years and over half (55%) having at least 10 years experience.

Seventy-six workers were currently designated as 'social workers'. Fourteen were 'care managers', presumably also working at basic grade level. Apart from one planning officer, all other staff were described as a senior social worker, team leader or manager. The length of time they had been in their present post was similar to that for Children and Families workers, with just under half having been in post for two years or less, a third for over 5 years and less than 10% for 10 years or more.

For just over a fifth of staff this was their first post, but at least one previous post since qualifying was recorded for 111 workers (78%). For 55 the most recent prior post had been as a social worker, with a further seven described as care managers. A senior or management

position had been held by 39 staff, and the remaining 10 were in specialist posts such as trainer or children's rights officer. For 12 staff the previous post had been either with children (6) or had encompassed more than one other client group, i.e. not in Community Care.

Eight-five staff (60%) had had at least two previous posts since qualifying and 50 (35%) had had at least three. In total, 20 of these posts were with a client group other than those served by Community Care teams. Taking all previous posts into account, a total of 32 (13%) had been outwith Community Care, most having been with Children and Families. In contrast, among Children and Families staff, only nine of previous posts (6%) were with another client group. This would seem to indicate a small trend towards Community Care posts from Children and Families teams.

In common with staff in Children and Families teams, the average time spent in previous posts was three years.

Some aspects of career pathways for Community Care staff are outlined in Table 15.

Table 15 - Pathways through Community Care

	Present Post	Previous Post 1	Previous Post 2	Previous Post 3
SW/ Care Managers	90	62	42	29
Managers/ seniors	50	39	31	12
Co-ordinators/ specialists	1	10	12	9
Posts Outwith Community Care (not included in totals)	0	12	12	8
Total	141	111	85	50

Criminal Justice

At 26, the sample of Criminal Justice workers was far smaller than the other two statutory sections. This was the most experienced staff group, with three-quarters having been qualified for 10 years or more. Correspondingly three quarters of the staff were over 40. Ten were men and 15 women (relevant information on one missing). Just over a third (9) had a degree and 3 (11%) had an HNC.

All but three of the Criminal Justice staff were designated as 'social workers', the others being either senior social worker (2) or service manager (1). At 9.6 years, the average time spent in the current post was far higher than for staff in either Children and Families or Community Care. However five respondents had been in post for over 20 years, so this inevitably increased the average. Nevertheless, half the staff had been in post for over five years and less than a third had been there for under 2 years. Forty per cent had not changed

job for over 10 years, so there had been somewhat less mobility than within the other sectors.[5] However the sample is small and this may be atypical.

Information on previous posts was available for only 13 Criminal Justice workers. In their most recent post, eight had been social workers, two were in specialist posts within Criminal Justice and three, managers of a residential or fieldwork service. Four had worked with a different client group, three in Children and Families and one, Community Care.

Nine staff had had at least two previous posts. For the job two before the current post, five had been field social workers, three residential workers and one a care planner. Of the six staff with three previous posts, the last posts recorded had been in social work (3), residential care (2) and nursing (1). Four had been in Children and Families, so in all 8 of 28 previous posts (32%) had been outwith Criminal Justice, primarily in Children and Families.

In posts prior to the present one, the average length of service varied at 4.7 years for the most recent but only 2 and 2.7 years for the previous two.

This small sample may not be representative but it does suggest that front line staff in Criminal Justice teams are considerably more experienced than their colleagues working with Children and Families and that the teams are more stable. However Children and Families work also demands great skill, since social workers are often required to work with young people and adults who are hostile to their involvement and in situations where children are at risk of harm.

Voluntary Sector

The sample of staff currently working in the voluntary sector was small (31) and came from one geographical area, so the profile reported here may not be typical. Within this group of staff, there were 24 women and 7 men: women were slightly over represented compared with the sample as a whole (77% compared with 71.6%). At 70%, the proportion of staff aged 40 or over was also somewhat higher than for the sample as a whole. This was an experienced group, with two thirds having been qualified for at least 10 years and less than 10% (3) having completed training during or since the year 2000. Twenty staff (64%) held a degree and three (9.7%) an HNC. This was a relatively stable workforce, with only five staff (17%) having been in post for 2 years or less, two thirds for more than 5 years and almost half, 10 years or more.

Only six staff working in a voluntary organisation described themselves as a 'social worker', nine were managers and the remainder were in a range of specialist and/or co-ordinating posts. In terms of client group served in the current posts the breakdown was :

Children and Families   9
Community Care   15
Combination/ other   7

Information on their most recent previous post was provided by 23 respondents, as follows: social worker (9); manager / senior social worker (7); volunteer co-ordinator (4); residential worker (2) and information officer (1). Twelve of these posts had been in the voluntary sector and eleven in a statutory setting. Five staff had been working in Children and Families but

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[5] In part, this stability may be attributable to the fact that, since the early 1990s, criminal justice services have been organised differently from other branches of social work, with ring-fenced budgets provided by the Scottish Executive and the creation of specialist teams. Arguably, the criminal justice remit has retained greater opportunities for what might be described as 'traditional' social work, for example in work with prisoners' families, young offenders and people with addictions or mental disorders. As discussed later in this report, reduced scope for direct work with clients was identified as a major source of dissatisfaction by staff in other areas of social work.

most of the rest categorised their client group as 'combination' or 'other'. The average time spent in the post immediately prior to the current one had been 4.8 years.

Eighteen people provided details of two previous posts and eight provided details of three. Average time spent in each of these posts was just over three years.

At each stage the proportion working with Children and Families and other client groups remained similar. However working back chronologically, the proportion of posts in the statutory sector increased. Alongside this is noted whether the DipSW was a requirement for the post. Details are as follows:

	% in voluntary sector	% DipSW required
Present post	100	74
Previous post 1	52	78
Previous post 2	44	67
Previous post 3	25	63

Numbers are small, but the above results indicate that most of this staff group had started in a local authority, then moved to and within the voluntary sector. They also suggest an upward trend in requirements for a diploma in social work.

Results of Phase Two 'Extended' Questionnaire

Around 170 'extended' questionnaires were issued, either by hand at the SSSC registration event or to selected personnel by post. Sixty-five responses were received, indicating a response rate of nearly 40%. Response rates for self-completion questionnaires are very variable, but typically fall between 10-30%. The level of return was therefore higher than might have been expected.

Several questions in this 'extended' questionnaire were also in the shorter pro-forma, so, for the local authority employees who received their questionnaire at the SSSC social work registration event, it would have been useful to combine their responses with the data provided by other authorities from personnel records. However, since responses were anonymous there was no way of distinguishing those issued at the SSSC event from those sent out by local authorities who had already included the social worker in their data from personnel records. The results have therefore been kept separate to avoid double counting.

Results of the common questions were however compared to test how representative the Phase Two sample was of the bigger Phase One population. They proved very similar in terms of gender, first social work qualification, full/part-time, permanent/temporary and a DipSW requirement in current post. However, there were more significant differences in age range and in the client group served in current post. In the 'extended' survey there were fewer under 30s and more 51 to 60 year olds, alongside more respondents working in Community Care, with a corresponding reduction in the 'other' category.

Discussion in the remainder of this section will centre on the questions unique to the 'extended' questionnaire.

Table 16 – Have you undertaken any post-qualification courses?

	Frequency	%
Yes	35	54.7
No	29	45.3

A majority of staff (55%) had undertaken some form of post-qualification course with nearly a quarter of these studying the Certificate in Child Protection Studies. Fewer had completed practice teaching or PQ awards, Masters courses or the MHO certificate.

Table 17 – If NO, do you plan or would you consider undertaking any post-qualification courses?

	Frequency	%
Yes	17	56.7
No	13	43.3

Of those who had not undertaken any post-qualification course, nearly 57% said they would consider doing so. All respondents were asked if the availability of post-qualification courses would influence their career choice and just short of 48% said they thought it would.

Table 18 – Would the availability of post-qualification courses influence your career choice?

	Frequency	%
Yes	30	47.6
No	33	52.4

The respondents were then asked two related questions. First, when they qualified how long had they expected to work in social work practice or management and the second, given no unforeseen changes, how long do they now envisage remaining in social work. The objective of the first question was to find out whether or not respondents had initially viewed social work as their lifetime career. The aim of the second was to explore whether their work experience had made them alter their longer-term work plans. Table 19 shows that, on qualification, 60% of staff intended to stay in social work until retirement. Indeed, the vast majority saw social work as long-term, with no one estimating that they would stay in the profession for less than ten years. However, around 11% did not know at the time, i.e. at qualification, how long they expected to remain in social work practice and management.

Table 19 – When first qualified, how long did you see yourself being in social work practice and management?

	Frequency	%
<20 years	5	7.7
20 or more years	10	15.4
Until retirement	39	60.0
Not known at the time	7	10.8
Not valid	4	6.2

Table 20 – At present, how long do you see yourself being in social work practice and management?

	Frequency	%
<20 years	13	20.0
20 or more years	3	4.6
Until retirement	40	61.5
Not know at time	6	9.2
Not valid	3	4.6

Looking at how long staff now envisage remaining in the profession, the number looking to remain until retirement is slightly higher at 62%. An important consideration though is how many of those who thought at qualification they would stay in social work until retirement,

still wish to stay until retirement now. Of the 60% who originally anticipated doing so, nearly three-quarters still wanted to stay in the social work profession until retirement. This represents around 46% of all respondents. The one-quarter that no longer wanted to stay until retirement either did not know when they wanted to retire (11%) or wanted to do so earlier (15%). Extending this analysis to all respondents, not just those wishing to retire, we see that approximately 9% of staff want to finish their social work posts earlier than they thought at qualification. However, 30% now see themselves finishing work in social work practice and management later than anticipated at qualification. As already discussed, around 46% have not altered their chosen finish time, choosing retirement in both questions and the remainder (15%) are either unsure or have not responded.

Table 21 – What factors encourage you to stay?

	Frequency	**%**
Commitment to clients	50	76.9
Job satisfaction	49	75%
Relations with colleagues	46	70.8
Salary	32	49.2
Conditions of service	31	47.7
Loyalty to employer	22	33.8
Adequate resources	12	18.5
Clear remit	11	16.9
Other	14	21.5

Commitment to clients can be seen to be the key factor encouraging staff to remain in the social work sector, followed closely by job satisfaction. The other highly regarded factor is relations with colleagues.

In the 'other' factors encouraging employees to stay, 'lack of alternative' and 'domestic commitments' occur the most often. Also included here are positive factors such as 'family friendly policy', 'close to home' and 'I like working with people with learning difficulties'.

A less positive picture emerged in responses about what factors could discourage social workers from staying. As outlined below, stress and inadequate resources emerged as the primary considerations, with nearly three-quarters of respondents selecting each of these. No other factor was selected by more than 50% of employees. In the 'other' category, 'excessive paperwork' was mentioned twice. A 'lack of a clear career path' was also suggested as a factor, as was 'limited holidays and flexibility in working hours'. One employee cited 'violence towards workers' as a factor discouraging them from staying. Drake and Yamada (1996) found that inadequate pay, tough working conditions, lack of recognition for a job well-done, chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and overwork all negatively affect worker retention.

Table 22 – What factors could discourage you from staying?

	Frequency	**%**
Inadequate resources	48	73.8
Stress	48	73.8
Salary	32	49.2
Departmental structure	32	49.2
Conditions of service	31	47.7
Unclear remit	27	41.5
Nature of SW task	24	36.9
Relations with colleagues	12	18.5
Other	9	13.8

The respondents were later asked if they had any plans to seek other employment in the near future. They were able to give more than one answer.

Table 23 – Do you have plans to seek other employment in the near future?

	Frequency	%
Yes	22	33.8
No	43	66.2

Just over a third (22) said they did, with ten (15%) looking for employment in a social work/social care post within a local authority, nine (14%) for a similar post but within the voluntary or independent sector, and 7 (11%) outwith social work. Within this latter group three respondents went on to describe the areas of work they were looking to move into. One was considering lecturing, another a job where he could pursue his hobby and the third to do a post-graduate Masters course. Thus slightly less than half of those who planned to leave chose another local authority post as their next employer.

Though numbers are too small for any meaningful conclusions to be drawn, it is worth reporting that 40% of those in Children and Families teams planned to seek another post, compared with only 14% in Community Care and none in Criminal Justice. A third of those who planned to move were aged 40 or younger and only 10% were over 50. Employees who had undertaken any post-qualifying course were also more likely to plan to seek another post than those who had not, with 40% planning to move on, compared with only 24% of those who had no post qualifying qualifications.

Table 24 provides some details of previous posts held by the sample who completed the 'extended' questionnaire. In terms of previous employment, only a quarter of staff had had three posts or more. Data from this survey indicated that one fifth of staff were currently working in their first social work post. However, among the larger sample covered by the shorter pro-forma the proportion was 32%. Differences were noted across client groups with 40% of social workers in Children and Families teams in their first post but only 20% of those working in Community Care. Since the 'extended' questionnaire sample included a higher proportion of staff in Community Care, these differences may indicate that personnel were more likely to send the questionnaire to experienced staff and so introduce a bias into the 'extended' questionnaire sample.

Table 24 - How many previous social work posts have you had?

	Frequency	%
0	13	20.0
1	12	18.5
2	17	26.2
3	6	9.2
4	8	12.3
5	5	7.7
6	2	3.1
7	1	1.5
8	1	1.5

Just under 14% of employees had had gaps in service. Nearly half of these were for maternity reasons and a third for travel abroad. One person reported that personal issues had affected motivation to work and another was disillusioned and needed a break.

The concluding questions in the 'extended' questionnaire asked about a) reasons for becoming a social worker and b) whether social work had met respondents' expectations.

Reasons for becoming a social worker

Two broad motivations for choosing social work as a career were :

- a concern for social justice/ wishing to help people
- to facilitate career advancement and secure employment

Around three quarters of responses could be classified within one or other of these categories, with 24 mentioning an altruistic motive and 20 referring to career aspirations. Though evidently not mutually exclusive, only a few respondents mentioned both in their reply, suggesting that for most people one reason or the other predominated. Other frequently mentioned reasons included a wish to work with people, to make use of or develop existing skills, interest in working with a specific client group and more general references to 'job satisfaction'.

Among those whose stated motivation was altruistic, some emphasised helping individuals, while others focussed on challenging disadvantage and some cited both. The following illustrate the range of responses :

> Simply to help people
>
> Making a difference to people's lives
>
> To assist and support vulnerable members of the community and to make a positive impact on their daily lives
>
> To work with people. Address inequality/ deprivation. Interest in social policy/issues
>
> Commitment to the care and rights of others
>
> A wish to help people individually and collectively
>
> To offer something to the community and society and to contribute to the alleviation of social disadvantage
>
> Altruism! Seriously thought we could make a difference and be agents of social change – how naïve!

Others indicated that becoming a qualified social worker was primarily a matter of career advancement or gaining financial security. Some had been working in the care sector as unqualified workers and viewed becoming a social worker as natural progression, a means of developing their practice and/or achieving the recognition they deserved. Comments included:

> Professional development and also financial security
>
> Interested in this kind of work. Training opportunities available. Career development. Salary. Conditions of service
>
> Was doing the same job as qualified people for half the pay
>
> To be considered as a qualified worker with [vol. org. employer]. My nursing qualifications were not paid at the same rate. To increase skills and knowledge and broaden my experience
>
> Job security, job satisfaction

> Needed a proper career path following break up of marriage. Wish to gain more knowledge of client group I was working with

> Wanted to be 'qualified' and gain more training to ensure I could work in a range of social care posts which had more of a career path.

A number of comments combined elements of altruism/ sense of social justice and a wish to find a more rewarding or secure career:

> Caring profession- interest in people. Good salary

> History of working with people with learning difficulties. During nursing training felt I did not want to be part of a system segregating people I worked with. After time off having my family, did my courses to work with these people in a more facilitating, empowering role

> Saw it as a natural progression from care assistant and I believed I could make a difference

> More interested in helping people than making whisky

Explicit reasons for choosing social work were not always stated. A number of people simply referred to it being an available option following further education or a means of gaining a 'professional qualification'. One respondent could not remember why s/he had become a social worker, while another simply attributed this career decision to a 'temporary lapse in reason'!

<u>Has social work met your expectations?</u>

The majority of staff (60%) thought that social work had met their expectations. However responses varied depending on the client group workers were currently serving, with less than a third of those in Children and Families teams saying their expectations had been met, compared with almost three quarters of Community Care staff and all of those working in Criminal Justice and 'generic or combination' posts. The relatively low level of satisfaction among those in Children and Families teams corresponds with the fact that a higher proportion of this group were planning to move job in the near future. Since they are the youngest group, with more potential years of future service, and more time to think of changing career, these results may not bode well for future retention.

Even among those who thought their expectations had been met, only three were unreservedly positive in their accompanying comments, referring to improved standards and opportunities for continuing personal and professional development. More commonly social workers' replies showed a gritty realism and willingness to hold on to the good aspects, even in difficult circumstances. The following comments were all from people who said their expectations had been met:

> I expected it to be demanding, require commitment, hard and emotionally draining-- it is. I anticipated there would be rewards in seeing some at least achieving their potential – there are   (Children and Families)

> Job has changed considerably over the last 30 years. Clients keep you sane. SW departments as institutions try to do the opposite
> (Community Care)

> From a career perspective yes, but there are times when frustration can take hold due to lack of progress and change for people receiving services
> (Community Care)

Always had good contact with service users, courts and agencies. Only problem has been lack of proper management support, lack of feeling valued

(Criminal Justice)

Generally an interesting and satisfying career with a lot of challenges. I am disappointed that the profession continues to be misunderstood and undervalued. Am pessimistic about its future if adequate funding and staffing prevents people from holding realistic caseloads and offering proactive measures to help prevent crises

(Other employment)

Social work has met all of the above expectations [for career development, secure employment, job satisfaction]. Though in the last few years it has become less safe, increased workload with fewer resources, which has indications for stress levels. I am less sure I wish to continue in this line of work

(Information on client group missing)

Generally social work has met my expectations. However, for the job we do, the salary could be better

(Information on client group missing).

A number of strong themes can be identified in these responses. First many social workers had not expected the work to be easy, comfortable or routine. They enjoyed the challenges, the variety and the opportunities for working with people in difficult circumstances. However, the support necessary to work effectively was not always available, resulting in increased levels of stress. Staff shortages, lack of resources and lack of management support were commonly referred to. Another common theme was lack of status or acknowledgement of the demands of the social work task, reflected in public opinion, salary and the attitudes of some employers.

Not surprisingly, the same themes came through, with even greater strength, among people who described themselves as dissatisfied or satisfied with some aspects and not others. In addition these respondents included more comments about changes in the social work task. At a practical level, the most common complaint was that the demands of administration and paper work reduced time available for direct work with clients. From a more ideological perspective, some highlighted that social work had lost its capacity to empower others or effect social change. A sample of comments are listed below:

Yes, in terms of enjoyment and reward- in Children and Families you just don't know what is going to come in next – no, in terms of resources in particular staff shortfalls, also the amount of paper work and lack of time to deal with it due to high caseloads

(Children and Families)

To some extent yes, however I am very disappointed in the support network within the department and the availability of post qualifying training

(Children and Families)

Not able to work directly with people as a statutory social worker to achieve change—too much paper work, so role is more care management, policing child protection etc. (Children and Families)

I think it used to [meet expectations]. Now a very different job. Less direct work and more line management. Too much bureaucracy and paper work. Lots of positive developments, but often the local authority does not provide the most basic things to allow the job to be carried out.

(Children and Families)

At times it has but red tape infuriates me and slows down work with clients
(Children and Families)

Not really [met expectations]. I have many positive experiences of working with clients where I feel I have affected positive change and been appreciated for it by the client. However on the whole the bureaucracy, internal reorganisations, stress and expectations are just too much to cope with. Staff vacancies are never filled or allowed to exist for months, with staff forced to carry higher caseloads.
(Community Care)

We are really agents of social control and our organisation is anything but changing, despite the 'spin'.
(Community Care)

Disappointed care management is so paper work focussed. Lack of contact with service users in supportive role. It can be difficult to do a job so misunderstood and ridiculed for so little pay but working with the client compensates for this.
(Community Care)

I was disillusioned in the health sector and envisaged that social work may provide better opportunities and job satisfaction and fulfilment. It's a very restrictive work environment, limited resources and apathy. It does not encourage creative, open discussion or development of service.
(Information on client group missing).

Social workers are evidently expressing considerable dissatisfaction about the nature of the job they are asked to do, in particular their lack of contact with people and opportunities to work with them in such a way as to effect change. This is a matter of some concern, particularly since many had been drawn to social work by altruistic motives and a wish to work with people.

Some analysis was carried out to check whether people attracted to social work primarily as a career option were more or less likely to feel social work had met their expectations. No clear pattern was identified, though those in the career motivated group were more likely to mention salary or stress as a problem, with fewer references to lack of opportunities to engage directly with service users or effect change.

Results of the Phase Two 'Leavers' Survey

As previously explained, the 'leavers' questionnaire was issued to a sample of former employees of just one local authority. Due to time constraints this was carried out very much as a pilot, with the aim of testing the process rather than getting large amounts of data. Ten questionnaires were issued to staff who had left their local authority employment in the last twelve months. At the cut-off date, responses had been received from six of the ten.

Only two of the six remained in social work, one moving to the voluntary sector. One respondent left to a promoted post in health and the remaining three all moved to teaching. Thus only one of six remained in statutory social work.

Very little can be inferred from only six responses. However, viewed alongside data from the 'extended' questionnaire, these data were of particular interest because they suggested that the reasons leavers gave for leaving social work were very similar to concerns expressed by staff still in employment. From a list of options, four respondents ticked 'the nature of the social work task' and 'inadequate resources'; three cited 'stress and 'conditions of service', while

'salary', 'departmental structure' and 'lack of specific remit' had each been relevant for one person.

In terms of their motivation for becoming a social worker, it was of interest that each 'leaver' mentioned wanting to work with people or commitment to social justice. No-one referred only to career aspirations:

> Working with people in helping profession - social justice agenda

> I wanted to work with people and believed SW would give me the chance to do this in a helpful and constructive way

> To work with disadvantaged, discriminated people to use skills

> To work in voluntary sector, mental health. To gain more skills to enable people to change their lives

> Trainee year afforded opportunity to determine whether this was indeed the correct career choice. I wished to use my people skills to make a difference in the lives of those with varying needs

> To use previous experience to enter another profession following lack of opportunities in secondary education. Wished to remain working with people especially children and young people

Surprisingly only two of the six explicitly stated that social work did not meet their expectations. The following explanations were given:

> I particularly enjoyed the opportunity of generic work in my early career. I also liked establishing a new post as a GP linked SW as I felt this joint health /SW liaison was one way forward

> Challenging but rewarding

> Working in both residential and fieldwork with the voluntary sector met my expectations. However, working in the statutory local authority did not due to caseload and resource back-up. Pressure on local authorities to deal with child protection issues too often cut across chance to do effective therapeutic work

> I have enjoyed my time in SW and remain committed to it as a profession. However, in some places I have worked I have found it hard to act effectively due to staffing levels, overwork and bureaucracy. As time has gone on I think core SW skills and values are being lost to a case management approach

> Felt de-skilled and under-confident to do the job as juggling different demands and short staffed. Did not plan to do child care. Too stressful. Unable to do job due to under-staffing

> Basic grade posts require so many tasks and demands that you become de-skilled and consumed with paperwork, bureaucracy and politics

It is of interest that most people who had left said social work had met their expectations and remembered some aspects of social work in a positive light, but were critical of others. It corresponds with the fact that 60% of 'extended' questionnaire respondents said their expectations had been met, but went on to express considerable dissatisfaction with some aspects of their current employment. This suggests that social workers' career choices are complex and shaped by competing demands and considerations. That three of the leavers had moved into teaching serves as a reminder that there are 'pull' as well as 'push' factors and

that other professions are competing with social work for recruits. Recent pay awards to teachers have of course resulted in a current gap between teachers' and social workers' salaries. It is worth noting that four of the six mentioned the de-skilling of social work practitioners as opportunities for direct work with service users are restricted in the current climate.

Both the 'extended' and the 'leavers' questionnaires provided useful insights into social workers' views. However interviews with social workers would have allowed more qualitative exploration of the processes through which they weighed up their options at different points in their career. Time and resource constraints meant this was not an option for the pilot, but they would be a useful inclusion in any future research on the same topic.

Conclusion

This pilot study set out to:

- increase understanding of the mobility of the workforce, i.e. routes by which qualified workers enter social work and move through various posts;
- obtain some preliminary data on the considerations which influence these career moves.
- test ways of obtaining longitudinal data in a way that can assist and improve existing approaches to modelling/skills foresight. This will build on a model previously developed by TOPSS;

In this section, information from across these three aspects of the study is brought together to highlight emerging issues.

Data Availability

It is very evident that information about social workers' career pathways is not readily available from local authority personnel sections. Appropriate data gathering systems have not been in place and staff shortages mean that there is no scope to undertake the time consuming process of retrieving relevant information from a range of sources. The COSLA (2003) report recommended that each local authority should take steps to develop reliable information to inform work force planning, but it may be some time before this is in place.

In the meantime it may be more effective to obtain information directly from social workers. Issuing questionnaires at the SSSC registration events yielded a reasonable return. The return rate could presumably be increased if social workers were asked to provide the information as part of the registration process or if local authorities themselves issued questionnaires over a period which allowed for several reminders to be sent. This kind of management information will be crucial if authorities are to assess over time the effects of recently introduced recruitment and staff development initiatives.

For this study information was obtained through three sets of questionnaires. The Phase One questionnaire provided basic details of current post and previous experience. Most were completed by personnel staff in participating local authorities. A total of 612 were received but there were considerable gaps in data so only about half the sample could be included in some important aspects of the analysis, for example in relation to current post. In addition 65 current social workers completed an 'extended' questionnaire which included questions about their careers aspirations, experience and plans. Six questionnaires were completed by social workers who had left a local authority's employment in the last year.

Because of the difficulties in obtaining relevant information within the pilot's time scale, the data were not complete and were not necessarily representative. As acknowledged earlier, one local authority only submitted returns on Community Care staff, so Children and Families and Criminal Justice workers are underrepresented. The findings on the workforce are therefore presented as indicators of trends worthy of further consideration or investigation, rather than robust results.

Routes into Social Work and Recruitment

In terms of experience prior to qualification, this study supported other evidence that most social workers have previously been employed in a care setting. This is not surprising, since relevant experience is a requirement for entry to most social work courses. However information was obtained on up to three pre-qualifying posts and even at these early stages 80-90% of posts involved caring for other people. This suggests that the existing unqualified social care workforce is an important source of social work recruits, and that the development of appropriate 'bridging' courses is worthwhile, even though not all working in this sector will have the inclination or capacity to pursue professional training. The group of staff who had obtained an HNC and/or S/NVQ before qualifying was the youngest and most recently qualified.

Responses to the 'extended' questionnaire indicated that most of those who had transferred from outwith the care sector saw social work as offering an opportunity to do something worthwhile, work with people in an empowering way or challenge injustice. This also applied to former nurses who had expected that social work would provide more scope for an inclusive and empowering approach to caring.

Across the 'extended' sample, altruism was cited as the main reason for becoming a social worker. A common theme was the wish to work directly with people and help make a difference to their lives, individually or collectively. The second main motivation was to have a secure but interesting job with good prospects.

Current Staff and their Posts

Turning to the present workforce, women in the sample outnumbered men by almost three to one and two thirds of the workforce were aged 40 or over. Approximately half had been qualified for 10 years or more. Just over a third were graduates.

Since statutory social work is now delivered across quite separate teams, some of the more detailed analysis of the mobility and nature of the workforce differentiated between four different sub-groups: statutory workers in Children and Families, Community Care and Criminal Justice teams and workers in the voluntary sector.

Among our sample, which may not be representative, the most experienced staff were in the voluntary sector and Criminal Justice. These teams were also the most stable, with half in the voluntary sector and 40% in Criminal Justice having been in their current post for 10 years or more. This was the case for less than 10% of staff working in Children and Families or Community Care teams. Staff in Children and Families teams were notably younger and less experienced than all other teams. Half had been in their post for less than two years, while for 40% this was their first post. There were corresponding indications of staff moving from Children and Families work into Community Care and Criminal Justice and from the statutory into the voluntary sector.

The crisis in Children and Families teams is well recognised and several of the recruitment initiatives, for example the Fast Track course, are specifically geared to increase numbers here. This is a positive move but strategies to encourage retention of experienced staff would seem equally important. As COSLA (2003) acknowledged, important initiatives in child protection and youth justice depend on an appropriately qualified and experienced workforce for their success.

Satisfaction and Retention

The reasons given for becoming a social worker are not at all surprising and would warrant relatively little comment but for the fact that, when asked whether expectations had been met, most dissatisfaction stemmed from the fact that present practice allowed very little scope for direct, proactive and creative work with people. Social workers talked of being overwhelmed by bureaucracy, paper work and high caseloads, while lack of resources made it difficult to be effective in promoting change. In response to a question about what motivated them to stay in the work, the most common response was 'loyalty to clients'. Social workers emerged from this study as committed staff, trying to provide a client-centred service but often obstructed by the perceived limitations of their employing organisations.

Responses to the 'extended' questionnaire also indicated that many social workers were resilient, ready to acknowledge the positives as well as the problems. A majority (60%) said that social work had met their expectations, citing as positives the variety, challenge and satisfaction when clients were helped to make progress. However even among those who said their expectations had been met, all but a few referred to the difficulties mentioned above. A third of all respondents planned to look for a new post in the near future and a quarter hoped to leave social work or find a post in the voluntary or independent sectors. A higher proportion of staff working in Children and Families teams did not feel that their expectations had been met or planned to change job in the near future.

These findings suggest that developing the workforce is not simply a matter of increasing social work numbers. Rather there is a mismatch between the motivation and values of social work staff and the current nature of a social worker's job. This is consistent with the analysis of several commentators who argue that changes in social work are a consequence of shifts in the wider policy climate (Jordan 2001, Jones 2001). In common with other public services, social work is now run in accordance with a managerial rather than professional ethos, so that service development is guided by considerations of cost effectiveness and organisational efficiency. At the same time social work has become increasingly subject to regulation and guidance. On the positive side this is intended to improve standards. However it can also reduce the scope for professional discretion and result in services being provided on the basis of organisational expectations and procedures, rather than working out with an individual client what would be most helpful in a specific situation (Gilligan 2000; Jones, 2001). Gilligan draws attention to the de-skilling effects of working in this way and questions whether statutory social workers now have the skills to work effectively with children looked after away from home, most of whom have suffered trauma and loss.

While these observations help us understand the difficulties, they do not suggest a remedy. These are evidently questions well beyond the scope of this study but any discrepancy between what social workers value and the nature of the task is bound to have serious implications for recruitment, retention and development of the workforce.

Modelling/skills foresight

The model developed by the SSSC to simulate the movement of qualified social workers into, within, and out of professional work will be one of the immediate beneficiaries of the results of this research. The accuracy of the model's predictions will be enhanced by the inclusion of various data, notably the proportions of the workforce in posts where a qualification is mandatory (or otherwise), and, secondly, the length of time for which social workers intend to remain in the workforce. Although not discussed in the report, the dependency of this factor on age will also be included.

Concluding Remarks

This pilot study has demonstrated that considerable investment will be needed to obtain comprehensive information which will reliably inform workforce planning. Our experience would suggest that future research should include interviews with social workers to develop understanding of the competing considerations which shape their career decisions. This research has added to evidence of a degree of crisis in local authority social work, particularly in Children and Families teams. It has also highlighted some dissatisfaction with changes in the nature of the social work task and corresponding levels of stress. Nevertheless, the overall workforce is experienced and reasonably stable, while many respondents remain positive about the challenges and rewards of a career in social work.

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Appendices

Appendix I - Approved Courses[6]

1. A course leading to a Certificate in Child Care or Home office Letter of Recognition in Child Care (issued by the Home Office Central Training Council in Child Care from 1947 to 1971).

2. A course leading to a Certificate in Social Work (issued by the Council for Training in Social Work from 1962 to 1971).

3. A course leading to a Probation Certificate or satisfactory completion of courses by the Recruitment and Training Committee (issued or recognised as the case may be by the Recruitment and Training Committee of the Advisory Council for Probation and After Care until 1971).

4. A course leading to a Certificate or satisfactory completion of courses recognised by the Institute of Medical Social Workers (previously the Institute of Almoners).

5. Courses recognised by the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers

6. A course leading to a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (issued by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work from 1971 to 2002).

7. A course leading to a Letter of Comparability to the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (issued until 1990).

8. A course leading to a Certificate in Social Service (issued by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work from 1975 to 1995).

9. A course leading to a Diploma in Social Work (issued from 1991).

10. A course leading to a degree in social work approved by the Council or by a Care Council.

11. A course approved by a Care Council.

12. [A course leading to a qualification obtained in a country which is not an EFA state].

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[6] Source: Scottish Social Services Council

Appendix II – Pro-forma

Research into Social Work Career Pathways and the Qualification Framework

Q1 Gender

Male		**Female**	

Q2 Age

Q3a Professional SW Qualifications

Q3b Date qualification obtained

Q4 Awarding University/college

Q5 Other qualifications

Degree	**Y/N**	**Subjects in degree**	
HNC			**Y/N**
S/NVQ level 3			**Y/N**
Other professional qualifications e.g. teaching, nursing			

Q6 Date when current appointment started

Q7 Date when appointment with current employing agency started

Q8 Full or part-time post

Full-time

Part-time

Q9 If part-time please express as a proportion of full-time equivalent

Q10 Is your current post permanent, temporary or temporary agency?

Permanent		**Temporary**		**Temporary agency**	

Q11 Details of current and previous three posts since passing SW qualification (starting with current post).

Job Title	Approximate dates in post	Statutory or Voluntary Sector (Indicate by number which applies) 1 Statutory 2 Voluntary 3 Other 4 Info. missing	Client Group (Indicate by number which applies) 1 Children and Families 2 Community Care 3 Criminal Justice 4 Generic or combination 5 Other (specify) 6 Info. missing	Was a DipSW or equivalent required for this post? (Indicate by number which applies) 3 Required 4 Preferred 5 No 6 Info. missing

Q12 Details of posts prior to qualifying as a social worker

Job Title_____ **Approximate dates in post** _____

Job Title_____ **Approximate dates in post** _____

Job Title_____ **Approximate dates in post** _____

Appendix III – Extended Questionnaire

Q1 Gender   **Male**   ☐   **Female**   ☐

Q2 Age   ☐

Q3a What was your first professional SW Qualifications ☐

Q3b Date qualification obtained ☐

Q3c Awarding University/college ☐

Q4a Have you undertaken any post qualifying course?   **Yes** ☐   **No** ☐

Q4b If YES, please describe the qualification(s) ☐

Q4c If NO, do you plan, or would you consider undertaking any post qualification course?   **Yes** ☐   **No** ☐

Q4d Would the availability of post-qualification courses influence your career choice?   **Yes** ☐   **No** ☐

Q5a When you first qualified, how long did you see yourself being in SW practice and/or management? ☐

Q5b At present, if there are no unforeseen changes, how long do you envisage remaining in SW practice and /or management? ☐

Q6 What factors encourage you to stay (please tick all boxes that apply)

Salary	☐	Relations with colleagues	☐
Job satisfaction	☐	Commitment to clients	☐
Adequate resources	☐	Clear remit	☐
Conditions of service	☐	Other	☐
Loyalty to employer	☐	Please describe other:	

Q7 What factors could discourage you from staying (please tick all boxes that apply)

Salary	☐	Relations with colleagues	☐
Inadequate resources	☐	Unclear remit	☐
Department structure	☐	Nature of SW task	☐
Stress	☐	Other	☐
Conditions of service	☐	Please describe other:	

Q8 Date when your current appointment started ☐

Q9 Date when appointment with current employing agency started ☐

Q10a Full or part-time post   **Full-time** ☐
Part-time ☐

Q10b If part-time please express as a proportion of full-time equivalent

Q10c Is your current post permanent, temporary or temporary agency?
Permanent   **Temporary**   **Temporary agency**

Q11a Do you have plans to seek other employment in the near future?   **Yes**   **No**

Q11b If YES, what type of job will you be looking for?   social work/social care post within a LA

social work/social care post within the voluntary or independent sector

post outwith social work/ social care (please describe below)

PTO

Q12 How many previous SW posts have you had (excluding your current post)

Q13 Details of current and previous posts since passing SW qualification (starting with current post).

Job Title	Grade 1= SW 2= Senior SW 3= Manager 4= Senior Manager	Approx. dates in post	Statutory or Voluntary Sector (Indicate by number which applies) 1 Statutory 2 Voluntary 3 Other 4 Info. Missing	Client Group (Indicate by number which applies) 1 Children and Families 2 Community Care 3 Criminal Justice 4 Generic or combination 5 Other (specify) 6 Info. missing	Was a DipSW or equivalent required for this post? (Indicate by number which applies) 3 Required 4 Preferred 5 No 6 Info. missing

Q14 Are there any gaps in service in your answer to Q13?. If so, could you give a brief reason and length of time each gap lasted.

Q15 Details of posts prior to qualifying as a social worker
Job Title_____ **Approximate dates in post** _____

Job Title_____ **Approximate dates in post** _____

Job Title_____ **Approximate dates in post** _____

Q16a And finally, what were your reasons for setting out to become a social worker?

Q16b and has social work met your expectations?　　　　**Yes**　　　　　　　**No**

Please explain further

Appendix IV – Leavers Questionnaire

Q1 Gender   **Male**   ☐   **Female**   ☐

Q2 Age   ☐

Q3a What was your first professional SW Qualification?   ☐

Q3b Date qualification obtained   ☐

Q3c Awarding University/college   ☐

Q4a Have you undertaken any post qualifying course?   **Yes**   ☐   **No**   ☐

Q4b If YES, please describe the qualification(s)   ☐

Q5 How many social work posts have you had?   ☐

Q6 Details of current and previous posts since passing SW qualification (starting with current post)

Job Title	Grade 1= SW 2= Senior SW 3= Manager 4= Senior Manager	Approx. dates in post	Statutory or Voluntary Sector (Indicate by number which applies) 1 Statutory 2 Voluntary 3 Other 4 Info. Missing	Client Group (Indicate by number which applies) 1 Children and Families 2 Community Care 3 Criminal Justice 4 Generic or combination 5 Other (specify) 6 Info. missing	Was a DipSW or equivalent required for this post? (Indicate by number which applies) 3 Required 4 Preferred 5 No 6 Info. Missing

Q7a Is your current post full or part-time?   **Full-time**   ☐
Part-time   ☐
Not currently working   ☐

Q7b If part-time please express as a proportion of full-time equivalent   ☐

Q8 Details of posts prior to qualifying as a social worker

Job Title_____ Approximate dates in post _____

Job Title_____ Approximate dates in post _____

Job Title_____ Approximate dates in post _____

Q9 When you first qualified, how long did you see yourself being in SW practice and management?

Q10a What were your reasons for setting out to become a social worker?

Q10b and did social work meet your expectations?   Yes   No

Please explain further

Q11 Under what circumstances did you leave X authority? (please tick all boxes that apply)

Retirement age		Ill Health	
Early retirement		Decided not to work anymore	
Change of job		Other	
Career break		Please describe other:	

Q12 What factors motivated you to leave X authority? (please tick all boxes that apply)

Salary		Relations with colleagues	
Inadequate resources		Unclear remit	
Department structure		Nature of SW task	
Stress		Other	
Conditions of service		Please describe other:	

Q13a Do you have plans to seek other employment in the near future?   Yes   No

Q13b If YES, what type of job will you be looking for?
social work/social care post within a LA
social work/social care post within the voluntary or independent sector
post outwith social work/ social care (please describe below)

51