



Making the Most of the First Year in Practice

A Guide for newly
Qualified Social Workers



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Care Council for Wales
7th Floor
South Gate House
Wood Street
Cardiff
CF10 1EW

Tel: 029 2022 6257

Fax: 029 2038 4764

E-mail: info@ccwales.org.uk

Website: www.ccwales.org.uk

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Introduction

In the summer of 2007 the first graduates of the new social work degree entered the workforce. You may be one of these graduates, or you may be looking forward to graduating in the following years.

The Care Council for Wales (Care Council) has produced this guide in recognition of the importance your first year in social work practice will have for you and your employer. As a newly qualified and employed social worker you will become a permanent member of a team not a temporary student. You will be looking forward to putting your learning from the degree into practice and consolidating your skills. You will be hoping for a career that will be rewarding and challenging and where your employer will support you to be an effective social worker. The expectations of you as a registered, qualified social worker from both users of services and your employer are high now that you are in a position to make important decisions about people's lives and circumstances.

A well managed and effective first year is therefore essential.

The purpose of the guidance is to help you:

- make a smooth transition from student to professional practitioner;
- consider your responsibilities as an employee;
- know what to expect from your employer;
- know how you can consolidate and develop your social work practice in line with the expectations of the *Code of Practice*, continuous professional development (CPD) and post registration training and learning (PRTL).

The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) has developed companion guidance for employers called *Making the Most of Social Workers' First Year in Practice - a guide for employers*. This describes how the Welsh Assembly Government expects employers to support newly qualified social workers and what employers should expect from you. These two guides overlap to emphasise the joint responsibilities on employers and employees.

This guide is for:

- social work degree graduates;
- students on the social work degree.

It is also useful information for:

- people involved in the social work degree, including practice assessors, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and their partners;
- team managers with a new social work graduate in their team;
- staff who take on a designated mentor role for newly qualified social workers;
- senior managers including those responsible for workforce and staff development.

What's in the guide

The guide has 4 chapters:

Chapter 1 begins with brief pen pictures of 5 fictitious social work students who are about to graduate.

Each pen picture is designed to illustrate different routes onto and through the degree and then into employment. Later chapters describe how they go on to consolidate and develop their practice in their first year. While none of these new graduates will be just like you, parts of their 'stories' may be pertinent.

Chapter 2 is about moving into employment and includes ideas on how you might prepare for this.

Chapter 3 is about making the most of your first year in practice. It is the longest chapter covering the expectations of how you will consolidate and develop your social work through practice, supervision and learning, with support from your employer.

Chapter 4 is about how you can plan for your ongoing professional development beyond the first year in practice, using career pathways and post qualifying opportunities.

How to use the guide

You can approach the guide in different ways. For example, you could start with the pen pictures and follow one person through the following chapters. You could look first at the expectations of a protected case and work load or you could read all the good practice points. You will need to read it all at least once and then use it as needed.

The status of the guide

During the degree you will have been working to a set of requirements which you have to meet at each of the three levels. You have been assessed on your knowledge and skills and you have been awarded grades. You have been judged to be competent as a professional social worker.

Whilst you may not have further assignments to complete standard 6 of the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers says, "...you must be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills"¹.

¹ Code of Practice for Social Care Workers, Care Council for Wales

Although this document is guidance it sets out a way in which you can meet the Code's standard in your first year. As a newly qualified social worker therefore you are expected:

- to have read and be following this guide;
- to be working on your identified consolidation and development needs that you and your mentor/team manager have jointly identified;
- to be meeting the Code of Practice requirements in relation to your work with service users and for your ongoing development;
- to be keeping a record of your post registration training and learning (PRTL) for the 3 year period of your registration. This record will be required at the time of your renewal of registration with the Care Council (Care Council for Wales Registration Rules (Revised 2007) Further guidance is contained in the Council's leaflet, *Now you Are Registered*;
- to be continuing to meet the National Occupational Standards for Social Work (NOS).

This guide supplements your employer's expectations of you and those of the Code of Practice.

Chapter 1

The Pen Pictures - Introducing the Social Work Degree Students²

The chapter introduces you to the fictitious students.

SIÂN



Siân is a local authority seconded student and is a Welsh speaker.

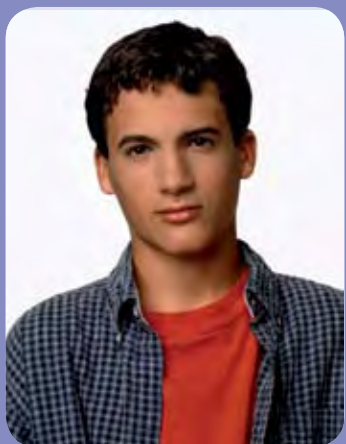
She worked for some years as a day care officer in a centre for people with learning disabilities before going on the local social work degree course.

Her practice learning opportunities have been in a range of settings including a multi-disciplinary mental health team where she would like to stay.

As she is nearing the end of the degree she will soon have an interview with the human resources manager to look at current social work vacancies as well as her new expertise and preferences.

Through the regular meetings with all seconded students, Siân knows that the authority has more vacancies in children's services and that there is an urgent need for Welsh speakers in the older people's teams.

MANISH



Manish did his A levels at college followed by a gap year. During this year he spent some time abroad working in a home for children orphaned through HIV and Aids. On his return to Wales, he worked as a carer and volunteered on a telephone help line before going on the social work degree.

Manish is a 'direct entry'³ student and has been 'hosted' by a local authority.

His practice learning opportunities have been in a children and families team in a partner local authority as well as in a community mental health team in the 'hosting' authority.

His hosting authority have offered him paid work experience in the vacations in different settings and locations. During Level 3 he told the training manager responsible for hosted students that he would like to work for the authority but he is also looking at other possible employers.

² These pen pictures are fictitious.

³ 'direct entry' students are those who apply directly to the degree and are not seconded or trainees and therefore are under no contractual obligations to a particular past employer.

MYRTLE



Myrtle is a direct entry student.

Myrtle trained as a nurse then took a career break to look after her family. During this time she took a number of counselling courses and became an accredited counsellor with a particular interest in providing counselling to women from black and minority ethnic communities.

She decided to retrain as a social worker and went on to the degree. Her practice learning opportunities have included a project for substance misuse in the voluntary sector and a children with disabilities team.

Myrtle wants to work as a social worker in a children's hospice, but as there are no vacancies currently she plans to sign on with an agency and get work close to home as she cares for her elderly father.

ELGAN



Elgan is a trainee from a local authority.

Elgan worked initially as a technician in the aids and adaptations stores. He then became an Occupational Therapy (OT) assistant in the rehabilitation team.

Initially unsure whether to train as an OT or a social worker he took careers advice from the authority. He applied for and gained a trainee social work post and then went on the social work degree. His practice learning opportunities have included working in a busy teaching hospital and a multi-disciplinary rapid response team which he really enjoyed.

As part of his contract he is expected to return to the team. This has been restructured and now has a more preventative focus. It is managed by a senior Occupational Therapist. He will work alongside one other social worker, a physiotherapist and a number of OTs and OT assistants.

Elgan is ambivalent about returning to the team.

ELAINE



Elaine is a seconded student.

Elaine's aunt and uncle have been foster carers for many years and Elaine often helped them look after the foster children.

After some short term jobs she realised that her experience of helping care for foster children was prompting her to consider a social work career. She became a family aide and after two years was seconded on to a social work degree.

Her practice learning experiences have been in a carer's project in the voluntary sector and a family centre in a neighbouring authority. Her seconding authority has vacancies in the children and families assessment team but none with looked after children which Elaine would prefer.

These pen pictures illustrate how each person comes onto the degree with different personal attributes, life experiences and via different routes. The degree provides different opportunities to develop social work skills and knowledge. You may be someone like Siân and Elgan with a lot of experience of working in social services before you went on the degree. Or, like Manish, you may have gained most of your social work experience from the time on the degree. You may be going back to your seconding employer or you may have no such ties and be looking for an advertised post.

However much these differences exist, the move into employment as a social worker is a crucial point in a social work career. It will be for you too. Chapter 2 focuses on just this.

Things to think about as you start your First Year in Practice

- What is the impact of my route onto and through the degree for my transition to being a qualified social worker?
- What positive aspects do I want to retain from my experience of being a social work student?
- What is going to motivate me? What am I hoping will be the best things to happen?
- What particular talents and enthusiasms for social work will I be bringing to service users, the team and to my employer?
- Which aspects of social work have I found most interesting and rewarding and which most challenging so far?

Chapter 2

Moving into Employment

In your final degree year you need to think where you might go after graduating, or where you will be returning to. Your options may be wide open like Manish and Myrtle. If you are seconded or a trainee like Elaine, Siân and Elgan, your options will depend on the contract agreed with your employer and the vacancies available. You may be eager, like Manish, to work for the authority that hosted you, or, like Elgan, you may be ambivalent about your return.

Your contract, practical aspects, feelings and aspirations will all be important considerations in your move to social work employment.

This chapter covers:

- what you can expect from human resources (HR);
- what support, management and development you can expect from your employer as a newly qualified social worker;
- what your employer will expect from you.

What you can expect from human resources as a trainee or if seconded

The guide for employers *Making the Most of Social Workers' First Year in Practice*:

- expects HR to have accurate information on the numbers, settings and locations of vacancies, the contractual agreements in relation to filling vacancies;
- recommends that HR holds regular meetings with secondees and trainees while they are on the degree to discuss progress, preferences, options, upcoming vacancies and any changes to staffing arrangements;
- suggests that key people are included in meetings where decisions about return are discussed. These could include team managers and people responsible for training and development and designated mentors.

You need to:

- know what your contract says about how your move to a social work post will be decided and arranged;
- be able to explain any preferences you might have (if these are contractually possible) and how these link to your social work career plans;
- be able to identify and describe your new expertise and learning. This will be particularly important if you are returning to a team or setting where you worked previously.

All newly qualified social workers can expect that the employer will be able to describe:

- the arrangements for supporting and managing you in your first year in practice (see Chapter 3 for more detail);
- how your first year in practice will be linked to wider strategies for Continuous Professional Development, Post Registration Training and Learning and career planning for social workers (see Chapter 4);
- what is expected of you.

SIÂN

Siân is pleased that the manager from the older people's team is at the meeting arranged by HR and staff development. She realises that the team manager may need convincing that she can contribute to the team given her previous background in learning disability services. Before the meeting she has thought about her development while a student in the community mental health team and what she can transfer to working with older people with mental health problems.

The team manager is aware that she will need to convince Siân that the work of the team will provide the opportunities and challenges that she wants. She comes to the meeting with ideas about the range of work available for Siân as a newly qualified social worker.

MYRTLE

Myrtle is delighted when a vacancy for a social work post in the children's hospice comes up a few months after she graduated and went to work for an agency.

She knows that a post like this is rare and that as a newly qualified social worker she may be competing with more experienced social workers. However she has compiled a list of the knowledge and skills that she gained from the degree as well as from her counselling and nursing. She adds in her learning from the induction provided to her as an agency employee.

Myrtle draws up some questions to ask at the interview about the support, social work supervision available and the management arrangements for her first year in a small, specialist multi-disciplinary setting.

ELGAN

Elgan is expected to return to the team he worked in previously and a vacancy has been held open for him. The team manager knows he's ambivalent about returning. After some negotiation they agree that Elgan will work in the team for 6 months and then work part time in the newly formed rapid response team and part time in his own team. They agree to review the arrangements at the end of the year.

What management, support and development you can expect in your first year

The employers' guide states that every employer should develop a model of support for newly qualified social workers. The model is designed to:

- provide a **bridge** from being a student to a qualified professional social worker;
- provide newly qualified social workers with a **mentor** who may be the team manager or another designated person;
- ensure that all newly qualified social workers have a **personal development plan** for the first year in practice that describes the planned opportunities for consolidation and development;
- ensure that all newly qualified social workers have a contractually agreed **protected case and work load and time** for implementing the development plan;
- establish **regular supervision** that provides time for reflection and learning as well as managing performance;
- provide a firm foundation for **ongoing development** as a professional social worker;
- **guarantee to service users and carers** that newly qualified social workers will be supported and managed to be effective.

What will be expected of you?

As you are now a registered social worker you will be expected to:

- undertake your social work role in a professional manner and as required by the Code of Practice;
- work effectively and creatively with users of services and their families and carers;
- uphold public trust and confidence in social care services both in and outside of work;
- continue to meet the National Occupational Standards for social work;
- keep your details up to date and maintain your registration with the Care Council for Wales.

You will also be expected to:

- meet your organisation's requirements of all employees as well as those that are specific to your social work post;
- work constructively on meeting your agreed consolidation and development objectives.

Good Practice Summary

Moving into Employment as a Qualified Social Worker

- Identify the skills and knowledge you are bringing to the team and your role from the degree - your transcript and service user feedback will be useful.
- Make sure you know what your contract with your employer states about your return arrangements if you are seconded or a trainee.
- When being interviewed for a social work post:
 - a. discuss what is expected of you as a newly qualified social worker;
 - b. discuss what support, management and development is available and what you will need to be effective;
 - c. review the contract details on protected case and work loads, mentoring and supervision arrangements, access to CPD and so on and sign if appropriate.
- Think not just about what job you want or will be moving to when you qualify, think also about your longer term career hopes.

Chapter 3

Making the most of your First Year in Practice

Working as a qualified social worker will be a new experience for you and all social work graduates.

The degree has prepared you and assessed your competence as having met the National Occupational Standards. But now you have to take on the professional role and practise as a qualified social worker. You will be accountable for the quality of your practice not only to your employer but also to users of services, their carers and families with whom you work. You will also need to continue to learn and develop and reflect on your practice as you face new challenges.

This chapter covers:

- key learning areas for all newly qualified social workers;
- mentoring and your personal development plan;
- protected case loads and work allocation;
- supervision;
- collecting and collating examples of your consolidation and development as a social worker;
- probation and appraisal;
- resolving difficulties;
- equalities and the Welsh language;
- quality assurance.

It concludes with a summary of your responsibilities for consolidation and development in your first year in practice.

Key Learning Areas

Having passed the degree you may feel that you don't need to do any more learning for a while! But as you make the move from being a student you will need to work on developing your role as a qualified social worker, you will need to understand what is expected of you as an employee and a professional and learn how the organisation functions. You will also need to develop your understanding of the community in which you are working. Taken together working on these learning areas will help you consolidate and develop your social work expertise. These key learning areas are outlined in the boxes below.

<p>Learning about being an employee</p> <p>You will need to gain and use information about your position as an employee, a social worker and the rights and responsibilities which accompany this - including legislative requirements.</p> <p>Your induction period will be particularly important for gaining this information.</p>	<p>Learning about the agency</p> <p>You will need to develop an understanding of the structure, function, policies and procedures of the agency in which you are working, including any specialisms that are pertinent to your role or the team.</p> <p>You will also need to understand connections with other agencies and service user and carer groups.</p>
<p>Learning about the community</p> <p>You will need to get to know the strengths and challenges of the geographical area/community in which you are now working.</p> <p>This will need to include information on factors such as the demography, cultures and languages in use as well as a historical perspective on the area.</p>	<p>Consolidation and extension of your professional education and practice</p> <p>In your first year in practice you will need to consolidate and extend your professional social work skills and the knowledge that you gained on the degree. As you take on new challenges you will need to continue to reflect on what makes good social work practice and your contribution to this.</p> <p>“As a social care worker, you must be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills.” (Code of Practice requirement 6).</p>

You should use this framework for identifying your unique consolidation and development needs. You might need to spend more time on some aspects than others; how you address them will also vary. For example:

Siân, Elgan and Elaine as seconded students/trainees, knew about the community and the organisation but want updating on some recent organisational policy changes. **Manish** completed a community profile assignment for the degree but needs to learn more about the team locality; the clientele for the hospice where **Mrytle** hopes to work is drawn from a wide geographical community with diverse languages and faiths which she needs to know more about.

Mentoring and your Development Plan

Your organisation should have decided how the mentoring arrangements for your first year in practice will be organised. It may be that your mentor will also be your team manager, or it could be a senior practitioner, or possibly a person who undertakes a range of mentoring roles. Your organisation will also have agreed how your development plan is to be drawn up, implemented and linked to your supervision, probationary period if you are on one, and your annual review (see below).

In order to identify your consolidation and development needs you and your mentor/manager can:

- draw on your transcript from the degree;
- use the key learning areas framework;
- revisit the National Occupational Standards for social work;
- use the Care Council's induction framework as it has been implemented in the agency;
- draw on any other learning needs analysis process used by the agency.

You should then decide together:

- **what** you need to consolidate and develop as a social worker;
- **how** this is to be achieved;
- in what **sequence** and over what period of time;
- how **progress** will be assessed.

This forms the basis for your development plan.

ELGAN

Elgan knows that his team has shifted to a preventative and re-ablement focus. The team now works more closely with GPs, district nurses and home care staff who are also adopting a re-ablement role where possible. The shift to re-ablement has been more than practical, it's about a changed approach and 'philosophy of care'. Elgan wants to know how it's working and the implications for him as one of two social workers in the team. Elgan and his manager agree that:

- he will look at the team's aims and objectives in relation to wider policy developments, including joint work with health and discuss this in supervision;
- he will accompany team colleagues on some joint visits and they will observe and give him feedback on some of his assessments.

ELAINE

Elaine is aware that families from Eastern Europe are increasingly moving into the area where she is working. She has just been allocated work with a family where the male partner is known to the substance misuse team and there are concerns about the safety and well-being of the two children in the family. The mother's English is very limited. In supervision Elaine discusses what additional knowledge and skills she will need for working effectively with this family and a plan is made for how to gain these.

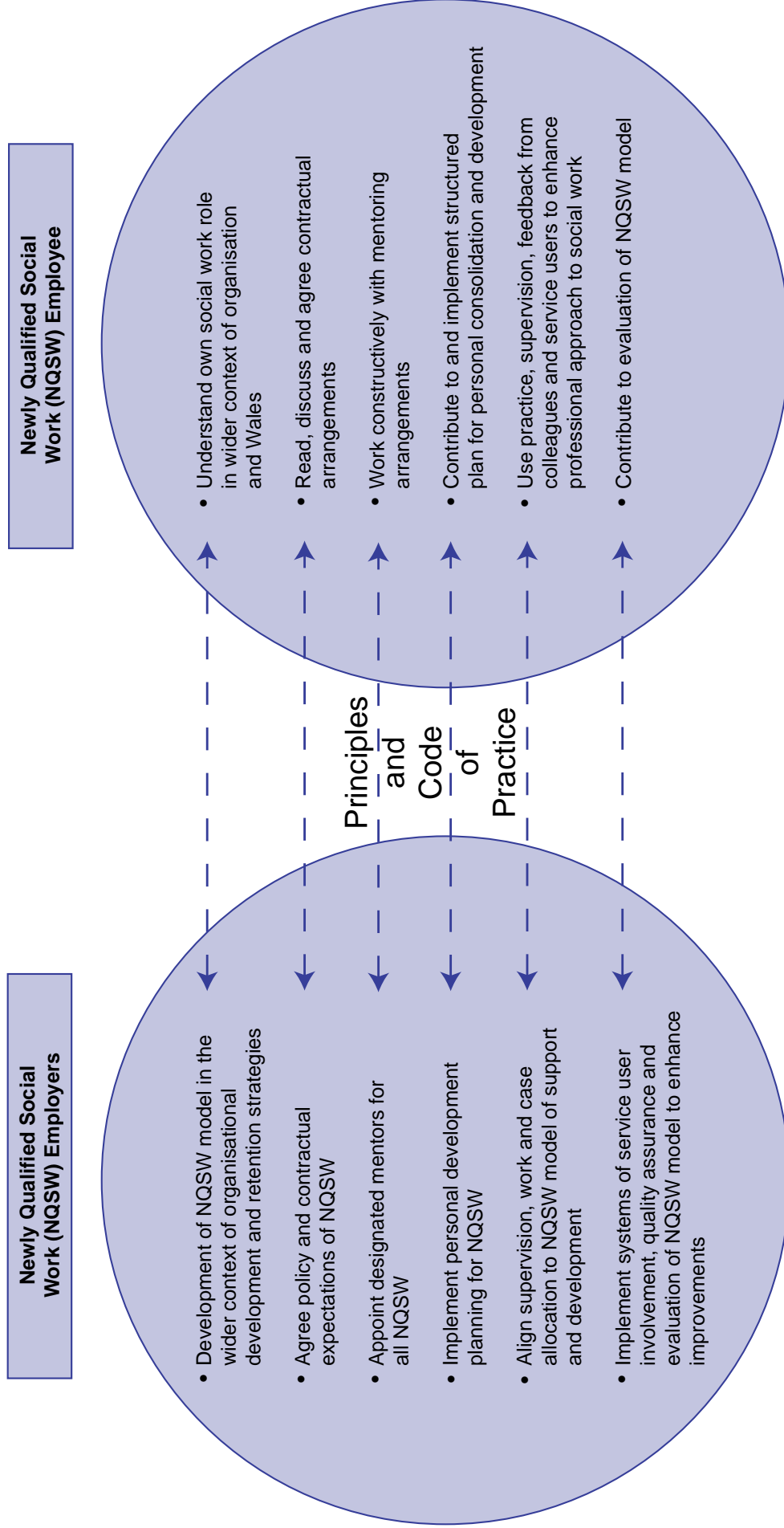
MANISH

Manish is appointed to a social work post in his 'hosting' authority. He developed a good knowledge of the local area as a result of doing a community profile assignment for the degree. He has been used to accessing relevant policies on the authority's intra-net while a student. He, his manager and his mentor agree:

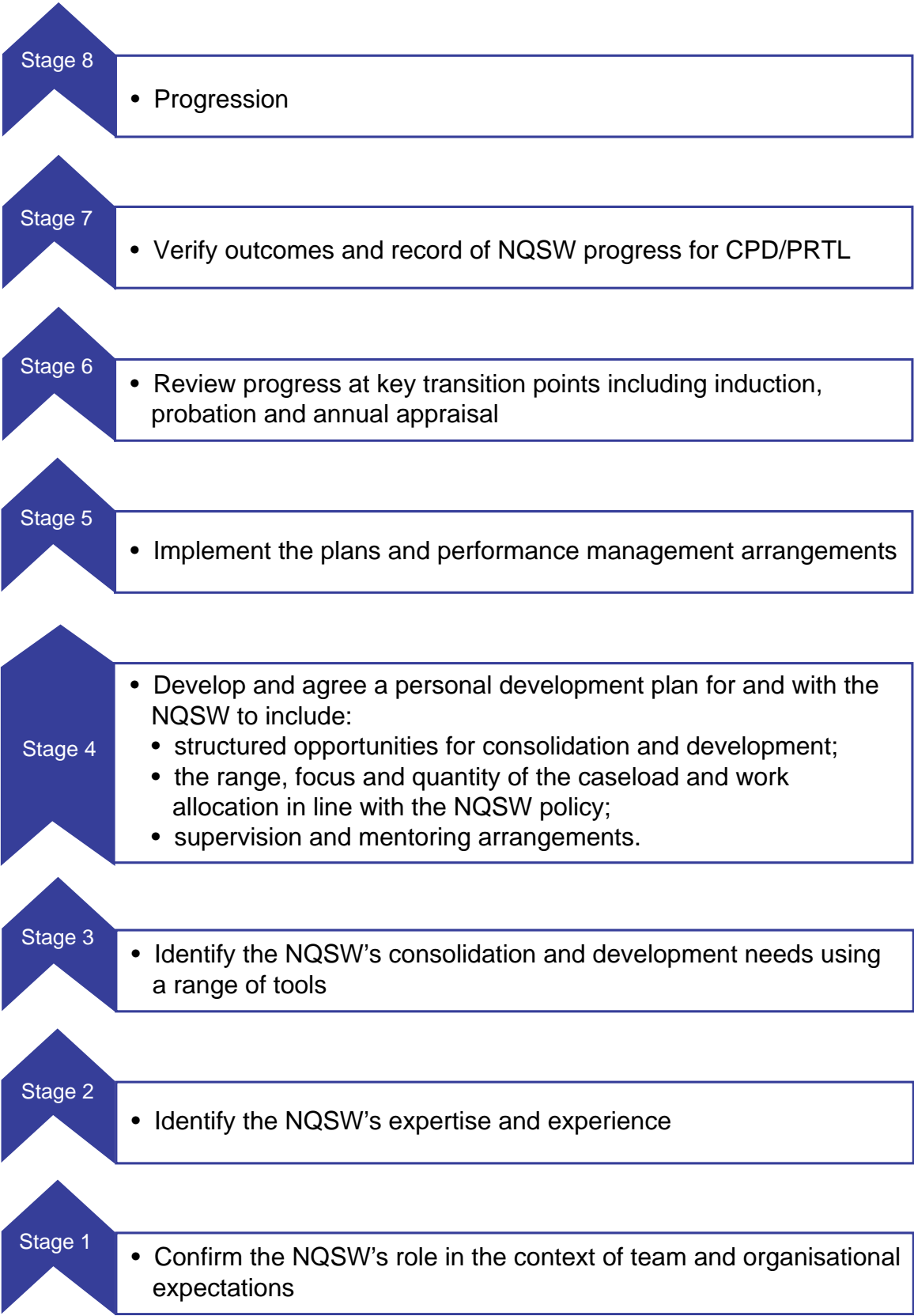
- he will go on the corporate and departmental induction courses;
- as most of his social work experience has been gained while on the degree, he will shadow some colleagues in the first two months and his case load will gradually be extended during this time.

You will see from the examples that people's consolidation and learning needs will vary and different approaches to meeting the needs will be necessary. You will need to think about what you need to work on in relation to the key learning areas and the approach that would best suit your learning. In addition to your development plan, there should also be agreement with your manager and mentor on protected case load, supervision, collecting and collating examples, probation and appraisal, equalities, Welsh language and resolving difficulties. Agencies may have additional areas to be agreed.

Joint Responsibilities for the First Year in Practice



A Structured Approach to Newly Qualified Social Workers First Year in Practice
Stages for Team Managers, Mentors and NQSW



Protected Case Load and Work Allocation

The contract you have agreed with the employer for your first year in practice should specify how your case and work load will be protected.

You are likely to have a larger and more complex case load than when you were a student, but the **quantity of work** allocated to you must allow you enough time to implement the development plan - the Welsh Assembly Government recommends that a day per month is provided. The **focus** of your case load may need to change over time as your confidence and competence in working as a qualified social worker develops. For example, your role is assessing and managing risks for service users or their carers may extend gradually.

Some agencies agreed that a care pathway needed developing for young people with mental health needs who traditionally had not been able to receive support from the adult mental health team. A project group was set up which included some young adults who had used Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as well as professionals from health, social services and the voluntary sector.

MANISH

Manish joined the project group because he had developed an understanding of this group of young people and their experience of the gaps in services while on the degree. He and his manager agreed that his workload would take account of the time needed for project group membership. With his mentor Manish identified that some of his identified consolidation and development needs could be met through working on this project including:

- understanding the links between agencies;
- learning more about what teenage service users needed and wanted;
- researching good practice in transition arrangements.

Whilst you should have a protected case and work load in your first year in practice, it is important to remember that as a team member you will be jointly accountable with your colleagues for the practice provided to service users, their families and carers.

Supervision

As a newly qualified social worker you should be receiving regular and planned supervision. This should include an agenda item on your progress on implementing the development plan as well as looking at your social work practice and performance as an employee.

SIÂN

Siân wants to extend the assessment skills she gained while a student in the mental health team to working with older people, including people with some dementia. She has agreed that she will bring 2 examples of recently completed unified assessments to supervision. She particularly wants to discuss communication skills and her recorded analysis and summary of the strengths, needs and risks. She also wants to discuss how best to ask for feedback from carers on how effective she was in working collaboratively with them to assess the person's needs, abilities and wishes.

MYRTLE

Myrtle, having successfully applied for a social work post at the children's hospice is part of a very small social work team working in a multi-disciplinary setting. She has informal supervision on an almost daily basis from her team manager with whom she shares an office. She also feels that the large weekly multi-disciplinary meeting is a place where she can think about and discuss the role of social work in palliative care with children.

Myrtle and her team manager have agreed that they will include a regular item in their formal supervision sessions on 'learning from elsewhere' when they will discuss and try to 'capture' this ongoing learning.

If you have a mentor as well as a team manager it will be important that links are made between the mentoring and supervision arrangements so that discussion of your learning and development dovetails with a focus on your performance as a social worker and the balance of your workload/development.

Collecting and collating examples of your consolidation and development as a social worker

As you are now a qualified social worker you will need to keep a record of your training and learning and its application for your PRTL and registration renewal⁴. Collecting and collating examples from your first year in practice will draw on evidence from your induction, and probation (if applicable) and your agency's annual review process.

There are many ways you can collect examples. These examples might be part of your everyday work, as with the assessments that **Siân** undertakes, or from being part of a project. **Manish** could summarise what he has found about care pathways as a handout for the project group and keep this for his PRTL record. **Myrtle** could keep notes of the practice implications of her 'learning from elsewhere'.

⁴ See 'Now that you are Registered' from the CCW

The social work degree emphasises gaining feedback from service users and carers. This is equally as important when you are qualified.

A colleague from a voluntary agency has set up an ongoing group for carers of people with dementia. She asks Siân if she will contribute to some sessions to look at improving carer's links with the department and in particular how assessments of both carers and people with dementia can be improved. As part of their planning they discuss how to ask for feedback from participants on the usefulness of the sessions and Siân's contributions. Siân will take the feedback to her supervision and to the team meeting.

Collating your examples

A number of approaches are possible. You could, for example:

- use the Care Council for Wales information⁵ and framework for recording your PRTL;
- use the agency's personal development/CPD portfolio for recording courses attended and the learning you have gained from these and other activities;
- use a learning log or reflective diary.

Whatever approach you choose, don't forget that:

- it is your responsibility to collect and collate examples;
- your manager/mentor will need to verify the PRTL record and possibly the CPD portfolio;
- when collating evidence for PRTL, 'the record must reflect the ways in which learning has informed practice' (p 12);
- it needs to form part of the minimum of 15 days or 90 hours of learning you undertake in 3 years as required for registration renewal.

Using your examples for probation and annual review/appraisal

If you are a new employee you will have a probationary period. At the end of the probationary period your competence as a social worker will be assessed in order to decide whether to confirm you in your post.

Your participation in induction processes; discussions in supervision; how you have worked as a social worker plus examples of your consolidation and development will all be important sources of information.

If you have been seconded or a trainee you will not be on a probationary period. However your manager will still be concerned with performance management and may want to review your progress and the quality of your practice at intervals.

Agencies should have annual performance reviews. These are opportunities not only to look back at what you have achieved but also to look forward to your future development. Reviewing the progress on the key learning areas will be important here.

⁵ www.ccwales.org.uk

Resolving difficulties

You and your team manager/mentor should have agreed how any difficulties in meeting the plan for your first year in practice will be resolved.

If you have a well planned and organised first year, with regular supervision, a protected case load and work allocated to you where you can consolidate and develop your social work practice difficulties shouldn't arise that are hard to resolve. However, plans can go awry. For example, your team might come under pressure due to sickness absence or vacancies; adult protection work or court attendance may suddenly increase putting your protected case load and regular supervision at risk. If this occurs and isn't resolved in the short term you will need to raise it with your team manager. The employers guide states that in such circumstances the team manager should take the problems to senior management. It isn't yours to resolve.

ELAINE

In the busy children and family team in which she is working **Elaine** has become concerned about the amount of work she has been allocated and also the fact that many of these families seem to have experienced multiple changes of social worker in the past. She is aware that her stress levels are rising especially as there are a number of vacancies in the team. Elaine discusses her concerns with her mentor and they agree to discuss work load, the contract and expectations of newly qualified social workers with the team manager. They also develop a plan for how to progress their concerns if the meeting with the team manager is insufficient (options include discussing the wider issues in the team meeting/discussion with staff development and or HR sections re the implementation of the model of support to NQSW, use of the Code of Practice).

Equalities and Welsh language

Your employer has a wide range of responsibilities under equalities legislation including for service delivery and employment practice. You will need to work appropriately within these.

Your personal development plan should include how you are going to consolidate and develop your anti-discriminatory social work practice. For example, your induction period could include opportunities to learn more about the cultures and communities within the locality, the extent and use of Welsh and other languages and so on.

Your mentor or manager will discuss and agree with you how you can access learning opportunities and materials through the medium of Welsh if you wish. You may also want time to develop some spoken fluency in Welsh if it isn't your first language.

It will be important to develop agreements for how any particular support needs will be addressed. For example, if you have dyslexia, you might need additional time for recording and e-learning. Perhaps, like Myrtle, you are black or from an ethnic minority and would like to attend a group for other BME people. This too could form part of the agreement.

Quality Assurance

The employers' guide expects agencies that employ newly qualified social workers to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the arrangements for their first year in practice. It expects employers to ask for feedback from newly qualified social workers themselves. It will be important for you to think about what aspects have worked well, whether you have felt supported and appropriately managed and how effectively you have been assisted to consolidate and develop your practice as a qualified social worker.

A summary of your responsibilities as an employee for your consolidation and development in the first year of your practice

You will:

- contribute to analysing your consolidation and development needs using your degree transcript, your organisation's expectations of you in your social work role and the key learning areas. You may need to review these during the year;
- discuss and agree the range of work based and other opportunities that can best meet your identified needs;
- meet the Code of Practice requirements and the National Occupational Standards for social work;
- develop and use opportunities to seek feedback from service users, carers and colleagues on your practice;
- use supervision to discuss your practice, reflect on feedback on your performance, evaluate your progress and the implications of your learning and development for your practice;
- agree with your team manager/mentor how you will record, collect and collate examples of your progress for CPD as well as PRTL;
- contribute to team learning.

Summary of Expectations of Employers

The Welsh Assembly and the Care Council recommend that every newly qualified social worker should have:

- **a personal development plan** based on an analysis of their experience and expertise at the point of qualification and updated as appropriate;
- **a structured approach to** meeting their identified consolidation and development needs through a variety of learning activities including practice and supervision;

- a **'protected' case load and work allocation** in which both the quantity and focus of work are appropriate to a person in their first year of professional social work practice;
- **contractually agreed time** to undertake consolidation and development activities which will contribute to continuous professional development (CPD) and post registration training and learning (PRTL). It is recommended that this is equivalent to one day per month and includes the PRTL requirement of 5 days per year;
- a **designated person** who will develop and implement the personal development plan and verify examples of progress. This may be a named mentor or the team manager;
- agreement on the approach to **involving service users and carers** in the consolidation and development of the newly qualified social worker's professional practice;
- **agreed supervision arrangements** including regular agenda items on the effectiveness of the personal development plan and the newly qualified social worker's professional development. The frequency should be appropriate to a newly qualified social worker;
- agreed arrangements for the timing and approach to **review and evaluation** - for example as part of probation, annual review;
- structured opportunities for newly qualified social workers and other key personnel to **feed back** on the effectiveness of the model.

Good Practice Summary

Making the most of your First Year in Practice

- Prepare thoroughly for constructing your development plan:
 - think about what you have learnt on the degree and the skills you have developed;
 - look at your degree transcript, the key learning areas and your job description and list your consolidation and development needs. You could star them red for urgent, amber for ongoing and green for optional.
- Agree arrangements for your protected case load and work allocation and what needs to happen if the agreement is at risk.
- Make arrangements to regularly review the development plan with the mentor/ team manager so that it is a 'dynamic' and useful tool for you. This could be done at key transition points in your first year - such as at the end of the induction phase, at 6 months or the probationary period as well as towards the end of the first year.
- Use supervision to review the quality of your social work practice and reflect on how you can apply your learning cumulatively.
- Use the ideas from the degree on how to seek and use feedback from service users - and don't forget the value of having your practice observed.
- Put the contractually agreed time for your development activities and PRTL into your diary and use the time constructively.
- Remember that you will have ideas about social work practice to share with the team - you may have been able to be creative in your approaches as a student, bring your creativity to the team.
- Remember that making the most of the first year in practice is a shared responsibility between you and the employer - you must each play your part.

Chapter 4

Year One and Beyond

Towards the end of your first year in practice, as part of your annual review, you, your mentor (if applicable) and your manager will review your progress as a social worker and the effectiveness of your development plan. As well as looking back you will need to agree how your workload, supervision arrangements and so on will change in the future. You will need to discuss the different formal and informal ways that you can continue to develop professionally and plan for this and your possible future career.

MYRTLE

Myrtle is keen to extend her communication skills in working with children. During a supervision session Myrtle and her manager look at the learning pathway developed by the local Social Care Workforce Development Partnership (SCWDP) and see that there is a short course on communicating with children in the core training which she could attend.

They also look at Myrtle's longer term career development at the hospice. The hospice wants to contribute to sessions on the social work degree on loss, bereavement and palliative care as well as a special session on supporting sick children and their families. Myrtle and her manager agree that if she develops her training and group work skills she could contribute to the hospice led sessions on the degree in the future. This would be positive for the hospice as well as Myrtle - and for social work students!

SIÂN

Siân has discussed her ambition to move into a management post in the future with her manager as part of her annual review. She is particularly interested in the day time opportunities which are being developed. She knows that this isn't a typical career pathway but is hopeful that her employers as well as her manager will support her in her ambition.

This chapter briefly covers:

- continuous professional development;
- post qualifying developments;
- career pathways and planning.

Continuous Professional Development

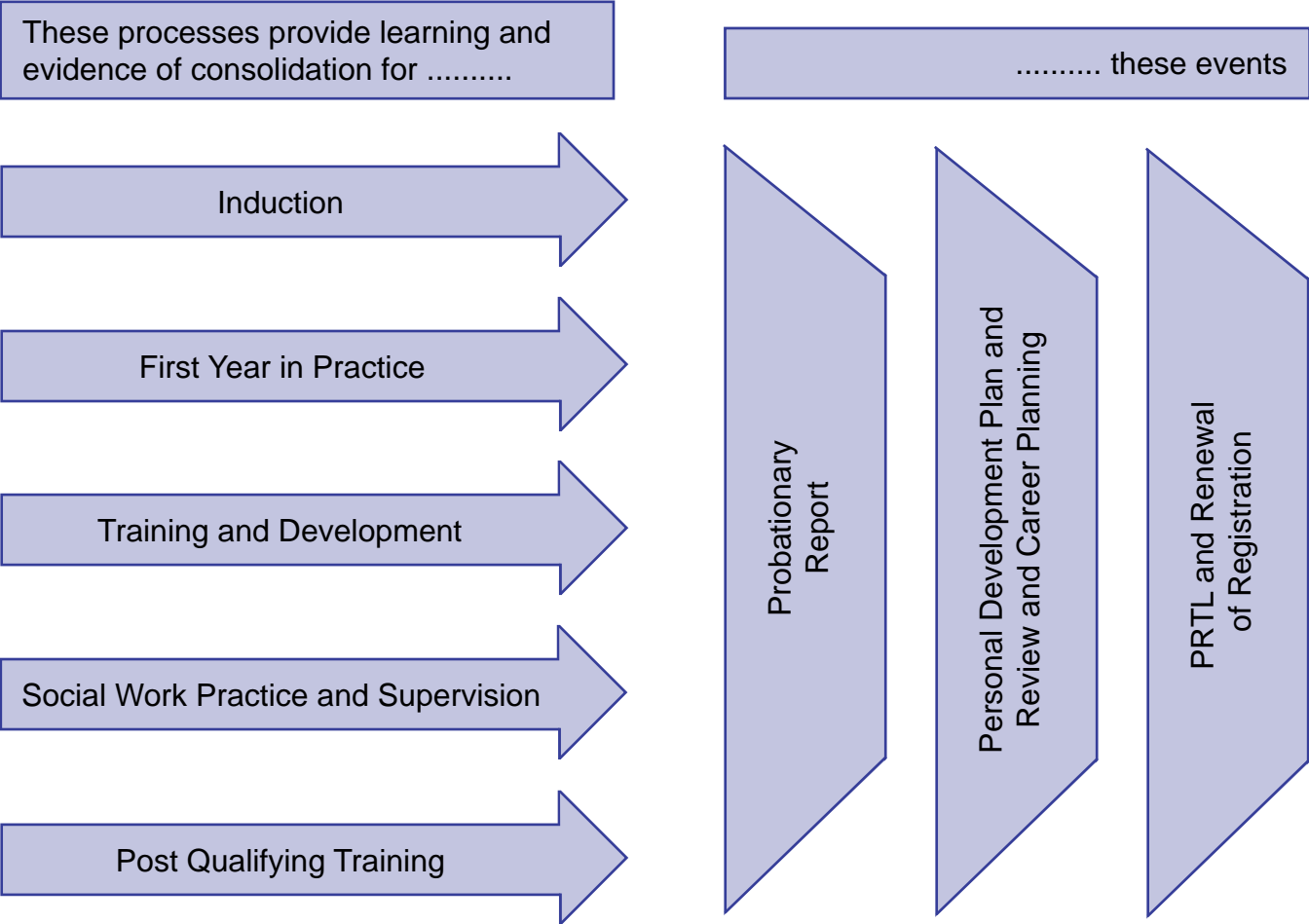
Social work, like most professions, expects you to go on developing and learning throughout your career. CPD is an important aspect of this. CPD can be defined as 'ongoing, planned learning and development'⁶. Its aim is to:

- increase your knowledge, understanding and skills in social work practice;
- help you reflect on and improve your practice;
- help you meet any changes in your role or in working in a different context/approach;
- enable you to expand and fulfil your potential as a social worker;
- contribute not only to your personal development but also to the team and to the social work profession;
- enable you to contribute to and influence practice knowledge and development;
- contribute to your career progression - whether sideways, to another level or a different employer;
- help you to meet the requirements for renewal of your registration.

Your annual personal development plan after your first year in practice should include an agreement about the range and focus of your CPD activities and the employer's expectations of your contribution to your CPD. Part of your ongoing development may include undertaking formal post qualifying training. You could be thinking about and planning for this during your first year. People responsible for staff development and training will be able to tell you about the range of modules available.

⁶ This section has been informed by the Skills for Care document 'Continuing Professional Development for the Workforce'

Demonstrating Your Consolidation as a Social Worker and Beginning of Continuous Professional Development



Post Qualifying Training, Career Pathways and Progression

Following the introduction of the Degree in Social Work in 2004 as the qualification for professional social work, the Care Council for Wales developed a new post-qualification (PQ) framework for professional social workers in 2007. The PQ framework aims to support the development of career pathways in social work and provides courses at:

- graduate;
- post graduate; and
- masters levels.

As the social work profession and roles continue to change and evolve the Care Council for Wales recognises that social workers need to develop new skills at different times, and that career progression is not just about promotion.

The PQ framework provides a flexible, modular approach that means social workers can develop new skills relevant to their work that also carry credit towards an academic qualification accredited by a university. The framework will contribute to a career structure for social workers that enable skilled practitioners to remain in practice whilst giving a route for the development of managers for the future.

The social work qualification, this guidance and the revised PQ framework provide part of this structure and should complement the employers' development of new roles such as consultant social worker.

So for you this means that at the end of your first year you may want to:

- continue with your current role;
- develop specific areas of expertise as a social worker;
- take on new roles;
- plan for longer term career movement laterally, or across levels.

You will need to explore these options and aspirations with your manager and possibly training or human resources personnel. You need to know if the organisation has career pathways mapped out - for example from social worker to senior practitioner - and what learning and expertise you need to demonstrate to move along such a career pathway. There may be some roles that you can only move into after gaining additional qualifications. This may be specified by the Care Council as well as by your organisation. If this is the case you will need to know how this links to your organisation's career pathways and career planning.

One Year and Beyond

Questions to ponder and help you plan for your future

- Looking back over your first year in practice what do you feel have been your most significant achievements as a newly qualified social worker?
- How have you built on the strengths you identified at the end of your training? What evidence is there of your progress?
- Are there any areas where you feel less satisfied with your progress? What further preparation or support will you need to remedy this?
- What are the priorities for your professional development in the next two or three years?
- What options are you currently considering for professional and career progression? (remember this doesn't have to mean promotion).

Conclusion

Just as moving from being a student to a newly qualified social worker was a crucial transition point for you, so will be the end of your first year in practice.

In this year you will have used the structure of your employer's model for newly qualified social workers and this guide to:

- have gained confidence in your professional role and in becoming an employee;
- consolidate your knowledge, skills and values of social work gained through the degree;
- use regular supervision and planned development activities to strengthen your social work abilities and develop new knowledge and skills;
- deepened your understanding of the issues facing social workers;
- become an employee beginning to contribute to the development of the organisation in the way it delivers its services;
- shape your practice to the needs of the local community (or service user group);
- to learn from the experience of service users and carers;
- develop your professional standing and commitment to promoting high standards in social work practice;
- begin thinking about how to pass on to others your experience and learning.

Together these form an important basis for your continued contribution to service users and carers' lives and to the social work profession!