What works in ‘Grow Your Own’ initiatives for social work?

Research report

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I am pleased to introduce this research, which is the outcome of one of the first projects to be supported by government following the Langlands Report’s recommendations (2005) for addressing barriers to entering a range of professions.

The project took place over two years against a backdrop of radical changes in social care service delivery, social work education and workforce supply and demand. We are grateful to all those who contributed to this highly collaborative project.

The General Social Care Council (GSCC) welcomes the study’s confirmation that Grow Your Own activity, when well planned and supported, can generate positive outcomes for both employers and those entering the social work profession.

The report is valuable in analysing the benefits, costs and challenges of different types of Grow Your Own schemes and their impact on higher education course provision, student progression, and recruitment and retention.

In particular it examines what works well when there are close relationships between employers and Higher Education Institutions, which are essential to achieving better outcomes in social work education.

The research has already led to the Children’s Workforce Development Council’s pilot to support local authorities to sponsor graduate students through qualifying social work training and to evaluate the outcomes. We will watch this development with interest and will welcome its first graduates.

Collaborative working was essential to the success of this project and mirrors its importance at a time when social work education is under particular scrutiny. I would like to extend my thanks to members of the project board for their commitment to and interest in the study. The GSCC is committed to a partnership approach to ensure the quality of the social care workforce through the provision of high-quality education and training and the strong involvement of employers and people who use services.

The GSCC looks forward to working with all the stakeholders involved in this study to ensure the development of strategies that support students to access training, thereby building the size and quality of the social work workforce.

Mike Wardle
Chief Executive, General Social Care Council
Acknowledgements

The Project Team thank the Grow Your Own Project Board members for their contributions throughout every stage of this project.

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List of abbreviations used in this report

APL  Accreditation of Prior Learning
AP(E)L  Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
BME  Black and minority ethnic
CBR  College-based route (usually university)
CH  Charity sector social care employer
CPD  Continuing professional development
CRB  Criminal Records Bureau
DCSF  Department for Children, Schools and Families
DH  Department of Health
DipSW  Diploma in Social Work
DPF  Daily Placement Fee
EBR  Employment-based route
FEI  Further Education Institution
GSCC  General Social Care Council
GYO  Grow Your Own
HEFCE  Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI  Higher Education Institution
HRDS  Human Resources Development Strategy Grant
LA  Local authority
NQSWs  Newly qualified social workers
NTS  National Training Strategy Grant
NVQ  National Vocational Qualification
OU  Open University
PI  Performance Indicator
PLO  Practice Learning Opportunity
(PR) (referred to in this report as a ‘placement’)
PR  Private sector social care employer
SfC  Skills for Care
UCAS  Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
VIP  Voluntary, independent and private
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Executive summary

The definition of Grow Your Own (GYO) initiatives used by this project is:

“Approaches by local authorities and the independent sector to support their employees, or potential employees, to qualify as social workers.”

Overview of the findings
This study explored the outcomes of investing in the broad range of models of supporting qualifying social work training that are encompassed by GYO schemes. It has confirmed that GYO activity, when well planned and supported, can generate positive outcomes for all involved and is highly regarded for the ways it enhances the skills and commitment of people entering the profession. Employers value the acquisition of staff members familiar with the realities of social work practice and loyal to the organisation, and also value the wider potential benefits of GYO for organisational culture and workforce planning. Students are grateful for the opportunity to qualify while employed and to receive additional support and mentoring, often where financial and caring commitments would otherwise have precluded this career development. HEIs value GYO for bringing additional students with – importantly – guaranteed placements, increased progression rates and higher levels of social care experience to share in classroom settings, and an overall strengthening of relationships with employer organisations.

Project aims and funding
The Social Care Workforce Research Unit at King’s College London undertook this research project to examine the nature and impact of GYO schemes, with particular focus on their role in widening access to the social work profession. The research was supported by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) via the Gateways to the Professions development fund. It was co-funded and overseen by a Project Board of stakeholders led by the General Social Care Council (GSCC).

The findings from the project have been used to develop a toolkit aimed at sharing good practice for the development of GYO schemes. The toolkit will be available in early 2009.

About the project
The project adopted a mixed methodology, drawing on 75 interviews across the nine English regions with employers including local authorities (LAs) and independent sector organisations; higher and further education institutions (HEIs); and current or recently graduated GYO students. Wider input was received via national and regional consultation events and written submissions. This was complemented by the analysis of anonymised GSCC data records of the demographic profile and the progression rates of the roughly 41,000 students who were enrolled for social work qualifications from 1998–2007.

This snapshot must be set against the wider and rapidly evolving contexts of social work and social work education. The separation of LA children’s services and adults services, and the transition from the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW) to the new social work degree, have both been distinct forces shaping recent levels of, and trends in, GYO. These are accompanied by other factors, such as changes in social worker vacancy levels, increased emphasis on workforce planning, debates over the role and future levels of need for social workers and the shift towards the “personalisation” of services. It is too early to judge the long-term impact of these recent trends on levels and prioritising of particular models of GYO.
Summary findings

Models and trends in GYO
- GYO activity can be broadly categorised into two main GYO models: secondments and traineeships. Employers may run schemes in parallel or select elements from each model in order to better target different organisational priorities. Overall levels of GYO activity in England steadily increased during the final six years of the DipSW, peaking sharply in the last year, 2003–04. Then, after a one-year drop, numbers have returned to previous levels. There are significant regional variations in levels and trends of GYO, with the highest levels in regions with the highest vacancy rates. Local variations are also affected by a range of factors and pressures, including policy and funding shifts, vacancy levels and recent changes within LAs.

Profile of GYO students
- GYO students are more likely to be white UK, less likely to be Black and are less likely to report any disability than non-GYO cohorts. GYO students are more likely to be male and older than non-GYO students. This differentiation has been increasing since the introduction of the new degree. GYO students overall tend to bring more social care experience to their student role, and are therefore more likely to have a realistic overview of the profession. Strikingly, GYO used to include a higher proportion of those with the lowest qualifications. However, since the new degree they have tended to be more qualified than previous DipSW cohorts and more than current non-GYO students.

Impact on employer recruitment, retention and workforce diversity
- GYO is widely valued by employers and students for recruiting social workers who can “hit the ground running”, both due to practical familiarity with the sponsoring organisation and greater confidence and experience in integrating theoretical learning with practice. However, there are concerns that schemes may prioritise preparation for the employer organisation, or a particular role within it, and not equip students with the breadth of experience and the tools to challenge poor practice.
- Increased staff retention rates are seen as a successful impact of GYO, although many employers do not systematically collect data. Internal social care staff are reportedly less likely to move on, with ties to the local area positively linked to higher retention rates.
- Students view ties to employers upon qualifying as a reasonable obligation; however, ties to a particular work setting are more controversial. Students more readily accept specific work settings if they are made an explicit condition of recruitment but are unhappy with changes to job allocation processes. Many employers successfully match student and organisation preferences at graduation, but this flexibility seems to be declining.
- Many GYO schemes are shaped by habit or economy, with only a third of schemes integrated into workforce development strategies, although this is an increasing trend and is associated with greater corporate support for successful GYO activity.
- GYO investment is not predominantly used to address gaps in workforce diversity, although many schemes include some element of widening access to the profession, one-third by supporting students without previous educational attainment. Most employers had not considered the potential of GYO to address the balance of gender or ethnicity,
or people with disabilities in the workforce. “Positive Action” schemes targeting under-represented minority ethnic groups are successful but rare.

• Most GYO students confirmed that they would not have accessed qualifying training without the opportunity offered by GYO, although this was more commonly due to financial and caring commitments rather than a lack of academic qualifications.

Impact on HEIs
• GYO activity secures HEIs guaranteed practice placements, expands student numbers and strengthens partnerships with employers, which can generate additional teaching resources. GYO students are more likely to pass on time and less likely to withdraw from their courses than non-GYO students.
• HEI Foundation or equivalent courses that can be credited onto the degree using Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) are significant GYO recruitment routes to enable potential GYO candidates to gain study skills and meet the Department of Health (DH) requirements for the social work degree. Since the degree, the minimal opportunities for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) have not enabled GYO schemes to fast-track experienced social care workers through qualifying routes.
• HEIs emphasised that, while GYO students’ level of previous educational attainment has tended to be lower than for direct-entry students, the rigour of courses and quality of students’ work are consistent.

Running a GYO scheme
• Employers describe the success of schemes as dependent on rigorous selection processes, with criteria including social care experience, values, motivation, communication skills, ability to combine work with study, the endorsement of managers and commitment to the organisation, as well as previous academic achievement.
• HEIs and employers have a broad range of agreements, often unwritten, about collaborating over GYO activity. These are increasingly formalised, focusing on practice placements and information-sharing about students. Commitments to funding an agreed number of students are desirable for HEIs but often seen as impractical, given LA funding cycles. HEIs are primarily selected by employers for proximity, the option of distance learning or due to established partnerships.

Support for students
• The type and level of support offered to GYO students by their employer vary significantly between organisations and different models of GYO. They include supervision and mentoring, financial aspects and study leave. In turn, depending on the supportiveness of their employer, students may require different levels of support from HEIs. Employers and HEIs agree that full-time GYO study needs less support because students are less likely to be juggling the roles of worker and student. Study skills provision is usually the responsibility of the HEI but GYO students do not necessarily have greater requirements than direct entry students.
• Half of GYO students interviewed were satisfied with the level of support received from their employer. Students draw on workforce development staff as the main source of employer support, with operational managers and work colleagues only sometimes supportive of the student role. The continuity and dedication of the GYO co-ordinator role are highly valued. The co-ordinators act as advocates for students, with varying degrees of influence depending on the scheme. Peer support is important, often facilitated by employers and HEIs. Half of students interviewed received financial
assistance from their employers in addition to payment of fees and salaries, including travel, book and IT allowances, and there is wide variation in study leave allocation.

Messages from this study/conclusions

• GYO training of social workers is important because of the sizeable public funds invested via LAs. This study was commissioned, therefore, to examine broadly untested assumptions about GYO activity.
• The evaluation found that both types of scheme (traineeships and secondments) include highly resourced models with significant levels of support, investment and responsiveness to the needs of the individual student, but that other models are strongly focused on immediate employer priorities. The better progression rates of GYO students may be due to the positive financial security and greater support and “expectations” that most GYO models bring. However, there is pressure on some to complete courses while carrying significant workloads, and at times their student experience has not been valued and protected. GYO can be used to generate a generic pool of graduates, but increasingly, with the separation of children’s and adults services and a reduction in overall vacancy levels, organisations are looking to GYO to target specific workforce gaps. There is a risk that students may feel coerced into working in particular roles and not with their client group of choice. While some employers emphasise the opportunities of GYO to widen individuals’ professional horizons, other employers restrict students’ choices of course modules, placements and eventual job settings. These factors can undermine the sense of GYO student loyalty to the employer, and therefore retention rates, so threatening one of the core motivations of employer investment in GYO. More broadly, employers who prioritise short-term organisational needs may jeopardise the quality of the education and the generic nature of the qualifying training.
• This evaluation shows that there is currently a trend towards bringing in externally recruited trainees. The perceived advantages of these highly competitive schemes are that they widen the pool of available recruits to the social work profession and increase the levels of men and the previous educational attainment levels of people entering the profession. However, the positive, long-term staff retention rates associated with GYO are better evidenced with long-standing models of secondment of experienced members of the existing social care workforce, often with greater ties to the locality and more experience of the nature of the profession. The introduction of “Newly Qualified Status” will assist the increasing numbers of graduates with limited social care experience to consolidate their learning, but possibly undermine one of the significant roles of GYO investment, promoting the ability to hit the ground running.
• There is increasing emphasis on the need for effective workforce planning in LAs. One obligation is to have a staff profile representative of the groups with which they work, and GYO offers a successful and under-used tool to target gaps in workforce diversity and to widen educational opportunities. However, these objectives require strategic direction and resource investment, and are not inevitable outcomes of all GYO activity. Social work education in England has considerable experience in meeting the dual policy aims of student quality and diversity but trends indicate a decline in GYO’s key role as an element of skills and career escalators within the social care profession.
• While employment-based routes (EBRs) have offered an important opportunity for increasing the portfolio of models for qualifying study, and for collaboration between employers and HEIs, the year-on-year uncertainty about GYO investment challenges and occasionally undermines HEIs’ planning. These uncertainties appear to have recently led to a reduction in EBRs, while some have been subsumed into college-based cohorts in order to minimise the planning risk. Therefore, the short-term nature of LA funding cycles and investment in GYO has wider implications for the provision of a choice of flexible routes to qualifying and this may conflict with other policy goals for increasing access to the professions.
• In conclusion, social work training and workforce development activity will benefit if they share intelligence, devise joint objectives and construct and measure desired outcomes to exploit the full potential of GYO.

Recommendations

For policy-makers
• National government commitments to widening access to the social work profession may be beneficially re-enforced through highlighting the potential performance management, workforce planning and equalities benefits of strategic GYO investment, as a complementary strand to policy and funding investment in raising the previous educational attainment levels of social work students.

For GSCC and sector skills councils
• There is a need to address current uncertainty and promote employer support for GYO outside the statutory sector, consolidating information on funding sources for GYO activity, including access for non-statutory organisations to LA and other funding from central government.

For employers
• GYO schemes require high-level endorsement of their priorities to be successful.
• Decisions for GYO planning will need to be clear about the different requirements and outcomes of schemes, and the likely impact on the age, gender, disability, previous educational attainment and ethnicity of students. Plans to establish or remodel GYO could usefully include an Equalities Impact Assessment. This should assist employers to establish the profile of their GYO candidates and the potential impact of targeted GYO recruitment or any alterations to scheme support or funding.
• GYO schemes have the potential for fostering an organisational culture that promotes staff development opportunities, including practice learning, as part of a wider “learning organisation”. All GYO schemes need to be integrated into employers’ workforce development or recruitment and retention strategies and succession planning if they are to be clear about their objectives.
• As part of a whole-organisation approach to GYO, adults and children’s departments may find it helpful to maximise their co-ordination of GYO activity in order to reduce administrative duplication and to benefit from practice learning exchange, as well as the possible need for reciprocal arrangements to accommodate GYO graduates seeking employment in other settings.
• Employers should maintain data on the comparative retention rates and profiles of GYO and non-GYO recruits in their workforce,
and on the relative success of different GYO models, as part of the evaluation of GYO investment. This may also include exit interviews on experiences of GYO; reasons for leaving the scheme or the organisation; and subsequent employment plans. This will establish if GYO is generating recruits for the sponsoring organisation; for the wider locality; for the social work profession as a whole; or whether people are leaving the profession.

• Reciprocal arrangements for placements between employer organisations are successful mechanisms for ensuring that voluntary, independent and private (VIP) students gain experience outside their normal work setting. This is particularly important for smaller organisations that cannot offer staff a range of placement settings and are vulnerable to the loss of staff from the workplace.

For HEIs
• HEIs, in discussions with local employers and the GSCC, may wish to consider maintaining or extending the choice of routes to qualifying, including opportunities to access distinct employment-based routes.
• HEIs may wish to engage in exploration of opportunities for take-up of AP(E)L for experienced staff, in light of the current GSCC review of the potential for introducing AP(E)L.
• HEIs should continue to develop joint information and recruitment sessions with sponsoring agencies to promote transparent discussion about the challenges and support mechanisms of a GYO route.

For students
• Students can maximise their preparation for and support throughout study by talking to past students on similar routes, maintaining peer support networks and clarifying their aspirations and opportunities for employer and HEI support.
• Students need to take on some responsibility for briefing and therefore enabling their colleagues to accommodate their change in role to student status.

For all
Good practice recommendations on the support for GYO students will work best if made explicit in clear contractual arrangements between employers, students and HEIs, including:

• payment of fees, salaries and additional costs;
• consideration of and agreements over study leave allowance and flexibility;
• caseloads and other responsibilities throughout study;
• breadth or constraints of practice learning opportunities;
• availability of consistent and dedicated co-ordination/mentoring outside operational line management and practice supervision, potentially within a GYO co-ordinator role;
• provision of preparatory study skills support if required;
• information sharing, including consideration of data protection waivers;
• redeployment or alternative mechanisms for students failing to complete schemes;
• job allocation procedures on graduation;
• student tie-ins to employers, to particular work settings, and payback of costs; and
• the promotion of a comprehensive learning experience for students.

Additionally, feedback on the application process to unsuccessful internal candidates and their line managers can assist the individuals to achieve the necessary qualifications or experience to be successful with a subsequent application, or to be directed to an alternative source of training and development.
Part A: Introduction and background

Background to the study

This report and the upcoming toolkit were developed as part of a research project that aimed to “identify and assess approaches by local authorities and the independent sector to support their employees, or potential employees, to qualify as social workers”. These approaches are known as Grow Your Own (GYO) schemes.

The research asked “What works in GYO?” from the perspective of the three main stakeholders: the employers who develop and fund GYO schemes; the universities and colleges that work with them to provide the qualifying courses; and the students who access the schemes. Existing GYO initiatives have often operated largely independently of each other and have lacked evidence on the wealth of variation in the motivations, forms and impact of GYO activity across England. This project was developed with a particular focus on exploring the current and potential role of GYO in targeting under-represented groups, and therefore the impact of GYO on widening access to the profession and the overall diversity of the workforce.

The research project was undertaken in 2007–2008 by the Social Care Workforce Research Unit at King’s College London working with the Open University, and was developed, co-funded and overseen by a Project Board of stakeholders led by the General Social Care Council (GSCC) (see Acknowledgements for details of all Project Board members).

The project was supported by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) via the Gateways to the Professions development fund. The GSCC was one of a number of professional organisations within England invited to develop a project, in collaboration with employers and higher education institutions (HEIs), in response to the recommendation in the Gateways to the Professions report (2005) that the government should promote projects that tackle the issues and barriers faced by people seeking to enter the professions through higher education. It is hoped that the findings of the project will inform not only the shape and success of GYO activity, but the wider local and national debates about workforce development and social work education.

Structure of this report

Part A presents the research methods adopted in this project, and outlines the research context, from the policy, practitioner and research literature.

Part B defines the terms used within the report, and briefly sketches the characteristics of the two key models of GYO. It presents an analysis of levels and trends of GYO activity between 1998 and 2007, based on the student registration data held by the GSCC. It then outlines the context of and the pressures on GYO activity that shape these levels and trends, from the perspectives of different stakeholders.

Part C presents the impact of GYO activity, its benefits and challenges, drawing together the different stakeholder perspectives and presenting them thematically under four headings:

- first, the implications for employment, including recruitment, retention and wider workforce development issues;
- second, the impact on social work education, including student progression rates, the contribution to the classroom setting, debates around student placements and broader possible tensions between “training” and “education”;
• third, the role in **building partnerships between employers and HEIs**; and
• fourth, the drawing together of the findings relating to **widening access to the social work profession**. Although this spans findings relating to both “employment” and “education”, these are drawn together to reflect the particular focus of this project on exploring the current and potential role of GYO in targeting under-represented groups, and its impact on workforce diversity.

**Part D** presents and discusses the practical experiences of employers, students and HEIs in **running and participating in GYO schemes**. It describes GYO recruitment and selection processes; the distinct requirements of EBRs; the range and effectiveness of support for GYO students once on GYO schemes; processes of contractual and informal collaboration between the different stakeholders; issues around developing GYO in the voluntary, independent and private sectors; and the resource implications of GYO.

**Part E** draws together the **conclusions and recommendations** of the project.

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**The “GYO” toolkit**

The toolkit is aimed primarily at local authorities (LAs) and independent sector social care employers to inform their GYO activity and provides practical guidance and template documents, as well as examples of good practice. It also contains sections addressing the perspectives of HEIs and GYO students.

It is hoped that the toolkit will encourage the further development of appropriate routes to and support through training, and will inform decisions to target under-represented groups to access the social work profession.

**Methods**

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivations and experiences of employers, HEIs and students in running, supporting and participating in GYO schemes. The aim was to provide an evidence base for good practice and to understand the resource implications and the impact of this route to social work qualification.

Key themes that informed the design of the study were identified following explorative discussions with key stakeholders and from an analysis of the literature, outlined under Research context, page 15. The project adopted

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**Table 1: Summary of data sources**

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<tr>
<th>Research method</th>
<th>Number of participants/data set</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>75 participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stakeholder consultation: national events/ regional meetings/written submissions</td>
<td>200 participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quantitative analysis</td>
<td>41,000 student records from the GSCC student registration data set</td>
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</table>
A mixed methods approach, drawing on a range of contributions and analysis of statistical data, summarised in Table 1.

A qualitative approach, including semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews, was chosen as the most effective method of capturing a range of different perspectives on the issues, within the resources of the project. A total of 75 interviews were carried out across the nine English regions with three key groups: employer organisations that support GYO; HEIs and Further Education Institutions (FEIs) that teach GYO students; and current or recently graduated GYO students.

**Participant profiles and recruitment**

**Employer organisations and HEI samples**
The first group of volunteer interview participants was GYO leads within 20 employer organisations, comprising 16 LAs, two voluntary sector care providers and two private sector care providers. A total of 27 interviewees participated in the 20 interviews, as seven organisations elected to offer two staff members with complementary perspectives to participate in joint interviews. All interviewees were involved in recruiting and supervising GYO students and liaising with the HEIs where students are studying, as well as with operational teams and senior management, or with overseeing other staff to manage these processes. Within the 16 LAs and the two voluntary sector care organisations, interviewees were GYO scheme co-ordinators, workforce development or practice learning co-ordinators based within workforce development or training teams. Within the two private sector organisations, both interviewees were heads of care. This study did not attempt to gain the views of the social work teams that the GYO students were released from (where relevant), or returned to. This data would add a valuable further perspective to the three gathered, but would require additional resources and would probably be best addressed through a longitudinal approach, involving a before and after method.

The second group of participants was course leads or senior lecturers within 20 HEIs, of which four were FEIs. A total of 23 interviewees participated in the 20 interviews, as three HEIs elected to offer two staff members to participate in joint interviews. As course leads or senior lecturers with a particular responsibility for or overview of GYO activity, all participants were involved in the recruitment and teaching of GYO students, and liaison with sponsoring employer organisations, or with overseeing staff managing these processes.

The employer and HEI interviewees were recruited through a number of different mechanisms. The project was publicised by the researchers at presentations at three national events; through articles in *Professional Social Work*, the *Social Services Research Group* newsletter and the *CAFCASS* newsletter; and via the circulation of a project leaflet via Project Board members’ networks, including the *IDeA Knowledge* website, and within the delegate packs of three other national events.

An initial brief scoping questionnaire enabled the researchers to gauge the level and range of GYO activity within employer organisations and to select participating organisations on the basis of these characteristics, reflecting sector and geographic spread across the nine regions (see Table 2, Appendix B). The 16 LAs were selected to ensure a spread of metropolitan, unitary and shire councils (see Table 3, Appendix B). Employer organisations with a significant range or model of activity were selected for the distinct perspectives that they offered. GSCC data on qualifying courses enabled the selection of HEI interview...
participants offering a range of perspectives on GYO, including whether GYO activity was a significant or a minor feature of the overall student cohort; whether it was integrated into or separate from non-GYO student cohorts; and ensuring a balance of HEIs and FEIs, as well as geographic spread.

GYO student sample
Thirty-five interviews were completed with GYO students or recent graduates: 16 with current Open University (OU) undergraduate degree students and 19 with students from 19 other HEI social work qualification programmes across England. Of these 19, nine were current GYO students and ten had graduated in the previous year from a GYO scheme. Four had pursued postgraduate qualifying routes and 15, undergraduate routes.

The OU and UNISON, two of the sponsoring stakeholders of this project, offered an in-kind contribution of a PhD student to carry out interviews with OU students. The OU social work degree is a distance learning and employment-based qualifying route on which all students are employer-funded and therefore classed as GYO students. The population from which the OU sample was taken comprised all students who undertook the K113 Foundations for Social Work Practice course in 2006. Eighty-six students were contacted by email, of whom 16 agreed to be interviewed.

Thirty of the students or recent graduates were female and five were male. Thirty described themselves as white British, one as mixed race, three as Black British and one as Asian (see Table 4, Appendix B).

Stakeholder consultation
Other individuals and organisations were invited to contribute by providing a written submission. The researcher also attended several regional Skills for Care (SfC) and Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) meetings across England to invite contributions via group discussion. The project’s two national stakeholder events provided an additional opportunity for a broad range of individuals and groups to inform the study and to share personal and organisational perspectives. The initial event (May 2007) brought together 55 delegates to scope themes at the project’s outset, and the subsequent event (April 2008) brought together 100 delegates to discuss the emerging findings and their implications.

Statistical data
The qualitative approach was complemented by quantitative analysis of anonymised data records from the GSCC. The data included records of students who were enrolled for social work qualifications from 1998–2007 and included information on around 41,000 students. Each student’s records included personal characteristics, as well as information on their place of study and general information on their funding sources and programme. The data allowed us to identify GYO students. An initial stage of analysis used descriptive methods to identify possible trends and associations between different characteristics of GYO students.
This was followed by a more in-depth analysis of trends, patterns and characteristics of GYO students by academic cohorts and separating those who qualified by the DipSW and the new degree routes. We used a variety of bivariate and multivariate analyses to examine variations in the probability of students being on GYO schemes. The data allowed us to compare the characteristics of GYO and non-GYO students and to identify any changes in the patterns of students over a period of nearly a decade.

In addition, the GSCC provided information on students’ progression from 1998–2005. Progression can be examined using a variety of measures and instruments, for example, how long students took to complete their courses, how many passed at their first attempt or how many completed their courses eventually. We examined the probability of different results between GYO and non-GYO students at their first attempt to finish their course. The strength of this measure is that it takes into account different programmes’ completion times; therefore both part- and full-time, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate progression levels can be examined together. Pearson Chi-square tests were used to examine if progression was significantly different between GYO and non-GYO students in each academic cohort.

**Ethical considerations**

Project documentation was submitted for ethical approval prior to data collection to the King’s College London Joint Schools Research Ethics Sub-Committee for Humanities, Law and Social Science and Public Policy. Documentation for student interviews was submitted to the OU student ethics panel. Approval for the study was also received from the Research Group of the Association of Directors of Social Services.

All participants were asked to sign a consent form after receiving information about the study and prior to the interview taking place. Anonymity was assured to participants.

**Limitations of this study**

As in all research, there are limits to this study and therefore to the knowledge gained. For example, potential confusions exist over students’ self-reporting of terms such as sponsored and seconded. Amongst those participating in the qualitative interviews, although very few HEIs and employer organisations approached to be interviewed declined, there may have been an element of bias in the self-selection in the individual chosen by the organisation to represent its perspective. Amongst the student sample, there was some dependency on accessing the non-OU students by circulating study recruitment information via the employer organisation, which may have introduced an element of filtering: it is unlikely that GYO students who had unsuccessful experiences would be captured in this recruitment method. However, alternative student perspectives were accessed by recruiting direct through social work journals and websites.

**Research context**

As part of its remit to examine the “gateways to the professions”, the Langlands Report (Langlands, 2005) investigated the social work profession, drawing on a range of debates that constitute the complex background to GYO schemes. This section explores some of the key themes that contribute to these debates as they emerge in a review of the literature. The first part considers the literature on recruitment and retention within social work. The small quantity of research on employment-based professional training in the field is then outlined. The final part reports on recent work.
on the complementary agendas of widening participation in higher education and the diversity of the social work profession.

Recruitment and retention challenges
According to the Langlands Report, one of the three main issues facing the social work profession was the reported shortage of good quality social workers working with children, families and adults in the United Kingdom (Langlands, 2005). This reflects long-standing recognition of the challenges of high levels of social work vacancies and turnover. For example, a key objective of the Department of Health (DH) Strategy for Social Care (2000) was to increase the numbers applying for, entering and completing professional social work training (Department of Health, 2000). Subsequently, in the government’s review of the social care workforce, Options for Excellence, one of the four work streams proposed was to increase the supply of qualified social workers (Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills, 2006).

In reviewing the data on recruitment and retention rates, it should be noted that central government changes of ministerial responsibility, beginning October 2002, led to the separation of children’s and adults social care services, with the provision of statistics for the sector now increasingly reflecting this. Key workforce data, presented here, are now provided by the CWDC (2008) and, for the adult social care workforce, SfC (Eborall & Griffiths, 2008), as well as the Local Authority Workforce Intelligence Group (2007).

In the children’s social care workforce, both vacancy and retention rates improved slightly between 2005 and 2006: amongst field social workers over this period, vacancies fell from 11.8 to 9.5 per cent and turnover fell from 11 to 9.6 per cent (CWDC, 2008). Nevertheless, the reporting of difficulties remained fairly consistent throughout this period, with 66 per cent of councils reporting recruitment difficulties and 47 per cent reporting retention difficulties for social workers. The same statistical review noted that authorities are seeking to counter these problems with strategies such as the development of career pathways, workforce planning and succession planning (CWDC, 2008).

Recent data for the adult social care workforce reveal that the vacancy rate for field social workers at September 2006 was 9.4 per cent, and turnover stood at 7.8 per cent. Recruitment was rated as difficult or very difficult by 54 per cent of LA respondents, while 29 per cent considered retention to be difficult or very difficult (Local Authority Workforce Intelligence Group, 2007).

Tackling the problem
Amongst an array of initiatives by social work employers, from making improvements to pay and benefits, work conditions and opportunities, to turning to the international labour market (Evans et al., 2006), one way employers have sought to resolve recruitment difficulties is to use secondment and sponsorship to attract entrants to the profession (Moriarty et al., 2008). This was reported as being the key motivation for the GYO schemes reviewed, below. Research is sparse in this area, but individual reports of such initiatives taken by LAs indicate they are meeting with some success. In the London Borough of Redbridge, for example, 1,700 people applied for 10 trainee places (Professional Social Work, 2004); a comparable scheme in the London Borough of Barnet was credited with reducing the vacancy rate in frontline children and families’ social work teams from 35 to 3 per cent. The high quality of the candidates was also noted (Coombes, 2005).
Recent commentaries, however, suggest that staffing difficulties should be qualified, at least in relation to the future of adult social care. One survey found that LA chief executives acknowledged that the number of staff involved in delivering adult social care will grow, but that the extra capacity is expected to be provided by voluntary organisations and social enterprises, particularly in the realm of new personalised services (Improvement and Development Agency, 2007a). It follows from this that there may be implications for how the role of the qualified social worker will be defined: other commentators have forecast a reduced need for social work professionals in the adult sector, either because of the increased use of personal budgets or due to tightened access to services (Eborall & Griffiths, 2008).

The broader context is one of increasing emphasis on workforce planning across local government as part of wider performance management. The Audit Commission study, Tomorrow’s People: Building a local government workforce for the future, argues that most councils have significant progress to make to secure effective strategic approaches to recruitment and retention of their workforce that avoid putting services at risk (Audit Commission, 2008). It concludes that there is a positive correlation between effective workforce planning and comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) results, and that recruitment and retention have a significant role in delivering equality objectives.

Councils without a systematic approach may waste money on unnecessary temporary and agency staff. Recommendations include the development of workforce strategies and the improvement of career structures and development opportunities, while identified constraints include an emphasis on short-term issues and budgetary constraints. Recruitment and retention in adult social care is highlighted as a stubborn problem. While workforce issues are seen as a higher priority since the introduction of a statutory duty on directors of adult social services to provide leadership on workforce planning (Department of Health, 2006b), the Audit Commission concluded that “employers will increasingly need to do their own scenario planning to counteract shortages in the sector” (Audit Commission, 2008).

**Employment-based professional training**

Employment-based routines (EBRs) to a social work qualification, where employers support students through payment of fees and/or study time, are one of the long-established approaches to dealing with local recruitment shortages (Balloch, 1999; Payne, 2005; Dunworth, 2007). However, they have been characterised by evolving models and varying levels of availability. For example, a 1999 survey of newly qualified social workers (Wallis-Jones and Lyons, 2001) found a dramatic reduction in the use of secondment since an earlier (1995) survey (Wallis-Jones and Lyons, 1996). More recently, interest has revived in expanding the opportunities for unqualified staff to gain a professional qualification. Every Child Matters called for more “options for flexible and attractive training routes into social work, including work-based training” (para 1.1, HM Treasury, 2003), reflecting wider government policy objectives of widening participation in higher education and of supporting lifelong learning (see below).

Employment-based professional training has been valued for its wider contribution to the concept of a “learning organisation”. In its review of the social care workforce, Options for Excellence, the government proposed that staff would deliver better services if their employers saw themselves as “learning organisations” (Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills, 2006). Integral to this is ensuring that staff can train “on the job”.

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**References**

2. Balloch, P. (1999). Employment-based routes (EBRs) to a social work qualification, where employers support students through payment of fees and/or study time, are one of the long-established approaches to dealing with local recruitment shortages (Balloch, 1999; Payne, 2005; Dunworth, 2007).
3. Every Child Matters. (2003). Call for more “options for flexible and attractive training routes into social work, including work-based training” (para 1.1, HM Treasury).
4. Eborall & Griffiths. (2008). Councils without a systematic approach may waste money on unnecessary temporary and agency staff. Recommendations include the development of workforce strategies and the improvement of career structures and development opportunities, while identified constraints include an emphasis on short-term issues and budgetary constraints. Recruitment and retention in adult social care is highlighted as a stubborn problem. While workforce issues are seen as a higher priority since the introduction of a statutory duty on directors of adult social services to provide leadership on workforce planning (Department of Health, 2006b), the Audit Commission concluded that “employers will increasingly need to do their own scenario planning to counteract shortages in the sector” (Audit Commission, 2008).
The evaluation of the new social work degree noted that current evidence about the provision of flexible study routes, such as the recent decline in employment-based and part-time programmes since the DipSW, appears to be equivocal. Further work is required to see if this represents an anomaly during the transitional stages of the implementation of the degree, or if it is part of a longer-term trend (Evaluation of the new social work degree qualification in England, 2008).

Wider social work education issues
While the many broader debates about the nature of social work education are beyond the remit of this study, and have been explored recently in the Evaluation of the new social work degree qualification in England (DH, 2008), several key areas should be briefly noted, as they emerged from this study's findings as relevant to stakeholder perspectives on the benefits and challenges of GYO.

First, in the context of the replacement of the DipSW with the new degree in 2003–04, there are long-standing concerns (that pre-date the replacement) that there is an over-emphasis on training and not enough on education (Preston Shoot, 2000).

Second, related discussions about the readiness to practise among newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) during their first year of employment are not new, and a key study in the early 1990s (Marsh & Triseliotis, 1996) found a clear tension between NQSWs’ emphasis on their need to develop interpersonal skills, such as communication skills, and their supervisors’ emphasis on the lack of familiarity with procedural skills, such as report writing.

Third, in the context of recent debates about the generic nature of social work education, and the possibility of developing separate qualifying routes for children's and adults practitioners, new evidence indicates that social work students want to keep their options open in terms of the service group with whom they would choose to work on graduating (Evaluation of the new social work degree qualification in England (DH, 2008)). These debates inform this study's exploration of GYO and are developed further in the following chapters.

Government funding for LA social care workforce training in England
Central government investment in social care workforce training for employers has been, from 2003–04 until 2007–08, via two grants: the Human Resources Development Strategy (HRDS) Grant and the National Training Strategy (NTS) Grant. The NTS has been targeted at training and qualification in the social care workforce, including both adults and children's services staff, with the amounts spent on workers contracted across the private and voluntary sectors reflecting the local proportions of staff across those sectors.

The first NTS included £6 million ring-fenced for each local council area to spend on a Trainee Social Worker Scheme, with a target of 600 trainee social work posts by 2005–06. The 2007–08 NTS included a £12 million allocation to support across England, which is neither ring-fenced nor subject to conditions.

Trainee Social Worker schemes are defined as:

“Positions of employment with a local authority that offer a period of introductory work in a social care setting, combined with, or followed by, training to enable the employee to obtain the necessary qualifications to become a social worker.”

1: LASSL (2007), DH
The guidance outlines the government's objective to:

“ensure that all local council areas have a Trainee Social Work Scheme. Employers will recognise the continuing importance of ensuring staff have a variety of opportunities to train to become social workers. It is recommended that the proportion of the grants to be spent in adults and children’s services should be in line with the proportion of the social care workforce employed in providing services in each. Nationally this would approximate to 50 per cent in each for social workers.”

From 2008–09 onwards, significant funding for social care workforce training will be separated between children’s and adults services, each of which will receive a single funding stream replacing the NTS and HRDS. The funding is not ring-fenced nor subject to reporting conditions. However, as previously, the objective is to support their respective adults and children’s social care workforce development in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors. The funding allocation over the next three years has been split between children’s and adults social care by a ratio of 13 to 87 per cent.

According to the Learn to Care funding survey of LAs (2006), most authorities that responded were likely to retain 100 per cent of their NTS and HRDS for workforce development in social care (Brown et al., 2006). However, the survey suggested that the removal of ring-fencing has caused difficulties for 43 per cent of respondent LAs (Brown et al., 2006), the money being used in other areas where there were budgetary pressures.

In 2006–07 LAs reported spending 67.4 per cent of their HRDS and 63.2 per cent of their NTS on their own workforces, with the remainder going to the independent sector (Eborall & Griffiths, 2008). The independent sector also has access to other funds. Although this includes funding for all social care workforce development, not just for social work qualifying training, it can be compared to current social work employment patterns across the sectors: of the 76,300 social workers registered with the GSCC at March 2007, 71 per cent were employed by LAs, 6 per cent by the independent sector, 6 per cent by employment agencies and smaller proportions by other organisations, with some self-employed (Eborall & Griffiths, 2008).

**GYO activity**

In the year 2006–07, 5,470 students registered on social work degree courses in England. Of these, 10 per cent took an EBR, compared with 14 per cent in 2004–05 and 18 per cent in 2005–06 (Eborall & Griffiths, 2008). In the same period (2006–07), there was a fall in council spending on secondments and bursaries for social work students, which may be partly due to the changeover from diploma to degree (Eborall & Griffiths, 2008) and the extension of GSCC bursaries to students.

At October 2006, out of a total of 2,411 staff in LA social services departments who were being supported while studying for their social work qualifications, 1,987 were on secondment, 2008–09

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<td>Adults social care workforce³</td>
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<td>Children’s social care workforce⁴</td>
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2: LASSL (2007)1, page 5, DH  
3: LASSL (2007)2, DH  
4: LAC ref: 1810070005
and the remaining 424 were defined as on bursaries or sponsored (Local Authority Workforce Intelligence Group, 2007). These figures were extrapolated from incomplete national survey response data. Over the previous two years, the annual surveys (which are responded to by all LAs) indicated a rise between 2004 and 2005 in the total number of staff being supported and a fall in numbers in 2006. This trend was echoed by the data estimating the total numbers qualifying who had been supported (by secondment, sponsorship or bursary) (Local Authority Workforce Intelligence Group, 2007):

• 2004 – 1,348;
• 2005 – 2,237; and
• 2006 – 758.

In reviewing the prevalence of GYO activity amongst LAs, one unpublished survey of 37 such authorities found that the majority (29–78 per cent) offered or were planning to offer GYO for internal and/or external recruits (Brown et al., 2005). In another survey, 71 per cent of LA respondents reported using sponsorship as a means of increasing the number of social workers, compared to 64 per cent using traineeships and 38 per cent using bursaries (i.e. “retainers” or “golden hello” payments) (Parker & Whitfield, 2005).

Looking at the data by numbers being supported across the two or three years of a qualifying route, in 2006, LA children’s services were supporting 2,990 people through professional social work training. Secondments accounted for 80 per cent of these and the remainder were those receiving bursaries or sponsorships. Of the 1,000 people who qualified in 2005–06, 70 per cent were secondments and 30 per cent were in receipt of bursaries or sponsorships (CWDC, 2008).

The evaluation of the new degree concluded that levels of GYO activity had been higher both absolutely and proportionally among DipSW students than in the first three academic cohorts of the degree since 2003–04. However, in 2005–06, when the first OU students were enrolled on degree programmes, the proportion of GYO students increased to 24 per cent (n=1,294), a return to levels similar to those prior to the transition phase. This figure is higher than the figure of students on employment-based courses (n=1,027), reflecting that GYO students are being increasingly supported on college-based as well as employment-based programmes (Evaluation of the new social work degree qualification in England, 2008).

The Children’s Workforce Strategy, launched in 2008, incorporated an outline of nearly £73 million investment over the next three years in measures to enhance the capacity and skills of social workers working with children and families (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008). One of the four areas of professional development activities being piloted is a new graduate trainee scheme, which will be part-funding 200 social work qualifying training places in September 2008, hosted by LAs in England (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008b). Candidates must be aged over 25 years old, hold a 2.1 degree (or equivalent) and not currently be employed in social work or care. Host authorities have been charged with considering how this scheme can be used to support the recruitment of more men and individuals from minority ethnic groups, and it remains to be seen how this new targeting of investment in employment-based professional training will impact on workforce diversity and retention, and on wider patterns of GYO activity.
GYO schemes in practice

This section reports on the small number of accounts of GYO schemes in the research and practitioner literature, in particular the evidence about the impact of GYO on the experience of practice learning; on wider organisational attitudes to workforce development; on staff retention rates; the relative resource investment; and the importance of support and co-ordination for successful GYO activity.

The main GYO programme in the UK is the National Open Learning Programme leading to a social work qualification, which has been offered by the OU since 1997. Most students have undertaken a placement in their employing organisation (work-based placements), which was evaluated in terms of its impact on the quality of student learning through interviews with 30 students (Walker, 2004). They considered in particular: induction; the role of key personnel; work opportunities; and student identity. Amongst work-based placements, only half received induction and the group was judged not to be accessing adequate support from agency co-ordinators. Moreover, supervisors were widely seen as not understanding the requirements of their role and how to apply this to a work-based context, and a quarter of students said that learning had been inhibited, either due to a lack of restriction in workload or an inappropriate range of practice. Work-based placement students also had more difficulties than others in developing a student identity – over half reported this as a problem (Walker, 2004). The main recommendations involved giving greater definition to the role of key personnel, and ensuring that work-based placements are appropriate to the needs of the student. Particular mention was made of the phenomenon of the student who has been supported on a GYO scheme as a “favour” by their employer: such students were more likely to face inadequate support and university programme tutors needed to be alert to instances of this (Walker, 2004).

A 2006 survey into the links between social work students’ practice learning in authorities and the recruitment and retention of staff found that the learning experience of all social work students on placements (not just GYO students) may be compromised because, rather than develop a critical approach to practice, students may come under pressure to “fit” or conform to a team ethos that does not promote challenging and independent thought (Parker & Whitfield, 2006). This was described as the “double-edged” risk of developing workers that are “fit for purpose” and able to “hit the ground running”, often seen as one of the strengths of GYO. The study questioned the tendency to recruit GYO students from the local population, which may assist in ensuring that a workforce reflects the locality but does not necessarily promote diversity; thus the specific needs of socially excluded groups may be missed. The authors also speculate that a bias toward authorities prioritising practice learning opportunities for their own GYO students might result in blocking opportunities for other students at local universities (Parker & Whitfield, 2006).

In the Scottish context (Dunworth, 2007) of one GYO scheme run by the OU in partnership with employers, students are members of social work staff before becoming students and are expected to remain in post during and usually after their training. The survey of 36 staff within one council who had qualified by this route between 1998 and 2003, along with their managers and senior managers, found that the benefits of the scheme included a higher profile for professional training within the department, particularly in those units where staff had completed the programme (Dunworth, 2004). Participants self-reported
increased knowledge and improved practice with clients. While many positive outcomes may be ascribed to the benefits of professional training per se, rather than specifically employer-sponsored training, qualifying staff were often managers, and good practice was described as cascading through the rest of the organisation (Dunworth, 2007). Regarding retention rates, of those moving post following qualification, 84 per cent were doing so within the agency, with some early evidence of a reduction in staff turnover (Dunworth, 2007). Schemes that have been implemented by LAs in the face of recruitment difficulties have positively reported that the GYO salary and support costs were set against the expenses associated with high vacancy rates: one authority had been spending £600,000 a year on agency staff, and reported reduced vacancy rates and early indications of high retention rates after qualifying (Coombes, 2005).

In a case study where the non-completion rate of a work-based social work programme was running at 22 per cent, one LA appointed a consultant to manage and support its GYO social work students for six months, prior to the role being incorporated into the staffing structure. The consultant had a background in social work and higher education and was able to proffer support to students and suggest changes in the organisation involved. One student reported seeing the provision of a consultant as proof of her employer’s confidence in her abilities (Christie & Dunworth, 2006).

**Widening participation in higher education and diversity in the social work profession**

Widening participation in higher education in the United Kingdom has been a government policy objective at least since the 1960s with the Robbins Committee (1963), which marked the beginning of the mass expansion of higher education and the establishment of the OU in 1969. More recently, the Dearing Report (1997) into higher education recommended that when government and funding bodies were allocating funds for the expansion of higher education, they give priority to those institutions that can demonstrate a commitment to widening participation (Dearing, 1997). The present government has set a target of 50 per cent of people under 30 entering higher education by 2010 (Jones, 2006), and this has been joined by initiatives under the lifelong learning agenda, such as the UK National Advisory Committee for Lifelong Learning (Jones, 2006). The drive to increase numbers of university graduates was stressed by the Learning Age Green Paper (Department for Education and Employment, 1998) as not only a question of economic necessity but also of social inclusion, that is, of widening participation in education (Leathwood & Hayton, 2002). The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) currently dedicates a portion of its funding to the goal of widening participation for students from under-represented groups or those who are at risk of not completing their course (Moriarty et al., 2008).

Closely allied to the drive towards widening participation in general, are efforts to sustain and improve diversity in the social work profession. The Langlands Report highlighted continuing difficulty in recruiting students who represent the diversity of local populations (Langlands, 2005).

**The profile of social work students and the workforce**

Recent years have seen increased interest in promoting workforce development strategies (HM Government, 2005, 2007; SfC, 2007). These are necessarily underpinned by information on the demographic characteristics of the workforce, in particular in relation to the populations with which they work, in order to plan the social work workforce of the future.
Work by Moriarty & Murray (2007) showed that there are trends in the data on demographic characteristics of all social work students indicating that the profession has become more diverse. In comparison with other disciplines, social work has successfully incorporated traditionally under-represented groups while retaining satisfactory completion rates. However, under-representation remains a concern in relation to men and people with disabilities (Moriarty & Murray, 2007).

**Men:** Data from the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) for 2002 record that only 15 per cent of acceptances for social work were men, compared to 47 per cent of all UCAS acceptances. In terms of the gender balance of the social care workforce, the most recent briefing from the SfC National Minimum Data Set for Social Care points out a gradual shift – that more men have joined the social care workforce in recent years (18 per cent in 2007–08, compared to 15 per cent in 2000–02). This leads to speculation as to whether they may remain and qualify, and so alter the profile of the social work workforce (SfC, 2008). Also, men account for up to a quarter of the workforce in certain areas, notably day care and management, with senior management male-dominated (Eborall & Griffiths, 2008). Around 80 per cent of social work students are women. Moreover, a slight increase in the proportion of female students is observable since the introduction of the new degree (Evaluation of the new social work degree qualification in England, 2008), although this trend may have already been underway prior to its introduction (Perry & Cree, 2003).

**Age:** The UCAS dataset indicates that 48 per cent of those accepted for social work programmes were aged 25 or over, compared to 10 per cent amongst all acceptances for higher education. The removal of the minimum age restriction of 22 for qualification under the new degree made it viable to access it direct from school or college, and school leavers were specifically targeted by the DH in its media recruitment campaign in 2002–03. Applications to social work training by young people have begun to rise slightly (SfC, 2008) and the evaluation of the new social work degree has confirmed that this has led to greater numbers of younger people being attracted to social work education. The evaluation indicates that there were initial reservations among some HEI staff and practice teachers as to the suitability of younger entrants but progression and retention rates suggest that this policy initiative has had a positive impact on the number of recruits to both the degree and the profession (Evaluation of the new social work degree qualification in England, 2008). Other recent work has suggested that younger social work students should be incorporated into the “non-traditional” category, warranting particular consideration of their support needs (Holmström, 2008). Difficulties that they may face include others’ assumptions about their lack of relevant experience, feeling disconnected from the wider student population and practical issues to do with living independently while on placement. One of the researcher’s recommendations was to develop mentoring and peer support schemes to overcome these difficulties (Holmström, 2008).

Allied to the factor of age is that of people with families and caring responsibilities and their chance to take up educational opportunities. While social work students have traditionally been older than other students in higher education, Dunworth (2007) commented that student funding arrangements in the UK make it difficult for those students with families to take up full-time education. Employment-based training may be a means of overcoming this barrier. Indeed, in the wake of her study, the agency that was its subject changed its policy to offer students blocks of study leave during the course (Dunworth, 2007).
In terms of **ethnicity**, the proportion of Black people accepted for social work programmes is among the highest for any subject. On the other hand, the rate of acceptance of Asian people is lower than that found in higher education as a whole. In the profession, 80 per cent of the social workers employed by councils and in the NHS are recorded as white and between 10–16 per cent are from Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups (Eborall & Griffiths, 2008). The evaluation of the new social work degree has confirmed that there has been an increase in the diversity of applicants to social work education, mainly in terms of the proportion of Black African students. However, male students and those from Asian backgrounds remain under-represented ([Evaluation of the new social work degree qualification in England, 2008](#)).

The UCAS data indicate that social work acceptances are marked by **lower prior educational achievement** than the all-subjects acceptances, and Moriarty and Murray concluded that social work has had a role in opening up professional training to otherwise under-represented groups in higher education (Moriarty & Murray, 2007). Where there remains a disparity between the profession and the wider population, as in the case of men and **disabled people**, more research and initiatives are called for (one example being the recent HEFCE schemes for improving placement experiences of disabled social work students (Wray et al., 2005)).

The profile of GYO students

In comparison to these overall trends in the profile of social work students, research analysing GSCC student registration data has highlighted variations in the level of GYO in relation to different demographic characteristics of students, indicating that some students are more likely to be supported by employers than others (1995–98) (Moriarty et al., forthcoming, a; Hussein et al., 2006). They concluded that GYO students are less likely to have defined themselves as having a disability and are more likely to be older than non-GYO students. Previous GYO activity has been characterised by strong regional differences, with levels highest in London and the South-west, reflecting high vacancy levels. By contrast, in the North-west, where social work salaries are comparatively high compared to average regional earnings, GYO levels were lower (Moriarty et al., forthcoming, a).

Progression rates amongst social work students

This section considers literature on progression rates for the social work qualification in relation to demographic characteristics which has explored the likelihood that some students are more likely to complete their studies at their first attempt, while others take longer. In addition to qualitative research assessing the experience of undergraduates in the social work degree course (for example,
Hafford-Letchfield, 2007), there is a growing body of quantitative work investigating their progression rates according to their demographic characteristics.

Research into progression rates amongst all social work students (GYO and non-GYO) registering for a Diploma in Social Work (DipSW) between 1995 and 1998 found that men, people from minority ethnic groups and students with disabilities had lower overall progression rates. One point of distinction from other professional disciplines was that, within social work, older students and those with lower levels of previous educational attainment did not suffer poorer progression rates than other students (Hussein et al., 2007).

Work on removing barriers to progression and retention in social work education has highlighted the fact that initiatives to support new students across higher education in general tend to focus on schools and school leavers, whereas many people entering social work are coming to higher education for the first time, or returning to it later in life (Moriarty et al., 2008). This research also draws attention to the particular needs arising after the initial phase of vocational courses at transitional moments during and after practice placements.

The central finding of research into part-time social work qualifying education was that secondment and sponsorship have a significant positive influence on student retention on courses (Moriarty et al., forthcoming, a).
Part B: Models, levels and trends in GYO

Part B defines the terms used within the report, and briefly sketches the characteristics of the two key models of GYO. It presents an analysis of levels and trends of GYO activity between 1998 and 2007, based on the 41,000 social work students registered with the GSCC over that period. It then outlines the context of and the pressures on GYO activity that shape these levels and trends, from the perspectives of different interview participants.

Summary

Models and frequency of GYO

- GYO terminology is interchangeable and evolving. Activity can be broadly categorised into two main GYO models: secondments and traineeships. Employers may run schemes in parallel or select elements from each model. They may target different organisational priorities. All these factors have implications for individual students' experiences and wider organisational impact.
- GYO activity steadily increased during the final six years of the DipSW, peaking sharply in the last year, 2003–04. Then, after a one-year drop, numbers have returned to previous levels.
- There are significant regional variations in levels and trends of GYO, with the highest levels in regions with the highest vacancy rates. Local variations are also affected by a range of factors and pressures, including policy and funding shifts, vacancy levels and recent changes within local authorities.

GYO students

- GYO students are more likely to be white UK, less likely to be Black and are less likely to report any disability than non-GYO cohorts. GYO students are more likely to be male and older than non-GYO students. Both trends are increasing since the introduction of the new degree.
- GYO students are more likely to pass on time and less likely to withdraw from their courses than non-GYO students. Strikingly, GYO used to include a higher proportion of those with the lowest qualifications. However, since the new degree they have tended to be more qualified than previous DipSW cohorts and more than current non-GYO students.
- Since the new degree, the proportion of GYO students on postgraduate courses has increased considerably. The two-year postgraduate route is seen as the cheapest, because fastest, GYO option. The shift in investment from current staff to external recruits is prioritising candidates with prior academic achievement, such as degrees.

GYO definitions and terms

The definition of GYO initiatives used by this project is:

“Approaches by local authorities and the independent sector to support their employees, or potential employees, to qualify as social workers.”

However, we found that the different types of GYO schemes were described in various ways. Three employer organisations interviewed referred to their “GYO” schemes, but most referred to “secondment”, “sponsorship” and “traineeship” schemes to describe overlapping models of GYO activity. Often these terms are used interchangeably between organisations, or within organisations over time, with localised assumptions about whom schemes are open to and what they are aiming to achieve (see page 27 for descriptions and characteristics of different types of GYO).
HEIs confirmed that the GYO terminology used by LAs is interchangeable and evolving, referring to a broad spectrum of GYO practice:

“We have used the term ‘secondment’ in the past but that isn’t the term the local authorities are using any more, and they talk about ‘sponsorship’ instead... they talk about ‘traineeships’ as well, so it is a bit confusing... it is interchangeable... I don’t think we get too tied up about the terms.”

HEI 6

Adding to this terminological confusion is the use of definitions in the GSCC student registration data. As outlined later in this chapter, all students enrolled for social work programmes provide the GSCC with information on their source of funding to cover the course fees. The two funding options that define them as GYO students are the categories of “sponsored” or “seconded”. As this categorisation is based on students’ self-reporting there is the potential for inconsistent use of terms, reflecting the different use by their particular employing agencies, and the range of patterns of support that fall within the umbrella of GYO activity. For example, it is not possible to infer from these categories whether a student receives a full salary and additional financial benefits, such as travel or book allowances, whether they benefited from a choice of qualifying courses, receipt of mentoring, generous levels of study leave or any other forms of support that might influence the student’s progression and experience of GYO.

There is a general assumption that “seconded” students are more likely to be existing members of the workforce of the employer organisation (see below for more details) and therefore that “sponsored” students are more likely to be those recruited externally to take part specifically in a GYO scheme. References to “GYO students” in this report encompass all those describing themselves as sponsored or seconded, and “non-GYO” students refers to all other students registered with the GSCC. Finally, the GSCC and HEIs categorise social work training programmes at an Institution of Higher or Further Education (collectively referred to in this report as HEIs) as:

- **Employment-based route (EBR)**, indicating a social work qualifying route registered with the GSCC for GYO students funded by their employer organisation. Students on EBRs are not eligible to receive the national bursary; or
- **College-based route (CBR)**, which refers to a standard social work qualifying route. These routes can also be used by students funded by their employer organisation.

Either term can refer to a route at undergraduate or postgraduate level. Interviews with HEIs revealed further varied terms, as some referred to specific EBRs as “Employment Learning Contract Routes”, “Work-based Routes”, “Employment-sponsored Routes” or “Learning Partnership Routes”.

**Descriptions and characteristics of different types of GYO**

No two GYO schemes are the same, but this research identified two main GYO models, which are briefly outlined here.

**Secondments**

Traditionally, GYO students have been existing social care staff seconded from their workplace, and while training budgets cover the costs of course fees and additional expenses (see Resource implications, page 124), their line management and salary remain unaltered throughout the course of study. However, the term “sponsorship” is increasingly used to refer to this model of GYO. An employer usually expects a GYO student
to work part-time throughout the course and full-time when there are academic holidays, and expects him/her to sign a “tie-in” agreement and to return to the team once qualified for a minimum agreed period.

Secondments can be viewed negatively by team managers when staff spend significant periods of time out of the workplace and “backfill” is not available, placing additional pressure on other team members. At times this has led to a reduction in secondment options that take staff out of the workplace for more than one day a week, and a preference for part-time and distance learning courses, with students often retaining their full caseload throughout study.

An alternative type of secondment is for internal staff to secure a GYO place and to leave their previous position, enabling the vacant post to be filled. Their new GYO salary and management are centrally co-ordinated by workforce development, or they are hosted by a new operational team, mimicking a traineeship scheme (see below). This model is usually associated with a greater choice of role or setting on qualifying that reflects the interests developed while studying, or the acute areas of vacancy within the organisation at that time. Removing students from a long-established work setting can also assist them to develop and maintain a new student identity, particularly when undertaking practice learning within the workplace:

“They have all been appointed to training posts [and] on completion of the qualification they are put into social work vacant posts... they effectively resign from their posts, and don’t go back... The first time we had a try at this, in effect they did stay in post whilst undertaking their course, and it became very tricky: ‘When I am a social care officer I do this, when I am a student I do this, and when

I go back to my post’... so we listened to that and actually next time they became trainee social workers... we moved them out of their posts so they physically had a new desk and new team and a new start... Looking back, it has been the right decision.”

LA 9

Traineeships

The other broad category of GYO is that of trainees, usually recruited externally and then hosted and “owned” centrally within workforce development, or within children’s or adults departments. Trainees are paid a set salary out of workforce development training budgets or operational budgets, which is often lower than an experienced seconded colleague would receive. They are provided with social care experience and there is usually greater flexibility around job allocation on graduation. However, external trainees are sometimes recruited at the outset of the scheme into specific teams with vacancies, thus mimicking a secondment model. The recruitment of external candidates may lead to resentment from social care staff who may not have had access to equivalent GYO opportunities.

For externally recruited trainees, being paid a trainee salary while receiving mentoring support and workplace experience was described as a popular option, and schemes receive very high application rates (see section on untapped pool of candidates, page 57). However, for long-term social care staff this model of GYO would usually demand that they take a drop in salary and lose accrued employment rights, and was rarely taken up:

“Traineeships are not for current staff although you can’t stop current staff applying... We have had one internal applicant applying for the traineeship successfully, but actually the terms and conditions stopped being attractive to her once she understood those, she
Those people come in… as family support workers, they do the year as a minimum… we provide in-service additional support and preparation for the whole university process, and in that process we assess how they are doing in practice as well, we make decisions sometimes whether someone is ready to go [to an HEI] or not… We will offer them additional support and I know they will be ready for the following year.”

LA 5

This two-phase process was occasionally replicated with internal candidates, with the long preparatory period enabling less qualified or confident GYO students to secure a place on a scheme and to be supported in-house to prepare for and gain their HEI place, rather than having to achieve the necessary qualifications and skills prior to securing the GYO sponsorship:

“Once they’ve got the [GYO] funding then they would be supported in their [HEI] application, because also they wouldn’t take up the place for 18 months… a year to make sure that everything is in place… the workforce development team would support anybody to get basic learning skills.”

LA 6

A significant feature of the traineeship model is the provision of additional social care experiences, either prior to, or during, social work training. A quarter of employers described offering trainees up to a year of prior experience, or, while studying, a rotating series of additional “placements” in a range of settings that generate a strong overview of social care:

“They would be appointed in the September prior to the academic year that they would start, so they’d have the full year working in [LA 6]… I meet with them and look at their application form and talk to them about their previous experience. I let them know the kind of placements that are available… we look at where their experience has been and what their learning needs are… I’ll make sure that their first ‘placement’ is significantly different from their previous experience.”

LA 6

“It is designed like a sandwich course, they do a year in children’s, a year in adult’s and two electives, and the idea is they come out as really qualified all-round social workers… and the way I explain it to team managers is that I consider them to be apprentices.”

LA 15

Two-phase trainee schemes tend to be well resourced and overseen by a dedicated workforce development staff member, who offers a significant range of support and study skills during the initial work experience phase to prepare candidates for HEI interviews and then for take-up of their places on the course:

“Those people come in… as family support workers, they do the year as a minimum… we provide in-service additional support and preparation for the whole university process, and in that process we assess how they are doing in practice as well, we make decisions sometimes whether someone is ready to go [to an HEI] or not… We will offer them additional support and I know they will be ready for the following year.”

LA 5

This model is described as best facilitated when the trainee is centrally co-ordinated; otherwise, teams may develop ownership assumptions about individual trainees:

“It was always co-ordinated from [workforce development] but with line manager responsibility remaining within the operational teams. We ended up with a little bit of ‘my trainee’ and being somewhat possessive about how long they were to leave ‘my team’ to go out on placement: ‘When are they coming back?’ and that became difficult… So we didn’t in the end want to
attach trainees to the teams, we wanted them to be a floating resource that we manage more centrally and that made it easier to then look at rotational placements and moving round the authority.”
LA 9

Non-GYO recruitment initiatives: “retainers” or “golden hello” schemes

“Retainers” or “golden hello” schemes, where employers make an offer of employment with a lump cash incentive payable on recruitment, are viewed as an alternative to, rather than an example of, GYO activity. However, this recruitment model is referred to here, as its shorter timescale and lower financial investment have made it at times a more popular alternative or a complement to GYO schemes. Students will already have independently secured their HEI place before they are recruited into an employer’s scheme, and will generally be in their final year of study, although they can be recruited at any stage of a course. As well as payment, they are usually offered one or more placements within the organisation, in particular the final placement. They only secure employment with the sponsoring organisation after qualifying, to ensure that their receipt of the national bursary funding is not compromised.

The terms “bursary” (not to be confused with the national GSCC funding for non-GYO students), “sponsorship” and “traineeship” were also used by interview participants to refer to this model of recruitment:

“The sponsorship wasn’t GYO, was it, really, it was a recruitment initiative... we would pay them, I think it was £2,000 a year and on top of that we also found them work to gain experience.”
LA 14

Employers reported moving away from the previously popular model of one-off “golden hello” cash payments at the point of recruitment, which contributed to workers moving through a succession of posts to secure multiple payments, to payments based on retention and performance indicators (PIs):

“It’s a three-year scheme and it’s very much linked to attendance and competencies and CPD, and so a formal assessment has to happen every year... based on the decision then a recommendation is made for either the full payment or a partial payment... £1,500 for the first year, £2,500 the second year and maybe £3,500... If we can hold onto people for three years I think that’s pretty good... There was this trend where somebody would be at [LA 1]... get the ‘golden hello’, then they’d go to [LA 2], then they’d come to [LA 3]... I think you’ll find that most people now have tweaked the various schemes... to include retention.”
LA 10

The majority of HEIs had past or current experience of local employers using the HEI as a route to contact and recruit for these schemes. They predominantly see facilitating this process as a positive service for their students, securing them a boost to their finances and local employment. They described it as an extension of the standard practice of employers inviting students on their final placements to apply for a job post-graduating. This model of recruitment was described as at its most prevalent when social work vacancy levels peaked, but reduced slightly in the last couple of years.

This section provides in-depth analysis of levels and trends of GYO students who were seconded or sponsored by their employers to undertake social work qualifications from 1998 to 2006; in total, around 41,000 students. As the Introduction and Methods section of this report outline, the analysis uses data provided by the GSCC, which holds the records of all students enrolled for social work qualifications. Each student’s record includes personal information such as date of birth, gender, ethnicity, highest previous educational attainment, funding source and any self-reported disability, as well as the name of the HEI, its geographical location, mode of study, programme type and whether the student is college or employment based. The records also include information on students’ progression up to the 2004–05 cohort. They form a unique source of information on the characteristics of social work students in England over a number of years, and offer a distinct opportunity to understand the composition and trends of GYO students. It also allows comparisons between GYO students and students who had other sources of funding. It should be noted that one of the complications of examining trends in GYO activity over the last five years is the distortion due to the transition from the DipSW to the degree.

Levels of GYO
All students enrolled for social work programmes are requested by the GSCC to provide information on their source of financial support to cover the course fees. The options are: receiving a bursary, a loan or a grant (LA or discretionary); being sponsored, seconded, self funded; and “other sources”. As these results are based on students’ self-reporting there is some potential for inconsistencies in how they define sponsorship or secondment. For example, an employer may not pay course fees but may pay for a student’s time while on the course; this may be interpreted by some students as “sponsorship” but not by others. Therefore, there may be discrepancies in what the data indicate as the overall level of GYO (Wallis-Jones and Lyons, 2003).

Table 5 Numbers and percentage of students identifying themselves to be seconded or sponsored (GYO) by year of registration and type of award, 1998–2005* (source: GSCC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort and type of award</th>
<th>Other funding</th>
<th>Seconded</th>
<th>Sponsored</th>
<th>Number of all students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 98–99</td>
<td>3523 86%</td>
<td>407 10%</td>
<td>183 4%</td>
<td>4113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 99–00</td>
<td>3377 82%</td>
<td>440 11%</td>
<td>286 7%</td>
<td>4103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 00–01</td>
<td>3136 80%</td>
<td>453 12%</td>
<td>354 9%</td>
<td>3943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 01–02</td>
<td>3266 76%</td>
<td>609 14%</td>
<td>402 9%</td>
<td>4277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 02–03</td>
<td>3548 75%</td>
<td>734 15%</td>
<td>470 10%</td>
<td>4752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 03–04</td>
<td>1867 60%</td>
<td>622 20%</td>
<td>638 20%</td>
<td>3127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 03–04</td>
<td>2175 87%</td>
<td>189 8%</td>
<td>133 5%</td>
<td>2497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 04–05</td>
<td>3862 85%</td>
<td>377 8%</td>
<td>324 7%</td>
<td>4563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 05–06</td>
<td>4117 76%</td>
<td>584 11%</td>
<td>709 13%</td>
<td>5410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Complete figures for 2006 and 2007 were unavailable at this time.
*6 Total percentages slightly below or above 100% are due to rounding, as the agreed format did not include any decimal places.
Both Table 5 (previous page) and Figure 1 show that the levels of secondment and sponsorship (combined) on the DipSW increased yearly from 14 per cent in 1998 to a peak of 40 per cent in 2003 during the last cohort of the DipSW. Employers described having increased levels of GYO prior to the withdrawal of the DipSW in order to take advantage of the shorter and cheaper route before the introduction of the new degree. 2003 was the transition year, with intakes of both DipSW and degree students.

Between 2003–04 and 2005–06 there was a steady increase in the proportion of students identifying themselves as being sponsored or seconded, from 13 to 24 per cent, returning GYO to the levels prior to the 2003 transition from DipSW to degree. Lower levels in the first couple of years of the degree are likely to be attributed to its phased introduction by HEIs. Full-time CBRs were often introduced prior to part-time and employment-based routes, including the later introduction in 2005 of the new degree by the OU, a route which comprises entirely GYO students (see next sections for details). Other possible reasons for the increasing levels of GYO activity are explored during the qualitative interviews with HEI staff and employers and are reported in the section on context/pressures (page 50).

Figure 1 also shows that levels of secondment varied from levels of sponsorship during the former DipSW qualification, with consistently higher proportions of students identifying themselves as being seconded than sponsored up until the last cohort of the DipSW (2003–04), although sponsorship was gradually increasing as a proportion of overall GYO activity. The comparative levels of secondment and sponsorship since the degree appear to be more similar; however, sponsorship has continued to increase as a proportion of GYO, and slightly eclipsed secondment in 2005.

The following analysis investigates variations in secondment or sponsorship in relation to different characteristics.

### Figure 1 Trends of levels of secondment and sponsorship (GYO) by year of registration and type of award, 1998–2005
GYO and programme type
Prior to the introduction of the degree there were three types of social work qualification programmes: non-graduate (the DipSW); undergraduate; and postgraduate. With the introduction of the degree in 2003–04 the non-graduate programmes accepted their last student cohort, and ceased by 2004–05, leaving only undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of study. The analysis shows that levels of secondment and sponsorship differ depending on type of programme; these are investigated in more detail in the next sub-sections.

**Distribution of all social work students by programme type**
Table 6 shows that during the DipSW the majority of students were registered for non-graduate programmes (around 60 per cent between 1998 and 2003), while almost equal proportions were registered for either the under or postgraduate programmes. The exception was the final cohort of the DipSW (2003), when 27 per cent of students were registered for postgraduate and only 14 per cent for undergraduate courses. This may be because employers and students seeking an undergraduate route prioritised the new degree. In 2003–04, when both the new degree and the old DipSW ran in conjunction, only a tiny proportion (5 per cent) of degree students were registered for postgraduate courses, while the remaining 95 per cent were registered for the new undergraduate course. This reflects the fact that most HEIs developed their undergraduate courses prior to their new postgraduate courses (Evaluation of the new social work degree qualification in England, 2008). Since 2004 the proportion of postgraduate students has returned to levels similar to those prior to the transition from the DipSW to the degree, and risen slightly (from 19 to 24 per cent).

**GYO levels on non-graduate courses, 1998–2004**
Table 7 (page 34) clearly shows a yearly increase in the levels of both secondment and sponsorship as a proportion of non-graduate students from 1998 until the DipSW ceased in

### Table 6 Distribution of social work students by type of programme, award and year of registration, 1998–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of award and year of registration</th>
<th>Non-graduate programmes</th>
<th>Postgraduate programmes</th>
<th>Undergraduate programmes</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DipsW 98–99</td>
<td>2499 60%</td>
<td>937 22%</td>
<td>744 18%</td>
<td>4180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipsW 99–00</td>
<td>2608 61%</td>
<td>913 21%</td>
<td>789 18%</td>
<td>4310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipsW 00–01</td>
<td>2522 60%</td>
<td>905 22%</td>
<td>776 19% 7</td>
<td>4203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipsW 01–02</td>
<td>2673 61%</td>
<td>877 20%</td>
<td>854 19%</td>
<td>4404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipsW 02–03</td>
<td>2992 61%</td>
<td>962 20%</td>
<td>950 19%</td>
<td>4904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipsW 03–04</td>
<td>1906 59%</td>
<td>887 27%</td>
<td>459 14%</td>
<td>3252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 03–04</td>
<td>118 5%</td>
<td>2445 95%</td>
<td></td>
<td>2563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 04–05</td>
<td>888 19%</td>
<td>3793 81%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 05–06</td>
<td>1150 20%</td>
<td>4525 80%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 06–07</td>
<td>1208 24%</td>
<td>3889 76%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7: Total percentages slightly below or above 100% are due to rounding, as the agreed format did not include any decimal places.
2003, with a significant peak in GYO of 61 per cent of the final DipSW cohort. The proportion of non-graduate students who were seconded increased by 8 per cent between 1998 and 2002, with an additional rise of 6 per cent in the final year of the DipSW (making the total rise from 15 to 29 per cent). Sponsorship also increased by 8 per cent between 1998 and 2002, but rose a significant additional 17 per cent in the final year (making the total rise from 7 to 32 per cent).

GYO LEVELS ON UNDERGRADUATE COURSES, 1998–2007
Table 8, which presents the proportion of undergraduate students who were sponsored or seconded, shows a fluctuation in the levels of GYO over the last 10 years between 4 and 26 per cent. Within that pattern of fluctuation there has been a gradual rise in sponsorship levels in relation to levels of secondment. The peak of GYO as a proportion of undergraduate activity (26 per cent) was observed among the last cohort of the DipSW, as well as the year

Table 7 Levels and trends of GYO among non-graduate students, 1998–2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort and type of award</th>
<th>Percentage of students seconded or sponsored</th>
<th>Number of non-graduate students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seconded</td>
<td>Sponsored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 98–99</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 99–00</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 00–01</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 01–02</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 02–03</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 03–04</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 Levels and trends of GYO among undergraduate students, 1998–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort and type of award</th>
<th>Percentage of students seconded or sponsored</th>
<th>Number of undergraduate students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seconded</td>
<td>Sponsored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 98–99</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 99–00</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 00–01</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 01–02</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 02–03</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 03–04</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 03–04</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 04–05</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 05–06</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 06–07*</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* excludes OU
GYO and mode of study: part- or full-time

Social work qualifications are delivered full-time, part-time and through distance learning courses. Students on distance learning programmes are formally categorised as studying within either a full-time or a part-time mode of study. While the vast majority of distance learning students are either sponsored or seconded, levels of GYO on full- and part-time routes show wide variations.

Not surprisingly, Figure 2 (overleaf) shows that the proportion of students who were seconded or sponsored is much higher among part-time students than full-time students. This is directly related to the nature of GYO schemes, as described by the study participants, where staff are usually required to work part-time while studying for their qualification. From 1998, the proportion of seconded or sponsored students among part-time students increased almost incrementally from 45 to 58 per cent in 2002–03 and peaked at 83 per cent in 2005. This may be explained by the dominance of the OU as the key provider of part-time social work qualifying training where all students have 2005–06 of the new degree. However, whereas during the last cohort of the DipSW the level of secondment was much higher than that of sponsoring (17 vs. 9 per cent), the trend was reversed in 2005–06 (with secondment now slightly lower at 12 per cent, compared to sponsorship at 14 per cent). (It is important to note, however, that the year 2006 is missing the figures from the OU.)

**GYO levels on postgraduate courses, 1998–2007**

Postgraduate courses (both during the DipSW and the new degree) are shorter in length than undergraduate courses. Table 9 shows that before the introduction of the degree, GYO activity accounted for only 2–5 per cent of postgraduate students. However, there was a noticeable increase once the degree was introduced, rising from 7 per cent in 2003 to a peak of 17 per cent in 2005. The drop to 9 per cent in 2006 indicates a recent drop both in overall postgraduate GYO numbers and in the percentage of GYO, reflecting the recent decline in employment-based routes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort and type of award</th>
<th>Percentage of students seconded or sponsored</th>
<th>Number of postgraduate students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seconded</td>
<td>Sponsored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 98–99</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 99–00</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 00–01</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 01–02</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 02–03</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 03–04</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 03–04</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 04–05</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 05–06</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 06–07</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 9 Levels and trends of GYO among postgraduate students, 1998–2006**
to be supported by an employer. By contrast, the proportion of full-time students who were seconded or sponsored increased only slightly from 1998 to 2004 (from 6 to 13 per cent), with the highest proportion observed in the last cohort of the DipSW. With the introduction of the degree the proportion increased from 7 to 12 per cent; however, it dropped to 4 per cent among the last cohort of students (2006\(^8\)). The interviews and background literature place these trends in context: notably the increase in the overall student numbers since the new degree, the greater availability of bursaries for non-GYO students and the encouragement of school leavers.

These findings can be further illuminated by consideration of trends in the three modes of delivery of the social work qualification. Table 10 shows the distribution of all students according to full-time, part-time and distance learning and by year of registration, showing first the distribution of non-GYO students across the three modes, and then the distribution of GYO students.

Distinctively, non-GYO students have remained predominantly full-time over the last 10 years (ranging from 82 to 98 per cent), while by contrast a high proportion of GYO students are on the part-time and distance learning routes. During the DipSW the proportion of GYO students studying full-time ranged from 18 to 32 per cent, although since the degree the proportion has increased, ranging from 43 to 67 per cent (although it should be noted that 2006 is missing data on OU students).

The results clearly show a peak in distance learning, particularly among GYO students, during the last cohort of the DipSW, where 30 per cent of all social work students were enrolled in distance learning mode (63 per cent of GYO students and only 9 per cent of non-GYO students). Since the introduction of the degree the percentage categorised as distance learning is almost negligible, but can be attributed to changes in the way the GSCC record data. Under the DipSW, OU students were included within the “distance” category but with the advent of the degree they are

![Figure 2 Trends in GYO as a proportion of students, according to whether full- or part-time, 1998–2005](image.png)

\(^8\): Not shown in graph as data on this cohort were not complete at the time of analysis.
recorded as full-time (Evaluation of the new social work degree qualification in England, 2008). In addition, the later introduction of the new degree at the OU reduced student numbers in 2003 and 2004.

The increasing popularity of “blended learning” approaches, in which teaching is provided both through online and face-to-face delivery, may mean that the distinctions between modes of study will become increasingly blurred (Evaluation of the new social work degree qualification in England, 2008).

Table 10 Distribution of all social work students by mode of study and whether they were GYO students and year of registration, 1998–2006⁹ (NB: 2006 is missing OU students under the “Full-time” and “Total” columns.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whether GYO and year</th>
<th>Mode of study</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-GYO students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 98–99</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 99–00</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 00–01</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 01–02</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 02–03</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 03–04</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 03–04</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 04–05</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 05–06</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 06–07</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GYO students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 98–99</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 99–00</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 00–01</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 01–02</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 02–03</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 03–04</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 03–04</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 04–05</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 05–06</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 06–07</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁹: Total percentages slightly below or above 100% are due to rounding, as the agreed format did not include any decimal places.
then rose sharply to 42 per cent during the last DipSW cohort in 2003. At the start of the new degree the proportion of employment-based students was only 9 per cent; however, it increased to 18 per cent in 2005. Again, this is due to the OU distance learning route not offering the new degree until 2005 and the fact that the last cohort data (2006–07) does not include the OU students.

**Regional variations in GYO**

Table 12 presents the levels and trends of GYO in different geographical regions in England between 1998 and 2007. The regions represent the location of the HEI, rather than the students' workplace. However, participants confirmed that students are likely to study in HEIs close to their home and workplace. Distance learning students are coded as a “national” category, as courses do not take place entirely in a specific region and are not included here.

The results show significant variations over time, both between regions and within regions. Levels of GYO students tended to be highest in the North-east, South-east and London, correlating with areas known to face significant vacancy levels. Levels were lowest in the South-west and Yorkshire & Humberside regions. Significant variations can be observed, including a huge surge to 80 per cent in the North-east during the last cohort of the DipSW, which may relate to particular efforts to enable non-graduate staff to qualify in two years, and a surge to 51 per cent in the South-east in 2005–06.

**Students’ characteristics and GYO**

In this section we will examine the levels of GYO according to different student characteristics, including gender, age, any reported disability, ethnicity and previous educational level.

### Table 11 Distribution of all social work students, whether college or employment based, 1998–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year and award</th>
<th>Type of social work route</th>
<th>Number of all SW students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College based</td>
<td>Employment based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 98–99</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 99–00</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 00–01</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 01–02</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 02–03</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 03–04</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 03–04</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 04–05</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 05–06</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 06–07</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(excluding OU)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10: May not add to 100% due to missing values.
Gender and GYO

It is well known that women are over-represented in social work education in general, with the total number of (GYO and non-GYO) male social work students falling yearly from 22 per cent in 1998 to 15 per cent in 2006 (Evaluation of the new social work degree qualification in England, 2008). By contrast, the proportion of men on GYO schemes has been consistently higher, although it has also shown a declining trend over the last 10 years. In the last six years of the DipSW (1998–2004), the percentage of GYO students who were men fell incrementally from 29 to 21 per cent, compared to a fall from 21 to 18 per cent for non-GYO men students. However, in the first four years of the new degree the proportion of men on GYO has ranged between 20 and 22 per cent, while levels of men amongst non-GYO students declined slightly from 16 to 14 per cent.

Using Pearson chi-square and Fisher Exact tests, the differences in the distribution of GYO students by gender were significant on p-level <0.005 with few exceptions. During the last DipSW cohort these differences were not significant and during the first two cohorts of the new degree such differences were only of borderline significance. This means that there were more or less equal distributions of men and women among those who were seconded or not during these three cohorts. However, men became significantly over-represented again among those who were seconded during the last two cohorts of the degree (05–06 and 06–07).

Age and GYO

Prior to the introduction of the new degree, the mean age of all social work students (GYO and non-GYO) was on the increase, from 32.6 years in 1998–99 to 42.5 years among the final DipSW cohort in 2003–04. The mean age of the first cohort of the new degree dropped sharply to 31.8 years and started a declining trend to reach 29.8 years for the latest cohort of 2006–07 (such differences were significant: F=155.6; p-value=0.000).

GYO students (seconded or sponsored) were consistently older than non-GYO students for all the DipSW and new degree academic cohorts between 1998 and 2007. Over this period, students who were seconded had the highest mean age, ranging from 36.5

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Table 12 Percentage of GYO students by region and year of registration, 1998–2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>DipSW 98–99</th>
<th>99–00</th>
<th>00–01</th>
<th>01–02</th>
<th>02–03</th>
<th>DipSW 03–04</th>
<th>Degree 04–05</th>
<th>05–06</th>
<th>06–07</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-east</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-west</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-east</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-west</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire &amp; Humberside</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

& Humberside

*11: Total percentages slightly below or above 100% are due to rounding, as the agreed format did not include any decimal places.*
to 38.7 years, while the mean age among those who were sponsored was only slightly lower, ranging from 35.8 to 37.7 years. These compared to a mean age ranging from 29.1 to 32.8 years among non-GYO students.

There is a noticeable trend since the introduction of the new degree: among DipSW students from 1998–2004, seconded students were on average 6.1 years older, and sponsored students 5.2 years older, than non-GYO students. Since the start of the degree this age gap has widened slightly, with both seconded and sponsored students on average 7 years older than non-GYO students. This increasing age difference reflects the withdrawal of the minimum age entry level for the new degree of 22 years, and the fact that GYO students are more likely to have experience in the social care workforce prior to entering study. This may pose challenges for seconded or sponsored students in relation to their non-GYO peers, and these issues of their “fit” with the wider student cohort and of peer support were highlighted in the qualitative interviews (see Drawing on peer support, page 10 and Impact of students on the classroom, page 80).

Self-reported disabilities and GYO

Students’ registration forms included information on whether they considered themselves to have a disability. It should be noted that this measure of levels of disability is not an indication of whether students have declared this disability to employers, or are receiving Disabled Students’ Allowances. There are some limitations to this information: first, students tend not to respond to this question, with 9 per cent of all students not providing information about their disability status, compared to 0.1 per cent for information on gender and age. Second, and perhaps more importantly, information on disability is collected at the onset of the courses, while in many cases students may discover, or disclose, some forms of disability during their courses, or at a later stage, when in the workplace. Sometimes social work students and professionals choose not to disclose unseen disabilities, for fear that it will damage their opportunities for professional progression (Stanley et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, this GSCC information provides the most accurate record available on disability levels among social work students. The analysis considered if students reported any form of disability, which may be a physical impairment or any unseen form of disability, such as mental health problems or dyslexia. The proportion of all social work students (GYO and non-GYO) with a self-reported disability was almost uniform across all cohorts between 1998 and 2007, at around one-tenth. An exception to this is the most recent cohort of the degree, 2006–07, where only 5 per cent of students reported any form of disability. The proportion of students with any self-reported disability was slightly lower among GYO students prior to the introduction of the new degree: GYO students reporting a disability ranged between 8 and 10 per cent, compared to between 10 and 12 per cent amongst non-GYO students. Since 2004, both GYO and non-GYO levels of reporting converged at 10 per cent and then fell to 5 per cent in 2006–07.

Ethnicity and GYO

Table 13 shows trends in the distribution of all social work students (GYO and non-GYO) by ethnicity from 1998 to 2007. Before the introduction of the new degree the distribution was almost constant, with white UK students forming from 76 to 79 per cent of students, white other from 2 to 3 per cent, Asian around 5 per cent, Black from 11 to 13 per cent and mixed and other ethnicities less than 5 per cent. In the first four years of the new degree (2003–07), there has been a marked increase in the proportion of students identifying
To examine whether these differences were significant we used chi-square tests, (presented in Table 14, Appendix B). They confirm that such observations are significant for all the new degree cohorts except the very first one (2003–04), when less than half of HEIs were offering the new degree. There were also significant differences in the ethnicity distributions observed on the last two cohorts of the DipSW (2002–03 and 2003–04). These were similarly related to a higher representation of white UK students and a lower representation of Black students among GYO students. Parallel observations were noted during some earlier DipSW cohorts (namely 1999–2000 and 2000–01), but on a lower significant level (p-value <0.05), indicating that such variations are long established but appear to be strengthening with time.

**Educational background and GYO**

Students provided information on their previous educational level at the time of their enrolment for their social work qualification. Education level at registration time was themselves as Black (between 16 and 18 per cent), with a corresponding drop in white UK students (between 69 and 72 per cent).

Figure 3 (page 42) presents the distribution of GYO (either seconded or sponsored) and non-GYO students by ethnicity and registration year. For each academic cohort the first stacked column (solid colours) presents the distribution by gender among non-GYO students while the second stacked column (patterned colours) presents the distribution among GYO students. Figure 3 shows that in some academic years the ethnic distributions of both groups are more or less similar, while in other academic years, particularly the more recent ones, there are some clear differences between GYO and other students. These differences are mainly related to the higher representation of white UK students and the lower representation of Black students among GYO students since the full roll-out of the degree in 2004–05, although this may always have been the case (Wallis-Jones & Lyons, 1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registration year &amp; award</th>
<th>White (UK)</th>
<th>White (other)</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 98–99</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 99–00</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 00–01</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 01–02</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 02–03</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 03–04</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 03–04</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 04–05</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 05–06</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 06–07</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4894</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12: Total percentages slightly below or above 100% are due to rounding, as the agreed format did not include any decimal places.
recoded as: O level or equivalent, A level or equivalent, diploma and any previous degree (however, 5.7 per cent of students registered from 1998–2007 did not provide this information).

For all social work students (GYO and non-GYO), a declining trend in the proportion of students entering social work education with only O level or equivalent was observed (from 11 per cent in 1998–99 to only 3 per cent in 2006–07). In contrast, a relatively large proportion of students enter social work education with a previous degree (consistently over 30 per cent between 1998–2003). However, there was some fluctuation in this proportion around the transition from DipSW to the new degree, with a higher than average proportion of students with a previous degree enrolled for the final DipSW cohort. This may be linked to the surge of secondment rates observed during the same year, and will be explored later in this section. During the last DipSW cohort (2003–04), 44 per cent of students had a previous degree, in comparison to 32 per cent the previous year and only 15 per cent among those who undertook the new degree during the same academic year. Since the introduction of the new degree an increasing trend of the proportion of students who have A levels or equivalent was observed. Again, this may be linked to the fact that since the introduction of the new degree students tend to be younger and is in line with the new degree requirements in relation to minimum qualifications. The proportion of students who held a diploma or equivalent before enrolment stayed more or less the same, with a slight reduction since the new degree (ranging from 19 to 26 per cent).

In comparison to these overall levels of previous educational attainment amongst all social work students, there are distinctive trends in the levels of previous educational attainment of GYO students between 1998 and

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13: O level or equivalent: O level, National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) 2 and non-certified learning; A level or equivalent: A level, NVQ3 and NVQ4; “Diploma”: higher or other diploma; Degree; Postgraduate degree.
Such variations and change of patterns since the introduction of the new degree may suggest a tightening in the GYO selection processes, where those who are already academically experienced stand greater chances of being seconded to the new degree. Some of the qualitative findings highlighted similar issues of changing trends in the selection of GYO students on the basis of academic achievement, with implications for negative impact on widening participation among people who have not had access to higher education (see Widening access to the profession, page 83).

Variations in the characteristics of GYO students

In the previous sections we showed how students’ characteristics vary between those who were GYO students or not, with several patterns and differences distinguishable before and after the introduction of the new degree. In this section we aim to gain a better understanding of how these different characteristics, such as age, gender and geographical region, interact with and influence the profile of GYO students.

If we examine the differences in the proportion of GYO and non-GYO students who previously had either a diploma or a degree we find that during the DipSW the proportion was between 1 and 13 per cent higher among non-GYO. This has been reversed since the introduction of the new degree, with the proportion of those holding a diploma or a degree between 7 to 19 per cent higher among GYO students than non-GYO students.

At the introduction of the new degree there remained higher proportions of GYO students with the lowest level of previous qualifications (O level or equivalent), although this has declined over the four academic cohorts to the same level as non-GYO students, at only 3 per cent of students in 2006–07.
with being on GYO schemes. Being a woman, young, from a BME group or having any self-reported disability, all significantly reduce the chances of being a GYO student. The effect of gender seems to slightly decline since the introduction of the new degree; however, it is still significant.

**DURING THE DIPSW, 1998–2003**

In order to examine how different characteristics influence the chances of a person being seconded or sponsored we constructed a binary logistic regression model. The outcome of the model (the dependent variable) is the binary variable of being a GYO student (seconded or sponsored), while the exploratory factors (independent variables) are those examined in the previous section: mode of study, programme type, geographical region, age, gender, self-reported disability, ethnicity and educational level at time of enrolment. This model will focus on those students enrolled on the DipSW from 1998–2007.

A logistic regression model enables the examination of the effect of each of the explanatory factors while controlling for the others, thus eliminating possible confounding effect(s). For example, if men tend to be older, then entering both age and gender into the model will expose the effect of age while controlling for gender; thus the results will indicate only the real significant associations.

Table 16 presents the results of a forward Wald binary logistic regression model examining the association between the variables listed above and the probability of being a GYO student on the DipSW (1998–2004); the model explains around 58 per cent of variance observed. Since distance learning students are included twice in the model, first through the mode of study and second through geographical area, the results related to them are only presented once under the former. All significant variables are highlighted in bold and italics in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education at time of enrolment</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme type</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported disability</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study mode</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p-value <0.05; ** p-value <0.005
Table 16 Results of logistic regression model\(^\text{14}\) examining the probability of being a GYO student among DipSW students, GCCC records 1998–2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables in the model</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% confidence interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Odds ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode (ref: PT)</strong></td>
<td>0.000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distance</strong></td>
<td>0.002</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Full-time</strong></td>
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<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme (ref: UG)</strong></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-graduate</strong></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postgraduate</strong></td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College vs. employment based</strong></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women vs. men</strong></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.19</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age at entry</strong></td>
<td>0.000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity (ref: White UK)</strong></td>
<td>0.218</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White other</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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<td>1.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No disability vs. any disability</strong></td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>0.19</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cohort (ref: 2003–04)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>98–99</td>
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<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99–00</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00–01</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01–02</td>
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<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02–03</td>
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<td>0.19</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education (ref: Degree)</strong></td>
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<td>O level or equivalent</td>
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<td>0.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>A level or equivalent</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
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<td>0.19</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Region (ref: Eastern)</strong></td>
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<td>0.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>0.047</td>
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<td>London</td>
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<td>North-east</td>
<td>0.562</td>
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<td>North-west</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-east</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-west</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and Humberside</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{14}\) Hosmer and Lemeshow test $\chi^2 = 13.2$; p-value = 0.105; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.578$
Table 16 shows that each of the following is significantly associated with the probability of being a GYO student for DipSW awards: mode of study, programme type, employment status, age, gender, registration year and region. Ethnicity, any reported disability and educational level at entry were all found to be not significantly associated with the probability of being seconded or sponsored, when controlling for other variables. This means that the likelihood of being on a GYO scheme is similar between students from different ethnic backgrounds, for those with or without any reported disability and with any level of educational background.

As one may expect, the likelihood of GYO students being enrolled in distance learning or part-time courses is significantly much higher than that they would be in full-time courses, regardless of all other characteristics. The odds ratio for a seconded student to be enrolled in a full-time course is 0.19 (p-value = 0.000; they are five times less likely to be in a full-time course than non-GYO students) when compared to being on a part-time course. Similarly, GYO students are significantly more likely to be in employment-based courses; the odds ratio for a seconded student to be college based is also 0.19 (they are five times less likely to be college based than non-GYO students).

DipSW GYO students were significantly more likely to be in non-graduate courses and significantly less likely to be in postgraduate courses when compared to undergraduate courses. This means that the most likely route for seconded students was, by and large, the non-graduate courses, followed by undergraduate, with the least likely being postgraduate.

There are relatively more men on GYO schemes than in social work courses in general; the logistic regression model clearly indicates that these observations are both systematic and significant. This means that men are more likely to be on GYO schemes (OR = 1.25, p-value = 0.000) than women when compared to levels of non-GYO students. Similarly, older students have significantly higher chances of being GYO students (each year of age increased the probability of being seconded by 5 per cent).

As mentioned above, distance learning students are coded (mainly OU) as a separate “national” category in relation to geographical location; thus, the following discussion excludes all distance learning students. Regionally, the highest probability of GYO was found in London (OR = 1.39), which was higher than that in the Eastern, South-east and North-east regions (levels of GYO in the last three regions do not vary significantly between each other and were similar to a reference category of OR = 1), while the level of GYO was significantly lowest in the North-west, with an odds ratio of 0.32, meaning that students in the North-west region were three times less likely to be on GYO schemes when compared to the reference category of students being in the Eastern region.

**New degree (2003–06) and GYO**

To examine the association between all students’ characteristics and the probability of being a GYO student since the introduction of the new degree, a similar binary logit regression model was constructed. However, because of the small number of new degree students now distinguishable on distance learning routes (OU students are now classed as full-time), we were not able to construct them as a comparable group and thus they were excluded from the analysis. Table 17 (page 48) presents the results of this model:
Similar to that observed during the DipSW, and not surprisingly, the probability of GYO is significantly higher among employment-based students, as well as those studying part-time. In terms of differentials in relation to successive academic cohorts, in each successive year since the introduction of the new degree there was a significant increase in the number of GYO students. The highest probability of GYO was observed among the academic cohort 2005–06; however, it is expected that the last cohort would have had even higher probabilities if the OU information were included.

However, unlike during the DipSW, a greater number of personal characteristics can be identified as more prevalent amongst GYO students. Education level, ethnicity and any reported disability were all found to be significantly associated with the probability of being seconded or sponsored to the new degree, even when controlling for all other variables.

Significant association was observed in relation to students’ ethnicity. Asian students had the highest odds ratio of being on GYO schemes, followed by white, then white other and mixed, with the least likely being Black students. When compared to white students, Asian students were one and a half times more likely to be seconded (p-value = 0.003), while Black students were three times less likely to be seconded (p-value = 0.000). While we know that the proportion of adult social care workers who identify themselves as Black is around 10 per cent, while Asian is only 3 per cent (Eborall and Griffiths, 2008), as the qualitative findings indicate, GYO schemes targeting students on the basis of ethnicity are rare.
Table 17 Results of Forward Wald logit binary regression model\textsuperscript{15} examining the association between different characteristics and the probability of being a GYO student since the introduction of the new degree, 2004–06

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanatory variables in the model</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
<th>95.0% C.I. for odds ratio</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Education (ref: Degree)</em></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>O level or equivalent</td>
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<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.62</td>
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<td><em>A level or equivalent</em></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
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<td><em>Diploma</em></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cohort (ref: 2003–04)</em></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004–05</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–06</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006–07</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post vs. undergraduate</td>
<td>0.479</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>No disability vs. any disability</em></td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ethnicity (ref: White UK)</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.432</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Age</em></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Women vs. men</em></td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>College vs. employment based</em></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Full- vs. part-time</em></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.30</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Region (ref: Eastern)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>0.996</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.77</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>North-east</em></td>
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<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.36</td>
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<td><em>North-west</em></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.13</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>South-east</em></td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>South-west</em></td>
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<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.54</td>
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<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>0.310</td>
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<td>0.67</td>
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<td><em>Yorkshire and Humberside</em></td>
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<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{15}: Omnibus $\chi^2 = 5395.8$, p-value = 0.000; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.542$
Since the introduction of the new degree, those with middle-level qualifications were significantly less likely to be GYO students, something not observed during the DipSW cohorts. Table 17 shows that students with A levels or equivalent before entering their courses were twice less likely, while those with a “diploma” were one and a half times less likely, to be GYO students than those with a degree. On the other hand, the chances of students with the lowest level of qualifications, O level or equivalent, to be GYO students did not significantly differ from those observed among students with a degree. The higher chances of those with the lowest level of prior qualifications to be on GYO schemes reflects the continued, although threatened, use of GYO activity as “a successful tool for training up experienced staff who had missed out on educational opportunities” (see Widening access to the profession, page 83). However, those at the other end of the spectrum, with a previous degree, were also more likely to be on GYO schemes, reflecting the trend to attract students with proven academic potential.

Another characteristic that is significantly associated with the probability of being a GYO student since the introduction of the new degree, is having any self-reported disability. Students who reported having no disability were significantly more likely to be on GYO schemes than those who reported any forms of disability (OR = 1.27 and p-value = 0.35). Again, the association between reported disability and the probability of being on GYO schemes was not as significant during the DipSW cohorts.

**GYO and progression**

GYO students were significantly more likely than non-GYO students to progress on time (complete their studies at the first attempt) during the DipSW during the period 1995–98 (Hussein et al., 2007) (see Methods, page 12) for definitions of progression, which is used in this study as “passing at first attempt”). There is some information on the progression of students up to the 2004–05 cohort; however, this information is incomplete. Results are available for almost all students up to the DipSW 03–04 cohort but for the first two new degree cohorts (2003–05) there was information for 92 per cent of non-GYO students, compared to 84 per cent (2003–04) and 63 per cent (2004–05) of GYO students. This is due to the fact that the majority of GYO students are part-time and, by definition, these routes take longer to finish.

The distinctive differences between GYO and non-GYO student results at first attempt, by year and type of award, are presented in Figure 4 (overleaf). GYO students tend to have higher pass rates, lower deferral rates, lower withdrawal rates and lower failure rates; however, they tend to have similar or higher referral rates, particularly during the last cohort of the DipSW (2003–04).16

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16: GSCC data records whether students pass, fail, defer, refer or withdraw. **Referral** is defined as when a student is permitted to retake an assessment without attendance at class, as a second attempt following initial failure. **Deferral** is defined as when a student is permitted to take an assessment at a later opportunity. It should be noted that variations in these definitions exist within different HEIs.
The high proportion of GYO students who were referred during the last cohort of the DipSW (twice as high as other years) may support the assumption that employers rushed to second or sponsor higher than average numbers of their staff in anticipation of the introduction of the new degree, which is longer and more expensive. This perhaps included some students who were not ready to undertake the course and thus many of them were required to repeat some pieces of work. High levels of deferrals among GYO students may also be linked to the fact that the same group is more likely to have the lowest qualification level – O level or equivalent – and therefore have less experience of higher education.

However, overall, GYO students progress faster than non-GYO students, being more likely to pass and much less likely to withdraw from courses, with such differences significant for each cohort when tested using Pearson chi-square tests. The fact that GYO students are less likely to withdraw may be directly related to their relatively more secure economic position, experience, support, or stringent acceptance processes.

Context/presures and their impact on GYO

This section outlines the context of and the pressures on GYO activity that shape the levels and trends observed in the statistical analysis, from the perspectives of different interview participants.

Levels of GYO activity

Employers had up to four models of GYO running concurrently, but on average they had two parallel models: usually a secondment scheme for internal staff and a traineeship scheme recruiting external trainees (see Descriptions and characteristics of different types of GYO, page 27). They described GYO schemes as coming and going over the years, but half had “always” had some level of GYO.

17: Total percentages slightly below or above 100% are due to rounding, as the agreed format did not include any decimal places.
18: A number of the employer organisations targeted by this study were selected because of their distinctive investment in GYO, and therefore the levels and range of types of GYO activity are likely to be marginally greater than national averages.
activity, albeit often low levels, unco-ordinated and led by requests from individual staff members.

One-third had recently closed down GYO models. The flexibility, shorter timescales and cost meant GYO investment had occasionally been dropped by employers in favour of using “golden hellos”:

“[The authority] for the last few years, they’ve done a mixture of sending a few secondees and using a bursary scheme... the programme of people that they’d selected to be seconded tended not to do so well, it started to seem like not such a good investment... they withdrew from the scheme and moved to this system of sponsoring people in their third year.”

HEI 3

Over half of employers had **recently cut back on the overall number of places on schemes.** One employer had stopped GYO altogether and instead temporarily funded a post to promote alternative recruitment and retention activities. However, some employers, particularly those with high vacancy levels, were **confident that GYO would receive continued investment.**

A minority of employers described their GYO schemes as **designed to fulfil particular objectives**, whereas most viewed GYO activity as **evolving incrementally**, perhaps positively informed by learning, or negatively by budget cuts:

“Schemes have evolved organically, and these themes [use of GYO to target specific workforce gaps] have not been reflected upon.”

Participant at SfC regional meeting

“Each year we actually have an evaluation of the traineeship process. And we get everybody back together that’s taken part in it, to evaluate what worked and what didn’t, and what we should do next time. And that’s how it’s come out as it is now... developing on an on-going basis.”

LA 2

Echoing these findings, **half of HEIs reported reductions in levels of GYO activity** in the last few years. On average, HEIs had five employers (LAs in the main) sponsoring students on their courses, with the numbers of students sponsored by those organisations ranging from large GYO cohorts to individual students. Only **two HEIs reported recent expansion in their GYO levels**, with one HEI now offering an EBR that had not previously been available in the locality, designed to meet existing demand from local agencies.

The rest felt that **GYO was fluctuating but at more or less the same level.** Some reported an increased intake at the end of the DipSW, to take advantage of a shorter, cheaper qualifying route; however, other employers chose to withhold GYO investment during the transition to the degree:

“We didn’t run another DipSW because we felt we need to get into the degree... you don’t always want to be putting somebody on something that is not going to be relevant by the time they come off, just about to become obsolete.”

LA 14

For HEIs working with a range of sponsors, the **yearly variations in GYO levels** from different agencies would often balance each other, and therefore stabilise the total GYO intake level. For other HEIs, the overall levels are **proportionally small enough to be rapidly adjusted** with more direct entry candidates.
Not surprisingly, HEIs working with a significant intake from a single agency or proportionally higher levels of GYO intake overall, find fluctuations are more difficult to adjust to:

“We get the majority of their students... they vary and that can cause a problem... in the sense that we have to plan for these modules and suddenly you find that they are not going to put people on... It does change all the time.”

HEI 16

The impact on HEIs is not just about the student numbers and fee income of a single intake, but can have long-term effects on staff levels and stability (see HEI recruitment and selection processes, page 98).

Separation of adults and children’s services

The separation of adults and children’s services was described by HEIs as having both a short-term impact, by distracting attention and investment away from GYO, and as generating more significant long-term uncertainty about the types and numbers of social workers required:

“I cancelled an intake... because there were insufficient numbers, and that is all because of the reorganisation and change going on... It is such a long-term investment their managers are not clear where the need is... because of the way in which services are being reconfigured.”

HEI 17

Speculating about future investment in GYO, several HEIs and employers expressed concerns that, since the separation of adults and children’s services, emerging non-social work-led departments would devalue investment in GYO. They saw future children’s and adults social care workforce development as coming under greater strategic influence from their respective education and health partners, with less potential for shared training across the different areas of social care:

“I’m not sure that people from those sorts of backgrounds [education, housing] would value social work in the same sort of way, and put [in] the same sort of level of resources.”

LA 8

Where GYO levels of investment are differentiated between adults and children’s departments, the existing trend is for reduced activity within those for adults. Some employers ascribed this to lower vacancy levels, although one HEI felt it was due to broader financial pressures on adult services.

However, the new funding allocation for social care workforce training between adults and children’s services may contribute to the emerging pressures on children’s social care workforce development budgets, which several participants described as being stretched to accommodate an enlarged, multi-disciplinary children’s workforce (see also Funding for GYO activity, page 54):

“Following the creation of a Children’s Services Department (CSD), the responsibility for training a much wider workforce has devolved onto us, whereas the old NTSG was solely for social work and social care training... In the merger, none of the organisations joining the CSD apart from ourselves [former Social Services] had training officers or specific training budgets, so we have been expected to spread ourselves much thinner... For the coming year we have been bailed out by Adult Services, who have agreed to put the whole budget into the pot for all training, but only for a year.”

Written submission
Changes to workforce development teams
A by-product of the separation of children’s and adults services in LAs has been in some cases the disappearance of a central workforce development team. HEIs described this as causing administrative duplication, and a loss of flexibility in managing placements and job allocations, thus increasing the complexity of organising GYO activity:

“There may not be social workers down the line, who knows, in five years’ time, we will be practitioners or something or other... there is a lot of change afoot... we’d have to adapt and change with it, I think that would be the way it would go.”

HEI 16

Decline in social work vacancies
Half the employers interviewed described the recent social work “recruitment crisis” as an impetus for increased investment in GYO. This was due both to the increased central government funding for social care workforce training that it triggered (see Funding for GYO activity, page 54) and because the underspend from salaries could be released to fund more GYO places and more generous “backfill” payments (see Replacement staffing (backfill), page 126):

“There was also a brief period of [central government] giving us money for staff replacement... a huge amount of money in fact, which we were claiming... I don’t think that is still available... [Now] they’re not paying the staff replacement... Team managers are feeling that they can’t support staff without it having a cost on them and their teams were quite angry actually in the beginning.”

LA 14

Future need for social workers
Both HEIs and employers felt that another factor in reduced GYO investment was uncertainty over the future levels of need for social workers, particularly among LAs, in the face of increased contracting-out of services. They predicted a further remodelling of teams to reduce levels of qualified social work staff, with the graduate social worker as a more “rarefied” role amongst other types of worker:

“Where we are with our [GYO] scheme is that we need to review it to see whether or not we should be growing social workers, or whether there are other types of workers that could be usefully developed through these means: care applicators, community outreach workers who are going to be looking after elderly people in the home, those sorts of workers, as well as a whole range of workers in children’s social care.”

LA 5

HEIs anticipated adapting their GYO provision to fit any new roles required, working with new sponsoring organisations and potentially having to adjust to smaller GYO social worker cohorts:

“Training sections keep a really good eye on [GYO], but very often a training section doesn’t exist [now] it’s a private organisation or you’re... talking now to probably three or four organisations... children and adults, mental health... it gets more complex.”

HEI 10

HEIs anticipated adapting their GYO provision to fit any new roles required, working with new sponsoring organisations and potentially having to adjust to smaller GYO social worker cohorts:
Most employers described their vacancy levels as now declining, although this often meant that distinct pockets of vacancies were more apparent. Several predicted that lower vacancy levels, combined with expectations of a larger cohort of graduates from the increased intake into the new degree, will reduce the need for future GYO investment, but it was noted that there was uncertainty about the proportion of the new social workers that will remain within the profession: “Particularly now as the labour market’s beginning to tighten up and the new degree is kicking in, in terms of generating higher numbers of qualified social workers, I wouldn’t be surprised if the number of GYO schemes started to wither in the coming years as they did in the late 70s and early 80s... We’ll see how many people are completing and want to remain in practice, because that’s a bit untested.”

LA 8

In considering future possible trends in vacancies, a quarter of employers mentioned their ageing workforce as requiring consideration: “I don’t think they’ll abandon the schemes because that would be very short-sighted, and in around 10–15 years we’ve got a huge number of people coming to retirement age... something like a third of the workforce in social care... We’ve got to be mindful of that as well, and plan for that.”

LA 4

One HEI noted that particular sponsoring agencies have consistently faced greater recruitment challenges, and were therefore more committed to long-term investment in GYO activity: “There are certain authorities who’ve had difficulty recruiting because of their geographical space... one that’s very rural and in an area where there are not very exciting cities or towns, so getting... students to go and stay and work there has always been hard... Another authority... they’re having to compete with rather more prestigious cities, so they feel they have to have a GYO initiative.”

HEI 11

However, as another HEI noted, agencies with particularly acute vacancy levels, which might benefit most from long-term investment in GYO, might be less likely to make the initial step of releasing people to study from the front line: “If they are short of staff, frontline staff, they are not going to send away four or five people to train.”

HEI 15

Funding for GYO activity

Half the employers said that the 2003–04 injection of ring-fenced funding for traineeship schemes from the NTSG had prompted a surge in their GYO investment: “Initially there was the Training and Support Programme and that began to make funds available, then there was the National Training Strategy Grant, and the Human Resources Development Grant made available to support workforce development initiatives, so those grants, I think, have really made a difference.”

LA 5

Damaging scandals and the call for residential staff to be qualified were other contributing factors behind an injection of GYO activity:
“So sometimes there’s been money around for special funding... The time that I went [on GYO] was after Frank Beck[19] and the pin-down enquiries... it was one of the findings that we had to improve the training.”

LA 14

Although government funding for social care workforce training overall has increased since 2003–04, several LAs described the removal of ring-fencing of the GYO allocation as leading to GYO budget cuts:

“It used to come out of the National Training Strategy Grant but now it is just part of the core money we get paid to the local authority from the Government... this is a problem. The Government might think they are spending money on this but it is not necessarily getting through... Cynically I would say it gets used to reduce council tax.”

LA 15

GYO activity was described by almost all the LAs as permanently vulnerable to budgetary reviews:

“I’m continuously told [GYO] isn’t gonna happen the next year, but I’ve been told that since 2004.”

LA 2

This was echoed by the experiences of HEIs working with LA sponsors. They had had last-minute cancellations due to budget cuts and reallocation of GYO resources to cover operational short-falls:

“A big factor is funding for [GYO] and the amount of money that is available and... the rules that go with that money, particularly coming from the Department of Health... The will is there in local authorities, but a number of times I have heard... ‘Sorry, I know in November we were talking about sponsorships but there won’t be any this year... there is a bigger financial issue’.”

HEI 6

New trends were evolving as research was undertaken, due to the announcement of changes to central government funding for social care workforce training in England (see information box within section on research context, page 19) and to children’s services. This had already generated new uncertainty about future GYO spending plans:

“We are waiting to hear what will replace the NTSG from April 2008 before deciding what to do.”

Participant at SfC regional meeting

While some contributors to this research were not able to predict the impact of this announcement on plans for investment, some LAs, following the announcement, could confirm their arrangements for the following year's GYO intake. Several had secured a commitment to supplement the children's workforce training allocation from the adults workforce training allocation, or from alternative budgets within the organisation. However, these arrangements were described as interim, and not secure beyond the next year's GYO intake.

Move to cheaper models of GYO

One of the trends emerging from employers is an interest in exploring cheaper models of GYO, including distance learning, because this means that less staff time is spent out of the workforce, as well as routes to which GYO students contribute (see Resource implications, page 124). While some employers were aware that one route to qualifying might not suit all potential candidates, they had decided to retain a single option for budgetary reasons:

“We are aware of the fact that distance learning isn’t for everybody… but they don’t get a choice of [routes], we decide.”

LA 7

Several employers and HEIs described the two-year postgraduate route as the cheapest GYO option for employers. This was related to it being the shortest route to qualification and therefore offering the fastest “return” on employers’ investment, in the absence of fast-track routes and possibilities for using AP(E)L to gain credits for practice. This trend may divert investment away from slower routes for those non-graduates who require additional support:

“It’s cheaper to recruit Masters students because you only have to study for two years… that’s quite attractive.”

LA 6

“Distance learning is obviously the cheapest route in terms of the direct costs, but then you have to balance that out with all the time it takes for somebody to complete their training and return as a qualified worker… that is why I am aware there is an interest in supporting people on the Masters route; much quicker turnaround from managers’ perspective.”

LA 11

GYO postgraduate schemes

As well as increasing interest in postgraduate options because of their faster return rate of graduates to the workforce, two LAs had established postgraduate GYO options in recognition of the fact that the national expansion of degree level study had led to a higher prevalence of graduates in their social care workforce. Undergraduate-only schemes could deter existing graduates and therefore could be seen as undermining “equal opportunities” of access to GYO.

The emerging trend of shifting investment from current staff to external recruits had been prompted by national funding to bring “new blood” into the workforce, but was also described by several employers as linked to a desire to promote “excellence”, “quality” or “professionalism” within the workforce. They prioritised candidates with prior academic achievement. Consequently, predominately non-graduate internal candidates are failing to secure places when competing against external candidates. This could lead to tensions:

“Sometimes managers said, ‘Why don’t we just go with the Masters because the quality may well be better and it’s cheaper?’… [but] if we only accept Masters students we are closing the doors to lots of people… The Director was very clear, she wanted the absolute best… With the last cohort, none of [the internal candidates] were [the best]… We no longer gatekeep posts for internal staff so somebody who already works in [LA 6]… they apply on the open market with the 500 that are applicants. That was very unpopular. We’ve had people who have worked in the authority for years… their chances have been reduced significantly… It’s very difficult for them to move on into a career in social work.”

LA 6

Two LAs described the loss of protected places for internal staff, and the reduction in the diversity of the previous educational attainment of their GYO students, as an inevitable outcome:

“It’s a fact of life, isn’t it? It’s a profession.”

LA 10
GYO or recruit “new blood”?
GYO activity has always been a method for recruiting new social workers by tapping into, and investing in, the potential of existing social care workforce members. Employers described how recent national trends supporting the development of “traineeship” schemes (see Research context, page 15) have shifted the emphasis of GYO towards expanding the overall social care workforce by targeting GYO students from outside the employer organisation.

Amongst employers, there was still an emphasis on the importance of offering professional development opportunities through GYO for internal candidates, with GYO places provided by all but one employer. By contrast, only half of employers offered GYO opportunities for external candidates. However, several of these organisations had recently withdrawn ring-fenced places for internal staff, and as a result those competing against external candidates were failing to secure places. This was acknowledged as a source of tension, as long-standing social care staff might judge that externally recruited GYO students had “taken” their opportunities for professional development:

“We... sponsor a combination of internal and external candidates... we have never set a figure to say ‘We are holding, say, six places [for internal staff]’. We have talked about whether we should do that but we decided we should just go for ‘the best’... You don’t want your existing workforce to feel they are losing out... at the same time we don’t want to favour them because we do want to get in ‘new blood’.”
LA 11

Several employers expressed frustration that, in the face of national recruitment campaigns to draw new blood into the social work profession, new funding for GYO is not targeted at the existing social care workforce, to support talented and committed practitioners unable to access qualifying training:

“That is the frustration, that enough people want to do social work. I get really irritated by great big recruitment campaigns... I am thinking, ‘Hang on a minute, there are people’... Government actually have to put money into that... The frustration is that some of the best people working are not qualified... How can an organisation which claims to be suffering from a lack of resources just overlook this vast group?... There are so many people applying for a sponsorship, if we had the funds we could be training Britain’s social workers for [the] GSCC.”
LA 13

However, frustrations that candidates for social work were being excluded through insufficient GYO investment were also expressed by employers recruiting externally. They had evidence of the popularity of GYO opportunities from the wealth of applications they received, and felt that there was a significant, untapped pool of high-quality candidates who could bring new blood into the profession, who would be excluded without an extension of GYO opportunities:

“We had about 3,500 applications for those 10 posts... the calibre of people [was] exceptionally high. Very talented people, a lot of whom would probably not have had the opportunity to train as social workers because of childcare or loans.”
CH 1

“The [traineeship] funding was made available to bring new people into social work... [that] is what we’re trying to do. There are lots of people who want to come into social work but
for lots of reasons can’t t... It’s not like going and doing an ordinary degree where you can study at night... because of the placements.”
LA 4

The possible trend of shifting the balance of investment from current staff to external recruits was linked to a focus on “excellence” within the workforce, and to an increased use of postgraduate qualifying routes, as a strategic decision to raise the academic profile of the workforce (see Context/pressures and their impact on GYO, page 50). This was seen as having a wider possible influence on driving up standards in the workforce, but challenging any complacency in colleagues:

“If you went and spoke to social workers in teams and practice teachers of teams, they would say, ‘Having a very good trainee in this team means that I, as a practice teacher, or other social workers have to up my game’, because they don’t want to be seen to be out of date, or complacent, or lazy, or lacking in knowledge with these new people entering the team.”
LA 6

All organisations confirmed that when advertising external traineeships they had been inundated with applications and were therefore able to select very strong candidates, which was described as leading to a reduction in the diversity of previous educational attainment within their GYO schemes (see Analysis of GYO levels and trends, page 31).

“I’m not sure if you have to have A levels because of the requirements of the university. I think it’s more to do with the department. They are asking for that now because they get loads of applicants, they are trying to whittle it down.”
Student 10

More benefits of bringing in new blood to an organisation’s social care workforce were their “enthusiasm” and fresh perspectives:

“Maybe because they haven’t had so many years in social care already, they are so fresh.”
LA 3

This was seen as countering the potential criticism of GYO that locally trained staff, having gained all their previous social care experience in their employing agency, could encourage a “parochial” profession, particularly in geographically isolated areas, where staff turnover rates tended to be slower:

“One of the criticisms of [GYO] is that it is too insular... Students can only think about their local authority and in places like [LA], which is relatively on the edge of the country, I can see why that would be a valid criticism.”
HEI 19

“Social work within the organisation is changing by having very high-quality trainees... It’s pushing up standards across the whole of the social work profile within this authority.”
LA 6
Part C: Impact of GYO

Part C presents the **benefits and challenges of GYO activity**, drawing together the different stakeholder perspectives and presenting them thematically under four key headings.

- **First**, the implications for employment, including recruitment, retention and wider workforce development issues.
- **Second**, the impact on social work education, including student progression rates, the contribution to the classroom setting, debates around student placements, and broader possible tensions between “training” and “education”.
- **Third**, the role in building partnerships between employers and HEIs.
- **Fourth**, the findings relating to widening access to the social work profession.

While some of the themes outlined below are more strongly associated with the motivations and experiences of a particular group, all themes were raised by all those participating in the project. The presentation and discussion of these perspectives illustrate that at times the benefits to one group can represent challenges to another, whose priorities or needs may be in direct conflict.

**Summary**

- GYO is widely valued by employers and students for recruiting social workers who can “hit the ground running”, both due to practical familiarity with the sponsoring organisation and greater confidence and experience in integrating theoretical learning with practice. However, there are concerns that schemes may prioritise preparation for the employer organisation, or a particular role within it, and not equip students with the breadth of experience and the tools to challenge poor practice.
- While most students are happy with their experience of placements, there are concerns about inadequate support from some employers when their placement takes place in a previous work setting, and about a lack of choice of settings, including options outside the employer organisation.
- Increased staff retention rates are seen as a successful impact of GYO, although many employers do not systematically collect data. Internal social care staff are reportedly less likely to move on, with ties to the local area positively linked to higher retention rates.
- Many GYO schemes are shaped by habit or economy, with only a third of schemes integrated into workforce development strategies, although this is an increasing trend. GYO indicates a commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) where it invests in internal staff; this carries forward to the next generation when ‘grown’ staff support future GYO.
- GYO investment is not predominantly used to address gaps in workforce diversity, although many schemes include some element of widening access to the profession, primarily by supporting students without previous educational attainment. Most employers had not considered the potential of GYO to address the balance of gender, or ethnicity, or people with disabilities in the workforce. “Positive Action” schemes targeting under-represented minority ethnic groups have been successful but are rare.
- GYO activity secures HEIs guaranteed practice placements, expands student
numbers and strengthens partnerships with employers, which can generate additional teaching resources. In addition, GYO students bring high attendance and progression rates, greater diversity in age and valued social care experience to the classroom.

- HEI Foundation or equivalent courses that allow some credit onto the degree are significant GYO recruitment routes to enable potential GYO candidates to gain study skills and meet the DH requirements for the social work degree. Since the degree, the minimal opportunities for AP(E)L have not enabled GYO schemes to fast-track experienced social care workers through qualifying routes.

- HEIs emphasised that, while GYO students’ levels of previous educational attainment have tended to be lower than for direct-entry students, the rigour of courses and quality of students’ work are consistent.

- Students view ties to employers upon qualifying as a reasonable obligation; however, ties to a particular work setting are more controversial. Students more readily accept specific work settings if an explicit condition of recruitment but are unhappy with changes to job allocation processes. Many employers successfully match student and organisation preferences at graduation.

### Implications for employment

#### Recruitment

GYO is primarily a recruitment tool for employers, and therefore commitment to GYO investment was described as inevitably at risk of decline in response to lowering social work vacancy levels (see Context/pressures and their impact on GYO, page 50).

Although rarely cited as an explicit motivation of GYO activity, there was agreement that investment in recruitment via GYO at a time of high vacancies was seen by employers as a **positive counterbalance to costly expenditure on agency workers and international recruitment**:

“We got all these [recruitment and retention strategies] in place so we didn’t have to go and recruit from abroad and also agency staffing really decreased... 'You are going to save on agency costs, you are going to save on recruitment from abroad, you’re “developing your own” in the way that you want to do’.”

LA 13

Looking beyond the benefits to themselves, students observed that they saw GYO as a successful tool for areas struggling to recruit social workers:

“In light of the fact that it is quite difficult to get people, to draw people into social work and into social work jobs in certain areas, I think it’s essential really... It’s possibly the only way in certain areas, which I know in [rural areas].”

Student 6
One student reflected that GYO could serve as an extended probation period:

“It’s like an extended two-year probation period, where you can shape them into your company’s way of working and the procedures and IT systems.”

Student 3

Traineeship models that recruit GYO students externally but offer a range of work experience in different social care settings on top of the degree “placements”, were comparable to secondments in producing graduates able to hit the ground running and already familiar with the organisation. However, this model was also seen as producing a more “rounded” graduate, with a broader preparation for practice than staff with experience in a single area:

“What we’re trying to do is develop qualified social workers who have a very good understanding of the organisation… All the placements run between 6 and 8 months so by the end of four years they’ve been in at least six settings… they’ve built up relationships, they’ve forged links, they have a very good understanding of all the different services… so what we get at the end of it is a well-rounded qualified worker, who knows the organisation inside out.”

LA 4

However, the transition back into the workplace, once qualified, was mentioned by a number of respondents, including students, employers and HEIs, as a potential area for concern. Because new GYO graduates were more likely to be expected to hit the ground running, they may miss out on the induction and support offered to other newly qualified staff, and in the absence of formalised NQSW status:

GYO was widely credited by employers as generating newly qualified social workers who can hit the ground running. This distinctive feature of GYO, compared to alternative, faster or cheaper methods of recruitment, was described as one of the principal motivations for GYO investment by employers. The different elements attributed to the ability of a GYO student to hit the ground running at the point of graduating are an increased practical familiarity with the employing organisation; greater experience of applying their theoretical education to practice; and, therefore, a more realistic understanding of and preparation for professional social work:

“Not getting a fast track… [but] getting, potentially, a better class of social worker, which will hit the ground running.”

LA 12

Familiarity with the organisation

All models of GYO were valued by employers for their potential to produce staff who already had a good understanding of the organisation. Internally recruited GYO students were seen as needing less induction and support on qualifying, as they are already familiar with structures, systems and working practices within the organisation:

“In the first six months the needs will be different. People that come from outside the organisation need to do the induction… their settling-in process can be longer. People that already work for the LA are familiar with its IT systems etc, so potentially do settle in a bit quicker and understand the culture and ethos.”

LA 2
“For me, I could have done with some more support… rather than have no support in preparation for coming back to work. That was lacking.”
Student 16

Facilitating links between theory and practice
GYO was also valued by all participants for its potential to generate NQSWs with greater experience of applying their theoretical learning to the realities of daily practice:

“The fantastic value of GYO is… when they are not in university, they are in work, they should be integrating their academic study to that workbase and learning as it goes. So, in a sense, they are doubling up on their learning.”
HEI 15

Students described the value of integrating reflection and application of theoretical learning into their on-going work, which was particularly important in the intensive postgraduate (2-year) route to qualifying:

“Being a trainee actually helped me more with the Masters… because it was so condensed… because I was working it allowed me to make sense of things very quickly. I think a lot of my colleagues were struggling to get their heads around the legal side of things… whereas, for me it was like, ‘I understand that because I do that every day’… I was able to draw it together a lot easier.”
Student 19

For trainees, the integration of theory and practice was more likely to have been experienced across a range of workplace settings, providing the additional advantage of helping students make the links across the different strands of social work practice:

“I move round every six months, so over the four years you can imagine the experience that I’ve built up… it’s been a wide range and every bit of it I know I’ll use in the future… I just can’t stress enough how good the scheme is and the experience… I have noticed as well, even though I’ve been working in very different departments, they all fit together… all the information that I’d picked up about domestic violence from the alcohol team was so significant to me practising in the advice and assessment team because I was able to give lots of information around it, which I would never have known about if I hadn’t had those other placements. I think it is a really good scheme and while the changing job every six months is stressful, I feel it has been a necessity.”
Student 10

A realistic picture of social work?
Several students felt that they had gained additional confidence in their readiness to practise on qualifying, through combining work and study. Importantly, it had offered them a realistic picture of the social worker role:

“It’s excellent because you’re getting people that, once they are qualified, it is not a shock, because they know what is required and what it is like out on the front line. I think if you come in as a student with no experience and then have your placements, and you can be very protected on your placements, then once you’re qualified you go in there and I think that is possibly why there is such a high turnover of staff… [GYO] gives a far more realistic picture and I think you get social workers that will have more staying power.”
Student 12

Concerns about whether their course was “fit for purpose” in preparing them for the realities of work were expressed by two students who were experienced social care practitioners.
They felt that courses could offer students an unrealistic picture of the profession, and the current nature of the work, with teaching biased towards theory, away from practical knowledge and skills:

“A lot of us feel that what’s been taught on the university is pretty unrealistic to what’s happening now in social work. In older adults we spend 90 per cent of our time behind a desk... For people out there who are coming in as social workers who think they are going to be working with people on an in-depth scale, the reality is that if you work for the local government it’s very much quick turnover.”

Student 8

Tensions between “training” and “education”

“The big tension is that the academics want to offer a good, student-focused, positive learning experience, and they want the students to feel like students. The employers are worried about that. I mean, the enlightened employers say, ‘Yes, so do we, but they’re also employees’... so you’ve always got a tension within social work training.”

LA 8

The overwhelming view of GYO, across the three participating groups, was of its positive contribution to supporting recruitment to the social work profession. However, there was some disagreement between, and within, the different stakeholder groups about the desirability of GYO students hitting the ground running, if this implied that their education had prioritised preparation for the particular systems and culture of their employer organisation, and had not equipped them with a range of experience in other settings or the tools to challenge poor practice.

These concerns can be seen in the context of a wider and long-standing debate within the profession around whether social work education is “fit for purpose”, and for whom. Interviewees felt that GYO activity characterised this debate, in the possible tension between the goal of training staff to meet the sponsoring organisation’s short-term workforce needs and that of maximising students’ educational opportunities.

Several HEIs described that one of their roles was teaching students to be able to challenge “bad practice”, which might mean challenging the very organisations that were funding their study. They recognised that this could be difficult for students, and unwelcome for employers. However, this could be blurred with separate debates about student competence, or whether the focus of social work education was sufficiently “vocational”:

“Our role is to help students gain the professional qualification and to be thinking outside the box. The fact they might be quite challenging is not necessarily something that we would want to change. If, what you are saying is, ‘They are incompetent’ then that’s a different question. If you are saying, ‘They don’t do things the way we want them to do them’ that’s not quite the same... We don’t take students seconded by local authority employers in order to produce social workers that are going to slot straight back into what they came from... [We] equip you with the skills and the confidence and the knowledge to be able to challenge poor practice. That’s hard... Students can find that quite a difficult gap to manage.”

HEI 1
HEIs described challenging the expectations of GYO sponsors, where they felt that these were undermining the HEI’s educative role:

“I don’t know if employers always want intellectually sophisticated social workers. I think they want people who can belt through the work and don’t ask too many questions, don’t reflect too much but churn out the forms, and I think we fight hard to train our graduates not to do that.”

HEI 6

“They really want people who can go and work and know the [LA] systems… We have a lot of problems with the local authorities saying, ‘We want you to change your curriculum to do this and to do that’, it’s very, very difficult.”

HEI 9

One-third of employers expressed concerns about social work qualifying training not producing GYO graduates ready to practise from their organisation’s perspective. In particular, they emphasised the views of operational line managers, that they should need to invest fewer resources in supporting the transition from GYO student to professional:

“You still get workers coming in who don’t know the basics, and we are in a climate where managers haven’t got [the] patience to say, ‘This is a newly qualified worker, we need to walk them through for the first six months’, and they are under so much pressure they need people coming out ready to roll.”

LA 5

“Students come out on placement... and people say, ‘Don’t they teach them how to do an assessment?’ and the university say, ‘That’s your job in practice, we teach them the academic side’, so there are some tensions... A lot of that gets mopped up in the teams.”

LA 7

Two employers had felt the need to provide workshops to supplement the degree in order to prepare GYO graduates for the workplace:

“They are going to have really stressful, really difficult jobs at the end and they have to be prepared... [LA 1] is now having to put workshops on for nearly qualified GYO students to get their practice up to speed, because they don’t feel they are particularly prepared coming out of university and walking into a childcare post... I do not think they are fit for purpose... [Managers] want some really basic training about assessment skills very quickly when someone starts... they are very unhappy with elements of the course.”

LA 1

However, the possibilities for tensions between training and education were not solely between HEIs and employers: within employer organisations there were contrasting views between operational managers and workforce development staff, the latter sometimes prioritising the broader educational experience of the students they are supporting:

“If you talk to operational managers here, as in any authority, they would say one thing, ‘This is what we want our staff to do’... I am a training officer and I would be saying probably something along the same lines as the universities, ‘This is what... I am developing them for’.”

LA 13

20: These interviews took place throughout 2007, prior to confirmation of government plans to pilot NQSW status for children’s practitioners, and the discussions around developing an equivalent status for adult practitioners.
“It is really tensions between the educational needs of the students... and the demands of the workforce... Quite often the training officer will be student-centred and learning-centred, but the people putting pressure on, back in the teams, won’t be, they don’t give two hoots whether students get learning/study [time].”

HEI 14

This long-standing debate was seen as being of increasing relevance because several HEIs felt there was escalating national pressure favouring employers’ priorities over the HEIs’:

“Are these people fit for purpose?... Saying, ‘It’s no good sending people out here that can’t do an assessment’... it’s a bit like training an animal to do tricks... More and more of the government’s agenda is to provide a workforce that is going to meet the needs of the employers.”

HEI 16

However, not all HEIs were concerned about trends that might emphasise meeting employer priorities and the “vocational” focus of the qualification:

“There is no point in tuning them into an academic degree and then hoping that they might be able to do something useful in the workplace... It’s a vocational qualification and therefore it’s got to be tuned into employers’ needs.”

HEI 18

One of the ways that some employers choose to control the learning experience of their sponsored staff is by specifying which electives (optional course modules) they should take, to fit the client group of the service funding the student:

“[The HEI] has got some optional courses... I want to be able to specify that our students won’t have a choice about that... That makes sense.”

CH 1

“The downside of being a [GYO] student is that local authorities can be stricter about choices of electives. In our final year, we have three electives... Some of our partnering organisations won’t let students choose.”

HEI 4

By contrast, other employers advocated that students maximise their educational experience and felt that this would, in turn, benefit the employing agency. They recognised the associated risks that GYO students exposed to new experiences might not want to return to the role expected by their employer. However, overall, some employers valued increasing the complexity of the knowledge and perspectives that the NQSW could bring to their role:

“You say to them, ‘This is an experience that’s going to change you, it’s going to change the way you think about stuff, it’s going to broaden you.’... We do encourage people to have a range of experiences... so that they’re rounded social workers... Some of them might decide that really what they want to do is not [CH 2’s work]... You can’t stop that... No organisation would want people coming back who don’t want to be there.”

CH 2

Tool for improving employer retention rates?

Improving staff retention was an objective for all employers, cited by several as their primary motivation for GYO, and while many employers did not systematically collect retention data, they did view it as one of the successes of their GYO investment:
“The overall view is that the whole thing over the years has been successful. That is anecdotal because I don’t have the figures to prove it... [retention] is high, very high... about 90 per cent.”

LA 14

Those who did collect figures estimated 80 per cent plus rates of retention, when tracking the continued presence in their workforce of GYO graduates. Some schemes established in the last few years had 100 per cent retention from their initial cohorts. The surge of traineeships from 2003–04 onwards was not sufficiently long ago to provide evidence of the long-term impact, but traditional secondments were widely viewed as a successful retention tool. Sponsoring internal social care staff was seen as investing in a pool of loyal workers who would be established, grateful and less likely to move on:

“The internal people have all been in [LA 8] for many years, so I would be surprised if they just upped and went... But the [external] graduate scheme’s too much in early days to see whether something’s going to happen.”

LA 8

“We had 16 [seconded] students start on the diploma, we had 16 finish... They’re still working for [LA 14] and have been around for ever, a huge amount of experience, they’re not going anywhere.”

LA 14

Several students described GYO as a mutually beneficial arrangement between employers and their sponsored employees, with the investment by the employer often being a reward for previous commitment, and prompting, in turn, the future commitment of the employee:

“From my point of view... I’ve worked for the local authority now for 11 years, so it shows a commitment from the workers as well. So for the LA it’s not a waste of money to put employees through these kinds of courses.”

Student 6

“The employer is willing to invest in you, so you have to repay that investment... It’s a win–win situation.”

Student 3

However, there was variable experience across employers, and some felt that the recruitment of external trainees was a more successful model, generating stronger loyalty to the organisation:

“Our [external] trainees have said that they have really valued the organisation and feel very committed... I don’t think we hear that about our [internal] people interestingly enough, and there is a different attitude because I think sometimes they think it is owed to them... The trainees are grateful for the opportunity.”

LA 3

Ties to the local area were described by half of employers as positively linked to higher retention rates. This was particularly the case in rural settings with little competition from other local employers, and with older workers who were likely to be less geographically mobile due to other life commitments:

“People have got roots here... history here, family here... they are more likely to stay.”

LA 7
“They are some of the best workers because if they are mature and settled in [LA 13] they are not going to be shifting off somewhere else, as newly qualified staff are, and I think that is probably one of the... arguments of investing is to say, ‘Look, these people are not going to move.’”

LA 13

This finding was echoed by the GYO students:

“Probably [will stay] the rest of my working life, I mean I have no plans to move out of the area, so certainly the foreseeable future.”
Student 6

Although some employers said equal opportunities prevented any explicit advertising or selection of external candidates on the basis of locality, others did use it as a selection criterion. Organisations reported that by selecting long-standing internal staff and using local, as opposed to national, advertising of GYO opportunities, they successfully promoted local recruitment. In contrast, schemes in localities with many competing employers were more resigned about the challenge of retaining staff and more likely to be reliant on other retention strategies:

“It was seen that we should be investing in local people qualifying... We have never actually put that in a person’s spec [but] we only advertise locally and it only goes into local press, and we only support the training through the local university... so it is implied but it is not a specific criteria [sic]. Generally it is people who haven’t moved to [county] to do this training, they have families here, and connections... they are not looking to move away.”

LA 11

Three local authorities continued the support for GYO graduates into newly qualified or post-qualifying frameworks of training and financial incentives, and described these as successful factors in securing their long-term investment. All had schemes that had recruited on the basis of strong previous educational attainment, or were in areas with high vacancies and staff turnover:

“We’ve invested all of this time, energy and money... wouldn’t it be tragic if we then lost them... I wanted to make sure we had a new qualified social work policy in place that provided a framework of support and supervision guidance and continued assessment... I will retain contact with them for their first year.”

LA 6

On balance, employers reported slightly higher drop-out rates, although still low, from GYO schemes recruiting external candidates without significant social care experience, who might not be sufficiently familiar with the nature of the working environment. There were examples of GYO students deciding that social work would not be for them and leaving during studying, affecting student “progression” rates, or after graduating, impacting on employers’ retention rates. With more postgraduate candidates being recruited externally, rather than from the internal social care workforce, there were concerns that their relative lack of experience in social care increased this likelihood:

“We have noticed more drop-outs since we have moved on to the [externally recruited GYO] route. Our feelings are that, largely, lack of understanding of what social work involves [is the cause], particularly with the Masters candidates, and that generally our internal candidates who complete the course continue to work for us and are a better investment... and that is probably because they absolutely understand what is involved before they start their training.”

LA 11
Postgraduate routes were viewed as more likely to generate managers, but there was also unsubstantiated concern that it might offer a more transferable qualification for someone to move on to other career options.

“You are setting someone up with a Masters, which is very transferable to different settings... One of my trainees is talking about teaching and you are thinking, ‘What are we doing, great for the country but what are we doing?’... They may become managers and [if] that’s what they aspire to do, that is absolutely fine because we need that, it is if we lose them.”

LA 1

When considering the success of their GYO retention rates, only two employers referred to their scheme as making a broader contribution to the professional workforce, and considering retention in the profession as a successful indicator of GYO.

“[The NTSG] was... about improving the intake to the general social work population... We tried to embrace that.”

LA 23

A quarter of employers described their commitment to the social care workforce of the wider locality, and so would not attempt to recoup fees (see Student contractual “tie-ins” to employers, page 119) if they lost a GYO staff member to a neighbouring employer.

“It is a discretionary thing. If that person had made a decision to go and work for [another LA] instead, it is highly unlikely that they would have asked for the money back... but this person was going to leave the country and go right out of social work altogether, so there is some flexibility.”

LA 16

Challenges of GYO for students: threats to retention

While students held an overwhelmingly positive view of GYO, those who gave mixed responses cited negative experiences relating to employers’ inflexibility about placements and job allocation on graduation, and the challenges of juggling a caseload while studying (see Placements, page 74 and Impact on job allocation: targeting “hard-to-fill” gaps, page 70). These pressures could threaten their retention on the scheme, and one student had left to study independently as a result.

Some students, usually those seconded from social care roles, described the difficulty of being required to maintain their previous, full-time caseload:

“Cases we identified... to be taken off me, but the local authority was just so overstretched, they had no one to go on to... I ended up coming in on the [study] day quite a lot.”

Student 19

The challenges of maintaining this balance, with no accommodation by employers, could lead students to conclude that they would be better off self-funding, or studying full-time:

“The first year was very difficult... three days at university and I had to go back to my substantive post and work two days a week and carry a full caseload and that almost killed me... It was like, ‘That’s the way you have to do it’... I would rather have... paid for the first year myself and had those two days off.”

Student 8
There were a couple of examples of **students challenging employers** over having to juggle heavy caseloads, or restrictive study time allowance, that had led employers to cut the GYO activity, rather than to increase the generosity of their support:

“One student described a successful **intervention by the HEI** to remove the pressure on students to complete their dissertation while out on their final placement:

“At one point I think our tutors had to tell [LA] to back down a bit because of their expectations of us... completing things was unrealistic... they wanted us to do work above and beyond other people on the course in a shorter timescale, because their interest was obviously getting us qualified and into the field. So our tutor said, ‘You have to back off here, they are doing enough as it is’... It was mainly revolving around the dissertation and when that would get completed... Our tutors were basically saying, ‘No, that is completely irresponsible and reckless to put that pressure on them, don’t do it’... They let us go at our own pace.”

**HEI 18**

Students on traineeship schemes are **less likely to have a full-time, on-going caseload to maintain throughout study than seconded students**, but those on trainee schemes rotating them throughout the organisation described a contrasting **stress of having to constantly acclimatise to a new work base**, on top of maintaining study and practice learning placements:

“There have been disadvantages [to GYO]... Changing your job every six months is quite stressful. That is something that I didn’t think of when I took the traineeship ... You’re getting settled and getting to know what you’re doing... [then] moving on again and again. You don’t even know where the coffee’s kept.”

**Student 10**

**Another pressure that an employer could exert** is to accelerate students’ completion of the course, freeing them earlier for return to full-time employment (see **Resource implications: cost-saving variations of GYO**, page 128). One student described a **successful intervention by the HEI** to remove the pressure on students to complete their dissertation while out on their final placement:

“At one point I think our tutors had to tell [LA] to back down a bit because of their expectations of us... completing things was unrealistic... they wanted us to do work above and beyond other people on the course in a shorter timescale, because their interest was obviously getting us qualified and into the field. So our tutor said, ‘You have to back off here, they are doing enough as it is’... It was mainly revolving around the dissertation and when that would get completed... Our tutors were basically saying, ‘No, that is completely irresponsible and reckless to put that pressure on them, don’t do it’... They let us go at our own pace.”

**HEI 18**

A quarter of HEIs suggested that some employers were potentially undermining their **future staff retention rates by not sufficiently supporting GYO students during their course**; by “shoehorning” them into placements or jobs that they did not want; or in managing their transition to qualified social worker (see **Support for students on GYO schemes**, page 106, **Placements**, page 74; **Impact on job allocation: targeting “hard-to-fill” gaps?**, below):

“The problem is [GYO] retention... How many are still in social work in five years?... The agencies have to take some responsibility for that, for what they do, the support they give... I certainly remember... [a] senior manager... talking about new staff... ‘We need to get them in and we throw them into care proceedings within the first six months and if they cope with it, that’s good, and if they
don’t, we are well shot of them’... I thought, all the investment that people had put in themselves and the State has put in, and it is like, ‘This is the Somme’.”

Impact on job allocation: targeting “hard-to-fill” gaps?

“No, it’s not been as strategic as that. We’ve grabbed who we can, and put them where we can.”

One of the variables associated with GYO schemes is whether they are used as a tool to target new graduates at particular workforce gaps, or whether GYO students are able to access any vacancy that would match their own career preferences.

Just under half of employers tied their GYO students to specific roles or geographic settings, and this appeared to be an increasing trend, with several others considering it a new development, as vacancy rates reduced overall and particular gaps emerged. Some employers described how the separation of adults and children’s departments, and budgets, had reduced their flexibility in matching student preferences to social worker vacancies. Students were increasingly usually “owned” and funded by, and expected to return to fill the vacancies of, one department, if not a single team within it.

“They were external applicants... recruited into specific teams where there was identified a lack of staff... It is a rural county: there are particular pockets of areas within the county which are very difficult to recruit to.”

Over half of GYO students confirmed being tied to a particular work area upon qualifying, although some were uncertain if they were or not. While a period of tie-in to their sponsoring organisation was generally viewed by students as a reasonable obligation to the employer, ties to a particular work setting were more controversial.

Most employers had taken the view that student and organisation preferences could be matched at the point of graduation, and students might be asked for their first, second and third choices of client group or work setting. These are matched to existing vacancies and the position is confirmed via an informal interview. Where there was a natural match or sufficient vacancies to accommodate the preferences of both employer and student this process was seen by both as very successful. Some students simply switched to social worker status and salary in an existing team the day after graduation.

Students who had embarked on GYO in awareness of their ties to a specific work setting were more likely to be pleased or resigned to this outcome, if it had been an explicit part of the GYO scheme recruitment conditions. As outlined in Support for students on GYO schemes, page 106, choosing to maintain the primary contact and support links between the GYO student and the employer organisation via a team manager, rather than through a central workforce development contact, was a mechanism for promoting team loyalty and encouraging a return to that work setting on qualifying:

“It is made very clear in the contract and through the whole selection process that the expectation is that that individual will return to a particular service and that it will be in a particular district, and they have a manager who they will contact and who should be providing them with support while they are at university... The hope is that that will help
However, students were unhappy with sudden changes to job allocation processes, including examples where students who had expected a choice of roles on graduation, had that choice withdrawn. One student said that the sudden denial of the opportunity to return to a long-standing work setting had undermined their commitment to staying with the employer (see Challenges of GYO for students: threats to retention, page 68):

“You’re guaranteed a job at the end... it is not always guaranteed the job that you thought you were going to get... They’ve told me I can’t go back to my job I’ve been doing for 12 years because they are short-staffed somewhere else... I’d be planning to move and tell them to sue me... I appreciated the training but unfortunately due to what they have offered me, I might do that.”

Student 17

Employers may choose not to insist that a GYO student takes a particular post unwillingly, with many recognising that this can threaten their retention in the organisation. However, this in turn was said to generate resentment from individual teams who have lost a worker, at the point of graduating, with no financial compensation for the cost of supporting them throughout study. Repeated experience of this had sparked some interest in models of GYO that top-slice budgets to support centrally owned GYO students:

“Sometimes individuals might decide they don’t want to return to that team... Managers do feel they have invested in that individual and there ought to be some payback from the other services... We have taken the view that actually if they want to return to [LA 11] then we haven’t lost them, while it is a local manager’s loss... They are looking at whether the match funding would be top-sliced rather than coming out of individual managers’ budgets for that reason because it does feel unfair... it does make sense just to look at top-slicing money and saying, ‘Well, you are a [LA 11] trainee rather than a particular area’s person’.”

LA 11

Several HEIs raised concerns that GYO graduates were sometimes given insufficient information about their job choices, and that models of returning to a prescribed work setting were failing to take into account the positive new experiences and professional preferences of GYO graduates. They advocated greater flexibility to move across settings:

“We had two students very recently who were in their final practice... the children’s worker wanted to work in a mental health setting and vice versa, and [LA] were saying, ‘You can’t do that because you came from the other service’... What you would want, if you were a manager, is somebody who wanted to be there, so that’s testing out historical ways, because when people were historically seconded they went from one service and they came back to that service. The notion there is that educationally they wouldn’t have shifted very much, which is a bit scary really if they are on a qualifying programme... It is back to funding really, because children’s and adult services are funded very separately.”

HEI 8

A minority of schemes offered no guaranteed social work job and graduating GYO students had to apply for vacancies alongside external candidates, while remaining in the unqualified post held throughout the course of study. This model avoided any concerns about pressure for students to take unwanted, “hard-to-
fill" vacancies. However, for students, the shortcoming of this model was that they did not benefit from the security and immediate salary rise of a qualified social worker post.

**HEI views on guaranteed student employment**
A quarter of HEIs described that immediate guaranteed employment for all social work graduates, which has been a feature of the last few years of high vacancy levels, is now diminishing, particularly in adult services. They therefore envisaged a point where the guaranteed employment for GYO graduates could be of great benefit to the HEI, if vacancies continue to reduce and there is a possible future risk of “flooding the market” with the increased number of new degree graduates:

“This year, the first-time students are not coming off the degree and just getting jobs, and so in that way the students that have... tied themselves into agencies have found it really easy to go straight from the end of the course into work because that is a difficult period financially.”

HEI 17

However, the majority of HEIs did not see this as a current concern.

A quarter of HEIs echoed GYO students’ concerns that not all GYO graduates had obtained qualified social worker posts, which they saw as a waste of employer investment:

“This year’s cohort coincided with another reorganisation... some of them had to go back and take social work assistant jobs.”

HEI 9

“I have had two students that... because of reorganisation were cut loose. To say, ‘There isn’t a post for you... go off and work somewhere else’... Outrageous I think, what a waste... not to capitalise on that investment.”

HEI 17

**Impact on wider employer organisational culture**

**GYO as part of workforce development strategies**

GYO initiatives that were viewed as successful by employers tended to have evolved to address one or two priorities, with many employers running different models concurrently to fulfil different objectives. However, many GYO schemes had been shaped by habit or economy rather than clear objectives, and most were not linked into any wider workforce development strategy.

Only one-third of employers saw their GYO activity as genuinely integrated into a wider workforce development strategy, but this was often a recent development, and other employers reported that this would be more likely in future GYO planning:

“Like most organisations we’ve started to pull together a range of activities that weren’t tied together in a coherent way two or three years ago... We now would have a published learning and development strategy for the workforce... This scheme would fit... it’s linked to our practice learning... starting to link with the post-qualifying framework... Elements are coming together in a strategic sense.”

CH 2

Where GYO was genuinely integrated into an organisational culture that supported workforce development, often as part of a wider recruitment and retention strategy, it was associated with greater support from across the organisation. Crucially, this meant that individual managers were more likely to take
students on placements, to support their own staff to access training, and to make a broader investment in practice teaching and learning:

“Previously, training was very much seen as an extra activity added on, but having the [workforce development strategy] focuses operational managers... on the training needs and requirements of their staff... Most managers are much more engaged with the process in a very positive and proactive way... GYO is just essential to recruitment and retention strategies.”
LA 13

When GYO is not integrated into an organisational culture that supports workforce development, GYO co-ordinators struggled more to secure support in the provision of placements and practice supervision. In the annual round of bidding for GYO funding, several GYO co-ordinators described trying to influence the wider context of their schemes by trying to encourage greater integration with a more strategic approach to workforce development:

“It is not a great culture in [LA 1]... it is still individual decisions whether to take students and so there is still that culture... you feel like you are begging someone to take a trainee.”
LA 1

“We bid for funding every year so we will put a proposal forward to say, ‘This is what we currently spend, these are our intentions’... We would prefer it if decisions were reached to say, ‘Look, these are the needs and this is what we want’... We wanted it to be driven in a different way... not to do with budgets but more to do with needs and requirements... It is more of a knee-jerk reaction than planning... [LA 7] don’t have that much workforce planning and intelligence.”
LA 7

Planning levels of GYO activity within teams and across departments, as part of wider workforce planning, was described as important for managing short-term issues, such as the number of staff away from the workplace concurrently, and as having potential for addressing long-term issues, such as the implication of an ageing workforce:

“It was apparent that we couldn’t let more than two per team at any one time be in long-term training, because it had a huge impact on the team... that is why I am always looking at it longer term.”
LA 3

“They always have taken a very short-term view... The last thing that happens is planning and strategic thinking... We think that people are being short-sighted and we hope that children’s services... will forward plan and realise that if we’re pulling GYO now, then two years down the line we’re going to be in crisis.”
LA 14

**Contribution to a “learning organisation” culture**

The contribution of GYO to employers’ organisational culture, in supporting the idea of the “learning organisation”, was viewed positively. It was seen as contributing to staff morale, indicating that the organisation values CPD, which is a useful hook for recruitment of social care staff, and viewed favourably in government inspections. It carries forward to the next generation, when staff who have been “grown” become practice assessors or supervisors supporting future GYO (see Growing the next generation of contacts, page 82):

“I’m responsible for recruitment... I will always say that there are opportunities to go away and get qualifications... They want to hear that... there is a lot of training...
government inspectors called us ‘a learning environment’.”
PR 2

“These [GYO students] are the social workers of the future, so we can persuade and encourage them to be practice teachers and supervisors, long term.”
LA 7

Impact on social work education

Placements
The views of the benefits and challenges associated with placements, within GYO activity, epitomised the potential for contrasting priorities between different groups – students, HEIs and employers.

The primary impact identified by all HEIs was the guaranteed placements that GYO students brought, which were usually prioritised before other student placements provided by the employer. The inability to secure placements has been a restricting factor on the expansion of student numbers for many HEIs; therefore, the guaranteed placements integral to almost all models of GYO activity have been a crucial resource.

While a quarter of HEIs felt that strong partnerships with sponsors facilitated their ability to negotiate additional placements for non-GYO students, other HEIs were frustrated that by prioritising their own students, LAs were excluding non-GYO students from important statutory practice learning experiences:

“They prioritise, in their agency, that student… that has a big impact on availability for placements for other students, not GYO… It is not uncommon for GYO students to have two statutory placements when we really struggle to find one for a full-time student and that is inequitable.”
HEI 17

However, there was widespread concern amongst HEIs, and from some workforce development staff and GYO students, that measures were not always in place to ensure an adjustment to their change in status from practitioners to students.

While one-third of HEIs did not permit a placement in the sponsoring team, most HEIs took the pragmatic approach that this was an inevitable demand from employers. However, choice and negotiations about the breadth of practice learning settings within several sponsoring authorities were described as more restricted since the separation of children’s and adults services.

Half of workforce development staff expected students to have one placement in their previous work setting, and saw this as both a selling point to managers who were funding GYO, and a tool for preparation for practice after qualifying.

HEIs had often intervened on behalf of GYO students when no concessions were made during a placement to reduce a full caseload, or to allow time for reflection or study. Several also recommended that seconded students take responsibility for informing and therefore enabling team members to accommodate an established colleague’s change in role to student status:

“Placements are found by the agencies and that’s a great boon to the universities and one of the incentives for getting into the [GYO] route... probably the greatest one... At a time when many of the statutory authorities are getting smaller you need their placements more... it’s very, very competitive and you’ve got to find ways of working closely with them.”
HEI 11
“We sometimes say to them, ‘Do a presentation to your team and explain what you are doing, just for 5 minutes in a team meeting, so that other team members will understand what it is you are doing on placement... why you need an hour a day to do your logs and your tracking documents.’”

HEI 16

Where schemes were managed and funded by workforce development rather than by operational teams, they were more likely to dictate that GYO students took all placements in new settings, in order to avoid this potential for conflicts of interest. GYO co-ordinators also described taking on this role, negotiating between team managers’ and students’ needs:

“If we sponsor them we stipulate that they have to have placements within [LA 15], half will be in their own workplace... If they are going to meet our needs we want to know that they can actually do it, but we also know that we can guarantee good statutory placements... it is an obviously good selling point to the organisation and to managers that you are not going to lose that worker for half the time... it is not so good for the individual worker in that they carry on having their full caseload when they ought to be being a student... some managers are better than others... When they start the scheme I meet the manager with the staff member and go through the whole thing... sometimes I have to intervene and talk to the manager.”

LA 15

A small number of HEIs expressed concern that some employers did not allow a placement in another organisation, particularly if someone’s previous social care experience had all been acquired within one organisation. This was more likely when employers were sponsoring GYO students on full-time courses and did not have the student in the workplace at other points of the academic year.

Others stipulated that one placement must be outside the sponsoring agency:

“We have two placements on the course: we would certainly not give them more than one placement in their employing agency... What is the point? Go and get some ideas from elsewhere, see what other people are doing.”

HEI 6

The final placement

The final placement was seen by employers as a key element of the preparation for return to the workplace and therefore many prescribed that it should take place in the future work setting, or an equivalent:

“Our students needed to be prepared to come back to work to [LA 5] standard and the best way to give them that is to have them back here for their final year...Then they get geared up to [LA 5’s] policies and the way it does its work and they don’t have all that to do when they come back and they start as qualified workers.”

LA 5

This policy was described by some workforce development staff as in the interests of students, where their model of scheme requires that GYO students apply for a social worker post on graduation rather than being automatically slotted in, enabling students to compete for their preferred post:

“Trainees should have their last placement in where they are going or a related area, but because it is a holistic degree and the university want it holistic they don’t like cherry-picking with the placements, so there is a bit of conflict... If you have two candidates going for one job, and one has just been in a
children’s services placement they are going to have more insight to sell themselves.”
LA 1

However, the practice could also generate concerns from HEIs, that the quality of the practice learning assessment could be compromised by managers wanting to guarantee that their staff return to the workplace qualified and without delay:

“There was an expressed concern from [HEI] to say that they felt it was a conflict of interest that the student would have their final placement in a team that they were going to be employed in... [they felt that] the manager who was employing them, because they had a shortage, would be extra determined that that person would pass the final placement... they were concerned.”
LA 7

Voluntary, independent and private (VIP) sector GYO: placements and wider work experience
Reciprocal arrangements for placements between employer organisations were seen as successful mechanisms for ensuring that VIP students gained experience outside their normal work setting. This is particularly important for smaller organisations that cannot offer staff a range of practice learning settings and are vulnerable to the loss of staff from the workplace, so benefit from the presence of another student:

“Independent sector [GYO students] would need statutory experience which generally means going outside of their own organisation... we do encourage local authorities to pair up and teamwork with local voluntary organisations and that generally works quite well... because they get students in exchange.”
HEI 14

“There is quite a lot of interest about how staff in the voluntary sector can become qualified, so managers will say, ‘Well, I’ve got so and so who wants to become qualified, we don’t want to lose them but then we can’t afford to fund them’... I’ll say ‘Would you be happy about doing a swap amongst other people in the voluntary sector who want to send staff?’... so that they’ve still got people coming in, and they are really keen on that kind of idea.”
HEI 15

Two VIP sector interview participants – one employer and one recent GYO graduate – raised their respective concerns about insufficient statutory sector work experience for VIP-sponsored GYO students. Both felt that there was a risk that social workers would have a gap in consolidating their knowledge and practice:

“One of the problems with the GYO scheme that we run, and I’m sure with other non-statutory organisations, is that we will still have people coming back to us with qualifications... who will not have done proper frontline local authority work... It may be one of the reasons why we may ease back from the scheme.”
CH 2

“Social work is a very vast field and covers a large area, whereas I have gone back now into a very narrow field... a lot of the knowledge that I gained throughout the degree will be lost... As part of a GYO scheme I feel that the company should second you to work for a local authority for six months, because obviously it’s very different how local authorities work and because of the law changing so frequently, in an independent agency you don’t tend to pick up on that.”
Student 9
The impact of placements on GYO students

Over 80 per cent of GYO students felt that their placements had provided enough variety and quality of experience to meet their learning needs. Those expressing dissatisfaction were amongst those students who had undertaken all placements internally within their sponsoring organisation.

All OU students had undertaken one placement with their employer and one placement with an outside organisation. The placement settings of the 19 students from other HEIs were varied. Fourteen of the 19 had taken their placements with their employer only.

Students described advantages to practice learning in their own organisation. The challenge of familiarising oneself with new people and processes could be viewed as a distraction from learning:

“Within your own organisation is fine. The advantage is that you don’t have to do so much initial networking as you know the processes, so you can learn the new skills without having to learn absolutely everything.”
Student 1

However, five students felt that their student identity was blurred when on placement in their own organisation, with managers and colleagues sometimes failing to adjust their approach and to recognise that an established social care worker was now a student. This was particularly the case in their substantive team, although it could also arise when based in other teams:

“The disadvantages are that sometimes they can expect rather a lot of you... [External] students... would be given a slower pace of work and more time to research. I think when you work for an organisation... they expect more from you and take advantage a little bit.”
Student 7

However, within a supportive placement setting, facilitated by practice teachers and/or team members, experienced staff felt that their student identity was sufficiently protected, and that their previous social care experience was appreciated, rather than exploited:

“Part of the traineeship was the deal to go into childcare after, so obviously the second placement was a childcare placement. I came from childcare but it was a different office... people were very good at saying... ‘Do you want to be involved and observe?’... the balance was right.”
Student 6

“I’m lucky that my practice teacher is very much keeping me in the student role, because I’m very experienced in working with older adults... I am working in a hospital now and it’s totally different. So I am protected in that way, people don’t think ‘She’s experienced, we will give her this to do’.”
Student 8

Students were also more likely to describe a placement in their previous work setting as less challenging:

“Both [placements were] really good experiences... I probably got more from the external one in that it was a totally different experience, because I was [already] getting the experience ‘in house’ on the job.”
Student 2
“While in the adults [placement] I didn’t have a clue about how things worked... That was quite nice because it was a learning opportunity and made me think a bit more ‘out[side] the box’.”
Student 6

However, an external placement could be equally unchallenging:

“My... first placement wasn’t really [a] great experience because I was working for a small voluntary sector organisation... befriending older people... Compared to the role of a qualified social worker... I didn’t find it useful... Whereas my second placement... was in a role very similar to what I do now as a qualified social worker.”
Student 13

Other concerns expressed by students were not about the setting of the placement, but the preparedness and enthusiasm of the host team:

“I did have issues with my first placement... it was a small team and they didn’t want to take on a student, and that created a lot of animosity and difficulties... It wasn’t [resolved], it was kind of ‘Get my head down and my days done and then get out of there’.”
Student 3

Students also raised concerns that their practice learning options could be compromised by the limitations set by their employer in order to maximise the benefits to the organisation. Examples included swapping with other trainees to remove the need for backfill cover for trainee posts, and refusing to allow students to take placements outside the organisation:

“The range of placements that I had wasn’t particularly very wide... That was a real disadvantage because I wanted to do perhaps a voluntary sector placement... That wasn’t really taking into account my learning needs, it was more about, ‘We’re paying for you to do this course and therefore we are going to get a little bit back’.”
Student 6

However, when students outlined the advantages associated with practice learning within their own agency, several were focused on their preparation for return to a particular social work role and so welcomed placements that supported this process:

“The advantages are that you’re building up a network with people that you will be continuing to work with in the future.”
Student 10

There was pragmatic recognition that placements can be challenging to organise, and some students felt that, as GYO students, they had benefited from a broader choice of placements and greater investment from the practice learning co-ordinator than their non-GYO peers would have received:

“You do get the pick of the placements and the person who organises the placements really discusses with you what your needs are... She worked really, really hard to get the one I wanted... A lot of my colleagues have just been given placements that are totally unsuitable because I know that placements are in very short supply.”
Student 8

Impact on progression rates
Higher attendance, retention and course completion and progression (passing the course at first attempt) rates by GYO students were the experiences of all but a few HEIs, when they compared them to their non-GYO cohort. Some reported that it was almost unheard of for GYO students to drop out.
This was attributed to the strength of their commitment, and the added motivation of meeting the expectations of their sponsoring employer agency and their work colleagues. Echoing the views of HEIs, several students described their GYO status as increasing the likelihood of their completing qualifying training, due to the additional expectations of their sponsoring employer.

“I didn’t have any concerns because for me failure wasn’t an option... I think because it was work-based I was more serious about it... Not pressured – pressure is too strong a word, I just wasn’t as relaxed about it as I could have been if I was studying it on my own. Which was a good thing because it forced you to get on and do what you had to do.”
Student 18

Experienced social care staff were described as having a more realistic understanding of the profession, and being grateful for the opportunity of achieving the qualification via sponsorship. This resulted in a higher retention rate at HEIs than direct entry students or students on traineeship schemes that recruit less experienced candidates.

“They are a better bet... they have investments from their organisation, and often this has been a considered decision over a long period... Motivation is very high... you don’t get that with the people who have jumped into clearing.”
HEI 2

Strong peer support (see also Support for students on GYO schemes, page 106) and fewer financial worries were also mentioned as factors contributing to their lower attrition rates.

Some GYO students confirmed that they felt that their GYO experience had brought them different advantages and pressures, compared to their non-GYO peers, including the reduction of financial concerns while studying:

“This route took the pressure off me financially but gave added pressure having to juggle work and study. I have spoken to many people who have completed different routes; all seem to have experienced pressures in varying ways.”
Student 4

Several HEIs reported that the combination of their work experience and commitment to the learning opportunity meant that the GYO students generally achieved a better class of degree:

“Students who get a first are more likely to be [GYO] students than not. It seems to be a combination of students who have got a lot of experience and a lot of motivation, and also, untapped academic potential... You can see some of them really blossom throughout the three years... there are some [GYO] students who become outstanding students.”
HEI 1

However, the pressure of meeting the expectations of their sponsoring employer agency by juggling a caseload while completing their qualification as quickly as possible was seen by HEIs as a possible threat to students’ educational experiences (see Tensions between “training” and “education”, page 63):

“[GYO] Masters students are less likely to complete the dissertation... they just feel under such pressure, they get to the end of it and they just want to get their qualification... They get a postgraduate diploma, which I think defeats the whole object. I have noticed that from one particular authority... they all just got fed up and felt too tired at the end to do it.”
HEI 17
Impact on student numbers

The pressure from the wider university to increase fee income and therefore student intake was described by a minority of social work departments as a significant motivating factor in the development and expansion of GYO activity:

“To be entirely candid, the main pressure came from within the university, for the fees.”
HEI 6

For others, the success of GYO activity in expanding student numbers and relationships with local employers has been less of a top-down imperative, but it still makes a positive contribution to how the department fits in with the strategic aims of the institution:

“We bring a healthy income into the university... This isn’t the priority, but the university’s strategic plan has something to play in there... we are conscious that, as a university, you are a business and you have to create these business opportunities.”
HEI 10

Impact of GYO students on other students

Although not all GYO students are already established social care practitioners, with some recruited on to GYO schemes after only one year’s social care experience, most students seconded from existing social care roles, or recruited on to competitive traineeship schemes brought considerable prior knowledge of social care to the classroom. This was a resource that both they and academic staff could draw on:

“The strengths... [of] being employment-based is that I could draw upon my prior knowledge and experience for certain lectures and essays... This I think gave me an advantage over other students that may not have had that experience.”
Student 5

The majority view of HEIs was that GYO cohorts bring and benefit from complementary skills and experience when studying alongside non-GYO students with different work experience and demographic profiles:

“It’s very positive, because of the experience that they bring... [GYO] are extremely helpful to their peers who come in without any knowledge of the organisations that they are going into... [and] there are a lot of older [GYO] people who find it much more difficult to make use of the education... to change, it can be more painfully difficult for them... they learn a lot and can get spurred into opening up their minds by the younger people that are much more flexible of mind... there is some good exchange... it certainly enriches the experience.”
HEI 5

However, while GYO students were welcomed for bringing up-to-date knowledge that could be called upon within the classroom, they would have some of this expertise challenged, and would “need to unload, and that is always more painful” (HEI 12).

HEIs often had to manage a tendency for non-GYO students with less experience to be intimidated by more vocal GYO peers, and for GYO students without academic experience to be intimidated by well-qualified school-leavers:
“Some of the [non-GYO] students... who have got comparatively little experience... compared to somebody who’s been doing community care assessments for 10 years... have felt intimidated or silenced or unable to question and found that quite disempowering... [But] in different situations or perhaps different students feel that they learn ever such a lot from [GYO] students... in terms of what the gap might be between government rhetoric or policy directives and theory and what actually happens on the ground... [non-GYO] students can find that quite helpful, particularly in preparing for the reality of placements... [GYO] students often feel incredibly anxious about academic work and intimidated by students who have come through a more traditional GCSE qualification route.”

HEI 1

Resentments could also occur over the respective pay, or free time, that each saw that the other cohort benefited from (see Support for students on GYO schemes, page 106).

“The university had introduced top-up fees, which meant that college-based students had to find another £500 above the General Social Care Council grant. Of course [GYO] students didn’t, and that created some kind of friction.”

HEI 4

Many HEI staff said that the significant injection of social care experience into the classroom brought positive challenges to their own teaching and therefore to the learning environment:

“The [non-GYO] full-timers will swallow everything that you say and the [GYO] part-timers will come out with some technical jargon, which will threaten me, because I might not be sufficiently up to date... The [HEI] staff team feel that, generally, you have to be much more on your toes... You also have to be careful though that they don’t lull you into a false sense of how much they know. Sometimes it’s very specific areas of knowledge, and sometimes it’s not put into any sort of wider context.”

HEI 18

Impact on employer/HEI partnerships

The third area of benefit from GYO activity that emerged was its importance for HEIs in building partnerships with employers, and for employers, the importance of using those partnerships to influence the work of the HEI. Three-quarters of HEIs felt that working with sponsoring agencies in developing and maintaining GYO helps to cement important reciprocal relationships, in the absence of the formal partnerships prescribed by the former DipSW:

“It’s part of that symbiotic or reciprocal relationship with partner agencies... putting something back into the community... Universities are... requiring increasing amounts of time from them, setting up these very elaborate placements... We require the agencies to come to numerous meetings and to be involved in committees and admissions... It’s part of that reciprocity really.”

HEI 11

“It is just part of that complex web of partnerships... We have post-qualifying courses... We want teaching to be practice related [so] we have to have postings with agencies... Why do we have an employment route?... We probably would offend our partners if we didn’t... [it] would be signalling a shift in partnership.”

HEI 12
Programmes dependent on GYO cohorts to sustain viable student numbers understandably described the importance of investing time in GYO-sponsoring agencies (see Resource implications, page 124). However, amongst a number of HEIs that are not dependent on GYO to sustain student numbers, there was a similar commitment to promoting GYO as a tool for the maintenance of relationships with local agencies, despite the financial costs involved:

“We are not going to turn people down because you just wouldn’t do that in relation to relationships with organisations, so we would rather take more, even though... once you get your target you don’t get any more money for the students... but I think in terms of relationships it is to our advantage.”

HEI 2

Maintaining these positive links requires an investment of time and is facilitated by the development of discrete forums, such as regular meetings. These were predominately described as a valuable investment, which generates greater trust, mutual assistance and problem-solving capacity to bring to the shared agenda of training social workers:

“We have... termly or six-monthly at least meetings [and] give them lunch... Local authorities quite like that... We have a stronger relationship as a consequence of [GYO]. We can name people in each authority that we can go to and talk to. I’m sure there are almost invisible spin-offs from that in terms of sorting out problems ... It develops more trust.”

HEI 18

One practical benefit from the close relationships that GYO engendered was the negotiation of additional placements for non-GYO students, which a quarter of HEIs felt that GYO had helped them to secure (see Placements, page 74):

“We use it as a bit of a pincer movement... You do need to spend some time with the employer... so there is an additional cost in actually doing that. But you can also then talk about additional placements... do a bit of negotiating... It’s good to have those links.”

HEI 15

Other resources that HEIs described that these closer relationships brought them included free ad hoc guest lecturing and tutoring, as well as representatives for interview and practice assessment panels:

“[Local authorities] have got this investment in their staff, they are more likely to do things like provide some free teaching and lectures.”

HEI 20

“Growing” the next generation of contacts

Other practical benefits for HEIs stemmed from GYO graduates returning to local “partner” agencies and taking up post-qualifying courses and promoting more GYO activity. For HEIs this helped cement the next generation of guest lecturers, interviewers and practice assessors:

“They are the people that we might call on... encouraging them to do further study... It’s those informal networks, as well as coming back and continuing their education here... It does feed into the next cohort.”

HEI 1

The impact of employers on HEIs

Whereas building multifaceted partnerships with sponsoring agencies was a core motivation of HEIs in supporting GYO activity, in contrast, only one sponsoring agency mentioned developing wider relationships with HEI partners as one of the motivations for their GYO activity:
However, several HEIs described what they saw as excessive expectations by employers that GYO entitled them to have greater influence. In particular, these expectations were focused on course structure and timing, with course content less commonly an issue. A common area of intervention by employers was to minimise delays to students’ progression if they were required to take re-sits, which had cost implications for the employer.

**Widening access to the profession**

**An under-used tool for employers?**

While GYO investment is not primarily being used by employers to address gaps in workforce diversity, just under half of employers had some element of promoting wider access to the profession within their overall GYO activity. This was primarily by supporting some students without previous educational attainment, and a couple of employers were targeting under-represented BME students in their areas:

“It is about people who have been disadvantaged by the system and ensuring that they have a chance.”

HEI 19

Most employers had never considered the potential of GYO as a tool for targeting workforce gaps, such as in the balance of gender, ethnicity or people with disabilities:

“The under-represented have never figured in the thinking about our trainee scheme.”

Local authority at CWDC regional meeting

“[I don’t think there has been enough of a link with workforce planning with the Directorate.]”

LA 15

HEIs generally described that they had successful mechanisms for involvement of GYO-sponsoring agencies, via the Programme Management Board, or occasionally via a more specific group for sponsoring agencies only:

“Agency reps are on our Programme Management Board for the degree... and we get feedback via that mechanism... They sit on the Curriculum Committee and things like that, they are part of the total picture of the social work degree.”

HEI 2

However, once GYO was in place, employers wanted mechanisms to influence HEIs’ programmes. They cited having informal discussions and representation on degree programme boards, but only a few described any impact that they felt they had achieved.

Different HEIs were reported to be more or less open to suggestion or influence over the configuration or content of courses, but there was also recognition that some elements of perceived inflexibility were due to the structured nature of the qualification:

“We were in partnership with these universities... on more than one level, so it is not just about our [GYO] scheme... We go to the Practice Review Panels... that might also spill over into other courses that the [LA 15] training section is using... There are motivations... to work with the local universities.”

LA 15

“Some of the universities we have a lot more influence with, depending on whether we are involved in their Management Boards and their Assessment Panels... You can actually suggest changes and they are open to listening... Others are a bit more ‘This is our programme and this is what we do’.”

LA 7

However, once GYO was in place, employers wanted mechanisms to influence HEIs’ programmes. They cited having informal discussions and representation on degree programme boards, but only a few described any impact that they felt they had achieved. Different HEIs were reported to be more or less open to suggestion or influence over the configuration or content of courses, but there was also recognition that some elements of perceived inflexibility were due to the structured nature of the qualification:
The sense of GYO having untapped potential was echoed by a couple of HEIs observing the practice of the employers with which they work:

“I don’t think employers are tuned in enough to using [GYO] as an opportunity to get greater diversity in their workforce... it could be quite an important tool... [to] recruit more specifically to get balance in the workforce.”

HEI 18

Only a few employers were currently exploring wider possibilities within their organisation:

“Currently we’ve got all these very able, highly competent, highly skilled, highly previously qualified [GYO] students... we’ll replicate what there already is in the organisation in terms of staffing. But if we are to take up the potential that the [GYO] offers, to be developing other kinds of people... targeting people with disabilities or young black men who might have criminal records... it might feel like a bit of a risk... [but] it would fit in with our Diversity Strategy... We need to think about... what the gaps are and how we’re going to meet them.”

CH 1

**Widening access as a motivation for HEIs**

“We are deeply committed to this... many of the people who are members of staff here were trainees themselves.”

HEI 2

GYO that widened access to the profession for people previously educationally disadvantaged was, for some employers and HEIs, an ideological stance that exemplified the principles of the profession itself, in terms of “empowerment” and in considering students’ particular needs:

“Our reputation as a course is about wanting participation and tackling exclusion... The origins of [GYO route] come out of that philosophical stance... about recognising that what we are teaching is a course about working with the most vulnerable, disadvantaged people in society. That’s what the profession is about, or should be, and that we have a commitment to being role models in that and to widening participation and to recognise disadvantage educationally.”

HEI 1

The professional job satisfaction in delivering social work education was exemplified by facilitating GYO activity for several HEI interview participants. They saw their role as promoting equal opportunities and offering expertise in supporting “non-traditional” students, including providing high levels of individual support and, in one case, even access to parking:

“It was really rewarding to see how those students had actually progressed from being a bit wobbly on their Foundation... [to] coming out the third year... Their development is excellent... They are a very rewarding group to tutor.”

HEI 16

“One of the features we build into our courses is quite a lot of individual tutorial support... generally speaking it’s Access students that we are catering for. So that’s bringing people into social work who have missed out initially on their education... [They] might even be looking for somewhere where you can park a car – that sounds silly but... if you’ve got children to pick up then that location is much better... When people are selecting courses they are looking with a number of factors in mind and not just the best social life.”

HEI 18
Several employers and HEIs regretted that there are no greater financial incentives to take on any additional costs associated with a “widening participation” agenda, such as greater preparatory investment, slower, more supportive routes, and higher levels of mentoring throughout for GYO students. They regretted the possible reduction in GYO’s historical role of bringing experienced social care workers from non-traditional academic backgrounds into the profession:

“I just hope that those people will still get a chance to qualify... partly depending upon government funding, you know the Government could... [provide] a funding stream that was for non-traditional students.”

HEI 19

Financial and caring commitments as barriers to study

Students described the opportunity of GYO as widening access to the profession, enabling those who would not be able to afford to study independently to apply, including mature students. Over 80 per cent said that they would not have taken up social work qualifying study without GYO. However, just over half had a degree, indicating that financial and caring commitments, rather than lack of previous educational attainment were the more prevalent barriers to accessing social work qualifying study:

“It’s great because for people like me, who, I’m an older student, there is no way I would be able to fund this myself. It’s a brilliant way to get a qualification that I never dreamed I’d ever really get.”

Student 8

“At the time I was about 36 years old and had wanted to become a social worker probably since I was about 17. This was a great opportunity for me... I have financial responsibilities so I needed to be employed while I was studying.”

Student 18

Some students described their financial and caring commitments as barriers that they did not foresee being overcome without employer sponsorship, although for others they would potentially be overcome at a later stage:

“No, because I had a mortgage so I couldn’t afford to leave my job and also I’d been working for the council for about nine years so obviously I’d have lost any of the other additional benefits, like my annual leave.”

Student 6

“Would I have considered doing that? Yes, at some point in the future... Not at this stage, I couldn’t have afforded it.”

Student 1

The lack of other opportunities for accessing qualifying study had led students to pursue a GYO route to social work that did not meet their educational priorities:

“It’s a shame that I couldn’t have done the MA because it seems a bit stupid to have two BAs, but you have the benefit of being paid while you’re employed, because otherwise I certainly couldn’t have done it with a mortgage and things.”

Student 12

One student noted their luck in gaining a last-minute GYO place, because a colleague had not felt they could take the pay cut from an experienced social care manager to a lower GYO salary, which was set as an entry-level social care assistant.

Employers echoed the views of students, describing the most significant impact of their GYO activity on widening access to the
profession as the *opportunity it offers for people with financial or caring commitments*. Often selected from the experienced social care workforce, these GYO students are more likely to have accrued stability and benefits within their working role that they would not relinquish for the uncertainty of taking on independent study and agency work. Two-thirds of employers described their GYO students as reflecting this profile, predominately *academically able to access training*, but very unlikely to have done so because of prior commitments:

“Mature students who have family commitments, mortgages... couldn’t afford to take the three years out of employment... all 10 [students]... looked into doing the degree... but didn’t feel that they could give the commitment because of either financial or family commitments. So it provided an opportunity for them.”
LA 2

“Some of my trainees are taking a pay cut to come on to this scheme and really had to balance out whether they can afford that, given that they maybe have a mortgage and the cost of living is high... [but] for others it’s great.”
LA 6

HEIs reflected that the key barrier to accessing social work qualifying study for those with financial and caring commitments was the demands of placements:

“There is provision for people to do the course on a part-time basis, but very few [non-GYO] students actually do that in practice. That’s partly because of the requirement around placements.”
HEI 1

The impact of GYO as compensating for previous educational experiences

The extent of support provided to access GYO opportunities was often referred to by employers as part of an ideological stance: whether the organisational priority is to widen educational and professional opportunities for social care workers who have historically been excluded from them, or whether to use the mechanism of GYO to select the strongest academic candidates in order to shape the profile of the workforce.

GYO activity has historically been associated with training up current social care staff, and this model was repeatedly described by research participants as “true” or “real” GYO. It was described as tapping into an existing organisational resource within the workforce, but requiring a commitment to additional investment in high levels of tailored supporting for people to achieve academic success (see Support for students on GYO schemes, page 106):

“Our care workers, huge potential... have got a wealth of experience but... the last experience that they had of classroom was probably when they left school... They know the job inside out, have taken on responsibilities that probably they shouldn’t have, used as social workers when they shouldn’t have been, but lack the ability to write an essay or more basic than that... We do assessments of their learning needs right at the beginning... the level of support is incredible... We believe that’s part of why our students are still there at the end.”
LA 14

One-third of employers described their students as experienced social care workers from their own workforce who lack the qualifications and confidence to access qualifying study without the support that their GYO scheme offers:
“In practice I think what happens is people who are graduates, people who’ve done previous training and academic work of whatever nature before, tend to put in the best application forms, tend to present better in interview.”

CH 1

Schemes that strived to maximise accessibility, without checking and supporting candidates’ ability for study at qualifying level, reported having to tighten entry requirements after some students had struggled and failed:

“We struggled with entry criteria... with a balance of it offering an accessible route into social work qualification for a wide number of staff who wouldn’t have had those opportunities before... and not setting people up who weren’t actually equipped to go on the course. And frankly I think we got it wrong... A couple of them dropped off the course, and I don’t think we did them any favours by not being rather harder-nosed at the point of selection.”

LA 8

Several of these employers emphasised that the academic qualifications were not their priority when selecting GYO candidates, beyond those necessary to secure the HEI place and the study skills to benefit from it. Instead, they emphasised professional potential (see HEI recruitment and selection processes, page 98):

“We’re shortlisting... we’re not interested in whether it’s A levels or the equivalent... Might be somebody with 7 A*s at GCSE and somebody else who’s just scraped through, but in the end it’s about where that person’s at, how they perform at interview, because we’re not wanting people to be great academics, we want them to be able to manage the course but it’s about their practice and what they do, and about them as individuals.”

LA 4

However, even for schemes with an ideological focus on broadening diversity, using selection criteria that do not prioritise more academically qualified candidates, there is still a tendency for the better qualified to secure the places:
“We should be more rigorous in selection for the degree, because we have had some students that I know would have got through the DipSW but are really struggling with the degree... But on the other hand we also need to look at how we can help those people.”

LA 14

Whether this bridging support is best provided by the HEIs delivering qualifying programmes, by local further education colleges devising bespoke programmes for employers or generic Access courses, or by the employers themselves in-house, is an ongoing debate for employers and HEIs. It is part of a broader discussion of the perceived need for skills and career escalators within the social care profession:

“We started the Certificate [with the local FEI] because of the blockage of how do we get people who don’t have academic qualifications into social work?”

LA 13

“One once they were accepted on to the course, the college itself ran some preparatory workshops for GYO students to work on some of those basic academic skills, so they felt there would be at least a more level playing field when they arrived with the full-time students who came from a more formal [academic] background.”

LA 8

“We run the maths and English courses, so that if that is a barrier to somebody accessing [GYO] training there is support to do that beforehand.”

LA 11

Some HEIs felt that not offering a pre-GYO study stage, such as Access, Foundation or certificate qualifications left a gap in preparing “traditional” GYO students who had significant workplace, but not academic, experience. Generally, these study routes were popular amongst employers and potential GYO candidates, although a minority of HEIs had found employers and GYO candidates unenthusiastic about investing time in preparatory stages of study, prior to qualifying courses:

“We do have an Access course... which employers’ students are often reluctant to follow. They feel that we should just give them a place on the [degree]... There is a real issue about preparing students to do a degree-level course... a particular issue for mature entrants who may not have done anything since leaving school... They think we are just obstructing them... but the worst thing we can actually do to anybody is take them out of a course when they can’t cope... they never do come back... We had some bad experiences... and tightened up our admission procedures as a consequence... the preparation beforehand is very important.”

HEI 18

HEIs offering Access, Foundation or certificate qualifications that could be AP(E)Led on to the degree described these as important GYO recruitment routes. These were used wholly or substantially by sponsoring employers to train their staff, both as end qualifications in themselves, and to select potential candidates for sponsoring through a full GYO programme:

“We run a Foundation degree... it allows them to transfer credit... Quite a lot of students come through that route... It was worked up in partnership with the local authorities... for people who may not want to become social workers but who had potential and wanted further training... Maybe they do go on to be decent social workers... [they] have been working in the service for a long time... they want to qualify.”

HEI 5
However, a minority HEI experience was that Access courses, if not co-ordinated with the degree course, could be unhelpful, by offering students a false sense of their expertise in social work, rather than focusing on study skills, such as computer skills, that would equip them for qualifying study:

“[Another department] runs it... Students come from an Access course thinking they have a really good understanding of social work—and actually find they don’t... We’ve said some of the things that we specifically wanted the students to do, one of which was computing... never mind teaching them about social work, teach them these skills in order that they can study at higher education [level].”

HEI 20

While preparatory routes were successful mechanisms for generating GYO students, the uncertainty of employers’ funding could lead to the loss of strong candidates for GYO, who are unable to secure continued sponsorship. This created unmet expectations and could generate resentment towards their employers:

“We also have a Certificate... mapped into the first year of the degree... it’s been quite a popular option... most of them would like to go on to the degree... The difficulty in that is that, while they’ve virtually done the whole of the first year as far as university is concerned, they are then subject to the sponsorship criteria of the agency. Last year, we had some disappointed students because the agency didn’t... sponsor them... That creates quite a bit of resentment.”

HEI 16

HEIs recruiting strong academic candidates, usually the “older universities”, have historically not provided Access, Foundation or certificate course study opportunities. However, a couple of HEIs described this stance as potentially shifting:

“We have got a good reputation on the course and did very well in the last student feedback survey... We are oversubscribed and so we don’t feel we are in the situation where we were looking at worrying about having appropriate numbers... [offering an Access route]. I just think strategically that’s something that a lot of courses are looking at, and not just in social work, in other professional fields.”

HEI 1

Even for competitive, oversubscribed courses, some HEIs still emphasised the importance of promoting access to the profession for a diverse range of candidates, including those who had previously missed out on academic opportunities, while maintaining the quality of their intake:

“We are also involved heavily going to different further education colleges or secondary schools and pushing social work... We have moved beyond the days where there were various numbers of Access places for students within universities... That got us into a whole lot of trouble around the quality of social workers... But there are a number of people who, for various reasons, weren’t able to access education... and have come back to it with a lot of skills... It is deeply competitive but there are Access students who get through.”

HEI 4

Several HEIs running employment-based and college-based courses in parallel emphasised that, while the level of entry qualification of their GYO students tended to be lower than for their direct entry students, the rigour of the courses and the quality of students’ work were consistent:
“There are all sorts of myths that have gone around about employment-based routes being not as rigorous... actually we have worked really hard to have consistency of quality... Employment-based users have to achieve exactly what other students [do], but in a different structure and different order.”

HEI 19

Using GYO to target BME applicants

**Legal obligations under The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000**
The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a duty on public sector authorities to: eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; promote equality of opportunity; and promote good relations between people of different racial groups. All public authorities are also legally required to monitor, by racial group, key indices, including those that record which staff receive training.

**Positive Action**
Positive Action can play a significant part in both developing existing BME staff and improving levels of retention. Positive Action is:

“A range of lawful actions which seek to address an imbalance in employment opportunities among targeted groups which have previously experienced disadvantage, which have been subject to discriminatory policies and practices, or which are under-represented in the workplace.”

(National Health Service, 2007)

The lawful actions include targeted training, provision of facilities and encouragement to apply for specific posts. Positive discrimination, as opposed to Positive Action, involves preferential recruitment or promotion regardless of competencies, skills and experience, and is unlawful.

**The Equalities Bill**
In June 2008, the Government announced plans to extend Positive Action under the Equalities Bill, so that when selecting between two equally qualified candidates employers can take into account the under-representation of disadvantaged groups. The Bill, which will apply to England, Wales and Scotland, is designed to simplify equality law, and will replace eight pieces of legislation covering discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief. It is expected to be introduced into the next Parliamentary session, starting in November 2008. See: www.equalities.gov.uk.

Only two LAs were using a Positive Action approach to target specific under-represented minority ethnic groups in their workforce, in order to increase the match between the ethnic profile of their qualified workforce, and the communities with which they work. The flexibility of this approach was demonstrated in the contrasting scale of these Positive Action schemes: while one is a recently developed scheme in a predominately white, non-urban area, offering a single place each year, the other is a large-scale, long-term investment within a diverse, inner-city setting:

“[We have] one [GYO] place as a Positive Action place... the social work workforce wasn’t representing what the local census was telling us about the population... You don’t actually have to seek exemption [from the Race Relations (Amendment) Act], you state that you are using a particular section... When we’ve done our workforce planning we look at those issues... Once people start on a scheme, the fact that one of those people is a Positive Action trainee becomes completely irrelevant.”

LA 12
“It has been a highly successful scheme, it has enabled the council to plan its workforce so that, for example, most social work teams would know that they could have a bilingual speaker from the local community... So they're not just having a workforce reflect the community in a cosmetic sense but a workforce who could deliver services for local people because they are from that community.”

LA 5

One LA had not instituted a Positive Action approach, but is attempting to promote diversity by advertising for their externally recruited GYO scheme in the local BME and gay and lesbian press, and via local mosques. It had adjusted interview panels to ensure that they contain men. Another described awareness of the possibility of using GYO to address the under-representation of specific minority ethnic groups, but had hoped that these gaps would resolve themselves without intervention:

“We have considered ethnicity... and we have looked at the make-up of our workforce. What we decided to do, I think this might be naive, was hope that we would have applicants from other ethnic groups.”

LA 3

Other employers described their schemes as strongly based on “equal opportunities”, which they felt would preclude them targeting BME groups:

“In a word, ‘No’... you then have to tread very carefully on positive discrimination. If we were targeting a particular ethnic group at the cost of others, then how does that work out?... I also don’t think it has featured much on the landscape in the overall planning of things, it is almost like a knee-jerk reaction – do something.”

LA 7

**Targeting younger people**

With the opportunities that the new degree offers of opening up GYO to younger people, one GYO scheme has targeted people aged 18 and over, providing a two-year preparatory phase before degree study, including social care experience in partnership with local voluntary organisations, and academic preparation in partnership with a local FEI. There is a greater risk that this less experienced cohort may find that they do not want to pursue social work as a profession, and therefore an expectation of higher drop-out rates than from schemes recruiting experienced social care practitioners:

“We were interested in seeing what would happen if we took young people... A lot of the managers really just want people who are ready to ‘hit the ground running’ and they don’t want people they are going to ‘hand hold’ and train too much. And this group is the younger end, less experienced than we would traditionally have... [so] I decided to try the voluntary sector [for work experience]... I worked with [local FEI] on an approved accredited programme... I then had to put in some additional [sessions]... about confidence, study skills, maths skills, written work and critical reasoning... When we took them on we saw that first year as a time when they would look at the profession and say, ‘Yes, I like this, or I don’t’, but that was a two-way process... People are very young to know what they want to do seven years down the line.”

LA 5
The impact of GYO on other workforce development

A quarter of employers mentioned other workforce development schemes within their organisation that are promoting diversity, career development or staff retention. They saw these as informing or complementing their GYO activity:

“The scheme should not also be seen in isolation to other things the council is concerned with... [GYO] has set a model for developing groups of people within the community for professional careers, so we can use the systems that we have set up to help other groups.”

LA 5

“The other thing we are highly involved in is trying to get young recruits through apprenticeship schemes through ‘train to gain’ schemes... so yes, it is starting to happen.”

LA 9

“That ‘Return to work’ course... Qualified practitioners that have been out, because there is a valuable resource, particularly women who come out of the workforce for a couple of years and then [their] confidence is rock bottom... This course is a lovely way of nurturing people back.”

LA 13

“Without the secondees we might have an overall younger student group. That makes and has an effect on the constitution of the social group and the variety and the diversity of the student group.”

HEI 3

“(The) big change of course has been the change in age... agencies that go a trainee route and advertise... had really high flyers and they were younger and much more academic.”

HEI 12

ETHNICITY

Most HEIs described the ethnic diversity of their GYO cohort as broadly reflecting the populations of the locality, or of the respective localities, of their sponsoring agencies, which might span both urban and rural areas:

 “[We have] mainly white GYO students. If we recruited the same number of secondees from [city council] as we do from [county council] then that would be different.”

HEI 3

Some HEIs had not considered if there was a differential ethnic profile between their GYO and direct entry students, but on reflection realised that GYO students were less ethnically diverse than their direct entry counterparts:

“We have, I would say, [an] average 60 per cent of black African students here... it is not the same for [GYO].... They might have one or two students from a different ethnic background but a lot of those students are white, yes I have just realised that.”

HEI 17

The impact of GYO on workforce profiles

AGE AND PREVIOUS EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Both employers and HEIs reported that external traineeships tended to secure younger people with stronger qualifications than traditional internal secondments, whose students tended to be older and more experienced than the direct entry student cohort, and more commonly from non-traditional academic backgrounds:
Two HEIs speculated that there may at times be differential selection of GYO candidates where workforces are more ethnically diverse:

“We were running… an employment-based DipSW… and they were almost all white [while] the direct entry route was at times up to a third black… My black colleague thinks, for whatever reason, the black social care assistants are less likely to get sponsored.”

HEI 12

“[Ethnic diversity] has not been one of the greatest successes of our EBR… it is hard to tease out what is going on… I think probably that in shire counties institutional racism is pretty strong and things don’t work so well for black staff.”

HEI 19

Differential ethnic profiles between GYO and non-GYO students could generate tension in some areas because of the tendency for GYO students to bring greater experience to the classroom, with expertise therefore appearing to be the monopoly of one ethnic group over another (see Impact of GYO students on other students, page 80):

“[GYO students] are seen as the knowledgeable ones… But there is a potential issue for a race problem. The knowledgeable ones are also, because they are seconded… on the whole, white students. Then there is an issue that the ones who know the most are the white students and yet most students are the black students. Lecturers need to be very skilled actually at picking up these issues.”

HEI 20

**Gender**

Lastly, although GYO schemes were not being used to formally target male GYO candidates, both employers and HEIs generalised that levels of men within GYO cohorts reflected similar or slightly higher levels than within the existing social work workforce, as described in Part B on analysis of GYO levels and trends. Schemes recruiting trainees into the organisation tended to have a greater proportion of male GYO students:

“There are more females in the social care workforce and especially the unqualified, but I definitely think we have had more male [externally recruited] trainees.”

LA 3

One HEI had talked with male GYO students to explore whether GYO was helping to address the gender imbalance:

“I did some research about talking to men about why they did apply for funded routes… men that did apply said, ‘Because we are still seen as the breadwinner’… They felt very much that they couldn’t reduce… their income to go off and study… so GYO actually helps, to some degree, balance out that.”

HEI 15

Another HEI speculated that the shift to the degree, and focus on career pathways, would contribute to increased interest from men in social work as a profession, without the support of GYO:

“This year, out of Masters students… out of 30 we had 14 men, which is an enormous change, and when you talk to those men… they are aspiring to be managers. So I think because of it being a degree, having a clear pathway seems like a good job, a respected job that people come into for those reasons’.”

HEI 17
Part D: Running a GYO scheme

Part D presents and discusses the practical experiences of employers, students and HEIs in running and participating in GYO schemes. It describes GYO recruitment and selection processes; the distinctive requirements of EBRs; the range and effectiveness of support for GYO students once on GYO schemes; processes of contractual and informal collaboration between the different stakeholders; issues around developing GYO in the voluntary, independent and private sectors; and the resource implications of GYO.

Summary

- The type and level of support offered to GYO students by their employer vary significantly between organisations, and between different models of GYO. In turn, students require different levels of support from HEIs, depending on the supportiveness of their employer. Full-time GYO study requires less support because students are less likely to be juggling the roles of worker and student. Study skills provision is usually the responsibility of the HEI but GYO students do not necessarily have greater needs than direct entry students.
- Students draw on workforce development staff as the main source of employer support, with operational managers and work colleagues only sometimes supportive of the student role. Only half of GYO students interviewed were satisfied with the level of support received from their employer.
- The continuity and dedication of the GYO co-ordinator role are highly valued. Co-ordinators act as advocates for students. Peer support is an important source of support, often facilitated by employers and HEIs. Wide variation in study leave exists between employers. Half of students interviewed received financial assistance from their employers (in addition to payment of fees and salaries), including travel, book and IT allowances.
- HEIs and employers have a broad range of agreements, often unwritten, about collaborating over GYO activity. These are increasingly formalised, focusing on practice placements and information-sharing about students. Commitments to funding an agreed number of students are desirable for HEIs but are often seen as impractical given LA funding cycles. HEIs were primarily selected by employers for proximity, the option of distance learning or due to established partnerships.
- Employers describe the success of schemes as dependent on rigorous selection processes, with criteria including social care experience, values, motivation, communication skills, ability to combine work with study, the endorsement of managers and commitment to the organisation, as well as previous academic achievement.

Most employers offered some support and advice for potential candidates within their organisation to access their GYO opportunities, usually a mixture of individualised one-to-one input and more formal group sessions.

At its most comprehensive this is a multi-stage process leading from information-giving to preparation for internal and HEI application processes; and then to preparation for study once a GYO place is successfully secured:

“I run information sessions... people who might be interested... come along and I talk to them about what we offer, what the university expects, about our criteria... there is a guidance booklet for those people as well,
There are positive examples of liaison between operational managers and workforce development to support candidates who have failed to secure a place on a GYO scheme to achieve the necessary qualifications or experience to be successful with a subsequent application:

“If, for example, in the interview or during an application process, there were gaps that were identified, they are then discussed with the team managers to say, if this candidate is to apply again these are the gaps you may want to address, to see if they can support them with that.”

LA 7

Assistance is usually provided by the workforce development team. However, in a minority of organisations line managers are responsible for this role, with workforce development taking a hands-off approach that distances them from potential candidates so as not to bias the GYO selection process:

“Managers do professional development reviews once a year with each member of staff... managers are often stating in the application forms that they see this as the next logical step for this worker... It is up to them to do the rehearsing with their member of staff to get what support they can... I will give advice over the phone up to a point, I can’t bias somebody’s application because I am on the panel... a large part of the selection procedure is showing, like applying for a job, that you can fill a form out properly, that is part of the test that you get the form in on time, that it is legible, that you have answered the questions.”

LA 15

Employers had learned that comprehensive information about the entry requirements for the scheme should include the nature of studying at degree level, and the role of the social worker. All this assisted some unsuitable GYO candidates to de-select themselves from the application process, rather than face the disappointment of rejection. However, workforce development staff described the difficult balance of how to respond to candidates who are repeatedly unsuccessful at securing a place, trying to discourage those who are seen to be unsuitable, and to support those who have potential:

“We would try and counsel out of the process people we felt were utterly unsuitable and didn’t stand a chance, for everybody’s sake really.”

LA 8
“We give them interviewing coaching as well and do much to support them if we think they are good candidates… you come to know them over the years… There is one guy that finally got in this year… he is going to be the best social worker, we have all seen him around for three or four years, and [he] just closes up in interview… but he did it this year with flying colours so he finally got in.”

LA 13

Half the GYO students interviewed reported receiving support during the application process, and two-thirds said that they started their qualifying training feeling adequately prepared. However, the adjustment in status from worker to student and the challenges of qualifying study, particularly for those who had been away from education for a long time, were often described as things that could not be “prepared for”, whatever level of formal or informal support students had received in advance:

“Myself and others on the course had three–four months of pre-learning, and although this should have been enough preparation, nothing would have prepared me for the real thing… This gave information on construction of essays, reading, using study time effectively.”
Student 4

“I don’t think you can be fully prepared… I knew it was going to be hard work and I hadn’t studied for a long time but… and I was knackered at the end of it.”
Student 6

A minority of employers offer no support to their own staff to secure a place on the GYO scheme because they view this as disadvantaging external candidates, where schemes are open to both types of candidates.

Employer student selection priorities

Whether schemes recruit candidates internally, externally to the organisation, or are open to both, employers described the success of all their GYO schemes as strongly linked to their rigorous selection processes. These included examination of the candidate’s values, motivation and analytical and communication skills, as well as educational and social care experience. GYO schemes tend to be highly competitive, with opportunities therefore to tailor the selection criteria to meet the scheme priorities, balancing the required levels of academic and social care experience, or the necessity of candidates having already established their commitment to the organisation, or bringing in transferable skills and experience as “new blood” to the organisation.

Two employers emphasised that they kept the previous academic requirements low, as they were less interested in “academic high flyers” than candidates with the right “values in practice” and “interpersonal skills” (see also Widening access to the profession, page 83):

“Our recruitment process… it’s extremely detailed and thorough, and probably more demanding than it is of qualified staff… the reason for that is that we’re taking a huge risk because… the theory is they’re not coming with any prior qualifications, and perhaps very little work experience, or maybe only voluntary experience so it’s about making sure that the people we get will succeed… We do some written case study work… to check literacy and analytical skills… They do a presentation which very much tests their values around diversity and equality and discrimination… They’ve got a technical interview panel… we’re asking them
questions about their values in practice... Five different elements of the interview, which takes place over a two-day process, as well as of course the application form... a demanding process.”

CH 1

“To begin with we wanted it to be as broad as possible, and I think we had something like 1,600 applications the first year... We didn’t set academic qualification requirements other than as a guide... because we were very conscious that even within our own workforce there are people who don’t have that academic background but who would be very good social workers... we tried to provide a bit more guidance, said, ‘This is the level that you are going to have to demonstrate to us that you can study at’... We focus in quite heavily on... interpersonal skills... ‘Can you demonstrate in your background that you have had that experience and that you understand what being a social worker is about?’ ”

LA 11

However, employers recruiting candidates who failed elements of the course and needed to retake, or who dropped out and required redeployment, had experienced a negative impact on the reputation of the scheme and concerns about the cost implications. This led to tightening of the entry requirements for candidates, and to clarifying the contractual arrangements with GYO students if they fail or drop out:

“We have had a couple of problems with students this year, and the cost implications are huge... and that was for just one essay... if you fail you wait until the next year. That is so hard to manage as an agency because we haven’t got the money to be supporting staff extra time... If somebody was retired on medical grounds or something, or redeployment, they might come out of the training budget... and it is going to be disastrous... How do you test the calibre of a student to know they will get through?... Having to show that to senior management, it doesn’t look good... We have just cleared up the fact that if you fail or if you don’t get through the HEI interview process you are redeployable and that is that.”

LA 1

The standard criterion is for candidates to have one year’s social care experience, although most schemes do not specify that this is in a paid capacity. While many schemes recruiting internal candidates require them to be already within a permanent social care role, some schemes allow internal staff in non-social care roles to transfer to a social care setting on take-up of their GYO place:

“They need to have had a year’s direct work experience... You do [need to be currently in a social care role] but... one of the trainees this year was a social inclusion officer in Education.”

LA 1

Several employers emphasised that they were looking for evidence of the ability to manage the challenge of combining work with study:

“From the selection processes, from the criteria there is evidence that they can work and study, we are particularly looking for their motivation, that they have plans on how they are going to balance their home life, work and study and give us real examples... [of] what strategies they will put in place.”

LA 15
The endorsement of managers for GYO applications from internal staff was an important factor in student selection, mentioned by half of employers. For secondment schemes where managers will have to cover for the absent staff member, their “release” of their staff member is an essential criterion (see Replacement staffing (backfill), page 126). This could lead to unequal access to training opportunities for staff within different teams:

“There have always been team managers who wouldn’t support people to apply... and none of that was ever regulated or monitored... There would be other team managers who’d perhaps have three people on programmes and then having awful problems doing any work, but there were huge differences... Certain staff did not have access to social work training.”

LA 14

HEI recruitment and selection processes

To support recruitment to their EBRs, or recruitment of GYO students on to college-based qualifying routes, some HEIs host information and recruitment sessions, or attend sessions hosted by the sponsoring agencies. These are described by all stakeholders as a successful mechanism for presenting and promoting an honest discussion about the challenges of a GYO route, bringing together prospective candidates with current students, employers and HEIs:

“The briefing event that happens every year, that’s a presentation about the course and a presentation about the [GYO] route and an opportunity for potential students to talk to both staff at the university... [and] from each authority... [and] students who are currently on the course. It’s a real opportunity for them to feel their way around what the possibilities are... there will be a couple of presentations from existing [GYO] students. Then there is going to be a break into each local authority and I’ll go round that and talk to a smaller group and that’s where their [GYO co-ordinator] and their current [GYO] students will be... it’s an opportunity for them to have a cup of coffee and a more informal kind of discussion and, ‘Come on, spill the beans and tell us what it’s really like’. I think that will encourage people.”

HEI 1

Unsurprisingly, given that some GYO activity is set within highly co-ordinated collaborations between a single employer and partner HEI, and other GYO students are left to secure a place independently at an HEI of their choice, there is a broad spectrum of type and degree of collaboration between HEIs and employers in the recruitment and selection of GYO students.

A minority of employers and HEIs have completely integrated GYO recruitment, shortlisting and interviewing jointly, but more commonly, “joint recruitment” processes will involve employers in shortlisting and only then interviewing jointly with HEIs:

“They make an application to the employer who does some shortlisting and makes their own decisions about who to put forward... the local authority and myself interview prospective candidates.”

HEI 1

Joint recruitment processes could occasionally generate “struggles” between employers and HEIs over their respective selection priorities:

“Certainly in shortlisting we have to flex our muscles... around how the university
A couple of employers were more cynical about the rigour of the HEI selection process, describing their GYO candidates as almost guaranteed places:

“I might be very cynical, but I don’t think they are particularly fussy who they take on courses as long as people pay the fees… I mean, the academic calibre of our candidates, it is a very mixed bunch.”

LA 15

Because the annual cycle of HEI student selection is usually completed prior to the confirmation of LA funding levels, most HEIs asked authorities for an estimate of GYO places to assist in planning the cohort, reserving those places in anticipation of later confirmation of GYO funding. HEIs therefore tend to interview and offer HEI places to an excess of candidates, of whom only a proportion are able to subsequently take them up. Some HEIs described this as inevitable, but others as a waste of HEI resources, and some were exploring alternatives, including moving away from a reservation system to a joint recruitment process with employers to attempt to improve their annual planning cycle:

“In most authorities you have to get the [HEI] place and then apply for the [GYO] funding… Students in January/February are told, ‘Yes, you’ve got a place’. We can still be waiting in August for the agency to say, ‘Yes, you can have the money… What agencies will say is, ‘Well, we can’t really do it any other way’… a bit of a panic for the lecturer who currently does it.”

HEI 15

A few HEIs offer a specific selection process for students known to have pre-secured GYO funding, either by guaranteeing them interviews or by lowering entry requirements for local employers’ candidates, although this was not always publicly stated. Where there are long-standing partnership arrangements between HEIs and employers, HEIs justified a more generous approach to GYO students as a reflection of their confidence in employers’ initial selection processes:

“We... guarantee an interview... We used to have a partnership... so if candidates are in a position of potentially being seconded... they are going to have the requisite requirements.”

HEI 20

Other HEIs reported a high success rate of GYO candidates gaining places on their courses, but ascribed this not to more lenient HEI recruitment policies, but to the calibre of the candidates when employers are recruiting experienced social care workers to their GYO schemes:

 “[The majority] because of their experience, they come across better when they do their initial essays, which they have to write in order to get sponsorship... I wouldn’t say they are... favoured over the non-employment route.”

HEI 16
“We don’t reserve places because it wouldn’t be worth it… We have had some people who we have offered places to sending us messages in August saying, ‘Didn’t get the [GYO] money’… Because that wound us up… this year we have been much more strategic… and interviewed together, so that was an improvement… it worked well.”

HEI 6

Most HEIs do not turn down GYO students, even though they may be confirmed, or eventually be withdrawn, only days before the start of study. The boost of GYO to overall student numbers and the importance of maintaining positive relationships with local employers underpinned their willingness to be flexible. However, this overall process of accommodating GYO funding cycles was described at best as “a jigsaw puzzle” (HEI 4) and at worst as “the Admissions Tutor’s nightmare” (HEI 2). The destabilising effect of this on planning the student intake can create insecurity in planning for staffing, and occasionally leads to cancellation of an intake (see also Trends in GYO, page 26):

“The uncertainty would be in terms of future planning. If we are not going to get students in the future then that will be a sizeable chunk of our work which will disappear. Once that starts happening then you start losing staff as well, it’s difficult to gear up again… The more solid [GYO] arrangements are, then the more able they are to plan for it and the better provision we’ll be able to make as a consequence, and the more stability we’ll have.”

HEI 18

A couple of HEIs had combined separate EBRs with CBRs in order to mediate this uncertainty, so that variations in levels of GYO students could be countered by adjusting the recruitment of college-based candidates:

“In university terms, in trying to keep people employed and not swinging an explosive sessional workload that is not very doable… They tell us now how many people they are going to sponsor the next year… We had half a dozen lined up from [LA] and come April with the financial year and the budget it evaporates… [So] we put the two [EBR and CBR] groups together for pragmatic reasons really, because we could get a sense of what was happening in EBR numbers and carry on recruiting or close the books for CBR students depending upon what was going on, and it is much more viable now.”

HEI 12

“We had to cancel… the Masters because we had eight and it is a minimum of 10… otherwise we don’t get enough income for a post… It is really difficult to pin people down to how many… They go off and they liaise with all their managers and… we always know it is going to be last minute… Yesterday… somebody from [LA] said she had someone [a new GYO student] and we have induction on Monday. OK send her in, if she is willing to start the course and you can free her up… I can take her aside and help her… You just have to be really flexible… Now I have put my [EBR] Masters together with my full-time; I think that is the answer.”

HEI 17

Options for HEIs in EBRs

While GYO students predominately study part-time or via distance learning on EBRs (see Analysis of GYO levels and trends, page 31), the classification of EBR alone does not indicate that the route has a discrete study pattern. Historically, they were developed to accommodate employer priorities, including maximising student time in the workplace. HEIs interviewed were split equally between those
Some HEIs also offer additional flexibility in the timing of placements and exam boards in order to minimise student time away from the workplace, and therefore employers’ costs:

“It is a full-time route but the university sells it that there is the potential to work because it is one day at university and your practice day is one day the same week... not block placements.”

LA 1

Some EBRs were distinct routes in name only. These HEIs describe arrangements having evolved over time until they were indistinguishable from CBRs, the only differences being in the recruitment and funding of students, and the arrangements for placements:

“Whether we’ve got an EBR... it’s of no particular value to us to make that distinction... they’ve become more and more incorporated into the full-time programme, until a point where, really, there is no distinction.”

HEI 3

EBR routes that provide a distinct pattern of study are structured with fewer college-based days, and some direct teaching replaced by alternative forms of teaching support. These routes were developed by HEIs to offer flexibility to meet employers’ needs. Although many were described as part-time, reflecting less time in college, they were often still completed within three years:

“We’ve tried always to have a very flexible approach and try and relate well to employers... We have found having [EBR] part-time students [is] a way of establishing a clear identity for ourselves... What we can offer... is an adaptable approach.”

HEI 18

“They still complete it in three years... the reality is a financial and a pragmatic one... they are in two days... the full-time students are in four days a week.”

HEI 1

Occasionally, employers described dissatisfaction with the structure of EBR courses that did not consistently facilitate student time back in the workplace:

“I don’t like the way the second year is set up... it is really complicated for the teams to accommodate because... it is a couple of hours on a Monday, say, and then a Tuesday in work, then two lessons a month on a Wednesday... That is for about six weeks... [Managers] just write them off because they can’t work around that... and they are still on their full salary.”

LA 3

These HEIs describe arrangements having evolved over time until they were indistinguishable from CBRs, the only differences being in the recruitment and funding of students, and the arrangements for placements:

Some HEIs were offering flexibility not only in the course structure, but in the teaching materials and the individual and group support provided (see Support for students on GYO schemes, page 106). This provision of support had evolved over time, as HEIs gained experience of running distinct GYO routes. For example, HEIs referred to students’ critical
experience of the first year of combining work and study, as requiring particular investment to ensure the progression of students:

“None of us quite knew what we were doing when this [GYO route] started... It was like, ‘Throw them in the deep end’ and so some floundered... We have got better now and what we are doing now is supporting them in that first year.”

HEI 6

“We are aware of the needs of part-time EBR students... we are trying to develop materials that are more accessible... CD-Roms and Open Learning materials... [less] standing in front of students direct teaching... more tutorials and seminar groups.”

HEI 10

“We have [GYO] people submit the draft of their assignment and get feedback... There is a real mixed opinion about that... and we say, ‘Well, they should because they are studying at a distance’... so as a marking tutor you’d mark the assignment twice, in the way that you wouldn’t on a full-time individual route.”

HEI 8

Other part-time EBRs did not require any new teaching materials but simply delivered the CBR materials over a longer time period:

“You look at a full-time programme and then you divide it up and you... just string it out longer.”

HEI 11

A couple of HEIs with distinct EBRs also had a minority of GYO students on their CBR, either because the employer had allowed the student a choice of route, or because the employer did not want to offer support to their GYO students, and believed that a CBR would provide more comprehensive student support:

“[They] chose to be traditional full-time students rather than go on the EBR because they said they wanted their opportunity to be a student, which they have fought long and hard for.”

HEI 2

“One of the authorities that we are in partnership with last year recruited four trainees who they decided to send on the CBR. But that is very unusual... The person who was going to support them in their Staff Development Unit left... so they said, ‘We will send them on a CBR [so] they would get all their support through academic structures rather than [the] agency.”

HEI 8

The blurred margins of GYO and EBRs With limited GYO funding available to members of the social care workforce, several HEIs described their aspirations to open up their distinct EBRs to prospective students without GYO funding. They noted that many social care staff have no access to full GYO opportunities but may be able to obtain partial support, including time off and access to placements. One HEI proposed greater use of e-learning and a reconsideration of the eligibility criteria for the bursary, in order to widen access to qualifying study:

“The EBR... allows people that are currently employed to access a programme that is funded by their employer... [but there is] a bigger cohort of students that we are seeing, much more interested... [The] GSCC’s definition of ‘work based’ is you are getting a wage, which isn’t always true... they are not getting money for these times... An e-learning route would allow a gateway... Our programme would be a lot fuller if people could claim the equivalent of the part-time bursary and could then justify it, they are not getting money for these times... They can do
HEIs described the additional objective of supporting this model of teaching as “embedding learning within the workplace”. Although described by both employers and HEIs as more resource intensive than standard teaching delivered in a college setting, it was attractive for employer organisations that want to use their training capacity to exercise greater control over the timing and delivery of courses, and to monitor student progress. HEIs highlighted two caveats for success: the importance of an independent quality assurance framework in order to maintain transparency over the rigour of the academic practice; and the need to ensure that students maintain contact with new and challenging perspectives from outside their current work colleagues and setting:

“Students... were unable to get a traineeship... and so they were still working for the authority but they were getting time off unpaid... There may be more students who are supported and about whom we don’t know because... they’re doing CBR in such a way that they are maintaining part of their job... deals that can be being done... between employer and employee.”

HEI 11

“We have someone else from [LA] who is tacitly being supported... on the part-time CBR... The only support that they are giving her is finding her placements.”

HEI 19

**Delivering teaching in the workplace setting**

A minority of EBRs include workplace-based tuition, which may be delivered by HEI and employer staff, or joint appointments across the organisations, and is dependent on close partnership working between the two organisations.
Students had limited opportunity to compare their experience of learning in their work setting to a CBR. One mentioned the added confidence that they felt they gained in relating theory to practice, having practitioners from their own agency as teachers. Another noted that one limitation of the model was the lack of physical contact with the HEI, which limited their access to library resources:

“We... had the university tutors coming to us... I would have preferred to access the university building... it had a library on site and you could go there afterwards... that was probably the only downside.”
Student 2

“Because the tutors themselves were practitioners they can actually relate the theory to the practice far more easily than if you were just told, ‘Well, in theory this would work’... So I think there are huge advantages.”
Student 7

Workplace mentoring schemes
Where GYO students are on EBRs that are substantially workplace-based while studying, several HEIs have established schemes that they described as successfully developing and supporting the role of workplace mentors. This mentoring role is distinct and additional to the line management and practice supervision that GYO students may also be receiving from within their employing organisation, and is an on-site resource in making links between theory and practice and an “advocate” for the student. HEIs provided several training sessions to prepare and support the mentor in this role. These schemes were particularly concentrated in the critical first year of study, when students were described by HEIs as likely to be under considerable pressure adjusting to a new role, but not feeling able to discuss this with their HEI tutors. Ironically, students might fail to take up the opportunity of receiving mentoring support because they were too busy with work and study commitments to fit it in:

“[For] EBR students we have set up a mentoring scheme... Until they start their placement they could literally be coming in Monday [to HEI], going back to the workplace and doing exactly what they do before... In order to recognise that this person is a student, because... when they are in their agency they don’t have that identity, is to provide a mentor from the organisation... Students are very frightened of us when they first come in... if they had somebody in the agency who could be like a mediator or voice for the student to give them that additional support... Also it is about the agency taking responsibility, not saying, ‘It is the university’s fault, or that student isn’t succeeding’, to be real partners in learning... Each year we try to recruit mentors from the organisation, we give them a bit of training... I would say it has been mostly successful for those who have taken it up, they have found it helpful, but there are issues about students taking it up because they feel so snowed under... they haven’t been able to fit in the mentor.”
HEI 17

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (AP(E)L)
Opportunities for AP(E)L are available and used to some extent in most HEIs interviewed. However, only two offered EBR GYO students structured sessions prior to the start of the degree to develop AP(E)L portfolios, thus reducing the time spent out of the workplace, and the costs to the employer. These AP(E)L opportunities had developed alongside the EBR in direct response to the requirements and investment of sponsoring agencies:
“The EBR... evolved from an AP(E)L structure... Employers were saying... ‘We want to get people into the second year’... The funding was there in the local authorities to support it, that is where the impetus came from... Local authorities said to us... ‘We want a course which will meet our needs’.”

HEI 15

Occasionally, HEIs have established blanket AP(E)L agreements with employers for their GYO students who have already received in-house training that exceeds the equivalent college-based course:

“One of the things we do AP(E)L wholesale is the Welfare Rights Course in [LA] which is five days long... more than what our college students do.”

HEI 19

A quarter of HEIs did not offer any AP(E)L, or described their course as constructed so that it is unworkable, with some emphasising the administrative impracticalities, and others emphasising the pedagogical importance of students not missing elements of the course:

“No, we don’t do that... we are quite strict in saying here is [sic] our academic criteria and you have to meet that, really that is all.”

HEI 6

Several HEIs expressed concerns that employers would use AP(E)L to restrict the educational experience of their staff, and therefore welcomed the decision not to allow accreditation for prior practice experience within the new degree. Even if a module or course is AP(E)Led, several HEIs insisted that students still attend classes without completing the coursework, in order to maximise their learning experience, and therefore did not view AP(E)L as a mechanism for releasing students back into the workplace:

“You can fully understand why Accreditation of Experiential Learning was restricted, because employers... would take the cheaper option... That doesn’t necessarily churn out good... staff.”

HEI 15

HEIs reported GYO students as holding contrasting views about AP(E)L, with some eager to minimise the duration of their qualifying programme, and frustrated at the lack of possibilities for crediting their social care experience, in order to reduce their time spent on placements. Other GYO students did not want to fast-track their qualification but to maximise their opportunities to gain study skills and an educational experience:

“The main thing is that people feel incredibly frustrated they can’t credit practice because most of our students have got anything between two and 20 years’ practice... they feel they should get credit for.”

HEI 14

“So far nobody has chosen to AP(E)L... certainly the work-based learners, they are actually keen to do [college] work... They can feel quite removed from the course anyway because they are in work four days a week... They actually want to do it because they are worried they want to keep their skill level of study up.”

HEI 2
Support for students on GYO schemes

Employers’ support for GYO students
The type and level of support offered to GYO students by their employer varies significantly between organisations, and between different models of GYO scheme within organisations.

HEIs said that this variation in the experience of support by their employers meant that GYO students studying alongside peers from other sponsoring agencies were quickly able to compare the perceived generosity of their sponsoring employer. While some would be more appreciative of their employers, others would develop resentment about their comparative allocation of study leave, caseload levels, travel and book allowances, and other elements of employer support:

“We do one module through distance learning and they need some study time, so we say that they are definitely not available for work on two days... Now some authorities say, ‘OK, we want you in work three days a week’, other authorities say, ‘We want you to have the whole time off for study’... It creates discussion!”

HEI 8

Where employers run a scheme seconding their own staff alongside a traineeship scheme bringing in new people, the latter tend to receive greater levels of support. Within highly resourced GYO models students are intensively monitored throughout the scheme by workforce development-based GYO scheme co-ordinators (see page 110), receiving additional practice supervision and line management in their work settings. However, in other models of GYO, students are left to initiate contact, and employers reflected that they might not be aware if their students are struggling, as illustrated by the differential support offered by one employer on their contrasting models of GYO:

“For the [1st model: recruited externally]... they’re getting fortnightly supervision... and we have a Learning Agreement at the beginning of a placement, a mid-placement review and then sometimes we have a final meeting... it is quite well monitored... I don’t know how supported the [2nd model: recruited internally] feel... They have to come to us if they want anything.”

LA 4

HEIs’ support for GYO students
The type and extent of any additional support that HEIs provide GYO students, in contrast to non-GYO students, is shaped by the type of GYO route, whether college- or employment-based, and part- or full-time, and by the profile of the students, including whether they are academically skilled or need additional study skills support.

Echoing employers’ views that students studying full-time need less support, HEIs described part-time or distance learning routes as needing more individual tutorial support. Students would be more likely to be on their own trajectory rather than enjoying peer support:

“They attend university one day a month... for these students we do three visits in a year so... they are quite well looked after because if we can ensure that things are set up properly in the beginning we know that that year will go much more smoothly... They get more individual attention than the general route.”

HEI 2

HEIs reported that regular liaison with sponsoring agencies was more important for students on EBRs structured around less time
at the HEI. **Information events for students and managers** were part of involving managers in understanding and planning for their students’ support needs for the forthcoming year:

“We run information mornings, which take up a lot of time over the summer... The managers are invited... they don’t always come and they grumble that they don’t know what’s going on... Information is given out about what their employee will be doing this year and where their pressure points will be... Managers could be quite supportive then of the student.”

HEI 16

Additionally, HEIs reported that GYO students from different sponsoring organisations could **demand different levels of support from HEIs**, depending on the relative challenges of their model of GYO scheme and the supportiveness of their employer:

“In terms of the level of support our students get with their sponsoring agencies, that means that they don’t demand that sort of level of support from us... [However] students from [one LA] were very dissatisfied. Of course, their dissatisfaction spilled over... because then they start finding fault with the programme as well. The complaints I had would come more from those students who are not supported [by their employers].”

HEI 7

Some HEIs described GYO students as less likely **to admit to HEI tutors** or to their employers that they do not understand elements or that they were struggling with a course, particularly if they are older, more experienced practitioners and used to feeling confident about their social care practice. They could be equally **uncomfortable expressing these concerns** to their sponsoring agency, where it could be seen as a sign of weakness or ingratitude:

“The students are very frightened of us when they first come in... if they are an experienced worker and [have] been in social care for a long time I think they are expected to be completely up to scratch... they feel reticent in... being honest about, ‘Actually, the theory doesn’t make sense’.”

HEI 17

In contrast, GYO students who were experienced social care practitioners could **need reduced input from HEIs**:

“They are a fairly self-sufficient group, they are fairly used to coping with pressure, they have it all the time in the agencies... I would think they probably need less support, sometimes tutorial-wise and academically than some of the mainstream undergraduate students.”

HEI 16

**Student experiences of support**

GYO students describe a broad range of **complementary sources of support** drawn from their HEI, different elements within the workplace and their home lives that they had used to facilitate the successful completion of their qualification:

“While on the course I had a staff development officer, who I could go to for any support needs or anything like that, as well as my academic tutor and practice teacher. I had an on-site supervisor on my placement as well. Then I had the other trainees as well and of course mates are also a source of support... I felt if I needed help or advice there was somebody I could turn to.”

Student 3
“It was very important that my manager understood the need for study time and allowed me to take this flexibly; also that my caseload was reduced when on placement. Other [GYO] students and staff development staff provided a network of formal and informal support. I had the same tutor throughout the course and this proved invaluable as she came to know me... My main concern was about balancing work and home life... the only way I overcame this was with [the] support of my husband and family.”

Student 11

All GYO students confirmed receiving some form or range of support from their employer once on their GYO scheme, which encompassed all forms of individual and group, financial, emotional and practical support. However, only half indicated that they were satisfied with the amount of employer support, with nearly two-thirds of the non-OU students satisfied, compared to just over one-third of the OU students. This difference may be an indication of the model of GYO associated with distance learning routes, which were often described as leaving the student to maintain their former working status and full caseload, in addition to taking on the student role, rather than moving into a more supported hybrid role of GYO student/worker.

A couple of students described themselves as striving to be as independent as possible throughout their GYO experience, and reflected that they would be reluctant to take up support even if it was offered:

“At the time I was feeling that I could have done with some more support, but looking back now I think I probably would have turned it down or said, ‘Look, I want to do this on my own’.”

Student 9

Establishing and maintaining connections
For candidates recruited into a sponsoring organisation to take up a place on a GYO scheme, the first element of investment described by employers is the induction process that they provide into the scheme and to the wider organisation. These range from cursory to extensive, and appear to set the tone for the continuing ethos of the scheme, which in the following example is highly resourced and supported:

“The cohort of trainees... have a comprehensive two-week induction programme that introduces them to [LA 6]... the borough, its residents, its services, its resources and children’s and adults services... They spend a day shadowing a social worker within a specific team and we make sure it’s a team that they’ve not got any prior knowledge of working in. They meet the Chief Exec, the Director of Children’s Services, Director of Adult Services. They go and visit a range of different resources within the community, they go on a bus tour of the area.”

LA 6

For both externally recruited and internal staff on a scheme, employers emphasised that investing in making GYO students feel valued by, and connected to, the organisation while they were absent for significant periods was of particular importance for those on full-time and postgraduate courses:

“They are invited to the Christmas ‘do’... whether they are at university or not... and just little things like that; having email accounts which we have to pay for. So they are very much, from the beginning, part of the organisation even if they are at university... They do value that.”

LA 3
Despite the importance of maintaining these links to the organisation, once on a qualifying course, GYO students **studying full-time were seen by employers as requiring less emotional support and intervention**, because they are less likely to be juggling the roles of worker and student:

“An advantage was the fact that we had additional support in a way, in that I still had a link with the workplace, which meant that I could speak to my old colleagues to get advice or assistance... That was even when I wasn’t on placement.”

Student 6

Choosing to maintain the **primary support links between the GYO student and employer organisation via an operational manager**, rather than via a central workforce development contact, is not common, but is more likely to be a feature of traditional secondment models and is seen as a mechanism for promoting team loyalty and encouraging the return to a particular work setting on qualifying:

“It is made very clear in the contract and through the whole selection process the expectations that that individual will return to a particular service... They have a manager who they will contact and who should be providing them with support while they are at university and studying, so that they are not suddenly out of touch... The hope is that that will help the individual to feel part of that team and to return to that team... that is why they have a contact person within a team.”

LA 11

For GYO students **remaining in a previous social care post** while studying, the transition to a student role is less explicit, and can lead to students feeling that their managers and colleagues had not taken into account any change in their status within the team, and resented their absences from the workplace.

“There was some resentment, people seemed to be never in work... Some teams were absolutely superb, the managers taking that on and making it clear that it would be of benefit to everybody in the service... There

**Support from managers and colleagues**

When **GYO students were asked which staff from their employing agency had supported them** once their scheme was underway, a third cited workforce development staff and a quarter referred to their operational manager. Support from different operational managers was described as variable:

“My manager was very supportive. Not all managers were. Because they changed quite rapidly in [LA], one of the managers may be very supportive and they move on to a different role and the new manager didn’t understand and wasn’t so sympathetic... I was very lucky.”

Student 7

When asked what other sources of support they had drawn on during their study, beyond the formal structures of the GYO scheme, one-third named their work colleagues:
were other places where... it went unmanaged and the students became quite isolated within their workplace.”

LA 8

Workforce development staff had advised students to assert their changed status, and intervened in person when this was not addressed (see also Impact on social work education: placements, page 74):

“They have regular supervision with their managers, and one of the things I emphasise is... make sure that there is a standing item that your manager is talking with you about your training, so that it is not something which is lost... Because managers have their own agenda as well and it’s usually about the number of people off sick and available [staff] cover.”

LA 16

As described above (Threats to retention, page 68), HEIs were aware of the particular pressures on most GYO students of juggling dual roles, and many had advocated for individuals when their student role was threatened by a lack of accommodation by managers and team colleagues. However, this was rarely a direct approach, and usually HEIs approached workforce development contacts within the employer organisation in order to, in turn, advocate with operational managers:

“The difficulty between the... work/study/life balance, which they are all battling with, that can be quite stressful for them and they do shed a few tears... We can liaise it back to the agencies if we feel worried about a student... The learning development teams at the agencies take this on board, they will then liaise with their managers to say, ‘Look, so and so shouldn’t be doing a five-day caseload when she’s only at your place three days a week’.”

HEI 16

The GYO co-ordinator role

A named GYO scheme co-ordinator is usually the visible embodiment of the employer’s investment in GYO. They invest time and support in the individuals on the scheme, and are the hub for liaison between students, operational managers, HEIs and senior management, usually also organising student placements. Although well-resourced schemes have full-time GYO co-ordinators, most are part-time roles based in workforce development departments, or a part-time role spread over more than one person. Several employers emphasised that the continuity and dedication of the role are important in establishing its success, enabling them to build relationships with and support the needs of individual students, as well as all the other stakeholders:

“It does reflect the importance the organisation gives to [GYO]... that they’ve created a post dedicated to keeping an eye on... and to develop it... It started as a one-year secondment, was seen as hugely successful and made permanent.”

CH 1

However, the reality for organisations supporting only one or two GYO students is that no GYO infrastructure is likely to be in place, and the GYO co-ordinating role is absorbed into the daily line management or training role:

“She checks things and talks to me about it... we call that supervision... things were addressed like that.”

PR 1

Many experienced GYO co-ordinators reflected on individual support that they had provided, particularly at points of crisis for students, that they felt had increased the GYO retention and pass rates, and contributed to the loyalty
and commitment that those students felt towards the scheme and to their sponsoring organisation:

“One bursary student who phoned and said, ‘I am going to give up, it is too much’ ... So I met her... it was just unpicking it and finding a route for her to carry on studying and making sure she had an extension... That happens quite a lot, people get quite a few things happen during a degree... You need a quick response, I need to drop my other work and go out to keep them going... This is a lot of money we are investing and... you need to do that to get people through.”
LA 1

“I see each trainee once a month on an individual basis... The trainees have somewhere they can go... if they’re having issues they are not on their own. And I think that’s a fundamental... We’ve had to support some people where it got a bit dodgy... They wouldn’t be there if we hadn’t actually gone in and done that.”
LA 2

While all GYO co-ordinators see themselves as an advocate for the student, they report varying levels of influence, significantly with operational managers, which they describe as important when negotiating placements or looking to address issues of caseload overload for employment-based students. This level of influence is often determined by the model of GYO scheme, in particular the “ownership” and funding of the students – whether workforce development-based or operational team-based. Additionally, high-profile schemes with explicit senior endorsement within the organisation were described as being in a fortunate position of greater influence:

“There was quite a power balance the first year for me approaching [operational] managers... I needed to appear to be on the same level, but I didn’t feel it... With a job like this people need to trust you.”
LA 1

Students echoed the importance of an ongoing, supportive co-ordinating role throughout a GYO course, and gave examples of support from a co-ordinator or supervisor that had kept them within a scheme, and contributed to them completing their qualification. Comparisons were made to their less well-supported peers, whether studying independently or on other GYO schemes:

“The regular supervision has been very important because there’s been a few times when I’ve nearly thrown it all in, I’m afraid.”
Student 10

Where GYO co-ordinators were not in post, were over-stretched or were not able to advocate for students due to lack of influence over operational managers, students described a gap between the support that they felt they needed and that they received on the scheme:

“The manager did not appreciate the work involved in this kind of study. There was an expectation that outside the college day and the study day the work pattern would work as it used to. I think some education, regarding the intensity of the course, given to managers would be very helpful.”
Student 4
“[The GYO co-ordinator] could acknowledge the concerns, and was taking it back to senior management, but nothing was happening from it.”
Student 19

**Need for senior level commitment**
GYO co-ordinators reported that the fastest route to securing a broader organisational commitment to GYO, which would facilitate their role, was via strong ownership from the top. Therefore, changes in key senior management personnel could jeopardise the continued financial investment and broader commitment to GYO activity:

“The Director of Social Services, he was 100 per cent behind this scheme, which means that he made it very clear to everybody that they had to be behind the scheme... Led from the top down in that kind of way, backed by the money to enable the scheme to take off, for the infrastructure to be there... You have to be supported properly and you have to get top-line commitment for something.”
LA 5

“A senior manager who was very much committed to the notions about training [and] developing GYO... has left the department so I am a wee bit fearful about that. What is going to be the general commitment... without that influence from a very powerful senior manager bearing down on people?”
LA 13

**Joint HEI and employer staff appointments**
Although several HEIs and employers had past experience of joint appointments between sponsoring employer organisations and HEIs, the practice is not currently prevalent. Each contractual arrangement between the organisations is different, but the post-holder will typically be joint funded and split their working time between the organisations, contributing to student teaching and tutoring in the HEI setting and usually taking on the GYO co-ordinator role in the employer setting. This can streamline the processes of collaboration and information sharing between organisations and offers the employer the confidence of a consistent overview of their students’ progress across both settings. Students also gain a highly visible source of support.

Successful models were described as dependent on the ability of the post-holder to span two organisational cultures, requiring flexibility from both organisations to accommodate the changing needs of the role. One HEI described the welcomed strengthening of a partnership and additional teaching resources that the model could bring, but expressed concern about the stability of the employer-funding of the role:

“There are a lot of advantages to both sides of the partnership... [However] it’s very easy when local authorities are feeling the squeeze to begin to think, ‘Well, how can we save money?’... This is about working together with local authorities... If the LA pulls staff out we will have tremendous gaps in teaching... It can be a cultural mismatch too in terms of how an agency might expect a member of staff to work within that organisation, as opposed to how the university expects the member of staff to work... Sometimes that clash can cause difficulties over things like arranging holidays, annual leave or arranging working practices... because, of course, we cannot change teaching and it’s the same day in and day out over the course... When there is no flexibility it can cause frustrations.”
HEI 4
Employer and HEI facilitation of peer support

Peer support was cited by nearly all employers and HEIs as a contributing factor to the successful progression of GYO students. Employers often facilitate this via initial opportunities for “bonding” and ongoing facilitated group sessions, varying between employers from monthly to once a term. While these group sessions are important venues for formally disseminating information, they are equally seen as an opportunity for students to “let off steam”. Therefore, keeping the group at a manageable size and bringing together people with comparable experiences of GYO is important to maintaining its effectiveness:

“I get them together three times a year as a group... if they miss coming to my group I phone them up to find out how things are going... I used to just run the one group, and then when we got up to 25 people it became unmanageable and what I felt was people’s needs were not being met... I negotiated about splitting the group [into] similar sorts of programmes... The purpose of those meetings is an information session, it is about me catching up with what is happening with them and it is for me to pass on information, but it is also for me to pick up where there are issues... About getting that peer support right from the start... they are good at supporting each other... get them together at first, get them to know each other.”
LA 16

A quarter of HEIs also referred to the importance of peer support in contributing to the successful progression of GYO students and a minority of HEIs have chosen to keep GYO students together in tutor groups to facilitate that process, which does concentrate the staff expertise in managing the distinct features of GYO cohorts:

“They quite like having meetings... we have employment-based tutorials, occasionally, where all of them come together... they want to discuss agency problems... they’ve got a lot of work issues they want to share... I’ve had them in floods of tears over all the problems at work.”
HEI 16

However, most HEIs have taken opportunities to integrate tutor groups of GYO and non-GYO student cohorts, if this is possible within their model of study. At times this included maximising the mix of students by demographic and professional background, as well as GYO status, and was a choice to prioritise exposing students to new perspectives, over facilitating more time with peers from their own agency (see Impact of GYO students on other students, page 80):

“One of the things we didn’t want to do was ghettoise groups of [GYO] students... each member of staff has a group of students who they are tutor for... a mix of people from the EBR and from the CBR, and that works very well.”
HEI 4

“We make the tutorial groups up with an eye to age, gender, ethnicity... we look for a spread... wouldn’t put all the [GYO] together... And every year... they change tutor and they change group, despite protests... it stops cosiness.”
HEI 2

One HEI took the flexible approach of adjusting the model of group tutorial support year-on-year, depending on the preferences of each GYO cohort:

“The fact they are [GYO] students is what defines them as a group separate from the rest of the cohort... On the one hand it’s good to be in the same tutor group as other [GYO]
students... [but they ask] ‘Why can’t we get a bit more mixed up?’... It’s an issue that we wonder about each year... Their specific learning needs and at the same time giving them access to discussion with people from diverse backgrounds ... We try different approaches to it depending on the feedback that we get from that particular cohort.”

HEI 1

With part-time GYO students, as with all part-time students, the opportunities for developing a peer support network are reduced, and when students tend to be older, with family and caring responsibilities, this further undermines the likelihood of peer support networks evolving, without support or investment:

“Once the part-time route kicks in everybody is travelling... at different paces... it’s like herding cats, you never see them in the same room at the same time... maybe more effort should be made... because one of the weaknesses of the system is that some of the students... don’t feel sufficiently supported by the student group, because they don’t have a distinctive cohort... also because you know they’ve a home to go to and often kids to feed.”

HEI 11

Most students confirmed having drawn on their GYO peers as a source of support during their programme:

“The main thing would be the peer support because we knew there was a group of eight of us who were all going through the same thing... I think eight is probably a really good number for a group, isn’t it? A friend of mine was doing a work-based route but more on her own, a secondment thing and I think she felt quite isolated.”

Student 15

However, GYO schemes that have a very small intake, those spread over large geographic areas, or those with students following different routes of study encountered greater structural barriers for students securing peer GYO support from within their own organisation.

Study leave
The study leave allocation students receive is another important element of their experience of the supportiveness of the GYO scheme. Study leave is commonly between a half day and a day a week, with the level often prescribed by HEIs depending upon the course: whether it is college or employment based; undergraduate or postgraduate; or full- or part-time. Some employers extend this leave throughout HEI holiday periods, while others expect the students back in the workplace full-time when not at the HEI or on placement. A couple of employers did not expect their postgraduate students to return to the workplace for the duration of the course. Students were appreciative of not only the overall levels of study leave allocation, but of flexibility that enabled them to take study leave at particular deadlines and stress points on the course:

“On this particular placement I have had lots of support and flexibility regarding taking additional study days, to get an essay done or whatever.”

Student 1

Some employers described themselves as accommodating in granting requests for additional study leave at critical points, such as exams, or dissertation deadlines, based on an evaluation of the individual circumstances, but there was a concern that a minority of students would attempt to exploit their generosity:
“We know the [GYO students] very well and we have been able to make judgements about whether these are reasonable requests or not, and we have on occasion said no to things... Some of the requests we get are a bit ridiculous.’ ”

LA 9

One head of care in the private sector was proud that current staff on GYO schemes could benefit from a more generous study leave allocation than they had previously received as a GYO student within the same organisation:

“When I did mine it was very difficult... to have things like study days... I was a manager then... We’ve moved on so far now that we can actually afford to allow people to go away and study and have study time properly.”

PR 2

Provision of support with study skills

Unless the model of qualifying study involves joint teaching by the employer organisation, the provision of support with developing study skills is usually seen by employers to be the responsibility of the HEI once the course is underway.

HEIs emphasised the generic provision of support in study skills that they provide for all students, not just GYO, and only a minority of HEIs described GYO students as having greater needs than direct entry students, although gaps in IT skills were more prevalent with more mature students, and therefore amongst traditionally seconded students:

“The [GYO] students do need particular support in terms of study skills, but actually quite a lot of our other students do as well... What we do have, just generally for any student, is a really good centre... we encourage all students to access that service and perhaps particularly we encourage [GYO] students.”

HEI 1

“The IT gap is there... for lots of more mature people [it] is a massive gap... and it might be that people... shied away from it until they get on the course and then they realise they have got to do it.”

HEI 8

With an expanding pool of graduates in England, increasingly people in the social care workforce, or thinking of entering it by a GYO route, are already graduates; however, both employers and HEIs emphasised that some students at postgraduate as well as undergraduate level need support with study skills.

Financial assistance

When describing the financial assistance received from their employers, on top of payment of course fees and salaries, half of students cited payment of a travel allowance, one-third received a book allowance, and one mentioned receipt of a laptop:

“Crucial really, especially the book allowance because with it being an MA we had to write a dissertation, and with it being a quite specialist area the books weren’t actually in the university library so we had to purchase them. So without that I probably wouldn’t have got my dissertation done.”

Student 13

Employers’ choices of HEIs

Employers were supporting GYO at up to six different HEIs, chosen for a range of factors relating to their own and their students’ preferences. HEIs were primarily selected for convenience of locality, for the option of distance learning, or due to maintenance of “historic arrangements”, including jointly developing EBRs and therefore the benefits of well-established partnership working. Less than a quarter of employers said that an HEI was chosen because of its strong academic reputation.
Employers with a single GYO scheme offered a single option of HEI, but others gave prospective GYO students a choice of HEI, facilitating a match between the mode of study and the student’s preference, and offering geographical convenience, particularly in large counties when one HEI may be significantly more accessible than another:

“We’ve got three people at [HEI]... a couple at [2nd HEI]... one at [3rd HEI]... one at [4th HEI]... one shortly going to [5th HEI]... and we have a couple going to [6th HEI]... The staff members make the choices... You just get glimpses... a sense of whether the students are stimulated... Undoubtedly some [HEIs] are stronger than others, some of them more focused on student need... You can begin to see a sense of that.”

CH 2

Contracts and information sharing
HEIs and employers described a range of agreements about collaborating over GYO activity, mostly unwritten but successfully maintained through meetings and informal contact. Few employers and HEIs already had written contracts or protocols, but the trend was for increasing formalisation of these arrangements. Contracts in place or being developed focused on the number of practice placements provided and information sharing about GYO students. Employers were more likely to have specified the use of Data Protection Waivers on information sharing about student progression (see below). Other areas HEIs specified included study leave entitlement; protocols around practice placements; and IT provision for students. While some had sought to establish a commitment to funding an agreed number of GYO students annually, this was seen by many employers and HEIs as unenforceable, given the challenges of LA funding cycles and late-stage decisions about levels of GYO (see Context/pressures and their impact on GYO, page 50):

“There is a contract [with HEI], the key things we are committed to is to give them a certain amount of students each year... and the number of placements.”

LA 5

“They take a commitment for the payment through the whole programme. They take full responsibility for providing practice learning opportunities... those are the two essential things... Most sponsors would make... students sign [a Data Protection Waiver]... It gives them access to results at course level, and our sponsors would like a lot more... they would like us to be informing them if a student was looking like they might fail.”

HEI 14

Many HEIs and employers had not considered formalising written agreements between employer and HEI. They saw the two contractual links as those between the employer and student, and between the HEI and student:

“There used to be with the old DipSW... ‘partnership agreements’... They don’t exist with the advent of the new degree... The employer does have a contract with the student which says, ‘These are the kind of things you can expect’. The university has a contract with the student, but we don’t have a written contract with each other and I am not sure that people would want it actually, it would be interesting to see if they would, because how binding would that be?”

HEI 8
Successes and breakdowns in information sharing

There were great variations in the detail, frequency and formality of information sharing between employers and HEIs, with unwritten arrangements dependent upon good working relationships between named individuals across the organisations and on the multiple forums for information sharing:

“We do have an agreement that... they will notify us if people are not turning up, or if they have any issues or concerns. There’s nothing signed anywhere, but I suppose it’s an informal agreement, and because we have practice assessment panels and boards... you’re in the loop.”
LA 4

However, the fragility of arrangements based only on good relationships with helpful individuals was recognised:

“The communication is quite good between the agencies and ourselves... [but] we have had a blip once or twice when somebody was in post who really wasn’t perhaps the most helpful of people or perhaps not the most involved.”
HEI 16

Not all employers felt that a stakeholder meeting, attended by all agencies providing placements, was an appropriate forum for seeking detailed information about the progress of GYO students:

“They now have stakeholder meetings which act as a management committee... It’s slightly restricted in terms of it being a management committee for those on the employment-based route, because you’ll have other local authorities who don’t have the same interest. Perhaps it’s not entirely comfortable raising some issues in front of local authorities who just provide the odd placement when you’re talking about quite detailed issues around individual personalities.”
LA 8

There was a general sense from employers and HEIs that information-sharing arrangements, as a key part of wider contractual agreements, were evolving towards increased formalisation, prompted by particular negative experiences of student progression, and more generally as experience was gained of successfully co-ordinating GYO activity:

“With [HEI] there is a formal contract... It hadn’t occurred to us that even though we were sponsoring and paying fees [HEI] didn’t necessarily need to disclose information about failing assignments, failing exams. Now that procedure has been put into place... A lot of it was finding our way as we went along.”
LA 9

“We do have protocols now... they cover all those practical things: if a student is struggling, at what point we would be informed of that, in terms of when do we have the right to know, at the same time as the student, or afterwards, when there is any problem whatsoever, whether it is sickness, CRB disclosure... it is a two-way process, we should both be disclosing with each other and the protocols just set out the sequence when that happens.”
LA 11

When reporting agreements have not been agreed or not adhered to, both HEIs and employers were concerned that the other did not inform them of problems concerning students, such as significant periods of absence, failed placements or coursework, or disciplinary procedures:
“There is one student from [LA] last year who started to have a number of long periods off sick, and I’m not sure we were happy... We expected [LA] to know about that... They felt they ought to have heard something from us about a student not being here a lot sooner than they did... We haven’t systematised that.”

HEI 3

“The information exchange has been a difficult one and we have now got a paragraph about that in the contracts... We hit the buffers in discovering, solely by chance, that one of our students was undergoing disciplinary procedures in a local authority while we blithely had him off on placement.”

HEI 12

Data protection waivers
Half of employers had their GYO students sign a data protection waiver to enable HEIs to share information about student progression, primarily as a back-up for students informing their employer if problems arise. Other employers who had not developed data-sharing agreements with HEIs and GYO students reported that this was an area that they were now introducing, having previously relied on students to report any problems with their progress:

“We ask students when they enter programmes to sign an agreement, Data Protection Act really, so that they are prepared for the universities to release these results direct to us... I would expect if there was a student in danger of failing the course that the student would come to see me first of all, but they don’t always, so sometimes I have been approached by a concerned tutor... It does work.”

LA 16

“It’s something that we’re actually looking at, because of course the trainees go to the university as students, so therefore the university has no right to share... any information with us as their employer... There hasn’t been a problem yet, but we have recognised it as something that we do actually need to look at... We would like to have that safety net that the university could let us know.”

LA 2

Not all employers were aware that this waiver was an option:

“There’s all kinds of issues about [sharing information]... probably data protection would mean that they wouldn’t do that... we haven’t asked... there is no agreement with any of these colleges... It would be wonderful to be kept [informed], but it would breach all of the ways which universities work with data protection.”

CH 2

While some HEIs were as enthusiastic as employers about data protection waivers, seeing them as a mechanism to increase trust with the employer, others were still considering the option:

“If a student is consistently absent we will report that to the employer and, similarly, if the student is not coping with the academic work or not submitting work... It’s the policy we want to have as a team, which might sound very oppressive, but... our experience has been that where we collude with the students it’s not a recipe for success... It’s much better to address the problems early on... I’m aware of the arguments, ‘It’s not up to us to police the students’... I’m afraid we take the opposite point of view... It develops trust with the employer... their employees are just disappearing off into college... they don’t...}
employers see the tie-in as morally binding rather than legally enforceable, and many had not attempted to recoup payment:

“We ask people to sign Post Entry Training Agreements but actually whether we could ever enforce them we are not sure... Certainly we wouldn’t say [to them], but really we wouldn’t stick to it.”

LA 7

However, a quarter had successfully recouped some level of payment where the agreement had been broken by a GYO student. All employers said that they would use their discretion, and not pursue people who left the organisation unavoidably, for example, due to ill health. Some reported that if the tie-in is to a particular team but someone wants to move elsewhere in the organisation, the request will often be accommodated, even if this policy is not explicitly stated so as not to encourage others to break the agreement (see Impact on job allocation: targeting “hard-to-fill” gaps?, page 70):

“We have had this discussion very recently about employers writing [data protection waivers] into their own contract [with students], because it is not straightforward, if you recognise that the student has a contract with the university... You may have health issues which the student is not wanting to talk to their employer about... and unless we were in a position where we thought that was impinging upon their practice in terms of safety of themselves or others we wouldn’t be passing that information on... We wouldn’t jeopardise... a relationship with a student.”

HEI 8

A minority of HEIs had clearly rejected data protection waivers, wanting to retain discretion over information sharing and leave students the responsibility of reporting difficulties with progression to their employer:

“Student contractual “tie-ins” to employers

For almost all employers, the contract or “tie-in” that they ask GYO students to sign at the outset of a GYO scheme is integral to their attempts to secure high retention rates and a “return” on their investment. Most require the payback of fees, and sometimes of other GYO costs such as travel and book allowances on a proportional basis if the GYO graduate leaves the organisation before the period of “tied” employment is completed. There is usually a commitment of two years to the employer, but occasionally it is on the basis of one year of tie-in for each year of funded training. Similar arrangements, where staff sign “learning agreements”, are often in place for other significant investments in staff training. Most employers see the tie-in as morally binding rather than legally enforceable, and many had not attempted to recoup payment:

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“We get them to sign really so that they think that through, they’re more likely to stay because they’ve considered the fact that we’ve financially supported them... When we sought advice we were told that legally there’s not very much we can do... [except] refuse to give a reference.”

LA 4

There were examples of GYO students who had left a scheme, but remained working within the organisation, and employers had recouped payment via direct deductions from the salary. This method is also used to deduct payment from the final payments of staff salaries if they hand in their notice prior to the completion of their tie-in period. Organisations needed to have a system in place for payroll departments to recoup these payments immediately upon
notice being served by the student. GYO students therefore sign an agreement for the arrangement to be put in place at the outset of the scheme:

“We have enforced it... because they still work for us we just deduct it out of their salary, they have to agree to that... We have someone who has actually left the authority and has gone to a neighbouring authority and we are claiming hers as well.”

LA 3

A few employers had experience of their social care staff deliberately rejecting GYO opportunities in favour of studying independently so as to avoid ties to an employer:

“We have had one or two of our workers who have left and gone to do it independently, who have chosen not to apply for [GYO] because they didn’t want to commit.”

LA 3

Students confirmed that they all had tie-ins to work for their employer, with the majority tied for two years and one-fifth tied for three. Most students were planning to fulfil this commitment, and nearly half indicated that they would stay on after this period, although one-quarter planned to leave immediately upon completion of the qualification and did not see the tie-in as an enforceable barrier to this.21

When asked how long they would like to work for their sponsoring employer, one student said that they would like to leave immediately, seeing the GYO scheme as a springboard for career progression elsewhere, but would probably fulfil the terms of the tie-in:

“Do you want an honest opinion? Not a day after I qualify [but] I probably would stay with them for a couple of years... I want to widen my horizons really... getting the qualification will give me more opportunities.”

Student 14

The majority of students described tie-ins as a fair return on the investment their employer had made in them. There was recognition that the positive element of a tie-in was that it was an indication of guaranteed employment, and that the standard two-year period was a reasonable phase of post-qualifying experience before exploring career changes.

“They have put me through this course [so] they should get the benefit of having me work for them.”

Student 8

“I’ve got an automatic job once I qualify and it’s positive... Post-graduating two years’ experience is good anyhow to be able to take somewhere else. I do think that I owe them something back... however I do think that it does limit what I can do... It’s not legally binding at all.”

Student 10

However, even where tie-ins are in place, the guarantee of a social work job was not a feature of all GYO schemes, and while some students were offered priority status in internal job applications, others feared that organisational changes might place their employment in jeopardy:

“There is restructuring going on in [authority] at the moment so it’s very difficult to say where we will end up... we are looking at whether we will actually have a job at the end of it.”

Student 14

21: It should be noted that these plans to move on from their sponsoring employer organisation were not necessarily confirmed but, for many, were speculations a year or two in advance.
Developing GYO in the VIP sectors

While this report integrates VIP sector perspectives into the general presentation and discussion of the project findings, there are distinct issues about VIP GYO levels and funding that emerged from interviews with stakeholders that are briefly presented here. The voluntary and private sector employers participating in this study were all funding their GYO activity out of internal organisational training budgets, with levels of investment varying from the part-time secondment of a single staff member to significant programmes of internally and externally recruited schemes, co-ordinated by full-time staff members. Other possible GYO funding sources available to VIP sector organisations include the government funding for LA social care workforce training in England, accessed via LAs (see Research context, page 15 for details) and the GSCC grants for voluntary organisations. However, many HEIs and employers from across the sectors felt that the national funding for GYO could be successfully expanded to meet currently unfulfilled interest from VIP employers and potential GYO students.

The minority of students who were unhappy with the tie-in cited the overall length of commitment to the agency, including the period of GYO study, as being difficult to accommodate alongside other competing life commitments. One suggested that employers should accept their sponsored staff moving on, as they are willing to take on staff that other organisations have sponsored:

“It was a long commitment to make. You’re basically saying you want someone to commit five years of your life to this organisation... a lot can happen in your life, so that would be a disadvantage.”
Student 3

“I moved house to another county. I have now had to pay back my fees... Employers need to be more flexible... when students move out of the area, after all, they employ social workers who have qualified elsewhere.”
Student 11

One student had eventually left a GYO scheme because of objections to the level and responsibility of work they had been given as an unqualified GYO student, within a wider context that they perceived to be one of inappropriate practice standards by the employer. They felt that the ability to leave a job or to “whistleblow” was compromised for GYO students, because of the threat of having to make unaffordable repayments:

“Trainees, in particular, [are] in a very vulnerable position, because an unqualified member of staff can just say, ‘I’ve had it and I’m going’, as can a qualified member of staff. But as a trainee, there is a financial implication... it does affect the ability to whistleblow, because there is always that threat of, ‘Leave, but then you’ll need to pay back X amount of money, or whistleblow and stay here, but we can make your life very uncomfortable’... I thought, ‘If I leave right now, there is [sic] going to be all the issues with paying money back’... I felt really stuck.”
Student 19
GSCC grants for voluntary sector GYO in England
Between 1999 and 2008 the GSCC contributed funding to between 3 and 36 new voluntary organisations per year, totalling 192 organisations over the period. The budget for the fund is £321,000 per annum, with individual grants divided into a maximum of £10,000 per year for full-time GYO secondments and £5,500 per year for part-time. Organisations are only permitted to receive a single grant at any one time, and applications from those groups who are currently under-represented amongst trained social workers are encouraged. Although there are currently no statistics on progression and qualification of students co-funded via this grant, this information could be available when the new OSCAR database is linked to the GSCC registration database.

LA funding of local VIP sector GYO activity
A number of LAs had recent experience of funding GYO activity in local voluntary agencies, although while this covered students’ HEI fees it usually did not include backfill or other costs. This role in funding VIP GYO activity in the locality was referred to as fulfilling the intention of the NTSG, which had specified that proportionate amounts should be spent on social care workers contracted across the private and voluntary sectors. The increasing role of the VIP sectors in the provision of social care was referred to as accentuating the need to consider workforce development opportunities in these sectors (see Research context, page 15).

However, most LAs had funded little or no GYO activity in VIP social care organisations. This was rarely described as a cause for concern, but there was a strongly held minority view amongst LA staff of an injustice towards local voluntary sector agencies. Similar concerns about lack of investment in local private sector agencies were not expressed:

“We set up the scheme originally when the DH put out the two new grants... Our understanding of the way that was supposed to work at the time, although the rules around it have relaxed since then, was that it was supposed to be spent on both the local authority and independent sector.”
LA 12

“On one or two occasions we have been able to extend that to support voluntary organisations... The amount of funding doesn’t always make that possible, but I think that is something that should be done more because as less social workers are located in statutory sectors we need to support voluntary organisations.”
LA 5

The main barrier to LAs extending this financial support was seen as the need to prioritise their own internal GYO activity:

“We have previously refunded a voluntary organisation the fees of one of their members of staff to undertake their training... We’ve never done that since... Because we have had such huge investment in our own staff... we’ve not really been in a position to be able to be a little bit more benevolent and look at the needs of voluntary organisations.”
LA 6

HEI experiences of VIP sector GYO
One-third of HEIs described current GYO activity on their courses from the non-statutory sectors as low, usually one or two students at a time, but for most HEIs it was non-existent. There was broad agreement across employers and HEIs that small organisations rarely have
Several HEIs expressed concerns that the current model of distributing social care workforce development funding for a locality via the LA did not successfully filter GYO opportunities though to the VIP sector. There was a mixed view from HEIs as to whether voluntary organisations were aware of, and able to access, this funding, with only one HEI optimistic that this is increasing:

“...We do get quite a lot of odd ones [from the VIP] that are sponsored through the local authority, or what happens is they... enquire about the employment-based route and I advise them to seek funding or get sponsored by their local authority... People are becoming more familiar with their rights to ask for sponsorship.”

HEI 17

One HEI advocated a more direct mechanism of funding allocation:

“What we have had is quite a lot of interest in the VIP sector, whereby [social care staff] want to access the work-based learning route but their employers won’t fund them... With the work that’s now being pushed towards the voluntary and independent sector we know that organisations do want to come on board and be involved in this kind of course, there is just not the financial infrastructure there to do it... Local authorities, in a sense, have told them what they can and can’t do. What [VIP organisations] want to do is to be able to have access to that money... a central pot.”

HEI 15

VIP staff are more likely to be seconded on to a distance learning route because it entails less absence from the workplace, and the majority of the OU's sponsoring organisations are VIP sector, although the numbers of staff members supported at any one time by any one agency may be small. HEIs and students cited cases where the lack of funding for GYO had led to voluntary sector staff leaving their jobs to join LA traineeship schemes, or to study independently on the bursary. After qualifying, some had returned to their previous employer:

“I worked for a charity within my borough. [LA] said to me, ‘Do you want to come and work for us... we could possibly let you go on to the trainee scheme’, which I thought was a good opportunity.”

Student 19

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HEI 15

One-third of HEIs were planning to develop and strengthen partnerships with VIP sector organisations, although some speculated that this could be resource intensive:
“There is a growing awareness amongst the staff team of how important the independent sector is for us in terms of developing partnerships... we need to think more strategically about that, both in terms of sufficient placements for our students, but also in terms of how social care is changing and developing and the role of the voluntary and non-statutory sector in that more... What would be massive in terms of cost implications is if we were going to be more proactive in terms of seeking out and encouraging other partner agencies.”

HEI 1

One HEI highlighted the additional range of experience that VIP GYO students could bring to the classroom:

“The [VIP sector] student mix and their different experiences is absolutely fantastic... this one person who is coming in September who is from a private fostering agency... That person is going to bring an experience that won’t be in the room from the statutory sector... Educationally that is going to be very, very positive.”

HEI 8

While some HEIs were committed to increasing the flexibility of funding for their EBR in order to encourage greater VIP GYO activity, others required a full commitment of support for all employment-based students at the outset of the course. They felt that reducing the funding commitment of employers disadvantages the student, even though some students desperate to secure any GYO opportunity would be willing to accept compromise in the level of funding and support they receive:

“It is much more difficult for the smaller organisations to know that they are going to have continuity of funding... [We are] trying to find ways for employers...so they haven’t got to take that commitment for the whole degree, and to make it as flexible as possible for the students to self-fund...The more we build that flexibility into the degree the easier it makes it for those kinds of organisations.”

HEI 14

“I say, 'These are the requirements'. Where they can’t quite afford the whole package... they always go into negotiations with an employee, saying, ‘Well, you don’t take this annual leave and we will give you this, and you pay a bit’, but we say ‘No’, it has to be a full sponsorship otherwise it disadvantages the student. So we have had times when students have said, ‘My manager won’t allow me to come for that induction’... We are quite tough about it... Students, because it is their only option to do it where they are working, find that hard... but it is such a tough route to do, being employed, that it has to be fully supported.”

HEI 17

Resource implications

Overall costs to employers

Employers’ GYO costs ranged from £20k to £35k per student per year of study, covering fees and salaries but excluding backfill or central workforce development management and administrative costs. Fees are relatively standard, at roughly £3k per annum.

Some employers described costs being offset by receipt of the Daily Placement Fee (DPF) for the assessment of practice, paid by the GSCC to HEIs at £18 per placement day with public sector employers and £28 with independent employers. This is passed on to employers unless there is a formal agreement between the HEI and the placement provider for the HEI to withhold an element for the assessment or management of the placement:
In some organisations internal staff move to a set trainee salary to take up a place on a GYO scheme rather than retain their previous position and salary through a secondment model. Thus, higher paid unqualified social care staff, usually experienced members of the residential care workforce, have to take a pay cut:

“All trainees are salaried from appointment... they all start at the same point and at the point of qualification they will all start at the same point, and we have certainly had instances where particular residential staff, obviously, they drop salary in order to take a trainee post.”

LA 9

Time back at work while studying
The main variable in the short-term resource implications for employers was the amount of students’ time in the workplace. This differed significantly, not only in the structure and the stage of the course, but in the extent of employers’ study leave allocations.

Most undergraduate students are in the workplace part of the week during the academic year. There are variations between full-, part- and capacity-based learning courses; college- and employment-based courses; and between courses that do block placements and the less common practice of spreading placements part-time throughout the academic year.

Most postgraduate students are in the workplace little or not at all during the course, except when on placements. Some are expected to return to work over the summer academic break, but others are released until the course is completed.

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Salaries for GYO students
The significant range in salaries reflects regional and urban/rural variations; whether people are retaining better-paid roles or receiving a lower trainee wage; and variations between undergraduate and postgraduate salaries, in some agencies. Schemes paying an “allowance” to GYO trainees with non-employee status paid less (see Cost-saving variations of GYO, page 128):

“We have two schemes... People that weren’t employed by us but as trainees, we do take them on at a lower salary, and the others are people who already work for us and we second them and pay their full salary... The traineeship model might be seen as more beneficial to the department, it is a lot cheaper... They are offered a salary of about £13,000 a year as trainees, which is nothing like our own secondees, which is about £22,000.”

LA 16

“We pay a contribution to staff cover, which is not all of the time that they are out but it is a contribution, and we get some of that money in from the day placement fees, so that is converted into money to help cover for people.”

LA 16

Two employers mentioned that against the recruitment and administrative costs of GYO should be set the standard cost of recruiting to a basic grade social worker post, which they estimated as £4k.22

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22: The Audit Commission (2008) quote the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development’s calculation that the average cost of filling a vacancy is £4,333, rising to £7,750 when turnover costs, including vacancy cover, redundancy costs, recruitment/selection, training and induction are included (CIPD 2007).
“The full-time people... do come back in during some pieces of their year to do some support work... [and] help out over holidays... so we do get something from them. The part-timers... on EBRs are different, depending on the kind of scheme that the university runs. So they go off for college work, particularly in Level 1, for maybe not much more than a day a week, so the replacement cost element is much less... but when they move on into Levels 2 and 3 and start to do long placements then clearly that balance changes. So it’s hard to put a cost on it. And the colleges already have different patterns.”

CH 2

“The [full-time undergraduate] traineeship are actually classed as full-time students and the only time they come is when it is the end of the academic year, come and work for us until they go back to university, we allow them all the other holidays... The work-based [undergraduate] distance learning people, the first year we give them one day a week study, and one day a month to attend university... The [postgraduate] are out for two years... they are not expected to work at all.”

LA 3

Replacement staffing (backfill)
Replacement for staff out of the workplace due to GYO study commitments was repeatedly cited as the most controversial element of GYO funding and schemes had ended or started based on this issue alone, although — in the following example — resolving the issue of backfill can generate another issue of “ownership” of GYO students:

“It is very hard to get managers on board with the [new] traineeship, very easy with the [old] bursaries... because with the bursary scheme you were still attached to your workplace and you still did some work. The trainee scheme, you don’t go to that workplace until a year in November, and for some managers it is very hard to see what they may benefit from... [But] that is why we did [the traineeship] this way, because there is no backfill, it is a new job. The bursary scheme was backfill and caused a lot of problems because they couldn’t get the staff, so now they can just appoint new people... The issue is whether we backfill... that would be the issue to the team.”

LA 1

Backfill for seconded staff was often not available, or a standard payment to the team of £5-10k per year was more common than full replacement, leaving it to managers to cover staffing gaps, often resulting in higher workloads for colleagues. This could impact on managers’ enthusiasm for supporting staff to access GYO:

“Backfill replacement costs are the main cost... the hardest to find, and that obviously varies according to the kind of role the people are in... We would have the team cover... [but] where they’re doing 80-day placements... you can’t do that... So the mechanisms that we’re developing really is... bring people in on a temporary, even if it’s a 2-year temporary basis, to cover... part-time or full-time depending on the pace of the programme.”

CH 2

“If you’ve got somebody in a social care post only working three days a week, it’s much cheaper to send that person than it is to send a manager who’s working five days a week... £4,200 a year we had to give each manager, irrespective of what the person was paid, how many hours they did. Every manager got that money, and they could use it however they wanted, as long as it was about using it for cover costs. That money has now been moved... adult services decided to use it elsewhere... So anybody who goes in the [GYO] programme, their manager has to
had very high-quality trainees placed with them, who, anecdotally managers have said, ‘Wow, that trainee is better than some of my qualified social work staff’, people are very, very keen to have a social work trainee.”

Externally recruited “trainees” are usually supernumerary so do not generate the need for backfill, but where their salaries are paid out of a team’s budget they, in effect, have the same impact as a secondment on reducing staff numbers when they are studying. Conversely, internal “secondees” who resign their previous role and move into a new trainee role free up managers to recruit to the new vacancy:

“They are additional [trainee] posts, they have been created through reconfiguration so… there are no longer vacancies that need to be filled. They effectively resign from their posts, and don’t go back.”

Fees and miscellaneous GYO support costs

Central workforce development budgets usually pay course fees and miscellaneous costs: most employers pay a travel allowance, although not always consistently across schemes they run in parallel. Half of employers offer a book allowance of £50 to £200 per annum or take requests for the in-house social care training library; plus occasionally employers provide childcare allowances and IT allowances for computers and internet costs for study at home:

“I have a budget… which covers university fees, travel expenses, book allowance and recruitment, any other costs that may incur.”
“We maintain a social care library, and so if they weren’t able to obtain books through the university, and then requested, it’s possible that we would purchase them and then put them in our library.”

LA 10

Cost-saving variations of GYO

One employer required co-payments by GYO students, and other funding variations included reducing salaries in the final year when students were out of the workplace, or transferring payment of the final year salary from a central budget to the budget of the team in which the student would be based on qualifying, or moving to models, such as distance learning, that increase student time in the workplace and reduce the concerns about backfill.

“First and second year they get their full salary, then in the third year we treat them as full-time students... they go on a reduced salary and... they are gone [from the workplace] until they finish.”

LA 3

“We pay half the fees, and that costs us around £1,200 a year and the candidate pays the other... and in the final year the divisions that will employ them take on the [salary] cost of the trainee... The idea is that they’re actually going to vacancies for that final year... Even though they’re actually only going to be working three days a week and they’ll be paying a full-time worker... [what] they’ve got to try and keep in their heads is, it’s an investment... which is very difficult for individual team leaders.”

LA 4

“There have been a lot of lessons... the amount of time out of their teams and the other, the amount of backfill... We have had to really think about the budget, so that is why we have moved to the distance learning, we are paying the teams less backfill, less impact on the teams.”

LA 7

Another model of GYO is one of securing full-time trainees on a tax-free training allowance, rather than employing them and paying a salary. This is an extension of the bursary model, where existing students are offered a financial incentive to tie them into employment on graduating, but are not legal employees before then. However, this model of tax-free traineeships has all the other features of a fully co-ordinated and supported GYO scheme.

“Our scheme is quite unusual... They are not employees... we pay them a training allowance... and therefore they are not taxed on it, so that saves us on salary costs... The traineeship runs from September through to the June/July and they get paid the training allowance on a pro rata for the months through that period, so that they’ve got the regular income of £1,150 per month that’s tax free for those nine months of the year... Part of the tax rules about whether people have to pay tax or not is they are not employees and we can’t tie them... We would very much encourage them to try and gain employment with us... We had a lot to do in terms of getting the Inland Revenue to agree the terms of our scheme... With a limited amount of money, to second people on their salaries we would have far fewer trainees.”

LA 12

Some employers advocated moving to a cheaper model to enable support for more people, although they speculated that this might exclude those who could not afford co-payments or to use up annual leave for exam preparation:
“They get their salary while they are [seconded]... What we would really like to do is introduce a traineeship scheme... where people take a dip in salary and then we can spread it around more.”
LA 13

HEIs also described examples of employers reconfiguring their schemes, to enable cost cutting and therefore expanding the size of the sponsored cohort:

“In [LA] they doubled their numbers by changing their scheme, they could send six instead of three.”
HEI 15

Several GYO co-ordinators, with significant experience of running successful, well-resourced GYO schemes, were dismissive and pessimistic about attempts to replicate their success without similar resource investment:

“I hear about people wanting to set up schemes... on a shoestring and still want the same results... You have to be supported properly.”
LA 5

Students’ experience of cost savings by their sponsor
None of the students interviewed had made co-payments towards the costs of their GYO scheme. However, a couple of students described other ways that they felt their educational experience had been restricted by the financial restraints imposed by sponsoring agencies. This could lead to conflict and resentment towards the agency.

One student was completing the postgraduate diploma, as their employer was not releasing students for any additional time out of the workplace, which would be necessary in order to complete the full postgraduate degree:

“Initially the [authority] had funded or supported students on the postgraduate route to complete the dissertation so that they could get the Masters, but they have obviously stopped that... It’s more time off work and it just seems a shame really, that it could be of benefit for the team.”
Student 5

Another student reported that their GYO student cohort was contesting a change, or a lack of clarity, within the contractual agreements with their employer, who was planning to cut their salary in the final year of the scheme:

“We are in a bit of a grievance at the moment because [of] two different contracts, and they contradict each other... Our final placement is a hundred days and under the current contract the department wants to pay us half our wages in our last year... so we won’t get paid on the placement... For every year we have to take a pay cut... If I’d been in the financial situation to [study without employer support] it would have been better... but of course then I couldn’t leave my job.”
Student 14

GYO funding models and student “ownership”
Employers described the perceived “value” of GYO to a particular operational team as being shaped by the impact on its budget and staff levels. Therefore, enthusiasm and support for GYO were often mediated more by local experiences, rather than by a broader evaluation of the total organisational resource investment and benefits, such as impact on recruitment, diversity or retention levels.
Resentments from individual teams, who have lost a newly graduated worker to another team with no financial compensation for the costs of supporting them throughout study, have sparked interest in models of GYO that top-slice budgets to support centrally owned GYO students. This would confirm that the measure of success of GYO staff retention rates, post-qualifying, is that they remain in the organisation, rather than in a specific setting. There did not appear to be consistent alternative arrangements between different services or teams to compensate the team that had invested in GYO but had “lost” the worker after qualifying:

“Managers are feeling that they can’t support staff without it having a cost on them and their teams... It caused some unrest with particular teams because... their budgets were paying to enhance a worker that they were thinking was going to be coming back... and then at the end of the scheme the new graduate didn’t come to work for them.”

LA 14

“Sometimes individuals might decide they don’t want to return to that team... It is more difficult when it is a change of service, the managers do feel they have invested in that individual and there ought to be some payback... We have taken the view that if they want to return to [LA 11] then we haven’t lost them, while it is a local manager’s loss... They are looking at whether the match funding would be top sliced rather than coming out of individual managers’ budgets for that reason, because it does feel unfair... The difficulty is we are structured in such a way that we have three areas and three different budgets so there isn’t that flexibility... So it does make sense to look at top-slicing money and saying, ‘Well, you are a [LA 11] trainee rather than a particular area’s person’.”

LA 11

Other factors impacting on the perception and management of GYO costs within employer organisations were the separation of adults and children’s services and occasionally the structural changes to workforce development teams. Long-standing workforce development staff, who described their personal commitment to promoting GYO activity, expressed concerns that these developments undermined a sense of a shared corporate investment in GYO:

“[GYO] salaries are met through our staffing budget, that was the Social Services staffing budget, but... budgets have split, the structure has gone into Adults, and Adults is saying, ‘Why are we paying for all these [GYO] salaries?’... Training and staffing and business support were in the middle of Social Services. A lot of that was shifted over to Adult Social Care, and so it looks like now that money is coming out of their budget.”

LA 3

“Within Learning and Development... we always looked after all the students, we now don’t do that... the money has gone back into service areas... We’re now a business, which has made a huge difference to our work because everything’s about making money or cutting costs.”

LA 14

However, in an alternative trend, some new models of GYO funding had evolved that were described as improving GYO co-ordination via centralisation of management and funding, and were associated with greater corporate flexibility in placement and job allocation:

“Staff Development Budget pays for fees... [and] Operational Budgets had paid for the salaries. For reasons to do with simplicity in managing the scheme we have this time round had the salaries lodged within the
Staff Development Budget, and that has been around issues of... who manages [trainees], who has line responsibility, who looks at monitoring, attendance and all those sorts of issues?... What we did learn was that if we can hold it all together it is easier to manage.”
LA 9

“The director decided that, in order to pay for the scheme, every service’s budget would be top sliced... we had a children’s service and adults service and an older people’s service, all three of their budgets were split to pay for the Trainee Scheme.”
LA 6

National funding for social work education
The introduction of university fees in 1999 had been viewed as having negative consequences for social work, mainly because potential applicants tended to be older and averse to taking on student debt. The decision that full-time students studying for the new degree and not employer sponsored would be eligible to apply for a non-means-tested bursary amounting to an average of £3,000 per annum was therefore seen as an important means of increasing the numbers of social work students.

Bursaries increased the viability of studying social work at undergraduate level for people with commitments and who might not have received means-tested support. However, the practice component of the degree still makes demands on students who undertake part-time employment to supplement their funding.

To aid the recruitment of students to the social work degree, the DH made funding available to the HEFCE for extra student numbers. This was a significant source of support, as funding mechanisms in HEIs limited student numbers on undergraduate degrees in individual institutions. This therefore enabled social work courses to apply for funding for additional social work student places and not be in competition with other HEI courses.

Resource implications for HEIs
Overall, GYO was seen to be positive or cost-neutral in the resource benefits that it brought to HEIs. However, for many HEIs interviewed, the resource implications of running GYO routes had often not been considered. On reflection, the time investment required to establish a distinct route or to secure the successful maintenance of GYO activity on existing routes could be significant:

“If we sat down and costed [GYO] out it would be probably slightly lighter... [but] when I think about it we also support or provide support for mentors... different interview slots; so there is quite a lot of cost if you think about it.”
HEI 2

“Initially there were huge cost implications that were really never business-planned out... Cost implications in terms of the module support that you would give to students. Each module leader would be responsible for those EBR students... It also has cost implications in terms of somebody actually overseeing the EBR route. Essentially, at the minute it’s not a huge amount of work but potentially it could be.”
HEI 15

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The motivations for HEIs in supporting GYO activity are outlined elsewhere (see Impact on social work education, page 74), confirming that the main resource benefit it brings is that of securing guaranteed student placements, and the associated benefits that these strengthened partnerships with agencies confer, including free lecturing and informal routes for recruiting students for non-qualifying courses.

HEIs reported that significant time needs to be invested in liaising with and updating sponsoring agencies over recruitment and selection; in ongoing information sharing; and in resolving problems with student progression (see Contracts and information sharing, page 116):

“There are resource implications and every local authority requires something different.”
HEI 4

“I do put in quite a bit of time liaising with the agencies. I’m usually the first port of call if there is a problem, for example, if we have students that haven’t made it and need to repeat a module or repeat an assignment, the agencies will come to me… We do liaise quite closely with them all the way through… The learning and development officers are on to us all the time, it’s fine, but about this student and that student...”
HEI 16

“You have to do a lot of work with partners… a huge amount of administration, and so for example training officers will ring up and they will want to know in great detail the individual people.”
HEI 17

Programmes dependent on GYO to sustain student numbers described the importance of investing in GYO:

“The [GYO] scheme takes a lot of organising each year... chivvying people up, ‘Do you want to be in this year?’... but it is worth it for us... a third of our intake.”
HEI 6

“Small numbers make a big difference to us, whereas [for] big universities, 18 [GYO] students here or there and it is nothing.”
FEI 2

“There is a time cost in terms of recruitment... shortlisting and joint interviewing... A small price to pay for what are generally a good group of students.”
HEI 3

One of the organisational implications of GYO was described as the flexibility required from academic staff and from the administration and support systems to accommodate alternative routes to qualifying, and to manage the needs of different employers and GYO students:

“It’s something about having that commitment to recognising the needs of the different agencies and individuals involved in that process and being willing to deal with those issues... Some of the internal bureaucracies that we have to deal with, because [GYO] students don’t fit the normal profile, just time-consuming and bureaucratic and frustrating; that’s a pain. But it’s about being willing to do that because that route is so important for those individuals, but also for the rest of the course.”
HEI 1
For HEIs offering distinct EBRs these accommodations included:

- the development of alternative models of tutorials;
- training for employers on in-house mentoring;
- blended and distance learning materials;
- facilitating APL processes;
- increased email correspondence with students; and
- models of delivering learning within the workplace.

Teaching costs for “face to face” time with students may be reduced on EBRs, but individual tutorial time, either face to face or virtual, or the need to invest in additional student mentoring increased:

“The teaching costs are less but they are not massively less… numbers of staff are reduced… For a full-time undergraduate module… there would be 48 hours of face-to-face teaching… but probably on the EBR… 30 hours face-to-face teaching… In the first year we pay £500 back to the agency… towards the costs of mentoring… What would be quite interesting I think would be to measure the time that mentors give to work-based students because… a portion of the fees is going back to you as recognition that some of the teaching is going on in the workplace.”

HEI 8

“There is an assumption that part-time routes are always more expensive… they go on longer, the cohort is less robust, it’s smaller numbers, students often need more support because… their trajectory is very personal… they tend to rely more on individual tutorials… Possibly there is more nurturing because you’re rooting for them to succeed more… they’re from this partner agency… you put more time in.”

HEI 11
Part E: Conclusions and recommendations

This study has highlighted the outcomes of investing in the broad range of models of supporting qualifying social work training that are encompassed by GYO schemes.

This snapshot must necessarily be set against the wider and rapidly evolving contexts of social work and social work education. The separation of LA children's and adults services, and the transition from the non-graduate DipSW to the new social work degree, bringing with it a new model of bursary funding and increased numbers of students, have both been distinct forces shaping recent levels and trends in GYO. These are set against other factors, such as changes in social worker vacancy levels, increased emphasis on workforce planning, debates over the role and future levels of need for social workers and the shift towards the “personalisation” of services. It is too early to judge the long-term impact of these recent trends on levels and prioritising of particular models of GYO investment and further scrutiny will be required.

Conclusions

The main benefit of GYO schemes is that of the quality of the graduates. Employers value staff members familiar with the realities of social work practice and loyal to the organisation, and also value the wider potential benefits of GYO for organisational culture and workforce planning. Students are grateful for the opportunity to qualify while employed and with additional support and mentoring, often where financial and caring commitments would have otherwise precluded this career development. HEIs value GYO for bringing additional students with – importantly – guaranteed placements, increased progression and higher levels of social care experience to share in classroom settings, and an overall strengthening of relationships with employer organisations.

While data is not widely and systematically collected by employers on the comparative retention and professional progression of GYO students post-qualifying, this study has confirmed that GYO activity, when well planned and supported, can generate positive outcomes for all stakeholders and is highly regarded for its practical contributions to the profession.

Second, when compared with other students, GYO students are more likely to complete their courses of study, and on time. These better progression rates on social work qualifying courses may be due to the financial security and greater support and “expectations” that GYO brings. However, there is pressure on some to complete courses while carrying significant workloads, and at times their student experience has not been valued and protected. There is a risk that, with the separation of children's and adults services and a reduction in overall vacancy levels reducing the flexibility in job allocation on graduating, increasingly, students may feel coerced into working in particular roles and not with their client group of choice. These factors can undermine the sense of GYO student loyalty to the employer, and therefore retention rates, so threatening one of the core motivations of employer investment in GYO. While some employers emphasise the opportunities of GYO to widen individuals' professional horizons, the risk of students discovering new professional interests over the course of their study that would deter them from taking a prescribed role on graduating has shaped the decision by other employers to restrict the choice of discretionary course modules and settings of placements. This raises questions about the generic nature of the qualifying training, and the safeguarding of the individual learning experience.

Third, GYO students overall tend to be older and bring more social care experience to their student role, and are therefore more likely to have a realistic overview of the profession. However, this evaluation shows that there is currently a trend to traineeship models of GYO. The perceived
advantages of these schemes bringing in externally recruited trainees are that they widen the pool of available recruits to the social work profession and increase the levels of men and the previous educational attainment levels of people entering the profession.

Other models, especially secondment, draw in students with different academic and social care experiences. This study found that the positive, long-term staff retention rates associated with GYO are better evidenced with these long-standing models of secondment of experienced members of the existing social care workforce.

Long-term retention rates in sponsoring organisations and in the wider profession need to be monitored following the recent investment in traineeship schemes that prioritise candidates from outside the social care workforce, possibly with fewer ties to the locality and less experience of the nature of the profession. It will be important to track and review this retention data over time. The introduction of “Newly Qualified Status” will assist the increasing numbers of graduates with limited social care experience to consolidate their learning, but possibly undermine one of the significant roles of GYO investment, promoting the ability to “hit the ground running”.

This evaluation found that both types of scheme (traineeships and secondments) include highly resourced models with significant levels of support, investment and responsiveness to the needs of the individual student. Other models are strongly focused on immediate employer priorities, and may offer limited choice in course type, placement settings or eventual job setting. The fourth conclusion is that employers who prioritise short-term organisational needs may have to address their potential conflict with students’ wishes to have a range of experiences and choices.

While EBRs have offered an important opportunity for increasing the portfolio of models for qualifying study, and for collaboration between employers and HEIs, the evaluation’s findings are that the year-on-year uncertainty about GYO investment and planning challenges and occasionally undermines HEIs’ planning. These uncertainties appear to have recently led to a reduction in EBRs, while some remaining routes retaining their EBR categorisation have been subsumed into college-based cohorts in order to minimise the planning risk. Therefore, the short-term nature of LA funding cycles and investment in GYO has wider implications for the provision of a choice of flexible routes to qualifying and the fifth conclusion of this study is that this may conflict with other policy goals for increasing access to the profession.

It is expected that the Equality Bill included in the Queen’s Speech in December 2008 for the next Parliamentary session will offer stronger weight to supporting Positive Action in recruitment. The increasing emphasis on the need for effective workforce planning in local authorities, including having a staff profile representative of the groups with which they work, means that GYO offers an under-used tool for targeted workforce development. Prioritising of male GYO candidates may be a controversial innovation, given the recognition that men are over-represented in senior positions, despite being significantly under-represented in the profession as a whole. This study concludes that, while GYO offers opportunities to address (some) gaps in workforce diversity, and to offer educational opportunities for those previously denied them, these objectives require strategic direction and resource investment, and are not inevitable outcomes of all GYO activity. The recent evaluation of the new social work degree concluded that social work education in England has considerable experience, and relative success compared to other professions, in meeting the dual policy aims of student quality
and diversity. However, as noted above, the recent drive to prioritise investment in high-level graduate trainee candidates from outside the social care workforce by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has not been countered by financial or performance management incentives to invest in other candidates. GYO’s role as an element of skills and career escalators within the social care profession may be declining and there is a need to monitor the impact of these changes.

The final conclusion is that consideration of the “business case” for GYO training of social workers is important because of the sizeable but often unquantified public funds invested via LAs. This study found locally untested assumptions that all forms of GYO activity are an effective tool to address long-standing recruitment and retention problems in social work and concludes that social work training and workforce development activity may need to share intelligence, devise joint objectives and construct and measure desired outcomes.

Recommendations

For policy-makers

• National government commitments to widening access to the social work profession may be beneficially re-enforced through highlighting the potential performance management, workforce planning and equalities benefits of strategic GYO investment, as a complementary strand to policy and funding investment in raising the previous educational attainment levels of social work students.

For GSCC and sector skills councils

• There is a need to address current uncertainty and promote employer support for GYO outside the statutory sector, consolidating information on funding sources for GYO activity, including access for non-statutory organisations to LA and other funding from central government.

For employers

• GYO schemes require high-level endorsement of their priorities to be successful.
• Decisions for GYO planning will need to be clear about the different requirements and outcomes of schemes, and the likely impact on the age, gender, disability, previous educational attainment and ethnicity of students. Plans to establish or remodel GYO could usefully include an Equalities Impact Assessment. This should assist employers to establish the profile of their GYO candidates and the potential impact of targeted GYO recruitment or any alterations to scheme support or funding.
• GYO schemes have the potential for fostering an organisational culture that promotes staff development opportunities, including practice learning, as part of a wider “learning organisation”. All GYO schemes need to be integrated into employers’ workforce development or recruitment and retention strategies and succession planning if they are to be clear about their objectives.
• As part of a whole-organisation approach to GYO, adults and children’s departments may find it helpful to maximise their co-ordination of GYO activity, in order to reduce administrative duplication and to benefit from practice learning exchange, as well as the possible need for reciprocal arrangements to accommodate GYO graduates seeking employment in other settings.
• Employers should maintain data on the comparative retention rates and profiles of GYO and non-GYO recruits in their workforce, and on the relative success of different GYO models, as part of the evaluation of GYO investment. This may also include exit interviews on experiences of GYO; reasons for leaving the scheme or the organisation; and subsequent employment plans. This will establish if GYO is generating recruits for the sponsoring organisation; for the wider locality; for the social work profession as a whole; or whether people are leaving the profession.

• Reciprocal arrangements for placements between employer organisations are successful mechanisms for ensuring that VIP students gain experience outside their normal work setting. This is particularly important for smaller organisations that cannot offer staff a range of placement settings and are vulnerable to the loss of staff from the workplace.

For HEIs

• HEIs, in discussions with local employers and the GSCC, may wish to consider maintaining or extending the choice of routes to qualifying, including opportunities to access distinct EBRs.

• HEIs may wish to engage in exploration of opportunities for take-up of AP(E)L for experienced staff, in light of the current GSCC review of the potential for introducing AP(E)L.

• HEIs should continue to develop joint information and recruitment sessions with sponsoring agencies to promote transparent discussion about the challenges and support mechanisms of a GYO route.

For students

• Students can maximise their preparation for and support throughout study by talking to past students on similar routes, maintaining peer support networks and clarifying their aspirations and opportunities for employer and HEI support.

• Students need to take on some responsibility for briefing and therefore enabling their colleagues to accommodate their change in role to student status.

For all

Good practice recommendations on the support for GYO students to work best if made explicit in clear contractual arrangements between employers, students and HEIs, including:

• payment of fees, salaries and additional costs;
• consideration of and agreements over study leave allowance and flexibility;
• caseloads and other responsibilities throughout study;
• breadth or constraints of practice learning opportunities;
• availability of consistent and dedicated co-ordination/mentoring outside operational line management and practice supervision, potentially within a GYO co-ordinator role;
• provision of preparatory study skills support if required;
• information sharing, including consideration of data protection waivers;
• redeployment or alternative mechanisms for students failing to complete schemes;
• job allocation procedures on graduation;
• student tie-ins to employers, to particular work settings, and payback of costs; and
• the promotion of a comprehensive learning experience for students.

Additionally, feedback on the application process to unsuccessful internal candidates and their line managers can assist the individuals to achieve the necessary qualifications or experience to be successful with a subsequent application, or to be directed to an alternative source of training and development.
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Local Authority Workforce Intelligence Group, 2007, Adults’ Social Care Workforce Survey 2006.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Literature review

search strategy

Protocol for literature search

Definition of GYO: Initiatives by organisations to support their employees, or potential employees, to become fully trained social workers.

Research question: What models of GYO initiatives exist in England, and how do they vary in their resource implications, their staff retention rates post-qualification, and their impact on workforce diversity?

Research sub-questions:

• What current, past and planned initiatives improve access to and completion of social work qualifying courses, in particular for groups currently under-represented in the profession?
• What initiatives exist to improve recruitment and retention in social work?

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Scope
Geographical area: primarily England

• “Employer organisations” includes statutory, independent, private and voluntary sectors.
• “Higher education institutions” (HEIs) includes further education institutions (FEIs).
• Study design: quantitative or qualitative: survey; case studies; focus groups; audits; local; national, small scale, large scale, follow-up, evaluative, evidence-based, exploratory.

Population: Social workers; social care staff and other people looking to qualify as social workers via support from a social care provider.

Date of publication: 1992–current.

Language: English

Search strategy: A variety of search strings were used, depending on the database, based on this template: “social work” AND (“secondment” OR “sponsor**” OR “inservice training” OR “career development” OR “continuing education” OR “professional development” OR “staff development” OR “divers**” OR “recruitment” OR “retention”).

Databases searched: Sociological Abstracts; Social Services Abstracts; Social Care Online (SCO); Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts.

Progress of search: After the initial searches, removal of duplicates and exclusion for irrelevance, 156 retrievals were entered into an EndNote database. Further selection (articles from the practitioner press were excluded except where they reported on specific GYO schemes) and the addition of literature published after the search was conducted meant that 38 studies and reports were included for review.
## Appendix B: Tables

### Table 2: Interview participants by region

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<th>Region</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England-wide</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Local authorities (LAs) by type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of LAs</th>
<th>Inner London boroughs</th>
<th>Outer London boroughs</th>
<th>Metropolitan districts/authorities</th>
<th>Unitary authorities</th>
<th>Shire counties</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: GYO students by ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route</th>
<th>OU Sample</th>
<th>Other HEI sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed race</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black British</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 Results of chi-square tests of variation in the distributions of students by ethnicity among those who were seconded or not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort and type of award</th>
<th>Chi-square tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 98–99</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 99–00</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 00–01</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 01–02</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 02–03</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DipSW 03–04</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 03–04</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 04–05</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 05–06</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree 06–07</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Strong associations are indicated with two stars and weaker ones with a single star.