Literature review on the social work bursary and student finance

Jo Moriarty and Jill Manthorpe

Social Care Workforce Research Unit

February 2018
About the Policy Institute at King’s
The Policy Institute at King’s College London addresses complex policy challenges with rigorous research, academic expertise, and analysis focused on improving outcomes. Our vision is to enable the translation of research into policy and practice by facilitating engagement between academic, business and policy communities around current and future issues in the UK and globally.

About the Social Care Workforce Research Unit
The Social Care Workforce Research Unit (SCWRU) at King’s College London is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care Policy Research Programme and a range of other funders to undertake research on adult social care and its interfaces with housing and health sectors and complex challenges facing contemporary societies.
Introduction

This report presents findings from a literature review into the social work bursary, a non-means tested award paid to eligible students enrolling on approved undergraduate and postgraduate social work qualifying programmes in England. It was introduced in 2003 as part of a suite of reforms intended to improve social work qualifying education (Moriarty et al. 2012b, Orme et al. 2009). Although it undoubtedly met its intended aim of reversing a decline in social work student numbers, concerns developed about spiralling costs because no limit was placed on the number of students eligible for the award. This prompted the Coalition government to announce a consultation on the future of the bursary (Department of Health 2012), leading to a decision to cap the number of bursary places on undergraduate and postgraduate qualifying programmes from 2013 onwards. In addition, undergraduate students would only become eligible for the bursary in their second and third years (Department of Health 2013).

As well as concerns about costs, the persistence of mixed views about the overall quality of new graduates entering the profession led some policymakers, commentators, and employers to question whether funds spent on the bursary might be used to better effect (for example, Narey 2014, Social Work Reform Board 2010, Social Work Task Force 2009). This, alongside the international popularity of fast track graduate schemes, such as Teach First, among policymakers and politicians (Ellis et al. 2016) helped spur the development of a number of fast track programmes offering alternatives to traditional three year undergraduate and two year postgraduate social work qualifying programmes. These currently consist of Step Up to Social Work (GOV.UK 2017a), Frontline (2017), and Think Ahead (2017). In line with government policy on increasing the number and quality of apprenticeships (Powell 2017), plans are in place to offer apprenticeships in social work (Stevenson 2017a, Woodham 2017) which are expected to start in September 2018 (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2017).

It is also important to take account of wider developments in higher education in England that affect students studying social work. These include the:

- increase in tuition fees, which has eroded the bursary’s value in real terms;
- rises in the interest rate on student loans which mean that graduates who start higher education after 2012 and who earn over £21k per annum will pay more in interest (Student Loans Company 2017);
- decision to end NHS bursaries for all new nursing and most allied health students from August 2017 so they access the same loans system as other students (GOV.UK 2017b); and
- legislation designed to make it easier for universities to offer two year undergraduate degrees (Johnson 2017).

In June 2017, the Department of Health asked the Social Care Workforce Research Unit based at King’s College London to update material (Moriarty 2011, Moriarty and Manthorpe 2010, Moriarty et al. 2012b) that it had prepared to inform the Department of Health 2012 bursary consultation. This report outlines the updated review aims, methods, and findings. It ends by discussing the implications of the findings from this short piece of work.

---

1 An accelerated MA in Children’s Social Work ran for one year in 2009-10 but we were unable to locate any published information about it.
Aims and methods

As the timescale and resources available to prepare the review were limited, it was decided that the Department of Health’s request would be met best through a rapid review. Rapid reviews are a ‘form of knowledge synthesis in which components of the systematic review process are simplified or omitted to produce information in a timely manner’ (Tricco et al. 2015: 2). They are typically used to inform emergent decisions faced by policymakers (Khangura et al. 2012). However, there is no established consensus about what rapid reviews should include and considerable variation in the way they are conducted (Haby et al. 2016, Khangura et al. 2012, Tricco et al. 2015).

Earlier work had established that student funding for social work education was an under researched topic (Moriarty et al. 2012b) and preliminary work indicated that it had remained so. This clarified that the chief purpose of the review should be to provide a timely summary of published research, highlighting the limitations in terms of rigorous evidence.

The review aimed to identify published evidence on the impact of the social work bursary on:

- the number of students enrolling on social work qualifying programmes;
- student participation in higher education; and
- the effect of different types of financial support on student progression.

Searches were undertaken of bibliographic databases, and the internet using the search terms social work, bursary/bursaries, and student finance/funding to identify material published after 2003 when the bursary was introduced. While they included some international research highlighting the difficulties faced by social work students in funding their education (for example, Khunou et al. 2012, Rai 2002, Ting et al. 2006, Yoon 2012) – these largely reflected the wider student funding system in the countries in which the research was undertaken. For this reason, a decision was taken to restrict the review to material published in the United Kingdom (UK) and to concentrate upon identifying sources that would be most relevant to informing policy on the social work bursary in England.

The review is primarily based on 25 full text items identified through a combination of database, website, and internet searches. The results of the searches are presented in Appendix One. The comparatively high number of items excluded after full text retrieval reflects the very limited amount of empirical material on the bursary. In most instances, excluded items simply referred to the bursary’s existence but did not discuss it further.

Initial qualifying education in social work is generic, although the Frontline and Think Ahead fast track programmes prepare students to specialise in working with children and families and in adult mental health respectively. The bursary is funded by the Department of Health and is given to eligible students wherever they choose to work when qualified so the material presented in this review covers all social work students, whatever the type of programme they follow.
Findings

Routes to a social work qualification

Table 1 summarises the different routes currently available to students to becoming a social worker. All programmes must be approved by the Health and Care Professions Council’s (HCPC) (2017) Standards of Education and Training. Following qualification, those wishing to practise as a social worker in England must also register with the HCPC. The government plans to transfer social workers to a new regulator - Social Work England - probably during 2019 (Stevenson, 2017c). It is important to note that the timings of university undergraduate and postgraduate programmes may, in reality, be shorter depending upon semester start and finish dates and the timing of final examinations.

Table 1: Routes to a social work qualification in England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of route</th>
<th>Time to qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full time undergraduate</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time undergraduate</td>
<td>Flexible. As an example, an Open University (2017) student in England acquiring 60 credits per year would take 6 years to qualify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time postgraduate</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time postgraduate</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Up to Social Work</td>
<td>14 months full time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontline</td>
<td>5 week residential programme. Two years with local authority, work second year as a newly qualified social worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think Ahead</td>
<td>5 week residential programme. Gain social work qualification after one year and work second year as newly qualified social worker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Postgraduate enrolments have been falling steadily since 2010-2011, despite an increase in the number of postgraduate programmes when compared with a decade ago (Evaluation of Social Work Degree Qualification in England Team 2008). In 2014-2015, students on undergraduate courses made up 68 per cent of enrolments on traditional university social work qualifying programmes, the highest proportion since 2009-2010. At the same time, postgraduate students find it easier to find paid employment, with an estimated 72 per cent of postgraduates finding social work jobs within six months of graduation compared to 64 per cent of undergraduates (Skills for Care 2016). Skills for Care notes that the reasons for this are unknown but suggests that postgraduates may be perceived to be more ‘job ready’. Its report also highlights a potential mismatch between local supply and demand for social workers in different parts of the country.

Costs and controversies

As mentioned earlier, the major change to the bursary since its introduction has been the decision to cap the number of students eligible for the award. In 2017, a total of 2,500 and 1,500 postgraduate bursaries were made available in England (Department of Health 2017). Unpublished preliminary figures from the Department of Health suggest this will cost £58.5 million, a reduction from the £80 million that the bursary was estimated to cost in the 2011-2012 financial year (Department of Health 2012). The government also provides funding through the Education Support Grant to help with the costs of arranging and providing practice placements and to support the involvement of service users and carers in social work education. The sums allocated for the Education Support Grant and the bursary remain unchanged from 2016 and some universities have reported reductions in the number of bursary places available on their qualifying programmes.
in 2017-2018 (unpublished data provided to researchers).

Table 2 summarises funding for social work students in 2017-18 across the UK. Higher education is a devolved matter and spending on higher education varies, with Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland all spending more per head of the population than England (Trench 2008). Unfortunately, despite the opportunities that devolution has brought in creating natural experiments, there are no comparative studies looking at different models of social work student finance or their cost effectiveness across the UK. The most striking difference in student support is on undergraduate programmes in England where students pay most towards their own tuition and living costs. In Wales, as in England, numbers receiving the social work bursary in Wales are also capped.

By contrast to social work students on traditional university qualifying programmes in any of the UK countries, students on the Step Up, Think Ahead and Frontline fast track schemes do not pay tuition fees and they all receive a substantial bursary to help with living costs. The January 2018 intake of 550 Step Up students will receive a bursary of £19,833 for the duration of the 14 month course (GOV.UK 2017a). Frontline and Think Ahead students receive a bursary for the first year and then are employed as newly qualified social workers in year two where their salary will vary depending on their employer and location. Frontline students currently receive a tax and National Insurance exempt bursary ranging from £16,756-19,591, depending on whether they are based in London. In year 2, they can expect to earn between £25 – 35k as a newly qualified social worker in Children’s Services (Frontline 2017). Students on the Think Ahead programme receive a bursary of £17,200 outside London or £19,100 inside London during the first 14 months of the programme. In the second year, they are employed as a newly qualified social worker and receive a taxable salary, typically ranging from around £21,000–£26,000 outside London to around £30,000 within London (Think Ahead 2017).

The financial advantages for those wishing to become a social worker between opting for fast track and ‘traditional’ programmes are most apparent for postgraduate applicants with a minimum of a 2:1 undergraduate degree. Many of these applicants already carry a burden of undergraduate debt and/or have family commitments which place additional demands on their finances (Croisdale-Appleby 2014).
Table 2: Funding for social work students in 2017-18 across the United Kingdom

The figures presented in this table assume students are UK residents and intend to study at a public university in their country of residence. Additional grants are available for students with disabilities and to students with adult or child dependents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Undergraduates</th>
<th>Postgraduates</th>
<th>Numbers capped</th>
<th>Funding arranged through</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>England</strong></td>
<td>£4,862.50 per year for students outside London; £5,262.50 for students in London. Only available to 2nd and 3rd year students. Students pay tuition fees of up to £9,250 per year. Students are eligible to apply for a maintenance loan.</td>
<td>Basic non means tested grant up to £3,362.50 per year for students outside London; up to £3,762.50 for students in London. Plus, up to £2,721 a year means tested maintenance grant for students outside London and up to £4,201 a year for students inside London. Contribution towards tuition fees paid to university for bursary recipients. Other students meet their own fees. Students who are not eligible for the full social work bursary are eligible to apply for a Master’s loan.</td>
<td>Yes (2500 undergraduate and 1500 postgraduate places), formula per university based on actual and projected admissions over 5 year period</td>
<td>NHS Business Services Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Ireland</strong></td>
<td>Incentive grant of £4k per year to all social work students. Students pay tuition fees (£4,030 per year if studying in Northern Ireland)</td>
<td>Not applicable (all qualifying courses are at undergraduate level)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scotland</strong></td>
<td>Rates are reviewed annually. Tuition fees per year £3,415 (maximum), approx. Maintenance grant per year £3,314 (maximum)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Scottish Social Services Council (postgraduate), Student Awards Agency Scotland (undergraduate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wales</strong></td>
<td>£7,500 (£2,500 a year for three years) or £5,000 (£2,500 a year for two years) for full-time Open University students. Qualifying students living in Wales pay tuition fees of £9,000 but receive a grant of £4,954 if studying at a public university in Wales.</td>
<td>£13,280 (£6640 a year for two years). This includes a contribution of £3,390 towards tuition fees</td>
<td>Yes (224). Each programme is allocated a set number of bursaries</td>
<td>Social Care Wales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Concerns that the funding differences between fast track and traditional programmes could help create two-tier qualifying routes appear to have been borne out, with many social work educators expressing concerns about the continuing viability of social work education in universities (for example, Featherstone et al. 2017, Jones 2017). This has been heightened by the closure of several well regarded smaller postgraduate programmes and the proposal (now rejected) that a further course at Durham University should follow suit (Stevenson 2017b).

**Social work student numbers**

Figure 1 shows the number of enrolments on university social work qualifying programmes between 1999 and 2015. Concerns about student numbers peaked in 1999 when there were only 4,129 enrolments, an estimated fall of 55 per cent over the previous five years (Moriarty and Murray 2007). The introduction of the bursary and the development of new undergraduate and postgraduate qualifying programmes in social work led to an immediate rise in student numbers – including increases in part time and employment based students between 2001 and 2004 who enrolled on the Diploma in Social Work to avoid the increased time it would take to qualify under the new degree. The fall in 2004-2005 occurred because the Open University did not have an intake of students in that year while it made the transition from the Diploma in Social Work to the social work degree.

While social work educators were pleased by the financial investment in social work education that accompanied the bursary, including the Education Support Grant to help with practice placements and funding to help with students’ skills development (Moss et al. 2007), some social work qualifying programme reported being under pressure from their university to expand student numbers, even though these increases were not accompanied by increases in teaching staff (Worsley et al. 2009). This ‘drive for size’, as Worsley et al (2009: 829) termed it, accentuated a mismatch in the geographical distribution of social work qualifying programmes across England which meant that areas with the highest vacancy rates for social workers, such as London, did not necessarily have the highest number of student places, even though there was no evidence enough newly qualified social workers would be prepared to move to areas with the highest number of vacancies (Evaluation of Social Work Degree Qualification in England Team 2008).

At the same time, the fall in the number of students enrolling onto social work courses since...
2010-11 means fewer social work graduates are entering the workforce. This has happened at a time when the demand for social workers is increasing (Centre for Workforce Intelligence 2016). It is partly offset by the expansion in the number of students on fast track courses but as only 342 students enrolled on the first two cohorts of Step Up (Smith et al. 2013) and 228 students on the first two cohorts of Frontline (Maxwell et al. 2016), fast track programmes are not the only explanation for the decline in student numbers. The Chief Social Worker for Adults has suggested that as, most of the Step Up graduates and all the Frontline graduates will be employed in Children’s Services, reductions in students enrolling on traditional qualifying programmes could have a disproportionate impact on adult social work (Romeo 2017), even taking into account the number of Think Ahead graduates, most of whom will apply to work in adult social work. However, as the first cohort of Think Ahead students has only just graduated, it is too early to draw conclusions about how the programme affects adult social work recruitment and retention overall.

**Motivations**

While Figure 1 shows the apparent links between student numbers and the introduction of the bursary and the decision to cap the number of bursary places, questions have also been asked about whether it has encouraged applications from students primarily motivated by the non-means-tested financial support (Narey 2014). A difficulty in answering this question is that most of the information on student motivations to become a social worker is based on research with early cohorts of social work bursary recipients (Furness 2007, Stevens et al. 2012). Nevertheless, both studies concluded that the overwhelming majority of students were driven by altruism and an urge to ‘make a difference’. Some of them also had personal experiences for wanting to study social work, a topic which we discuss further below when considering the benefits that those who have used social work services or experienced poverty or disability bring to the profession.

**Widening participation**

Widening participation aims to address the discrepancies in the take-up of higher education opportunities between different social groups. The policy dates from 1997 when the Dearing Report highlighted the continued under-representation of non-traditional students, such as people from minority ethnic backgrounds, students with disabilities and from certain social classes, especially those with parents in non-professional or unskilled work in higher education (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education 1997).

Social work programmes face an additional conundrum in terms of widening participation. The global definition of social work (International Federation of Social Workers 2014) highlights social work’s responsibility to global rights, respect for diversity and developing structures that help people faced with disadvantages. At the same time, social work programmes must endeavour to balance widening participation with ensuring students can meet professional requirements for entry into social work training (Dillon 2007: 830).

Dillon (2011) also observed the contrast between students in further education who were on an access to social work course and the backgrounds of those who already had sufficient educational qualifications to apply for a university place via UCAS. The students on the access course were almost all working part time in social care and brought strong motivations and personal experiences that were thought to bring advantages for a future career in social work but only one student reported being accepted by an ‘elite’ university.

While Holmström (2014: 452) highlighted the risks of polarised approaches that dichotomise between academic ability and other personal qualities, pointing out that ‘characteristics such as sound judgment and wisdom ... are surely dependent upon both intellectual strength and moral character,’ other debates about the quality of social work students have lacked these nuances.

Analysis of data on students enrolling on social work programmes indicated that changes to the social work degree have some positive effects on student diversity, for example by increasing the proportion of young students and men from black and minority ethnic groups (Evaluation of Social Work Degree Qualification in England Team 2008, Holmström 2011, Hussein et al. 2009, Moriarty
and Manthorpe 2010). Only a quarter of students surveyed as part of the Evaluation of the Social Work Degree Qualification in England reported receiving any financial assistance from their families. Most were reliant upon a combination of student loans, part time paid employment, and the bursary, although a small minority also reported using credit cards and commercial loans. For many students, the bursary had helped them realise long held ambitions to become a social worker:

I’ve always wanted to be a social worker … but when I first wanted to do it seriously, there was no money—I was a single parent. I couldn’t stay on Income Support or anything like that, so I couldn’t afford to do it. But now you get a bursary … so I can sort of just manage to do it. So, it was finances really that stopped me doing it before.

The reason I never went to university when I left school was because I would never have been able to afford it and there was no way I could have done anything like this if I’d had to pay course fees … so, I’m so grateful for that. (Moriarty et al. 2012b: 965)

Research with Step Up students similarly asked participants if they had previously considered a social work career. Although almost all said they had, they also reported that they would not have followed a career in social work without Step Up, generally referring to financial barriers attached to supporting families and/or repaying student loans. However, these financial barriers were usually paired with other factors, such as negative public perceptions of social workers and by an absence of information on routes into social work for ‘outsiders’. A small number had never previously considered a social work career. They were attracted by the opportunity to study for a professional and academic qualification that built on their experiences while being paid (Baginsky and Manthorpe 2015).

Although Step Up was originally envisaged as a route for attracting ‘high flyers’ who might already have established successful careers in other fields of activity, over 60 per cent on successful applicants in the first two cohorts were aged under 30 (Smith et al. 2013). One student commented on the intensity of the programme, which she thought would be very difficult for those with caring or other responsibilities:

Having few responsibilities is important. The overall demographic of my year group was young, white, childless females. It does not feel like a fast-track career change into social work – with the size of the bursary it is more like a stepping-stone for recent graduates with some experience to gain a further academic qualification and to start a career. (Baginsky and Teague 2013: 108)

This quotation highlights an important difference between fast track and traditional routes. Step Up, Frontline and Think Ahead all aim to attract applicants through a rigorous selection process and are highly selective in terms of the numbers and type of people to whom they offer a place. A comparison of students on Step Up and those on traditional university programme noted that successful applicants on the initial Step Up cohort had much higher levels of previous academic attainment than students on traditional courses. However, they lacked the diversity evident across other social work qualifying programmes, particularly in terms of ethnicity. This led the authors to suggest that further work was needed to see if some applicants were more disadvantaged at the selection stage than others (Smith et al. 2013).

Maxwell et al (2016) noted a similar pattern with Frontline students, observing that Frontline participants had significantly better A-level results than students on mainstream programmes, better GCSE grades in Maths and English and more first class degrees. They were also significantly younger, more likely to have parents who were graduates and more likely to have attended independent schools. The first cohorts of the Frontline programme also had fewer minority ethnic students than mainstream social work programmes, but at least the same proportion as there are minority ethnic people in the general population of England and Wales.

Financial support and progression

Student retention and completion rates are important indicators of quality within individual universities and the higher education system in general. Financial decisions, such as fear of debt, play a part in influencing decisions about whether to and where to go to university (Heynat et al. 2012). They may also influence what happens when students reach university. Although there are usually many reasons why students leave a
programme before its intended completion date, problems with finance and employment are often associated with decisions to leave, especially among older students, students from black and minority groups, and students with caring responsibilities (Yorke and Longden 2004, Yorke and Longden 2008).

There is now an established literature showing that progression on traditional social work programmes is differential, with some students (especially those from marginalised groups such as people from black and minority ethnic groups and men) being less likely than others to achieve a social work qualification (Bartoli et al. 2013, Bernard et al. 2014, Fairtlough et al. 2013, Fletcher et al. 2015, Furness 2012, Hafford-Letchfield 2007, Hussein et al. 2008, Hussein et al. 2009).

A number of studies (Bartoli et al. 2013, Fletcher et al. 2015, Hafford-Letchfield 2007) have indicated that social work students experiencing difficulties with their studies often also face financial difficulties. The demographic profile of social work students on traditional courses is such that almost half have school age children or care for a child or an adult with a disability (Collins et al. 2010, Moriarty et al. 2012b). Not only does this affect the amount of time they can spend on course work, they may also need to work more hours in part time paid employment. In addition, finance and accommodation may be especially problematic for care leavers who go on to study social work. Support with this, and other aspects of their studies needs to be in place, especially because the direct experience of using services may mean that they have additional skills in supporting people using services and their families (Mayall et al. 2015).

Alongside these qualitative studies, statistical models using information about Diploma in Social Work (Hussein et al. 2008, Moriarty et al. 2014) and social work degree students (Hussein et al. 2011a) showed that seconded and sponsored students were most likely to achieve a social work qualification and that seconded and sponsored undergraduates and those with a bursary were less likely to leave after their first year when compared to students funding their studies by other means (Hussein et al. 2009). (This research was undertaken when the bursary was still available to first year students). In a similar way, Step Up schemes also seem to show high progression rates. Among the first cohort of 185 trainees, 168 qualified as a social worker (Baginsky and Manthorpe 2016).

**Costs of different qualifying routes**

Only two studies appear to have sought to calculate the costs of social work education (Curtis et al. 2012, Cutmore and Rodger 2016). Curtis et al (2012) estimated that it cost £58,587 (£21,800 per year) to train a social worker on a traditional university programme. These costs were made up of tuition costs (£23,824), placement costs (£6,298) and living expenses (£28,465). The equivalent figures for postgraduates were £16,366, £4,351 and £20,876. The difference was mainly attributable to the shorter length of time it takes to qualify on a postgraduate programme.

Both Curtis et al. (2012) and Cutmore and Rodger (2016) suggested the overall costs of qualifying a social worker were less on traditional university postgraduate routes because of the shorter time it took students to qualify. Cutmore and Rodger (2016) suggested that the overall cost to the economy of training an undergraduate student social worker was £82,747 compared to £50,560 for a postgraduate. These costs are broadly in line with those reported by Cutis et al (2012), remembering that later figures were calculated when tuition fees were £3,000 a year compared with the £9,000 that students paid in 2016.

However, Cutmore and Rodger (2016) also concluded that the cost to government of qualifying a social worker by the postgraduate route was significantly more on the postgraduate route: £23,225 compared to £14,675. This was explained by the higher amount in bursary payments paid to postgraduate students and the higher proportion of postgraduate students receiving the bursary in relation to the total number of students on each intake. They also suggested that universities were cross-subsidising the costs of different courses, with postgraduate students receiving more in terms of input than undergraduate students at an institutional level. However, they did not offer any further evidence for this in terms of social work programmes.

At the same time, Cutmore and Rodger (2016) compared the costs to government of traditional university programmes with fast track schemes. They calculated that, at £45,823 and £40,413 per student respectively, the costs to government of Frontline and Step Up programmes were...
substantially more than traditional university programmes (remembering that their study was unable to comment on the quality of different students following different routes). Overall, more government money was invested in traditional university programmes (£66 million) than fast track schemes (£20 million) but this was because there are currently many more students on traditional qualifying programmes than fast track schemes. This balance may change with the national roll out of Frontline (Horwood 2016) and an increase to the number of Step Up students in 2018 (GOV.UK 2017a).

It is also important to note that both studies have their limitations. The unit costs to the economy of fast track schemes compared to traditional university programmes presented in Cutmore and Rodger (2016) are deceptive in that they do not include student living costs because they were not funded to collect new data. Neither Cutmore and Rodger (2016) nor Curtis et al (2012) were able to include students’ part time paid employment when calculating the wider costs to the economy. Even more importantly, their analyses are based on full time students. The Open University is a major provider of part time social work degree programmes but the methodological challenges in calculating the costs of qualifying via this route are considerable because assumptions cannot be made about the time it takes students to qualify on part time routes in the same way as can be done for full time courses (Moriarty et al. 2014).

Of course, costs alone are just one aspect of the picture. The question remains whether different costs result in different outcomes in terms of the quality of newly qualified social workers. This needs to take account of differences in resources (Featherstone et al. 2017). Staempfli et al (2015) found very few differences between Step Up students and students on a traditional postgraduate qualifying programme in terms of their capacity for critical reflection. However, Maxwell et al (2016) found that the quality of practice observed in Frontline participants was better than that observed in a similar group of postgraduate students on a traditional university programme. Manthorpe et al (2011, 2012) reported that employers considered that seconded or sponsored Grow Your Own Students with extensive experience in social care were especially valuable in the workplace because they were seen as ready to practise immediately.

Curtis et al (2012) also pointed out the costs of social work qualifying education need to be offset against the number of years that a student might subsequently be expected to work as a social worker. They pointed out that low retention rates meant that higher numbers of students needed to be trained to replace those who left. Unfortunately, few studies have been able to look at retention rates beyond the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment. However, Hackett et al (2016) reported that 84 per cent of the first cohort of Step Up graduates were still practising in child and family social work three years after qualifying. Manthorpe et al (2017) have also drawn attention to the very limited knowledge about the cost-effectiveness of Return to Social Work programmes and advise that data are collected on current initiatives.
‘All too often, social work is taught and practised as if it took place in a financial vacuum’. These words written by Glasby (2001: 498) seem almost as true today as they were 16 years ago. Despite the expansion in research into social work education, little attention seems to have been given to students’ financial positions and cost effectiveness of different qualifying routes. Even the list of published reports and journal articles presented in Appendix Two is deceptive because many of them are different outputs from the same study. At the same time, this was a very short term piece of work and, while efforts were made to ensure that all relevant material was included, it is possible that the searches omitted some relevant items.

As well as the paucity of published research, the lack of comparative designs means that care needs to be taken in interpreting their results. As Carpenter (2011) points out, the lack of comparative designs makes it harder to ascribe differences in outcomes to differences in different qualifying routes or between different social work programmes. The House of Commons Education Committee (2016) has called for the government to commission research comparing fast track and alongside university routes to establish comparative long-term outcomes. While evaluations of Think Ahead (2016) and Frontline trained social workers (Dartington Social Research Unit 2015) do involve comparative designs, the time span that they will cover is comparatively short. Existing research from other disciplines such as teaching (Allen et al. 2014) offer potential lines of enquiry for social work educators. Without better information on the long term outcomes of social work education, there is a risk that decisions will be made that have negative consequences for future social worker supply.

The review has shown that financial incentives can influence the number of social workers enrolling on social work programmes. While it may be that the decision to cap the bursary achieved a necessary correction in the number of students on qualifying programmes, the decline in student numbers has not been entirely offset by the increase in fast track routes. The over-representation of child and family social workers on fast track routes (Romeo 2017) may mean that adult services are disproportionately affected by this change. In the late 1990s and first decade of the 21st century, a shortage of social workers led to a very rapid rise in international recruitment (Hussein et al. 2011b). It is important to develop better methods for forecasting demand for social workers.

The review also suggested that there were differences between students receiving a bursary and those being accepted onto fast track routes. There is a need to consider the needs of those for whom a fast track route may not be suitable but who have the potential to make a valuable contribution to social work. There is a risk that the funding differentials between the two may lead to a two tier status in which students on traditional routes are considered to be less talented than those on fast track schemes (Schraer 2015). This is at the heart of some of the concerns about fast track schemes among social work educators, alongside concerns that too much emphasis on employment based approaches outside the university setting may mean that social work is regarded as little more than vocational training (van Heugten 2011), lead to less innovation in teaching (Doel et al. 2007), and weaken students’ professional identity (Scholar et al. 2014).

Traditional social work students have a different financial profile to other students because they are often older and more likely to have responsibilities outside their programme of study. The links between student finance, progression and quality are difficult to untangle and there is not definitive research as yet but it may be that university programmes are better placed to offer academic and pastoral support to students experiencing difficulties (Bernard et al. 2014, Mayall et al. 2015). However, the differential progression rates between students seconded or sponsored by employers (Hussein et al. 2011a) suggest that comparisons between
fast track and traditional routes need to consider the greater financial security experienced by fast track students.

In concluding this report, it is possible that the existence of different funding routes has contributed to the pool of effective social workers by increasing their diversity. However, comparative studies need to take account of the additional resources on fast track routes compared with the bursary. In their study of initial teacher training, Allen et al conclude:

*Each individual’s choice of initial teacher training route will depend on factors we are not able to explore – for example, the trainee’s taste for university- and school-based components of training and geographical mobility. The provision of scholarships and bursaries may attract a wider pool of applicants and provide more incentive to those with high degree classes. Consideration of these factors implies that a broad range of routes and funding provisions should be maintained to ensure a wide variety of potential trainees consider and train for the career. It is clear that there are costs to doing so, however.*

(Allen et al. 2014: 64)

Despite its limited nature, research on the social work bursary does suggest it has helped attract a wider pool of applicants to social work. The challenge is to invest in these workers to help them remain in the profession and to provide suitable opportunities for those who have taken time out of professional practice to return to social work.

**Policy options**

1. Consider maintaining the bursary at least for the period leading up to Brexit to maintain a stable supply of student numbers and avoid the risk of over reliance on international recruitment to reduce the number of vacant social work posts.

2. Set up a series of cross departmental discussions between the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education to identify the number of social workers needed in adult and children’s services.

3. Engage in discussions with the new social work regulator Social Work England about its possible role in collecting data on retention rates among registrants.

4. Undertake an impact assessment to consider the effect of the bursary in maintaining diversity within the profession.

5. Ensure that future announcements about the bursary allow applicants sufficient time to make alternative arrangements.

6. Undertake a risk assessment to investigate the potential consequences of monopoly suppliers developing in social work education between certain universities and fast track qualifying routes.

7. Examine the extent of non-repayment of student loan debt among moderate earners such as social workers, nurses and teachers and give thought to whether there are other options for student finance.

8. Consider the role of student services and other sources of financial information, such as the Money Advice Service, in helping social work students obtain financial advice.
Appendix 1: Flowchart for identifying material on social work bursary

192 records identified through database searching (Social Care Online, British Education Index, Web of Science and ProQuest)

81 additional records identified through journal websites (Social Work Education, British Journal of Social Work, Journal of Social Work) (n=55); internet searches (n=12); websites (n=9); personal bibliographies and reference harvesting (n=5)

After duplicates were removed and remaining records screened by title and abstract, 74 records were selected for full text retrieval

25 full text records of material published after 2003 included in the review

49 full text article records excluded because they were not about the bursary or student finance for social work in the UK
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of SW qualification</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Main findings</th>
<th>Finance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step Up to Social Work</td>
<td>Baginsky &amp; Manthorpe</td>
<td>2014 &amp; 2015</td>
<td>Longitudinal design following up 185 Step Up trainees from 2010 until they qualified as social workers in March 2012. Trainees completed surveys at four points in time over their 18 month training</td>
<td>168 (91%) students completed the course. Most were satisfied with the quality of their training and the support received from universities and employers, although this varied across different universities and different regional partnerships. The speed with which the Step Up programme was introduced possibly compromised the quality of implementation</td>
<td>Most respondents said they would not have followed a career in social work without Step Up, mainly because of financial barriers of supporting families and/or repaying student loans. Eighteen (12%) had never considered a social work career but were attracted by the opportunity to study for a professional and academic qualification that built on their experiences while being paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Up to Social Work</td>
<td>Baginsky &amp; Manthorpe</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Survey sent to first cohort of students qualifying from Step Up programmes in 2012. Response rate was 95%.</td>
<td>Of 138 respondents, 80% (n=111) were employed by the authority in which they had trained and a further 29 had started work in another Children’s Service Department (CSD). Most intended to stay with their employer over the next 2 years. Fifty per cent wanted a managerial role and some respondents were already senior practitioners. However, the ratio of those wanting a practice role over a managerial role was 3:1</td>
<td>Estimated that it cost the public purse approximately £53,000 to train each trainee, based on bursaries and equivalent trainee funding, university fees and sums paid to the regional partnerships, not taking into account the considerable development costs of the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of SW qualification</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Main findings</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Up to Social Work</td>
<td>Baginsky &amp; Teague</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Longitudinal design using data collected via 4 surveys of Step Up students between 2010 and 2012. Main focus of report is on first cohort of students</td>
<td>Ninety one per cent (n=168) of the 185 students who began Step Up. Ninety six 6 per cent of respondents thought they had been very adequately or adequately prepared. Level of satisfaction with the practice element of the Step Up programme was much higher than that expressed in relation to the academic input. There was also variation in satisfaction between respondents enrolled with different regional partnerships</td>
<td>There were some delays to bursary payments. There were differences between employers in terms of study leave and annual leave entitlements, and mileage allowances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Traditional' university programme</td>
<td>Bartoli et al</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Two separate focus groups held with 15 Black African students and 3 White British students in one English university</td>
<td>Examined the reasons why Black African students experienced lower progression rates than White British students. These included difficulties in practice learning, experiences of racism, financial pressures and difficulties, gender roles and expectations</td>
<td>Students consisted of a mix of international (no bursary) and home students (bursary). Black African students were often expected to give financial support to their wider family. This often involved them spending considerable numbers of hours in part-time paid employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison of students in England and India</td>
<td>Coffey et al</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Questionnaires distributed to 131 students on two undergraduate social work programmes in England (58% response rate) and to 260 social work students (90% response rate) from five institutions in Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>British students reported significantly higher levels of demands and significantly lower levels of support than their Indian counterparts. Despite the lower levels of demands and higher levels of support reported by Indian students, they had significantly poorer well-being than their British counterparts. Highlights challenges of this type of cross-cultural research</td>
<td>Both Indian and British students reported financial problems as one of the stressors that they faced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of SW qualification</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Main findings</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Traditional’ university programme</td>
<td>Collins et al</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Cross sectional survey of students on two social work programmes in Wales. Response rate was 58% (n=76)</td>
<td>While students enjoyed their studies and thought they were worthwhile, a third experienced emotional exhaustion and 42% scored above the General Health Questionnaire 12 cut-point measuring psychological ill health such as depression or anxiety</td>
<td>Correlation reported between the hours of paid work (outside the course) and levels of stress and emotional exhaustion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional university programme</td>
<td>Curtis et al</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Costings study using data from higher education statistics, data from practice educators, National Union of Students</td>
<td>at £20,097, the costs of qualifying a social worker are higher than those of training a nurse or allied health professional because of the higher attrition rates among social workers</td>
<td>Nearly half of the costs (undergraduate and postgraduate) relate to students’ living expenses (59 per cent), 10.5 per cent for the practice placement and 40.5 per cent relate to tuition costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional, Frontline and Step Up</td>
<td>Cutmore and Rodger</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Calculates cost to government of directly funding the qualification and the wider cost to individual learners associated with course participation</td>
<td>Cost to government of qualifying a social worker by the undergraduate route is significantly less than the postgraduate route: £14,675 compared to £23,225. However, the total cost to the economy, which includes government funding and wider costs, of a newly qualified social worker is much greater for the undergraduate qualification route: £82,747 compared to £50,560. This can be explained by higher annual tuition fees and a longer period of study (three years as opposed to the two years for postgraduate courses). The cost per newly qualified social workers for Frontline is £46,024 compared to £40,413 for Step Up. Highlight that these figures are based on cost data alone and do not take account of differences in terms of retention, progression or social work skills</td>
<td>On the wider costs to the economy and individuals, the positions are reversed with the accelerated routes generating the lowest unit costs. The lowest unit cost is for Step Up at £40,413 and the highest for the undergraduate route at £82,747. The difference between the cost to government and cost to economy is explained by the opportunity cost (alternative employment to degree course) which applied only to the traditional routes. Conclude universities are cross-subsidising the costs of different courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of SW qualification</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Main findings</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education access course</td>
<td>Dillon</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Mixed methods study involving surveys (n=55), focus groups (n=21) and interviews with students and educators (n=7) on access courses in 3 further education colleges who were applying to study social work</td>
<td>Evidence of ‘vocational stratification’, in which students from disadvantaged backgrounds were over-represented on access courses leading to vocational qualifications. Almost all the students participating were working part time in social care. Their motivations and personal experiences were thought to bring advantages for a future career in social work. Only one student reported being accepted by a pre-1992 university</td>
<td>Students experienced many barriers in terms of cultural and financial barriers to participating in higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Traditional’ university programme</td>
<td>Fletcher et al</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Qualitative study of 95 students who from black and minority ethnic groups, lesbian, gay, bisexual students, students with a disability studying at 8 different universities</td>
<td>There was uneven development of equality and diversity policies and practice across the eight universities and across different equality strands with less impetus for change than might have been expected. While there were numerous examples of innovative practice aimed at promoting inclusion for minority social work students, ‘success stories’ were rarely shared</td>
<td>The intersecting barriers linked to financial, family and community responsibilities created a greater risk of delayed progression for students with mobility and sensory impairment; mental health problems; and black and ethnic minority students, and overseas students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Traditional’ university programme</td>
<td>Furness</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Questionnaire sent to applicants to one social work programme in England over a four year period. Received 497 replies but not possible to calculate a response rate because of the way the sample was recruited</td>
<td>Respondents had a range of reasons for wanting to study social work, the most important being the perception that they could make a positive difference to people’s lives</td>
<td>Only 52% of the respondents had been aware of the bursary and only 3% indicated that this had definitely influenced their choice of career. Prospective students’ knowledge of the bursary has not increased since its introduction and the findings suggest that other factors act as primary incentives and motivate students to apply for social work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of SW qualification</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Main findings</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Up to Social Work (ongoing)</td>
<td>Hackett et al</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Mixed methods study following up practitioners graduating from the first two cohorts of the Step Up to Social Work (SUSW) programme, at three and five years after qualification. Compared with matched group of graduates from conventional programmes</td>
<td>Eight four per cent of the 164 SUSW cohort 1 graduates identified were still practising in child and family social work three years after qualifying. All qualifying practitioners generally felt well prepared for practice, and Step Up cohort 1 graduates were slightly more so than comparators. Majority of Step Up graduates working in child protection</td>
<td>Step Up students valued the additional financial support they received and also the speed with which they could become qualified. Authors suggest that if retention rates are better on Step Up, then this will help offset the additional costs of this route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Traditional’ university programme</td>
<td>Hafford-Letchfield</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Focus group with 7 students at one university and seminar meeting with programme staff</td>
<td>Students from diverse backgrounds faced practical, financial and emotional challenges in balancing a programme of study with their outside life. Staff needed to provide different types of support in accordance with students’ diverse needs</td>
<td>Highlighted role of peer support in coping with the academic and financial demands of the course and help with child care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Grow Your Own’ (employment based)</td>
<td>Hussein et al</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Secondary analysis of anonymised enrolment data on 41k students starting social work programmes from 1998 to 2007</td>
<td>Some evidence that students with higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to be sponsored or seconded by an employer since the introduction of the social work degree</td>
<td>Grow Your Own schemes have facilitated the participation of men, Asian groups and older applicants in social work qualifying programmes when compared to the general population of social work students. However, students from Black ethnic backgrounds and those with disabilities have been more likely to be under-represented in such schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Traditional’ university programmes</td>
<td>Hussein et al</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Secondary analysis of anonymised data on 5275 full time undergraduate students held by former regulator the General Social Care Council</td>
<td>Progression rates vary across different types of student. Only 9% of students were seconded or sponsored by an employer but their progression rates were higher</td>
<td>Withdrawal rates were higher among students not receiving the bursary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of SW qualification</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Main findings</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Grow Your Own’ (employment based)</td>
<td>Manthorpe et al</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Interviews with 23 educators in universities providing Grow Your Own employment based routes</td>
<td>Participants considered employer-sponsored students enriched the total student cohort, facilitated an expansion of student numbers, and strengthened partnerships with local employers. Acknowledged that schemes could lead to some tensions about the balance between education and training</td>
<td>Participants noted a trend towards favouring more students on faster routes to qualification and wanted an option for slower routes with higher levels of mentoring to support wider participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Grow Your Own’ (employment based)</td>
<td>Manthorpe et al</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Interviews with 27 representatives from 20 organisations employing social workers and funding Grow Your Own social work students</td>
<td>Grow Your Own was seen as a means to recruit and retain new social workers, specifically to recruit workers who were able to start practice immediately and needed minimal support, but also to widen access to the profession and to demonstrate evidence of the employers’ wider commitment to its nonqualified staff by providing a career pathway. Contrasted these findings with evidence of a fall in employment based social work qualifying routes</td>
<td>Unintended consequence of social work bursary meant that students who would not previously have qualified for financial assistance to undertake qualifying training on ‘college based’ routes received the social work bursary whereas employment based students were ineligible for it. The was thought to have contributed to decline in employment based routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of SW qualification</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Main findings</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontline</td>
<td>Maxwell et al</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Mixed methods longitudinal study, including comparison of demographic and educational data on 4750 students on conventional programmes compared with 228 Frontline students, questionnaire to 104 Frontline participants and 128 postgraduate social work students, comparison of 105 responses to simulated interviews with people using services and their families (independent raters did not know which route the students were following)</td>
<td>Frontline participants have significantly prior academic qualifications than students on mainstream programmes. They are also significantly younger, more likely to have parents who were graduates and are more likely to have attended independent schools</td>
<td>Frontline participants have generous financial support and considerable resources are invested in selecting the best possible candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Traditional’ university programmes</td>
<td>Moriarty</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Policy paper outlining 5 options proposed in DH consultation (2012) in relation to published research</td>
<td>All 5 options offered advantages and disadvantages but ending the bursary for first year undergraduates was probably the best option in terms of widening participation at the same time as using the bursary as a lever to improve quality of students</td>
<td>See left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International review</td>
<td>Moriarty and Manthorpe</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Literature review on social work bursary and other relevant literature on financial incentives for students in higher education; secondary analysis of data collected as part of the Evaluation of the Social Work degree and for the GSCC progression project</td>
<td>Very little published empirical data on the impact of social work student funding arrangements identified either in the UK or internationally. Concluded that more work was needed on evaluating different forms of funding arrangements for student support to provide better evidence on social work supply and demand</td>
<td>Some evidence that the diversity of social work students had increased and that some people had been able to study social work who would otherwise have been unable to do so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of SW qualification</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Main findings</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Traditional’ university programme</td>
<td>Moriarty et al</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Longitudinal mixed methods study included: interview (n=168) and survey data (n=3,944) with students; interviews with 64 social work educators and senior university staff; secondary data analysis of demographic and attainment data on 12,925 degree students and vignettes (n=352)</td>
<td>There was broad satisfaction with the curriculum among teaching staff and students, although it was thought to be overloaded. Access to good quality practice placements was variable. There was evidence of progress in students’ analytical skills (McIntyre et al, 2011)</td>
<td>There were rises in the number of students enrolling on social work programmes. Only around half of students responding to the online survey said that they would ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ have enrolled on a social work qualifying programme had the bursary not existed. A strong theme in the student focus groups was how the bursary helped non-traditional students who had been unable to go to university directly from school. Over half the students responding to the survey had caring responsibilities for an adult or school aged child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Traditional’ university programme</td>
<td>Scottish Social Services Council</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Profile of students enrolling on 17 undergraduate and postgraduate social work degree courses in eight Scottish universities</td>
<td>Trend towards younger students. Small increase in the number of men training as a social worker</td>
<td>Financial problems linked to withdrawals from social work programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of SW qualification</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Main findings</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Up to Social Work</td>
<td>Smith et al</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Mixed methods study including interviews and surveys across 8 regional partnerships responsible for delivering Step Up programme. Mainly concerned with the first cohort who began their studies in 2010. Complementary study to Baginsky and Teague (2013) which concentrated on students’ perspectives</td>
<td>Despite some participants’ initial apprehensions about the programme, their evaluation was broadly positive. Identified following aspects as needing further attention: capacity to provide a genuinely ‘generic’ social work qualifying programme in the time available, and given the explicit ‘child and family’ focus of the initiative; ‘diversity’ of the Step Up to Social Work candidates; intensity of programme and its potentially ‘exclusive’ nature of the selection process; and sustainability, should additional resources dedicated to the programme be substantially reduced or diluted</td>
<td>The additional financial support was reported to make it easier for trainees to focus on the training programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison of Step Up with postgraduate qualifying programme  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Main findings</th>
<th>Finance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staempfl et al</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>31 MA students and 13 Step Up students attached to the same university were invited to respond to vignettes (McIntyre et al, 2011) after completing their final statutory placement. Thirty one students agreed to take part</td>
<td>Statistical analysis showed no significant difference between the MA and Step Up students’ capability to critically reflect on and analyse the vignettes. Both MA and SU students achieved both middle scores in terms of reflection and critical analysis</td>
<td>No information on individual students’ finances but called for further research to consider cost effectiveness of the Step Up and traditional route, given the discrepancy between financial support given to the two types of student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Traditional’ university programme  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Main findings</th>
<th>Finance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worsley et al</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Social Work Evaluation of Learning (SWEL) study, longitudinal design, 286 students from 7 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in 4 universities in North West</td>
<td>There were gaps between student and educators’ expectations. Some students on undergraduate and postgraduate routes found it hard to adjust to educators’ expectations about the amount of independent learning and written work needed on the programme</td>
<td>72% of students were still in part time paid employment, despite the bursary. Researchers questioned whether the increase in student numbers had been accompanied by increases in teaching staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements and disclaimer

We acknowledge funding from the Department of Health and Social Care Policy Research Programme and thank policy colleagues for their helpful advice. The views expressed here are those of the authors and not the Department of Health and Social Care. We are grateful to members of the Unit’s User and Carer Group who assisted with this review and to Catherine Roberts and Joan Rapaport for their helpful comments. We also thank Lisa Morriss of the University of Birmingham for information on the number of bursary funded places in different universities.

References


Centre for Workforce Intelligence. 2016. Forecasting the Adult Social Care Workforce to 2035: workforce intelligence report. Centre for Workforce Intelligence, London.


Dillon, J. (2011), Black minority ethnic students navigating their way from access courses to social work


Hussein, S., Manthorpe, J. & Harris, J. (2011a), Do the characteristics of seconded or sponsored social work students in England differ from those of other social work students? a quantitative analysis using national data. *Social Work Education*, 30, 3: 345-359.


Jones, R. (2017), Social work education is in crisis – we must act urgently. *The


Stevenson, L. (2017c) Understanding of social work is desirable but not essential for new regulator chief, job ad says, Community Care, 6 December 2017. Available at: http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2017/12/06/understanding-social-work-desirable-essential-new-regulator-chief/, accessed 10 February 2018.


