A history of regulating social work and social work education

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Social Work England
Core question

Who articulates the professional perspective?
Regulating social work in England

- **Social Work England**
  - publish professional standards for social workers in England
  - publish standards of education or training
  - approved by Secretary of State

- **Improvement standards for social workers**
  - Secretary of State publish

- **Adequate provision for social work training**
  - Secretary of State may take appropriate steps

- Independent review after 5 years
What type of regulation?

- Why Regulation?
- Regulation for whom?
- Regulation of whom?
- Regulation of what?
- Accountable to whom?
- Regulators appointed by whom?
- Regulation by whom?
- Consequences of regulation?
- Paid for by whom?
Why regulation?

- Foundation of principles and values
- Transparency and accountability – users, public & peers
- Predictability and consistency - sanctions
- Comparable status with other professions
- Important for social work – contested values
Regulation of what?

- Long experience of statutory regulation of social work training and qualifications
- Long experience of forms of regulation of practice and structure in statute and guidance
- Recent experience of regulation of social workers
- **My main focus - social workers**
How did we get here? (pre 1970)

- On the agenda from the start of formal social work in early 20th century
- MSWs and PSWs regulated qualifications
- 1960s key issue in Standing Conference
- 1970 BASW constitution - qualifications
- As BASW formed, entered phase of anti-professionalism

‘All professions are conspiracies against the laity’
George Bernard Shaw – Doctor’s Dilemma 1906
How did we get here? (1976-80)

- 1975 BASW policy commitment
- 1975 Clients are Fellow Citizens – Bill Jordan
- 1976 BASW AGM - 'approved in principle proposals for a scheme of accreditation' – large majority (Nottingham)
- Joint Steering Group – ADSS, ADSW, BASW, CCPO and RCA, with observers from DHSS, CCETSW and SSWS (not NAPO)
How did we get here? (1980)

- 1980 CCETSW analysis – Malherbe - costs and effort involved would be ‘disproportionate’
- 1980 Joint Steering Group 2nd & final report
- All political parties opposed
- Major employers not convinced – local government, NCVO
- Service users ambivalent – not really interested – consumer movement just beginning
- Social workers divided – unions opposed
How did we get here? (1980-83)

- 1980 Barclay Committee – evidence from BASW and others
- 1982 Barclay Report – some sympathy but ‘case not made’
- BASW launched a further campaign – Sylvia Woolfe and Terry Bamford – kept issue alive
How did we get here? (1983-87)

- 1980s - Context changing – out-sourcing services, increasing diversity of employers, evidence of poor decisions by local councils, child abuse tragedies, increasing concern about standards
- 1987 Rowntree Trust consultation - Athenaeum
- 1987 General Social Services Council **Action** Group – funded by Rowntree based at NISW – ACC, AMA, COSLA, TUC (NALGO), ADSS, ADCS, BASW, SCA, CCETSW, NISW (Barclay & Utting)
How did we get here? (1987-90)

- Commissioned Roy Parker to do an independent study
- 1990 Safeguarding standards – recommended statutory regulation
- 1990 General Social Services Council Implementation Group (Statham & Brand)
- Regulation of social work and social care, protection of title, sanctions – developed working model
How did we get here? (1990-96)

- Implied benchmarks against other professions and other countries
- Conservative government procrastinated – not enthusiastic
- 1996 ‘Obligations of care: a consultation paper on the setting of conduct and practice standards for social services staff’
How did we get here? (1997-2000)

- 1997 General election – Labour manifesto commitment to legislate for a regulatory body
- 1998 ‘Modernising Social Services’ (Department of Health) – CCETSW abolished, GSCC created
- Office for Public Management commissioned to consult on code of conduct (Paul Corrigan)
- 2000 ‘Draft code of conduct for staff and code of practice for agencies’ for the General Social Care Council’ - OPM
How did we get here? (2000-15)

- 2000 Care Standards Act – GSCC, SSSC, CCW, NISCC – protected title – statutory codes
- 2002 Codes of practice for social care workers and employers – implemented across UK
- 2002 consultation on protection of title
- GSCC only body NOT regulating social care workers
- 2006 first conduct hearings by GSCC
- 2008 Social Work Task Force launched (Gibb)
- 2009 – 2013 Social Work Reform Board
- 2012-15 The College of Social Work
How did we get here (2009-15)?

- 2009 Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence critical report on GSCC – new Chair & Chief Executive
- 2010 GSCC disbanded without consultation – move to HCPC – no employers code in England - social work biggest group within HCPC - no prior experience of specific environment
- 2015 Professional Standards Authority critical report on regulators – ‘frighten registrants into compliance’
How did we get here (2016-19)?

- 2016 Government - ‘social work in England to be moved from HCPC to new regulator’
- 2017 Social Care Wales launched
- 2018 BASW publishes analysis of regulation, UK-wide principles for regulation and expectations of Social Work England
- 2019 Social Work England is launched?
Social care workforce

- Before 1970 - fragmented
- Constant tension between employers and universities – but also creative partnerships
- CQSW, CSS, DipSW, SW degree, PQA
- 1997 NVQs
- 1993 Care Sector Consortium responsible for standards – ‘employment led’
- 1998 Training Organisation for the Personal Social Services (hosted by CCETSW)
Social care workforce

- 1999 Sector Skills Council – in England separate bodies, in other 3 countries closely integrated with regulators – continuing tensions between England and other countries and between children’s and adult care
- 1999 Bologna Process launched – Higher Education comparability
- 2017 major changes in UK Skills for Care and Development
Social care workforce

- Those working in the arena of qualifications are wearily familiar with the frequency of structural change at national level. The disruption of these changes must have contributed to the uneven development of qualifications, not only in the social care sector.
Reflections 1

- Constant disruption since 2000 – no consistency in England – less constructive partnerships than rest of UK
- Power of government and employers – need for an authoritative and confident professional voice to work alongside service users – with employers and academics
- Employment and higher education
Reflections 2

- Seeming contempt for social work structures by government – constant change – no stability – loss of confidence
- BASW role
  - practitioners + academics + managers

This time we MUST make it different - together!
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THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS