



July 2024

**Social Work Education Partnership response
to recommendations from the 'Social Work
Practice Learning Funding: Research and
Evaluation' Report**



**Shaping together the future of
social work education in Scotland**

Table of Contents

03	_____	Background
04	_____	SWEP's responses to the recommendations
07	_____	Glossary of Terms
08	_____	Appendix 1

Social Work Education Partnership response to recommendations from the 'Social Work Practice Learning Funding: Research and Evaluation' Report May 2024

Background

The report was commissioned by the Social Work Education Partnership (SWEP) and completed by a small research team, based within Learning Network West, in September 2023. The report was shared through the SWEP Programme Office with stakeholder partners on 12 December 2023.

The original commission was made to illuminate current practice learning funding arrangements and to inform any improvements that could be made to the system.

Several of the recommendations link to work underway at a national level within proposed National Care Service and National Social Work Agency development, for example workforce planning improvements. Those recommendations will be considered within, and where appropriate linked into, that context.

As a partnership SWEP sets the strategic direction and agrees priorities for social work education but does not have the overarching responsibility to directly deliver on all or some of the actions and recommendations arising from the report. Individual organisations within the partnership have statutory roles and responsibilities and will consider the recommendations and agreed priorities in the context of their own remits. The SWEP Strategic Group has agreed, the following response to the report in order to provide clarity about actions already underway, to agree future priorities and to, influence and inform members who will have a role in progressing the recommendations.

The recommendations covered:

- Practice learning funding.
- Practice Learning Opportunity (PLO) providers.
- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
- Independent Practice Educators.
- Third Sector.
- Student funding including - Postgraduate bursaries, undergraduate students, travel and subsistence, administration of future student funding.
- Issues for further consideration.

The Practice Learning Funding: Research and Evaluation report makes specific recommendations in relation to:

- Targeting, formalising and standardising PLO providers.
- PLO support systems and networks.
- HEI planning for student intake.

- Third sector support structures.
- A centralised data and finance system.
- Financial planning and monitoring.
- Status and registration of Independent Practice Educators (IPE's).
- Targeting Practice Learning and Teaching requirements.
- Funding of assessed/non assessed PLOs.
- Support/investment of PLO providers re Practice Educators (PE's) and Link workers.
- Quality assurance of PLO's.
- Student finance.

SWEP have considered their response to the recommendations on the following basis:

- A.** To be considered by SWEP Delivery Group in alignment with regional infrastructure progression for the development and delivery of practice learning. (See Appendix 1 for SWEP structured organogram)
- B.** To be considered for inclusion in existing workstreams by the SWEP Pre or Post qualification groups, and if accepted to be assigned priority within the workstream's timeline.
- C.** Already under consideration by Office of Chief Social Work Adviser (OCSWA) as part of student financial support policy development.
- D.** For immediate decision to progress by SWEP Strategic Group at strategic level.

A. To be considered by SWEP Delivery Group in alignment with regional infrastructure progression for the development and delivery of practice learning.

1. The regional infrastructure is a significant workstream for the SWEP Programme Office (PO) and Delivery Group. Following a series of engagement events, SWEP PO will consider options and develop a regional infrastructure model, implementation plan, milestones, and timescales which will be considered by the SWEP Strategic Group.
2. SWEP PO will ensure that regional infrastructure progress will align with other ongoing initiatives.
3. There is an acknowledged caveat that HEI intake planning continues to be unfeasible without adequate and robust workforce planning.
4. Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) will scope how their existing platforms and data could be used to reduce duplication of input on student data and monetary transactions across partners and increase financial transparency in the system. The review of existing systems will be considered a cost-effective first step.

B. To be considered for inclusion in existing workstreams by the SWEP Pre or Post qualification groups, and if accepted to be assigned priority within the workstream's timeline.

1. Certain recommendations depend on future developments, such as the Advanced Practice Framework for Social Work (APF) and proposed National Social Work Agency.
2. The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) have completed a review of the practice learning teaching requirements (social work training requirements). This will have relevance to the recommendation within the report for a National Register for Independent Practice, the registration of Practice Educators (PEs) and targeting of the requirements.
3. Advanced Practice Framework for Social Work development will seek to address ongoing training and development opportunities for the current workforce including Practice Educators and Link Workers and consideration will be given to making this available beyond Professional Development Award in Practice Learning (PDAPL) qualification.
4. SWEP PO, Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW) and SSSC will explore the potential of using the British Association of Social Work (BASW) Quality Assurance Tool for PLOs in Scotland.
5. The SWEP Delivery Group will develop actions plans in relation to both pre and post qualifying education and training.
6. The SWEP Strategic Group will prioritise actionable recommendations to be overseen by the Delivery Group whilst also maintaining a register of recommendation for future consideration.

C. Already under consideration by Office of Chief Social Work Adviser (OCSWA) as part of student financial support policy development.

1. OCSWA are considering the recommendations in relation to student financial support policy and have taken steps to address issues related to student financial hardship.
2. Some recommendations have already been actioned and improvements introduced for academic year 24/25. This includes support for placement travel, and access to Students Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) loans for postgraduate students ineligible for SSSC bursaries. Other recommendations will continue to be considered within Scottish Government policy.

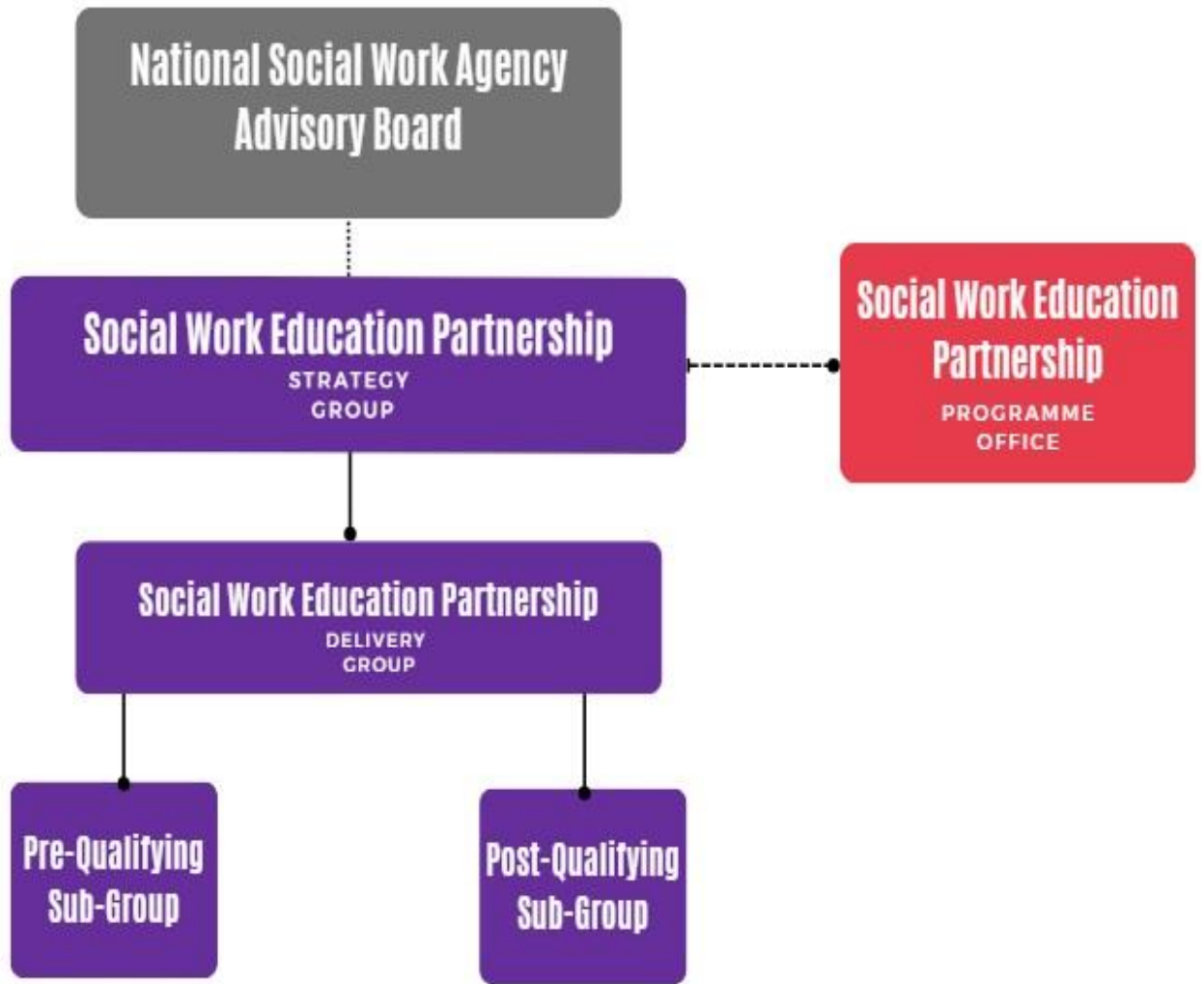
D. For immediate decision to progress by SWEP Strategic Group at strategic level.

1. The Social Work Practice Learning Funding: Research and Evaluation report and SWEP's Strategic Group response will be published on newly created SWEP website by mid-June 2024. (now mid July 2024).

2. SWEP PO will monitor acceptance and progression of actionable recommendations.
3. Any funding uplift will be dependent on progression of various social work education workstreams therefore this will inform the costs of additional spending on practice learning and determine who bears the cost of any specific funding uplift.
4. SWEP considers certain aspects related to regulation, Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) checks, caseloads, and financial remuneration can be absorbed into other recommendations without requiring a separate workstream.
5. SWEP recognises the complexity of Practice Educator funding which will be part of broader scoping work within the SWEP Delivery Group.

Glossary of Terms

APF	_____	Advanced Practice Framework for Social Work
BASW	_____	British Association of Social Work
HEI	_____	Higher Education Institute
IPE	_____	Independent Practice Educator
OCSWA	_____	Officer Chief Social Work Adviser
PDAPL	_____	Professional Development Award in Practice Learning
PE	_____	Practice Educator
PLO	_____	Practice Learning Opportunity
PO	_____	Programme Office
PVG	_____	Protection Vulnerable Groups.
SAAS	_____	Students Awards Agency Scotland
SASW	_____	Scottish Association of Social Work
SSSC	_____	Scottish Social Services Council
SWEP	_____	Social Work Education Partnership



Social Work Education Partnership Structure. July 2024