



Department
for Education

Confidence in practice: child and family social work assessment and accreditation system

Government consultation response

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Ministerial Foreword

In July this year I made a number of public commitments. I said that I intended to be a champion for our social care profession, and to both support and challenge employers to provide the training and ongoing development their staff need to do their job well. Several months on from sharing my views, I remain not only committed but tremendously enthusiastic about what I have seen.



Our aim – which I know is your aim too – is to ensure all vulnerable children, wherever they are across the country, receive the expert, high quality support and protection they need. Many parts of the system will contribute towards this. But, arguably, the knowledge and skills of social workers has the most profound impact. Whilst there is some excellent practice, we also know that that isn't the case everywhere.

We have listened carefully to your responses to the consultation. In direct response to your feedback, we will be moving forward with our plans to improve specialist child and family social work expertise, in a more measured way than originally planned.

For the first time, we are establishing a national post-qualifying standard for child and family expertise – providing a nationally consistent benchmark to which all local authorities will be encouraged to align their performance management systems. We will then measure against these standards through voluntary rollout of the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS), to begin with at two levels: practitioner and practice supervisor. This will provide nationally recognised staging points in social workers' careers. And this will help build the managers and leaders of the future.

NAAS provides a clear career pathway for frontline social workers and speaks clearly to employers about the importance of embedding effective social work practice across the workforce. It will reinforce the message that employers are encouraged to extend their training and development offer in order that their child and family social workers have the knowledge and skills they need to achieve accreditation.

The changes we have made to our rollout plans for NAAS are significant. They will see us working with a group of five local authorities to co-create the support and structures needed to successfully embed the standard and the assessment. Live evaluation will be a feature. We will monitor workforce impact carefully. Only when we have designed the necessary building blocks for this new system will we move to a second phase, with a more diverse group of local authorities, making adjustments which will take account of local variations. Once we have addressed the learning from this phase we will move to national rollout.

For local authorities, this initiative has the potential to transform supervision, performance management and learning and development. For individuals, it will provide a career

development pathway. And for the profession, it will show a commitment to increased levels of professionalism.

I look forward to continuing to meet and work with many more of you as we introduce this vital initiative to improve outcomes for children.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'R' followed by several loops and a final vertical stroke.

Robert Goodwill

Minister of State for Children and Families

Message from the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families

Ever since I qualified more than twenty years ago, I have always wondered why there was never any firm expectation about *what happens next* in the life-long career of a social worker. Post-qualification Masters courses have always been on offer to the few that could afford to fund themselves, or for a handful more who maximised on the luck of having an employer who was happy to invest in a chosen few.



There has always been a wide range of development programmes for advanced practitioners, supervisors or practice educators. These are mostly provided at local level and occasionally at regional and national level too; but it's been a patchwork affair. There has never been a *national* expectation for social workers to reach advanced levels of practice knowledge and skill which is formally examined and accredited, as is the case in so many other professions. The closest social workers have in England to systematic, specific, specialist post-qualification accreditation is for the roles of approved mental health practitioner and, more recently, for best interest assessors (although both accreditations are not exclusively for social workers).

For social workers working with children and families, the closest we have to any systematic approach to post-qualification accreditation is the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), which the Department for Education funds; whilst at local level social workers successfully pass, or otherwise, through myriad assessment processes. Standards expected from the programme are broad and the experiences of social workers who have done the ASYE are many and varied across the country.

Developing a national recognition of the deepening and advanced knowledge and skills held by all social workers, is crucial to our development as a profession. Crucial because it recognises the core knowledge and skills of generic social work applied to specific contexts. Crucial because people who come into contact with social workers need to know we have the knowledge and skills tailored to understanding *their* social circumstances. And crucial because we must help employers and Government recognise the value of social work within specialist services so that they are incentivised to support our professional development and invest in it.

Right from the start, every social worker coming into the profession should be able to see a whole career pathway in front of them. At every juncture, opportunities to develop in particular practice areas to a national standard, and to have that expertise accredited, should be provided. I have been working with the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) to look at how best to align the specialist Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) for child and family social work to the Professional Capabilities Framework. BASW

itself is looking at developing recognition of advanced knowledge and skill in other areas of practice, such as working with older people.

The Government response to the consultation on next steps for assessment and accreditation for child and family social workers is set out here. It has taken great account of the possible unintended consequences that have been raised. As a result of what has been said, rollout will be phased. Working with social workers, employers and the people who use our services, this new approach is designed to develop a system which works for everyone. This is a journey we are all taking together and at every step we will take stock, reflect and adjust direction according to what we learn along the way.

I look forward to continuing to work with you over the coming years to embed accreditation as a national recognition of the great contribution social workers make to public service.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'I' followed by a checkmark-like flourish and a small dot at the end.

Isabelle Trowler

Chief Social Worker for Children and Families

Introduction

1. The Department for Education's policy document, Putting children first, delivering our vision for excellent children's social care (July 2016)¹, set out Government's vision for excellent children's social care and our ambition for a system that works for every child, young person and family. We want to bring the best people into the profession and support existing social workers by providing them with the right knowledge and skills for the challenging, but hugely rewarding, work ahead. To support this, we need to create the right environment for excellent practice and innovation to flourish; learn from the very best practice; and learn from things going wrong. Most importantly, we need to make sure that what we are doing is working; developing new organisational models with the potential to radically improve services. All with the fundamental aim to improve outcomes for children and families.
2. The Department for Education consulted on the delivery of the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS) for children and family social workers at the beginning of this year. This is the formal response to the consultation and is part of the journey to put excellent practice at the heart of our reforms. It recognises that child and family social workers have the opportunity to have a genuinely life-changing impact on our most vulnerable children and families. It also reflects that what we do centrally can, and does, affect local practice. For example, the £200m investment in the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme has energised the sector and built consensus around the need to push boundaries and rigorously test and verify new approaches.
3. Government's clear vision is to develop and support a fully confident and highly capable child and family social work profession that has been properly trained with the right knowledge and skills. NAAS is pivotal to this system-wide improvement, but it is just one aspect of how we are working to raise the skills and the confidence of child and family social workers.
4. Driving improvement in children's social care services needs to be led locally and, importantly, delivered to meet the needs of individual children and families. The role of central Government is to intervene in cases of failure and to create national infrastructures and standards, which enable and support the pursuit of excellence and innovation. However, that should not detract from local responsibilities for

¹https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/554573/Putting_children_first_delivering_vision_excellent_childrens_social_care.pdf

effectively helping and supporting local children, raising the skills and the confidence of child and family social workers and innovation.

5. This document responds to the feedback we received from our formal consultation on the delivery of NAAS, focusing particularly on the details of the phased rollout. In addition, Annex A provides a detailed summary of both the consultation responses and what Government is doing in response to this feedback. Annex B provides the responses to each question in the consultation.

The journey towards a system that works for every child

The case for change

6. The backdrop for improving the quality of children's services is varied and changing. The challenges we face include growing numbers of children in the general population, significant increases in the proportion of children being placed on Child Protection Plans, and over two thirds of local authority children's services currently rated as 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted.
7. Our aim is to support local authorities, in particular with:
 - The quality of social work practice in children's services. Whilst excellent child and family social work practice exists, a growing body of evidence including Stein (2009) and Munro (2012) points to inconsistencies in quality. This evidence is supported by recent Ofsted findings: in the 39 full inspections that have taken place since 2016, failures of practice were found in 69% of cases and practice improvements were recommended in 74% of cases. This suggests a systemic problem that needs to be addressed across the board.
 - The particular skills required for those working in statutory children's services. The role of child and family social work is a highly-skilled job with significant levels of legal responsibility. It therefore requires a distinct set of skills. One important step for setting out at a high level the specific knowledge and skills required for those working in child protection has been the publication of the Knowledge and Skills Statementes (KSS). But many local authorities are yet to embrace or adopt the KSS in their training and management practices. A recent survey by Skills for Care revealed that a quarter of local authorities have still not begun the process of embedding the KSS. And the proof of concept² phase suggested a substantial number of social workers do not currently meet the standards set out in the KSS.
 - Raising the quality of practice for all child and family social workers, including those who are already in the profession. The implementation of NAAS recognises that around 30,000 social workers already in the profession, are

² https://consult.education.gov.uk/social-work-reform-unit/naas-consultation/supporting_documents/PoC_report_WEB.pdf

employed directly by local authorities. Addressing their training needs is an integral part of the wider agenda, including the work of the teaching partnerships to improve the quality of initial training and the high-calibre fast track entry routes 'Frontline' and 'Step Up'.

8. Set against these challenges, we have already made substantial progress in social worker education and recruitment.

What we have already done to improve social work practice

9. Putting Children First acknowledged that bringing the best people into the profession is essential for improving practice. We need more high calibre recruits, taught through a curriculum based on the knowledge and skills they need to work with the most vulnerable children and families. We need these recruits to be assessed against the KSS and to experience high quality statutory placements. Our fast track routes, Frontline and Step Up, have a particular focus on the challenges of child and family social work. Through these routes we have already trained over 1,300 graduates as social workers and close to a thousand more are enrolled across the programmes, which are now available in 90% of local authorities.
10. We know, too, that standards of education must rise across the board with no tolerance for courses that fail to prepare students for the realities of statutory work. We are continuing to fund Teaching Partnerships, which are raising standards of entry into the profession and incorporate the KSS into teaching and practice curricula with a strong focus on statutory placements. We are currently funding 15 Teaching Partnerships covering a total of 72 local authorities, 29 universities and a range of public, private, voluntary and independent organisations.
11. A new social work apprenticeship has the potential to provide a paid, employment-based route into the profession as an alternative to undergraduate study. Subject to Institute of Apprenticeship signing-off the standards, the apprenticeship is expected to become available from September 2018. Early indications suggest local authorities will take on around 600 apprentices across both child and family and adult social work, with similar numbers year on year.
12. Child and family social workers are eager to develop their own practice and many employers provide post-qualification training and development. The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) is highly valued; it helps to bridge the transition from initial qualification to the realities of practice. More than 10,000 child and family social workers have been supported through the ASYE with more than £20m invested since 2012.
13. Practice supervisors play a fundamental role in embedding high quality practice in social work teams. We are, therefore, developing a programme for those child and

family social workers making the transition from frontline practice to their first supervisory role. Separately, we are funding the Firstline leadership programme to equip good social work managers with the skills, impetus and vision to become influential and confident leaders. By 2019, more than 400 social work managers will benefit from participating in the Firstline programme.

14. Practice leaders create the context for excellent practice and are instrumental in developing excellent practitioners. We have recognised their role, and their unique position to lead and improve practice, by investing in those talented social workers who will be the practice leaders of the future through the Practice Leader Development Programme (PLDP). There are 18 future practice leaders currently participating in the PLDP and a second cohort of participants will start the programme in early 2018.
15. We are working with the profession through the funded support of the Principal Social Workers (PSW) network, which brings PSWs from across local authorities together. Together, we aim to share learning and create materials and resources to drive excellent social work practice, as well as to shape practice and policy at a local and national level.

Wider reforms

16. The context for NAAS – for continuous professional development and achieving confidence in practice – is an environment where excellent social care practice and innovation can flourish, where we learn from the best, and where child and family social workers are freed up to use their skills and talents to the full.
17. To achieve this, we have expanded the **Innovation Programme** through £200 million additional investment from April last year. We are continuing to work with our seven leading local authorities as **Partners in Practice** to understand what it takes to get to 'good' and what it takes to move from 'good' to 'excellent'; to interrogate the most important practice questions facing children's social care; and to develop additional sector-led, peer-to-peer improvement.
18. We are setting up the **What Works Centre** (WWC) for children's social care. The centre will play a key role in driving evidence-based practice across the sector, identifying gaps in evidence, and producing a national learning infrastructure on what works in Children's Social Care. It will also work closely with other WWCs, partners across the sector, and practitioners, to improve learning in children's social care.
19. Ofsted's **social care common inspection framework** (SSCIF) will focus on the things that matter most to children's lives and will prioritise work where

improvement is needed most, focusing on what makes a difference to the lives of children and other service users.

20. The new inspection regime will act as an enabler for excellent social work practice and innovation, allowing high performing councils the space to get on with the job, and free up the inspectorate to spot failure sooner in areas of concern. Modular inspections underpin a more targeted approach to supporting local authorities in getting to 'good' and, equally, where early signs of deterioration in performance in a good authority are detected, identifying where the local authority needs to focus its attention to maintain a good judgement.

Our strategy

21. *Putting Children First* set out Government's strategy to achieve transformation and fundamental reform. It stated that we should be judged by how we treat the most vulnerable in our society and that means putting our most vulnerable children first. It made clear that there are great child and family social workers doing great social work across England; these are people who exemplify compassion and the deep desire to help others. And it acknowledged that, for many, the reality is high caseloads, infrequent supervision, and little professional development.

22. Government's aim is for a system that works for every child. To deliver our aim, we are developing a national, practice-focused career pathway because child and family social workers deserve the levels of training and professional recognition that others enjoy. That is why our reform programme supports stronger initial training, clarity about the knowledge and skills child and family social workers need to do their jobs and robust assessment and accreditation to deliver confidence in practice.

Introducing NAAS

23. The implementation of NAAS will set a clear benchmark for assessing and accrediting child and family social workers. But this is not only about the assessment and accreditation system; the benchmark is for all employers to be able to use to assess and support their staff at all levels. NAAS will be an important diagnostic tool for performance so that local authorities can identify the gaps in skills and knowledge within their workforce, and implement training programmes to address these. Employers can align their recruitment and performance management processes around the KSS, embedding the benchmark across recruitment, professional development and performance reviews.
24. And NAAS will be instrumental in addressing the recruitment and development of social workers: the quality of any service is ultimately dependent on the frontline professionals who deliver it. Children's social work currently experiences high vacancy rates (16.7%³) and a reliance on agency staff. In recent years, a number of high profile independent reviews have raised concerns that many social workers do not have the necessary skills or capabilities to do the job (for example the Munro and Narey reviews).

Developing and testing NAAS

25. We have been working on NAAS for over three years. In 2015, in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders including representatives from the sector, we developed a rigorous system based on the KSS to assess social workers in order to gain accreditation as frontline child and family practitioners and practice supervisors. This assessment process was tested with 954 social workers between December 2015 and February 2016 through the proof of concept phase.

Service user feedback

26. As part of the proof of concept phase, service users from the Family Rights Group (FRG) and BECOME (previously the Who Cares Trust) were recruited to be part of service user panels. These panels were designed to capture service users' experiences and expertise and allow them to comment on the outcomes of a sample of simulated observations. This did not affect the scores that had been

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591914/SFR08-2017_Main_Text.pdf

given to the social worker. Their role was to provide challenge to influence changes that should be considered prior to full implementation. From FRG, service users included parents and kinship carers, and from BECOME, service users were care leavers.

Consultation response

The move to a phased rollout

27. We received wide and varying responses to the consultation. Responses identified a number of key issues, but there was overwhelming concern for the effective delivery of NAAS. We have considered carefully these concerns and are subsequently revisiting delivery plans.
28. To ensure that we properly test the delivery of NAAS, and address any initial issues, our proposal is to move to a phased approach before progressing with a full national rollout. We are calling this Phase One and Phase Two and both phases will be supported by in-depth analysis and evaluation.
29. Phase One will involve just five local authorities, where we will test the delivery mechanism of NAAS. These local authorities are: Bury, Leeds, Manchester, Oldham and Wigan. These local authorities are deliberately geographically proximate, but also show a breadth of workforce composition and Ofsted ratings so that learning networks can be built and successes shared as we begin to develop this new system. We will then move on to Phase Two in which we expect to work with a further 12-15 local authorities which are more diverse, geographically and otherwise, so we can be confident building a prototype which can be rolled out nationally.
30. Consultees generally accepted that there was a strong long-term case for introducing assessment and accreditation for social workers in statutory children's services in order to identify what 'good' practice looks like. They also agreed that this would increase consistency in child and family social worker skill and ability, and improve local authority workforce development systems. They identified benefits, too, for individual social workers who will be able to develop their knowledge and skills and receive help pursuing their future careers. But we also know there are questions that we need to be able to answer in order to roll out NAAS effectively and to ensure it meets the needs of local authorities and child and family social workers including:
- identifying the nature and level of support required to accompany assessment and accreditation (such as the right support and materials that social workers need to prepare for the test);
 - how employers will respond to, and support, people who do not meet the assessment standard and a subsequent appeals process;
 - monitoring whether the national standard has been set at the right level;

- identifying evidence-based costs and the biggest risks for rolling out the policy more widely; and
- the impact of NAAS on the workforce, including any unintended equalities bias (in particular Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals; individuals with disabilities; and experienced/older social workers), recruitment and retention and social work mobility both within children's social care and the wider profession.

Moving forward with Phase One and Phase Two

31. By using a phased approach, we can look at the main implementation concerns supported by real-time, in-depth analysis and evaluation. As we roll out this initial phase, the evaluation evidence will allow us to better understand how the system is operating in practice and ensure we have the opportunity to answer some of the key questions.
32. We are in the process of appointing an independent research partner who will be working directly with social workers and employers in the Phase One and Phase Two local authorities. Their research will capture their views on a wide range of issues and any concerns they may have as they begin the NAAS journey. The research partner will collect and measure the data gathered in both phases to ensure robust and independent scrutiny. This will allow us to better understand how the system is operating in practice and ensure we can amend and adapt it as required. This partner will need to collect the feedback and findings of NAAS from the first assessment onwards.
33. Subject to the successful completion of Phase One, Phase Two will test the assessment with a broader range of local authorities, to help us understand if there are any big differences between areas and further refine the model for national rollout. This will include understanding the wider picture on readiness to undertake the assessment.

What the assessment will look like

34. The assessments taken by child and family social workers in Phase One and Phase Two will be high quality from the outset. At present, we are consulting on the knowledge and skills statements (KSS) becoming the standard, forming the basis of the assessment.
35. The assessment, has been developed with the guidance of psychometricians, according to industry standard assessment development processes. Psychometricians help us focus on making sure the assessment is true to role,

assesses the right things and that it is fair to people with different working styles and with people who have protected characteristics (more on this, below).

36. The assessment will be a four-stage system:

- **Stage 1:** individual social worker practice endorsement by the employer – in the workplace over a period of time
- **Stage 2:** an online assessment of knowledge
- **Stage 3:** an observed interactive practice simulation in a controlled environment with independent examiners
- **Stage 4:** a written assessment

37. Importantly, we want to create the right environment for excellent practice; where social workers can flourish and perform at their best, learning from the very best practice and learning from when things go wrong. Throughout Phase One and Phase Two, we will work closely with employers and social workers to explore how feedback will be given and what additional support might be needed for anyone not passing one or more of these stages. For any re-sits, the support available and process will depend on the individual's situation; it will be essential to work with employers to ensure the system is clear and supportive.

Developing the assessment – focus on equalities

38. For every part of the assessment - knowledge, simulated and written - we will work with a provider who will take steps to address the issues identified during the proof of concept phase, paying particular attention to the findings in respect of age and ethnicity.

39. Psychometricians involved in the question development, have paid particular attention to reducing bias for older social workers and those from BAME backgrounds, using industry standard techniques and focusing on both the language used in these questions and the subject matter. Our aim is that no protected groups are placed at a disadvantage because of the content or presentation of the assessment material.

40. We will continue to check bias/equalities throughout Phase One and Phase Two and beyond to ensure the assessment is robust and fair for everyone.

Timing

41. For Phase One, we expect assessment to begin from mid-2018. And for Phase Two, we currently expect external assessments to begin in early 2019. However,

we will work with those local authorities in advance of this to ensure that they and their staff are prepared for the assessment.

42. We will listen to the local authorities with whom we work, to ensure they are ready and have the right structures in place. Therefore, we are not imposing a time limit. We will focus on improving the quality of practice rather than the number of social workers going through the assessment. We recognise the importance of rolling out in a measured way, moving at some pace and ensuring consistency across the testing experience while minimising unnecessary disruption to local workforces.

How we will communicate with the sector

43. The Department for Education is working very closely with Directors of Children's Services, heads of service, workforce leads, principal social workers, BASW and other colleagues in the Phase One and Phase Two sites. These local authorities will define which support materials (for example frequently asked questions, briefing documents, presentations and practice questions) will be helpful in preparing social workers to undertake the assessment. We will work closely with these local authorities, through regular visits and partnership learning days and a dedicated online space, to share information and learning as we build the system.

44. In addition, we will continue to engage with interested parties, including professional membership and sector representative bodies, regarding the reforms. The Social Work England advisory group will be regularly updated on progress in order that discussions about the new regulator are happening in parallel with the establishment of NAAS.

Preparation for NAAS and practice endorsement

45. In line with consultation feedback regarding whether a social worker is ready to take the assessment, we have revised our approach to practice endorsement. There will now be two elements to this:

- **Preparation for NAAS**

- We will work closely with Phase One and Phase Two local authorities to support them in aligning their performance management systems to the KSS for child and family social workers. The learning from this stage of the rollout will be shared as it develops and we will ask local authorities how we can best capture and share that learning. This is a very important stage, as local authorities will need to think carefully about the evidence of specialist practice they expect to see and how they will provide feedback.

- **Practice endorsement**

- Many consultees asked specifically about practice endorsement in the pre-consultation meetings. In practical terms, this is where the local authority hands the delivery provider the list of social workers they believe are ready for assessment. If the local authority has already aligned its systems to the KSS, and is confident social workers are performing well against them in their practice and their written work, this will be very straightforward. If not, the local authority may choose to have a way of assuring itself that social workers are performing in line with the KSS. For example, one of the Phase One local authorities is considering using the ASYE final assessment process. They may also wish to acquire feedback from those families that the social workers are working with. We will not stipulate what process, if any, local authorities should use. In a number of local authorities, the KSS will already be embedded. Decisions on when, and how, an employer assesses their social worker as ready for assessment are best made locally as employers have the relevant experience of a social worker's practice.

46. We recognise that helping to define how a new system works, whilst preparing social workers to undergo a new assessment, is a significant ask. Therefore we will provide grant funding to Phase One and Phase Two local authorities. Consideration of future grant funding will be subject to findings emerging from research during Phase One and Phase Two.

Practice leaders, agency staff and independent social workers

47. The system will be rolled out with practitioners and practice supervisors in the first instance. There is more work to do before we will be ready to introduce an assessment at the practice leaders level. Nevertheless, we would encourage all those who consider themselves to be practice leaders to undertake the assessment at supervisor level to help them understand how it works and to demonstrate their commitment to specialist child and family expertise.

48. During Phase One and Phase Two, we will concentrate on child and family social workers who are employed by the local authority and we will continue to look at how agency workers will take part in the NAAS programme. The knowledge and skills statements are addressed to all child and family social workers, regardless of the setting they work in or their role. NAAS should therefore be suitable for all child and family social workers regardless of where they work. We do know that some of the Phase One local authorities want to include their agency workers who have statutory responsibilities: that will be their decision.

49. We acknowledge that the system will have implications for Cafcass, adoption agencies, fostering agencies and voluntary and community organisations. However, while we will continue to work closely with them, we do not intend to assess their workforce during Phase One. We will, though, look at those social workers working in statutory functions in the Phase One local authorities, but who are not employed by the local authority during Phase Two.

Voluntary assessment

50. It is important to make clear that accreditation is *not* a mandatory qualification. It is our intention that all child and family social workers, over time, will aspire to achieve this post-qualifying status and we want to work collaboratively with employers to make this vision a reality. We want to see employers using the information from the assessment of their workforce to create an expectation of accreditation, while managing the outcome, so no shortages of child and family social workers are created in the short term.

51. However, we do acknowledge that introducing NAAS is a big change and it is vital that it is done in a measured way. We are clear, therefore, that accreditation will not be mandatory at this stage and, following the outcome of the testing phases, a decision will be taken on the appropriateness of mandatory assessment in the future.

How it will work for frontline social workers

52. We want to create a system that empowers social workers, moving the focus away from being 'tested' towards a culture where the assessment is a confirmation of the quality of their knowledge and skills. As we develop NAAS, we must put social workers' needs at the heart of it, so the assessment is not only a positive experience, it allows the social worker to give their very best during it. This is why feedback about performance against the assessment will be given in relation to each KSS area (not only the part of the assessment). It will also be given both to the local authority and to the social worker so that the local authority can support the social worker's development.

53. A key focus of developing this work therefore will be the experience of social workers undergoing the assessment. We want to understand how NAAS affects commitment, morale, and career plans and any unintended consequences.

54. We will work with a delivery partner that is willing and able to develop strong partnership links with local authorities; who will support shared learning and open, honest feedback from the delivery process and assessment results to enable

change and improvement where required. Our approach will be flexible and will respond quickly to any issues that arise.

55. The outcome of assessment would not affect a social worker's registration with the regulator; it would be for the employer to decide if the outcome of assessment should form part of pay and reward, or any performance proceedings. We will monitor this aspect of the system closely as we roll out.

Social workers who have taken part in the 'Proof of Concept' phase

56. We have considered further whether those social workers who undertook the proof of concept phase would be 'passported' through to accreditation. Whilst we accept the principle of this, we must bear in mind that the assessment has undergone significant development since proof of concept was carried out two years ago. We are satisfied that those social workers who met the standard of the KSS through the practice simulation and written elements of the assessment will be exempt from retaking these elements – as it is our intention that this part of the assessment will not change significantly, pending the outcome of the consultation on the KSS standards forming the basis of the assessment. They will be required to undertake the knowledge assessment because the design of the questions has changed. During the course of rollout, officials will liaise with local authorities to discuss which social workers may be exempt from the practice scenarios on this basis.

Involvement of the new regulator

57. Social Work England will be a new, bespoke regulator for the social work profession, taking over responsibility from the current regulator, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). It will have a role in approving post-qualifying courses, such as those relating to Approved Mental Health Professionals and the training of Best Interest Assessors.
58. As mentioned earlier, NAAS is not mandatory and will not affect a social worker's registration. In time, Social Work England could take on responsibility of NAAS but in the meantime, the system will be rolled out by the Department for Education.
59. The Department of Health is also developing post-qualifying standards for adult social work to support a consistent, practice-focussed approach across the whole social work profession. The Department of Health will shortly consult on post-qualifying standards for social work practitioners and supervisors in adult social care, which will enable social workers at these levels to reach and maintain the right standard.

Next steps

Next steps for DfE

60. Our next steps in building this system include:

- continuing engagement with the sector on the KSS as post-qualifying improvement standards;
- finalising the content of the assessment;
- undertaking a tender exercise to appoint a delivery organisation to administer the assessments; and
- appointing a research organisation to run the live research.

61. If you would like to receive information about these activities, or be involved in the standard setting or content development, please contact us at:

dfc.naas@education.gov.uk.

Next steps for consultees

62. The successful implementation of this system will only happen with the support of the sector. In preparation for the proposed transition of the knowledge and skills statements to the post-qualifying standards, we suggest that next steps for local authorities and employers will be to consider how the knowledge and skills statement can become part of your systems across:

- recruitment;
- objective setting;
- supervision;
- performance management; and
- continuous professional development both at individual and organisation level

Summary of responses

63. In total, 64% (97) of all local authorities responded.

64. There were 396 individual responses to the consultation – 388 via the online consultation system and eight via the inbox. Of these responses, the largest majority (291, 73.5%) came from individual social workers and other practitioners in local authorities.

65. A wide range of organisations responded, including: the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS), The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo), The Association of Professors of Social Work (APSW), Barnardo’s, British Association of Social Workers (BASW), Cafcass, Frontline, Nagalro, NSPCC, the Principal Child and Family Social Work (PCFSW) Network, and UNISON (the public service union). A breakdown of who responded is given at Annex C.

66. The consultation asked a series of questions on the delivery of NAAS. The question and answers are provided at Annex B.

67. The most significant views received were given in response to the open question in the consultation – question 10 – and therefore responses to these views have been given prominence in this document.

68. A summary of responses to the other questions is as follows:

1. *Broad approach to introduction of NAAS: a breadth of views*
2. *Statutory functions list defines who is assessed through NAAS: majority agreement*
3. *Assessment to take place following ASYE: majority agreement*
4. *New to practice supervisor/leader role, 12 months’ grace: majority agreement*
5. *Transition from another role, 12 months’ grace: majority agreement*
6. *Transition from outside England, 12 months’ grace: majority agreement*
7. *Agency workers to be endorsed by their employer: majority agreement*
8. *Employer decides when to re-endorse if ‘not met’: majority agreement*
9. *Light touch re-accreditation in future: majority agreement*
10. *Open question: see Annex A*

Annex A: Detailed summary of consultation responses and Government's response

(i) Key questions emerging

1. The consultation was designed to draw in a broad range of views on implementing NAAS – especially in the final, open, question – and this was reflected in the range of comments received.
2. Many respondents were positive about Government's plans for assessment and accreditation; for example, welcoming improving the focus on the quality of child and family practice, encouraging a stronger emphasis on learning and development, and boosting the status of child and family social workers. Others wanted to know more about some of the key questions that have informed the policy development and the areas that Government will be addressing during rollout, including:
 - the rationale for the particular focus on this initiative
 - who the assessment is for, what it will mean to be assessed, and how assessment fits with other pre-existing frameworks, such as the Professional Capabilities Framework
 - support for employers to embed the KSS and prepare individuals
 - support for individuals and the workforce as a whole
 - how there can be a consistency of approach and how the outcomes of assessment (e.g. 'met' or 'not met' will be handled)
3. Our response looks to show how we are addressing these broader concerns through the design of the NAAS system.

(ii) The rationale for this approach

What you said

4. Some responses (ADCS and BASW in particular) raised concerns about the value for money case for NAAS and whether it should be considered a priority in the current pressured climate.

Our response

5. The Department has considered carefully both the impact and the value for money of NAAS and we outline the importance of the programme below.

The quality of practice

6. Whilst there is excellent child and family social work practice, a growing body of evidence points to inconsistencies in the quality of child and family social work practice. The evidence also suggests that this problem is not unique to areas of low performance. We want to ensure all vulnerable children, wherever they are across the country, receive the expert, high quality support and protection they need.
7. Recent case studies have shown how local authorities, such as Derby, have improved their Ofsted grade through investing in comprehensive training programmes in evidence-based practice, and embedding these in their wider management processes (Rethinking Children's Social Work, 2014). It is therefore important *and* possible to improve the quality of social work practice in order to improve outcomes for children and create efficiencies within local authority services.
8. This suggests that our challenge is to raise the quality of social work practice across the country.

The special nature of child and family social work

9. The role of child and family social work within local authorities is a particularly highly skilled job with significant levels of legal responsibility, such as decisions about referrals. We want to create the right environment for excellent practice; where social workers can flourish and perform at their best; learn from the very best practice and learn from things going wrong.
10. The Munro Review noted that newly-qualified social workers are 'especially unprepared to deal with the challenges posed by child protection work' (Munro 2012) and surveys of newly qualified social workers find that they are concerned about specialist aspects of the job including knowledge of child protection; how to assess risk and preparing reports for legal proceedings (Sharpe et al 2011)⁴.
11. Entry into the social work profession in England is, of course, regulated through the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) with social workers registering as qualified social workers once they have completed their training through an approved provider. However, this registration process is focused on meeting the minimum standard required to enter a generic social work role and does not reflect

⁴ Sharpe E, Moriarty J, Stevens M, Manthorpe J and Hussein S (2011) Into the Workforce, London: Social Care Workforce Research Initiative, King's College London. <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/sshm/scwru/dhinitiative/projects/sharpeetal2011itwfinalreport.pdf>

the specialist requirements of statutory children's services. Government has announced that it will create a new bespoke regulator for social workers in England. The relevant legislation to establish this new regulator (Social Work England) received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017.

The knowledge and skills statements

12. To raise standards of practice, the Government introduced the KSS, which were published after formal consultation with the sector and which set out what constitutes effective child and family social work practice at three levels: practitioner, practice supervisor and practice leader.
13. Many employers have not yet taken action to embed the KSS within their management processes. We therefore need a way to support employers to use the KSS and align their performance management and training to them.

New entrants to child and family social work

14. The Department has already taken some action to improve the content of initial training for social workers – including introducing new routes such as Frontline and Step Up, funding Teaching Partnerships to bring employers and Higher Education Institute providers together and introducing the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).
15. Over time, this should ensure that all newly qualified child and family social workers will have the specialist knowledge and skills to prepare them for NAAS accreditation. In advance of that time, we need to find new ways to support social workers to develop their specialist child and family expertise.

Training and support post qualification

16. Training and support post qualification is not strong in all parts of the country. International evidence shows that high-performing countries offer extensive training for social workers as they move from initial training towards holding their own caseloads. The ASYE is an important step in the right direction, but we are aware that training and development can plateau after this point⁵. We need to support employers to offer training and development to professionals after they complete the ASYE so performance improves and grows.

⁵ <http://www.ippr.org/read/beyond-the-plateau-the-case-for-an-institute-for-advanced-teaching>

(iii) Getting our overall approach right

What you said

17. A small number of respondents wanted to know more about who would be assessed. We heard the message that NAAS should include all child and family social workers, statutory and non-statutory, otherwise it could lead to social workers being unable to move between disciplines.
18. A number of organisations called for NAAS to be mandatory to ensure a consistent approach across the whole country.
19. The consultation responses highlighted a desire for the KSS to be better embedded in social work practice and the employers' processes for workforce development. Respondents also questioned why the KSS did not closely map to the Professional Capabilities Framework as they are currently drafted.

What we are doing

Who we will be assessing

20. The responses to this consultation showed support for the list of social workers we identified as carrying out statutory functions (question 2). This list was drawn up to capture the social workers who have the greatest influence on decisions made about children. However, in time, it is our aspiration that all social workers will be able to, and will want to, undertake assessment to achieve accreditation.
21. Owing to social worker registration with the regulator – currently HCPC – being unaffected by participation in the assessment, or the assessment outcome, there will be no restriction of movement within the profession or a specialism.
22. It is also important to say that we are rolling out NAAS to practitioners and practice supervisors in the first instance. This is in recognition of the further development work needed to establish a basis on which to launch an assessment of practice leaders.
23. The first five local authorities to work with us to roll out the assessment will put forward a mixture of social workers carrying out statutory functions and their supervisors. We will make no stipulation about the order in which these social workers are assessed; this will be discussed and agreed with each local authority. We will be assessing agency workers if local authorities choose to endorse them (we explore this in greater detail in the section on agency workers).
24. Whilst we will assess those who have completed the ASYE programme in the five Phase One authorities, we will defer the assessment of all ASYE participants until we have completed, and learned the lessons from, the first stage of rollout.

Whether NAAS should be made mandatory

25. We are establishing a new system to put in place a post-qualifying standard and the support structures necessary to enable it to function effectively. This will include change in local authorities to provide support and closely monitor and manage the effect the introduction of the system has on the workforce. The level of change is the primary reason we will not make NAAS mandatory in the first instance.
26. A further consideration is the very strong support for this initiative amongst local authorities. Many have come forward to be part of the first two phases of rollout and hundreds of social workers have participated in the creation of the content for the assessment. If demand for the assessment proves to be strong, it will not be for Government to mandate this system; it will be for local authorities to look for accreditation and use it as an integral part of their workforce systems. It may be the case that individual social workers have a strong desire to gain accreditation if it allows them to develop their skill and knowledge and progress in their careers.
27. It remains the case that the Secretary of State may make NAAS mandatory at a future point but this will depend on the outcome of the first two phases of rollout.

Using the KSS as a basis for assessing performance

28. We know that the sector finds the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) useful and that many local authorities have aligned their performance management systems to it. We also know that some local authorities have found it challenging to see how the KSS can also be part of performance management systems.
29. We do not see the KSS as operating in isolation to the PCF, nor that only one of them can be used; rather that they can work together. The Chief Social Worker for children and families is working closely with BASW to see how best to align the KSS for child and family social work to the PCF.
30. We are also currently holding a series of roundtables across the country to consult on the KSS becoming the post-qualifying standards against which child and family social workers will be assessed. Once we have analysed all the feedback we will publish our findings.

(iv) Getting our approach to rollout right

What you said

31. A number of people asked what support employers would receive to prepare their social workers for assessment and how they would be able to assess if a child and family social worker were ready to take the assessment.

What we are doing

Rollout plans

32. We have fundamentally changed our approach to rollout of NAAS, in a number of ways, to prioritise support for employers and their support, in turn, for social workers.
33. The first change we have made is to the number and location of authorities with whom we will work. The first phase of rollout will now be with five authorities, which are geographically proximate, swiftly followed by a further 12-15 which are more diverse. The first-phase authorities are Bury, Leeds, Manchester, Oldham and Wigan. The second-phase authorities will be announced in due course.
34. In terms of timelines, the first phase will commence in mid-2018 and the second phase in early 2019.
35. The second change we have made is the focus for rollout. We will now work with an embedded research partner who will carry out live research in the first phase to assist us with:
- monitoring the national standard and equalities considerations;
 - monitoring contract and employment matters, including support for those not meeting the standard and any appeals;
 - refining the model and delivery of the assessment process;
 - identifying the nature and level of support required to accompany assessment and accreditation. For example, the right support and materials that both local authorities and social workers need to prepare for the assessment and how employers will respond to and support those who do not meet the assessment standard; and
 - monitoring workforce implications across recruitment, retention and mobility.
36. The third change affects the way in which we will roll out the assessment. We recognise that embedding the post-qualifying standard and supporting local authorities to prepare their social workers to take the assessment is a whole system change. We will therefore be working together with local authorities to co-create the materials, support and systems which will make the system effective. We expect to facilitate local authorities to come together and share learning. We will only publish materials or support from the Department if we are best placed to do so and at the request of local authorities.
37. Finally, we can provide reassurance that the findings of the first phase will inform the next phase. The second phase will test the delivery of the assessment with a broader range of local authorities to understand if there are any big differences between types of local authority and further refine the model for national rollout. This will include understanding how all local authorities are embedding the KSS

and their readiness to put social workers forward to undertake the assessment. Throughout, we will evaluate the impact on practice and evolve and develop the materials and available support which help make the system successful.

38. It is important to note that the format and standard of the assessment itself will not change from one phase of the rollout to the next; it will be robust and developed with equality in mind from the outset. There will be a clear threshold for those who have 'met' and those who have 'not met' the standard. The first social workers who undertake this assessment who receive a 'met' mark will receive accreditation.
39. The assessment has been developed with social worker input and with the guidance of psychometricians, according to industry standard assessment development processes. Psychometricians help us focus on making sure the assessment is true to role, assesses the right things. A helpful example is that there isn't an assessment of reading ability to make sure there is no more reading than would usually be required by a social worker in their day to day work. Measures such as this ensure that the assessment is fair to people with different working styles and people who have protected characteristics.

Covering the costs

40. The Department has committed to covering the costs of the assessment during the first two phases and will make a decision on future funding once the costs have been established. The first two phases of rollout will receive grant funding in recognition of the work involved in developing and building this new system.

Preparation and practice endorsement

41. Our understanding of what local authorities need to do to set up the assessment process has developed considerably over the past six months. We have already held planning workshops with the first phase of authorities and some of the second phase.
42. Firstly, in preparation for the proposed transition of the knowledge and skills statements to the post-qualifying standards, we expect local authorities to take steps to align their systems to the KSS in preparation for assessment. This includes alignment to objective setting and performance management, supervision and learning and development. Local authorities will want to look at what is acceptable evidence against the KSS and how feedback and support is being provided to social workers to help them meet each standard. Feedback mirroring the methods of the assessment will be encouraged to help a focus on knowledge, practice and written work. We will provide exemplar material so that social workers have the opportunity to become familiar with the assessment format.
43. If these steps of preparation are taken, the act of practice endorsement should be a straightforward one. Local authorities can satisfy themselves through their

processes that social workers are demonstrating the skills and abilities required for the assessment. The local authority then provides their delivery partner with a list of social workers carrying out statutory functions who are considered ready to undertake the assessment.

44. We will not stipulate what process a local authority should follow to satisfy themselves that a social worker is ready to take the assessment, but we will expect practice endorsement to be supported by the systems the local authority has put in place. Decisions on when, and how, an employer assesses their child and family social worker as ready for assessment are best made locally, as employers have experience of a child and family social worker's practice.
45. We recognise that there are different theories of practice and systems across local authorities. The Department, therefore, no longer expects to issue guidance on practice endorsement; support on this will be given to local authorities by the delivery provider.

(v) People and workforce

What you said

46. A small number of respondents raised questions around whether the implementation of NAAS, and especially the pace of rollout, might produce unintended consequences on the recruitment and retention of child and family social workers during rollout. In particular, whether child and family social work might become less attractive.
47. A further comment was that it could encourage agency child and family social workers to move employer to avoid assessment.
48. A small percentage (less than 5%) of respondents alluded to the findings from the proof of concept phase, where analysis of test results showed lower success rates for some groups of workers. For example, there were negative correlations relating to age and ethnicity.

What we are doing

The impact on the workforce

49. The Department will track very closely the impact on the workforce of the rollout of assessment and accreditation through the embedded research partner and through using our own supply and demand modelling. Many other professions which embed post-qualifying specialisms, such as in the health sectors, medicine and beyond, have seen an overall boost to recruitment and retention. It is our ambition that the introduction of NAAS will have a similar effect. We want this

system to build and grow and to enhance the profession of child and family social work.

Career pathways/deepening development

50. There are many ways in which social workers can advance their careers but none which provide national consistency. We want the introduction of NAAS to set the framework for stronger career pathways, supported by the practice supervisor and practice leader development programmes. It will be possible for employers to grow and develop their own talent pipeline using the staging points that NAAS provides at accredited practitioner and practice supervisor level. This will apply equally to those who wish to stay at the frontline or those who want to progress. In embedding the KSS successfully and improving supervision and reflection, this should benefit those who wish to deepen their practice and to become even more proficient.

Agency staff

51. The introduction of NAAS will not, in itself, solve the challenge that some local authorities face of using agency staff in more circumstances than they would want to. But we will continue to support groups, such as the ADCS workforce development group, as they address the ongoing challenges of how to work successfully with agency staff as part of a flexible workforce.

52. It is also unlikely that the cost of employing agency staff will rise significantly if some agency staff become accredited; owing to the plentiful supply of agency staff, local authorities may choose to hire those who are accredited or who possess alternative skills and experience.

53. Respondents to this consultation have clearly indicated that they consider the employer to be the best party to endorse agency social work practice. This will incentivise local authorities to invest in those agency staff they consider appropriate to do so and perhaps for more agency staff to consider joining local authorities. For individuals working via agencies, it may incentivise them to seek out employers which can support assessment and accreditation.

54. We know that at least one Phase One local authority is planning to assess its agency staff.

Building the assessment with social work expertise

55. In developing the assessment content, the Department's contractors are working closely with an expert group of child and family social workers and other professionals who have created an initial bank of general and applied knowledge questions, role-play scenarios and linked written exercises. With input and support from child and family social workers, we are now refining and validating the content to ensure there is coverage across the KSS and that it fully reflects the

skills and knowledge needed by frontline social workers and practice supervisors as defined in the KSS. This process has been carried out iteratively, responding to comments and findings as they have arisen. We will now carry out a similar process to establish the threshold for 'met' and 'not met' candidates and, as mentioned, we will monitor how the standard is applied throughout rollout.

(vi) Ensuring consistency

What you said

56. Just over 10% of respondents asked if NAAS would be implemented consistently across the country. Whilst respondents understood that there would be one assessment process, run on a national basis, respondents (especially individual social workers) commented that the varying qualities of employers across the sector could lead to inconsistent preparation for individuals and therefore an 'uneven playing field' for social workers.
57. In particular, we were asked if the assessment might potentially tell the Department more about the quality of the organisation's learning and development rather than the effectiveness of the individual.
58. Respondents also asked how NAAS would work across the sector including for the voluntary sector and for other employers.

What we are doing

Growing support beyond local authorities

59. It is understandable that child and family social workers want to have the best possible chance to perform well in the assessment even if the local authority they work with is not rated by Ofsted as performing strongly.
60. The second phase of rollout has been specifically designed to help us understand the different needs of local authorities, both geographical and in terms of performance. We will take conscious steps during this phase to establish what local authorities, and individuals, need to make the system work consistently before national rollout.
61. By the second phase we also anticipate being able to share advice and tips on embedding the KSS more widely, all of which have been developed by local authorities and individuals. A number of 'past versions' of assessments can be made available. We would like to see networks of social workers forming, perhaps supported by BASW, the PSW network and others, to offer support which could supplement that offered by local authorities.

What the outcome of the assessment tells the Department

62. The outcomes of the assessment will be one part of a bigger picture of data and information collected and analysed by government to support our work improving outcomes for children and families. The Department will use the information it collects to improve support for local authorities and to learn how to develop better systems in future. Inspection of services is provided by Ofsted and it is for them to decide how they wish to use this information in future.

The role of the voluntary sector

63. The voluntary sector plays a vital role in delivering services. In time we would expect to make the assessment available to all child and family social workers and to share the learning from the first and second phase local authorities to help other employers embed the KSS, and to prepare social workers for assessment.

64. For the first phases, it is important that we focus on a small group of local authorities and prioritise those carrying out statutory functions. As we build the system we will draw in a wider range of employers.

(vii) Incentivising development

What you said

65. Respondents asked about the consequences of not meeting the standard: this was raised in around one fifth of responses. For example, there were concerns raised about services being affected if large numbers of child and family social workers did not meet the standard. Respondents also asked about employment law implications for dealing with those who get a 'not met' outcome and appeals, especially from groups with protected characteristics.

66. Some respondents asked if employers would need to divert their attention from core services to ensure that their child and family social workers were ready to take the assessment.

What we are doing

Not meeting the standard

67. We expect managers to give high quality feedback to all social workers who undertake the assessment. If an individual receives a 'not met' outcome, the feedback will not only state in which part of the assessment the social worker was unsuccessful, but also each KSS area. Employers will then be expected to assist that individual to improve their knowledge and skills in those areas through local support and, if needed, learning and development.

68. As a social worker's HCPC registration remains unaffected, it is for the employer to decide if the outcome of assessment will form part of any performance proceedings – as any other evidence collected during the social worker's employment would do. As mentioned previously, we will closely monitor the system as we roll out and will respond to concerns of wider workforce impact through our iterative process.

Exceeding the standard

69. Respondents have expressed an interest in individuals receiving the highest scores. We do expect social workers to not only meet the standard, but exceed it because the assessment (based, subject to consultation on the KSS) is based firmly within what child and family social workers should be doing on a day-to-day basis. It is our hope that local authorities will think carefully about what high scores mean and whether they will wish to incentivise and reward those who do very well with, perhaps, an enhanced role within the organisation. Those who perform well will also be in a strong position to help others develop their skills and abilities.

Releasing social workers to undertake the assessment

70. It is our aim that preparing for, and undertaking the assessment, is something which social workers can do as part of the usual CPD they would undertake during the course of a year – indeed it should become integral to it. In the first instance, we will have careful conversations with the first local authorities about releasing their social workers to a timetable that does not disrupt day-to-day delivery of services. In time, when there is a future system of support and development in place both within local authorities and beyond, we would expect there to be a great deal more flexibility in how social workers use their time to prepare.

Annex B: Question analysis

1. This section covers the responses against each of the 10 consultation questions.

Question 1

2. We said we wanted all social workers carrying out statutory functions to be assessed and accredited by 2020, and described our overall approach for NAAS. We asked if our approach balanced effectively the clear expectation that social workers carrying out statutory functions will be accredited, with sufficient scope for employers to manage the results for their workforce appropriately.

Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
136 (34.3%)	114 (28.8%)	138 (34.9%)	8 (2.0%)

Question 1: Does this approach balance effectively the clear expectation that social workers carrying out statutory functions will be accredited, with sufficient scope for employers to manage the results for their workforce appropriately?

3. There was no clear outcome to the first question with responses being split between the three categories. Respondents who agreed said that NAAS could help improve social workers' knowledge and skills, standards and status. Of the respondents who said no, those that disagreed with the principle of NAAS felt other priorities were more pressing. Of those who were unsure, the majority sought more clarity on how the system would work in practice.

Question 2

4. We set out the statutory functions across children's social care and an expectation that social workers carrying out these tasks should be assessed and accredited. We asked if this list provided a good basis of the statutory child and family social work functions for which social workers should be accredited.

Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
237 (59.9%)	96 (24.2%)	57 (14.4%)	6 (1.5%)

Question 2: Do you agree that the list of services provide a good basis of the statutory child and family social work functions for which social workers should be accredited?

5. A clear majority of respondents agreed that the list provided a good basis of the statutory child and family social work functions for which social workers should be assessed. The majority of respondents who disagreed did so because they did not agree with the principle of NAAS, for the reasons cited above. Most respondents who were unsure were unclear how the functions carried out by individuals related to how their individual local authorities were organised, and they felt that they needed greater clarity.

Question 3

6. We set out an expectation that newly qualified social workers should have a period of 12 months minimum full time continuous employment with the same employer before being put forward for assessment – during which time they would be expected to undergo the ASYE programme, or similar. Assessment would therefore occur after ASYE completion. We asked whether they agreed with this approach and timescale.

Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
287 (72.5%)	58 (14.7%)	43 (10.9%)	8 (2.0%)

Question 3: Do you agree that a social worker undertaking the ASYE or similar programme, carrying out statutory functions, should not be assessed until after 12 months minimum full time continuous employment with the same employer (including time for completion of ASYE)?

7. The majority of respondents agreed that the minimum 12-month timescale for newly qualified social workers, during which they would carry out the ASYE programme, was the best approach.

Question 4

8. We said that social workers who are new to practice supervisor roles and practice leader roles should have a period of 12 months minimum full time continuous employment with the same employer before being assessed. We asked whether you agreed with this approach and timescales.

	Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
Practice supervisors	259 (65.4%)	77 (19.4%)	50 (12.6%)	10 (2.5%)
Practice leaders	237 (59.9%)	87 (22.0%)	60 (15.2%)	12 (3.0%)

Question 4: Do you agree that new practice supervisors, supervising the carrying out of statutory functions, and new practice leaders, should be assessed after 12 months minimum full time continuous employment with the same employer?

9. A significant majority of respondents agreed that the 12-month minimum timescale was sufficient. Of those who disagreed a number thought that given the importance of leadership roles the timescale for assessment should be within 6 months.

Question 5

10. We said that we expected social workers making a transition into child and family social work from other roles to gain accreditation after a period of up to 12 months. We asked if you agreed with this approach and timescale.

	Within 6 months	Within 12 months	Not sure	Not answered
Practitioners	75 (18.9%)	238 (60.1%)	71 (17.9%)	12 (3.0%)
Practice supervisors	104 (26.3%)	209 (52.8%)	69 (17.4%)	14 (3.5%)
Practice leaders	125 (31.6%)	178 (45.0%)	76 (19.2%)	17 (4.3%)

Question 5: How long after starting work in a child and family social work role, carrying out statutory functions, should practitioners, practice supervisors, and practice leaders moving into such roles be put forward for assessment as a maximum?

11. For practitioners the majority view from the respondents was that 12 months was the best timescale. There was less certainty for supervisors and practice leaders with a significant number of people believing accreditation should start sooner for people in leadership roles.

Question 6

12. We said that social workers moving from outside England would be expected to gain accreditation no later than 12 months after they take up the role. We asked whether they agreed with this approach and timescale.

	Within 6 months	Within 12 months	Not sure	Not answered
Practitioners	93 (23.5%)	231 (58.3%)	59 (14.9%)	13 (3.3%)
Practice supervisors	110 (27.8%)	204 (51.5%)	64 (16.2%)	18 (4.6%)
Practice leaders	133 (33.6%)	179 (45.2%)	68 (17.2%)	16 (4.0%)

Question 6: How long after starting child and family social work where the social worker is carrying out statutory functions, should practitioners, practice supervisors, and practice leaders moving from other jurisdictions be expected to be put forward for assessment as a maximum?

13. There was a similar response to question five with a clear majority of people agreeing that practitioners should be assessed within 12 months. There was less certainty for supervisors and practice leaders with a significant number of people believing accreditation should start sooner for people in leadership roles.

Question 7

14. We said that agency staff working in child and family social work should be accredited and that practice endorsement is best carried out by the organisation with direct experience of that agency worker's practice. We said we would expect this to be the local authority, trust or employer that has the statutory functions. We asked whether respondents agreed with this approach.

Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
233 (58.8%)	67 (16.9%)	88 (22.2%)	8 (2.0%)

Question 7: Do you agree that agency and self-employed social workers, carrying out statutory functions on behalf of others, should be endorsed for assessment by the organisation which has direct experience of their practice? We would expect this to be the local authority, trust or employer that has the statutory functions.

15. A clear majority of respondents agreed that the employer was best placed to assess an agency worker's practice and to provide practice endorsement. Some, however, raised the possibility that agency staff might move between employers as a way to avoid NAAS.

Question 8

16. Where a social worker does not meet the standard to achieve accreditation through the assessment, we said that it should be left to the discretion of the employer whether to re-endorse the individual for reassessment. We asked if they agreed with this approach.

Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
238 (60.1%)	95 (24.0%)	56 (14.1%)	(1.8%)

Question 8: Do you agree that it should be left to employer discretion to decide when a social worker is endorsed for reassessment?

17. A clear majority agreed that it should be left to the individual employer to decide when a worker was ready to retake the assessment. Of those who disagreed, many thought that there should be a nationally agreed timescale.

Question 9

18. We said that it was important that once accreditation has been achieved, social workers' knowledge and skills are maintained and developed over time with light touch, periodic revalidation. We asked if they agreed that re-accreditation should be expected.

Yes	No	Not sure	Not answered
215 (54.3%)	114 (28.8%)	54 (13.6%)	13 (3.3%)

Question 9: Should re-accreditation be expected, periodically, once a social worker has gained accreditation, to ensure that their knowledge and skill level is maintained?

19. The majority of respondents agreed in principle that re-accreditation should be part of the NAAS, but more clarity on the timescales was sought. Many of those who disagreed objected to the principle of NAAS as cited earlier.

Question 10

20. This question was an open invitation for respondents to give us their views on any other aspect of NAAS. Many views were given and these are addressed in the earlier part of this document.

Annex C: List of organisations that responded to the consultation

Local authorities (97)

- Achieving for Children
- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Bedford Borough Council
- Birmingham City Council
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Blackpool Council
- Boston Borough Council
- Bracknell Forest Council
- Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Brighton & Hove Council
- Bristol City Council
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
- Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Cumbria County Council
- Darlington Borough Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- Devon County Council
- Doncaster Children's Services Trust
- Dorset County Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Durham County Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council

- Essex County Council
- Gateshead Council
- Greater Manchester Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Hull City Council
- Isle of Wight Council
- Kent County Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Leeds City Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Lincolnshire County Council
- London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council
- London Borough of Bexley Council
- London Borough of Brent Council
- London Borough of Croydon Council
- London Borough of Ealing Council
- London Borough of Enfield Council
- London Borough of Hackney Council
- London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Council
- London Borough of Haringey Council
- London Borough of Havering Council
- London Borough of Lambeth Council
- London Borough of Merton Council
- London Borough of Newham Council
- London Borough of Southwark Council
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council
- London Borough of Waltham Forest Council
- London Borough of Wandsworth Council
- London of Barking and Dagenham Council
- Luton Borough Council

- Manchester City Council
- Medway Council
- Middlesbrough Council
- Milton Keynes Council
- Norfolk County Council
- North Somerset Council
- North Yorkshire County Council
- Northamptonshire County Council
- Northumberland County Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Oldham Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Poole Borough
- Portsmouth City Council
- Rochdale Borough Council
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Salford Council
- Sheffield City Council
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- Somerset County Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Southampton City Council
- Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
- Sunderland City Council
- Surrey County Council
- Swindon Borough Council
- Thurrock Council
- Wakefield Council

- Walsall Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- Warwickshire County Council
- West Berkshire Council
- West Sussex County Council
- Wigan Council
- Wiltshire Council
- Wirral Council
- Wokingham Borough Council

Union/representative body (6)

- Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)
- British Association of Social Workers (BASW)
- National Network of Parent Carer Forums
- Principal Social Worker network
- The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo)
- UNISON

Private organisation (5)

- Caretech
- Core Assets
- Cromwell Consultancy
- Fostering Solutions
- Parallel Parents Fostering Agency

University/training provider (12)

- Association of Professors of Social Work
- Brunel University
- Frontline
- Huddersfield University

- Leeds Beckett University
- South East London Teaching Partnership
- South West Teaching Partnership of Greater Merseyside
- University of Central Lancashire
- University of Manchester
- University of Portsmouth
- University of Salford
- Wolverhampton University

Voluntary organisation (14)

- Adoption Matters
- Adoption-Focus
- After Adoption
- Barnardo's
- Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA)
- Family Action
- Hypermobility Syndromes Association
- Naomi House Children's Hospice
- NSPCC
- Planet Autism
- St Francis' Children's Society
- The Ehlers-Danlos Support UK
- Thomas Coram Foundation for Children Family Support and Adoption and Fostering Services
- West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

Other (10)

- Cafcass
- Foster carer/s
- Independent Practice Educator
- Independent social worker

- Nagalro
- NHS
- Ofsted
- Parents Protecting Children UK
- TACT Fostering and Adoption
- Swiss Cottage School, Research and Development Centre



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