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Social work students and professional data transfer from the General Social Care Council to the Social Care Workforce Research Unit

Using existing data to enhance social care research

Positioning Paper

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About the authors

Dr Shereen Hussein is a senior research fellow at the Social Care Workforce Research Unit (SCWRU), King's College London. Dr Hussein is a demographer with broad interests in labour-migration, sociology, work-psychology and economics. Over the past decade, she has worked extensively in the fields of ageing and formal long-term care. Her work has considerably promoted the use of governmental, administrative and other existing data sources for research purposes, some of these are published through the [Social Care Workforce Periodical](#). Dr Hussein is the principal investigator of the SCWRU work stream (2012-2015) utilising existing datasets including the GSCC and other national datasets to address a number of research questions in the fields of social care and social work.

Acknowledgments

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Background

The General Social Care Council (GSCC), regulated standards and training of the social work profession in England up to the end of July 2012 and held a compulsory register of social workers and detailed information on registered students. Following the Government's decision, in July 2010, to close certain Arms Length Bodies (ALBs), the General Social Care Council (GSCC) transferred its regulatory functions to the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) on 31st July 2012. The HCPC, which currently regulates 15 healthcare professions, is being renamed the Health and Care Professions Council to reflect its additional responsibilities. The GSCC's remaining social work education and professional standards functions are to transfer to The College of Social Work (TCSW) and other organisations. The GSCC's administrative records are to be transferred to the custody of the Department of Health (DH).

The GSCC possessed unique professional datasets, which provide major opportunities to investigate questions about social workers and social work students. The Social Care Workforce Research Unit (SCWRU), supported by the Department of Health under its Policy Research Programme, reached a legal agreement with the GSCC to acquire some archive and reference information (originals and copies) in 2012. The agreement covers the transfer of a number of datasets to the SCWRU, King's College London (KCL), through disposal by presentation under the Public Record Acts. The ownership of information and intellectual property are thus transferred to KCL.

In June 2011, SCWRU and GSCC held a stakeholder consultation event (including members from policy, education, practice, service user and academic communities) to help formulate a vision for utilising the data and to debate priorities for research. A report summarising the event and key suggestions was produced and is available on the SCWRU website¹. In anticipation of this work, a full ethics application was submitted in 2010 to the Social Care Ethics Committee and approval was received late 2011 (Ref: 11/IEC08/0022). A final data transfer agreement was completed in June 2012.

Obtaining these unique, historical and valuable datasets will facilitate further research to address current and emerging knowledge gaps about the profession and social work education. Further analyses to be undertaken by the SCWRU form part of its work programme 2012-2015 and complement the Unit's efforts in utilising existing data resources to enhance the evidence base of social care and social work research. This is particularly important in the field of social care and social work where existing data are under utilised in research^{2,3} and is in line with government policy promoting the use of existing data⁴. This document sets out the details of transferred data, provides examples of prior research conducted using some of these data, and sets out a vision of future research aiming at maximising the benefit of such unique and rich data.

Scope and coverage of transferred data

The General Social Care Council transferred four major data sources to the Social Care Workforce Research Unit in 2012.

Anonymised Research Data

Anonymous historical and current electronic records of four major datasets were transferred; each containing a unique ID to enable future linkage of data (a full list of variables is provided in Appendix 1). These relate to:

1. ETIS dataset: Information on students who undertook social work training in England since 1947 (however, the majority of records date back to 1980s). Over 265,000 records provide information on students' characteristics (such as age, gender and ethnicity), type and place of qualifications and progression data through their courses.
2. ESG dataset: Provides information on placements during the qualifying programme since the introduction of the social work degree in England (2003) for each student who undertook the degree from 2003-2012. The dataset includes over 86,000 records providing information on different placements, such as length of placement, whether it was undertaken in statutory, voluntary or the private sector, as well as some information on type of agency involved and main service user or client group.
3. OSCAR QSW dataset: Provides information on registered social workers who are registered to work in England who qualified in the UK. The dataset contains over 800,000 records providing information on up to 10 employment positions for each registered social worker since the 1970s. The records contain information on social workers' characteristics (including personal profile, first part of home post code and education/qualifications) and information on their employment (including first part of post code, dates of start and elapse of employment, and sector). The dataset also provides information on social workers' activities at time of registration, whether employed or not. These data can be linked to students' records and potentially enable research linking students' progression with career history. Geographical location of employment and social worker data linkages may enable research into internal migration and employment mobility.
4. OSCAR IQ dataset: Provides information on registered social workers who are registered to work in England who qualified outside the UK. The dataset contains over 6,500 records providing information on up to 10 employment positions for each internationally qualified registered social worker. The records contain information on internationally qualified social workers' characteristics and information on their employment (including first part of post code, dates of start and elapse of employment, and sector). The dataset also provides information on

social workers' activities at time of registration, whether employed or not. Geographical location of employment and social worker data linkages may enable research into migration and employment mobility.

UK Student Records and Post Qualifying Courses

Hard copy of GSCC student records for individual enrolments and results for social work courses and post-qualifying training courses up to and including 1971 were transferred to KCL. If an individual holding a recorded qualification makes a subject access request (in the sense of the Data Protection Act, DPA) to KCL, KCL will confirm whether or not the requested information is held and if it is held, will provide a copy or extract of the requested information from the records and confirm that it is a true copy/extract from the information held by KCL. Notwithstanding this, KCL shall have absolute discretion to determine what steps are necessary to fulfil its obligations under section 7 of the DPA. Details of the student records information to be transferred to KCL are included in the list at Appendix 2.

Regulatory information about higher education institution (HEI) provision of post-qualification courses was held by the GSCC in hard copy. This information is to be scanned by the GSCC into searchable pdf format files in a directory structure listed by HEI; these electronic files are to be held by The College of Social Work. Following scanning the hard copy records will be destroyed by the GSCC.

SWEG Library

The GSCC Social Work Education Group (SWEG) Library will be transferred to KCL. It includes books, journals, and reports on social work education and documents setting out some previous parameters for social work course evaluations. The library will be placed in the KCL general library to facilitate public access.

International Qualifications

Prior to April 2011 the GSCC provided a service of verification of international qualifications to the other three UK social care councils (3C). Since 1 April 2011, the 3C have verified the qualifications of their own international applicants to be registered as social workers, drawing on reference information held by the GSCC when required. This reference information is being brought together and copies are to be transferred to the 3C. A copy of this reference information, containing no personal information, will be transferred to KCL:

1. Qualification Data by Country. An Excel spread sheet, whose contents are listed in Appendix 3, will be provided that will list the qualification

data held, by country, for all assessments made from 1 October 2008 to the date of transfer.

2. Country Factsheets. A fact sheet will be provided for each EEA⁵ country and, where information is held, non-EEA country, which will include the information listed in Appendix 4.
3. International Qualifications – grouped by country of training, electronic files of redacted qualification certificates, course transcripts, Diploma supplements in English and the original language will be transferred as scanned pdf files in a directory structure with the country as the root.

No information was transferred until the processes of verification of International Qualifications by the GSCC ceased in July 2012. The GSCC ensured that all personal data in the information was removed prior to transfer.

Examples of previous research using GSCC datasets

In this section we outline some previous uses of GSCC data to illustrate the potential for its use and to stimulate discussion.

Diversity and social work students' progression

Hussein, Moriarity and Manthorpe (2009)⁶ utilised 50,000 social work students' records from 1998 to 2007, offering longitudinal progression information on over 43,000 social work students to examine factors related to academic progression. The data provide a wealth of longitudinal information and offer opportunities to investigate how the findings and patterns concluded from the analysis of previous cohorts (1995-1997)⁷ changed after the introduction of the new degree in 2003. The analyses examined the hierarchical effect of higher education institutions' and students' characteristics observed in the previous analysis. The analyses identified the significant higher education institution (HEI) level effect on the probability of students to pass at first attempt; other individual significant factors included ethnicity, gender and reported disability. The results of the quantitative analysis were put in context and fed into the more qualitative piece of research in collaboration with Goldsmiths University of London⁸ and the GSCC through its Diversity and Progression Group.

International social workers in England

Analysis of the GSCC data on internationally qualified social workers who are registered to work in England formed an important part of a recent project examining international recruitment in social care⁹. The study examined the contribution to adult services made by international social care staff in England: first, by analysing the characteristics of international workers in terms of their country of origin, demographic composition, qualifications,

employment sector, specialism, skills and experience, with sub-studies of social workers and occupational therapists; and, secondly, by examining the experiences and expectations of international workers, their colleagues and employers/managers, as well as service users and carers. Results from the GSCC data analysis highlighted several important observations in terms of non-UK-qualified social workers' profile as well as some possible trends in migration and variations in rates of qualification verification. Over half of all international social workers in England, for example, were found to have been trained in four countries: Australia, South Africa, India and the USA¹⁰.

Analyses of the GSCC data contributed to other research projects including the evaluation of the social work degree in England¹¹; a study of 'Grow Your Own' (seconded and sponsored) social work training schemes^{12,13}; and desk top research on the social work bursary¹⁴.

Future Research Potential

The datasets provide major opportunities to investigate questions about social workers and social work students. Analysing such rich data forms part of the work programme of SCWRU from 2012-2015, which is funded by the Department of Health Policy Research Programme. We envisage that the data can support research that explores different questions employing solely quantitative techniques or could be utilised to form part of mixed-methods research projects.

As reported above, in preparation for this work the SCWRU and GSCC held a joint expert seminar in 2011 to introduce the data and their potential to different stakeholders. Participants in the seminar identified several evidence-gaps where research using such data had the potential to play an important part. The data has the potential, for example, to offer the best evidence about a number of key questions up to 2012, e.g. length of social work 'career'; and international and internal migration of social work professionals, among many others. Key initial research priorities for the SCWRU relate to the potential of linking different datasets to enable investigation of research questions through longitudinal methodologies. Some important areas include recruitment and retention, student suitability, career progression, mobility and initial training and the extent of placements' diversity.

Other ideas that have been mooted for further research include the supply and internal migration of social workers, geographical disparities in vacancy and turnover rates, and what happens to the increasing numbers of social work graduates in terms of their employment patterns. There is also scope to explore other areas concerning non-UK qualified social workers, such as the typical career path among this group compared to UK-qualified professionals, and the impact of the government's immigration cap on non-EEA migrants. The GSCC's data on social work training could be explored to examine the links between education and career progression, HEI and placement experience, and social workers' employment, and links between students' HEIs and placement records.

Appendix 1: Electronic Anonymous Datasets' Content

The **first** dataset comprises students' registration data records (ETIS results). This dataset includes the following fields:

- Unique ID (to allow linkage with other files)
- Reg ID (can be the same as Unique ID)
- Result (Pass; fail; withdraw; deferred; referred)
- Result date
- Date of Birth
- Route (numerical value of HEI)
- Start date
- Gender (female, male, unknown)
- Ethnic group
- Education level at start
- Report disability (any, none)
- Attendance (full/part time)
- Financial support (private, secondment, bursary etc.)
- Graduate (PG, UG, UG, other)
- Employment (employment based/college based)
- HEI name
- CCETSW-region
- UK country
- Award family
- Welsh speaking (Y/N)
- UPQ specialism *[includes high level of missing values]*

The **second** dataset provides information on placements during the qualifying programme (ESG placements). The dataset includes the following:

- A unique linkable identifier (to link students and social workers' data)
- Placement instance number
- HEI
- Academic year
- Placement start date *[not collected before 2006 and includes high level of missing values]*
- Placement end date *[not collected before 2006 and includes high level of missing values]*
- Placements number of days
- Placement sequence *[relevant to the number of placements undertaken by the same student]*
- Agency sector (statutory/non-statutory)
- Amount paid (for placement) *[includes high level of missing values]*
- Date agency paid *[includes high level of missing values]*
- Agency planning provision *[includes high level of missing values]*
- Planning element payment *[includes high level of missing values]*
- Agency assessment provision *[includes high level of missing values]*
- Assessment element pay *[includes high level of missing values]*
- Agency type (LA/private/voluntary)
- Agency service user focus
- Agency context *[includes high level of missing values]*

- Ethnicity focus (yes/no) [*includes high level of missing values*]
- Multidisciplinary focus (yes/no) [*includes high level of missing values*]

The **third** dataset provides information on registered social workers who are registered to work in England who qualified in the UK (OSCAR domestic). The dataset contains the following fields:

- Unique linkable identifier (linked to ETIS database)
- Date of birth
- Gender
- First four digits of home post code
- Disability (none, any)
- Ethnicity
- Qualification held
- Training establishment
- Date qualified
- Information on up to 10 different employment episodes, each includes the following information
 - Type of employment (Social Services, career break, self employed etc.)
 - First 4 digits of workplace post code
 - First 4 digits of organisation post code
 - Date started employment
 - Date ended employment

The last and **fourth** dataset provides information on registered social workers who are registered to work in England who qualified outside the UK (OSCAR IQ). The dataset includes the following information:

- Unique identifier
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Disability (any/none)
- Country of training
- Date qualification achieved
- Information on up to 10 different employment episodes, each includes the following information
 - Type of employment (Social Services, career break, self employed etc.)
 - First 4 digits of workplace post code
 - First 4 digits of organisation post code
 - Date started employment
 - Date ended employment

Appendix 2 – Qualification Records and Verification Information

	Information to be transferred	Description	Form	Notes	Date of Transfer
1	Student Records: pre-SW degree & old PQ (post qualifying) qualification records – for all of UK.	Individual student records – enrolments & results – for Schedule 1 and non-Schedule 1 up to and including 1971	Hard copy (ledgers, card indexes, microfiche, paper files)	Of historic and research interest. Individuals may seek access to information relating to their qualifications by submitting a Data Protection subject access request to KCL.	On or before 30 June 2012
2	Library	Books, journals, and reports on social work education and documents setting out the some, previous, parameters for social work course evaluations.	Various hard copy items.	Of historic and research interest only.	

3	International Qualifications – Qualification data	A list of qualification data, held by country, for all assessments made from 1 October 2008. See Appendix 1.	Excel spread sheet	Of historic and research interest only. No personal information is to be included.	
4	International Qualifications – Country factsheet for each EEA country and, where information is held, for each non-EEA country.	See Appendix 2	Fact sheets	Of historic and research interest only.	

Appendix 3 - Qualification Data by Country

An Excel spread sheet will be provided that will list the qualification data held, by country, for all assessments made from 1 October 2008 to the date of transfer.

GSCC Data Field Ref	Data requirement
GSCC-IQQ 69	Application Date
GSCC-IQQ140	Primary Qualification Country Of Training
GSCC-IQQ141	Primary Qualification
GSCC-IQQ142	Primary Qualification Body
GSCC-IQQ143	Primary Qualification Training Establishment
GSCC-IQQ144	Primary Qualification Award Date
GSCC-IQQ145	Other Qualification Country Of Training
GSCC-IQQ146	Other Qualification
GSCC-IQQ147	Other Qualification Body
GSCC-IQQ148	Other Qualification Training Establishment
GSCC-IQQ149	Other Qualification Award Date
GSCC-IQQ150	Qualification Assessment
GSCC-IQQ151	RegBody1
GSCC-IQQ152	RegBody2
GSCC-IQQ154	Registration Decision Date
GSCC-IQQ155	EU / Non EU

Appendix 2 - Country Factsheets

A fact sheet is provided for each EEA country and, where information was held, Non-EEA country, including when available:

- The regulatory status in that country.
- Contact details for competent authorities.
- Regulatory bodies.
- National contact points.
- Social work accreditation.
- Professional bodies.
- Qualifications that give eligibility to practise in that country.
- Any other information that may be of value.

¹ <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/sshm/scwru/res/knowledge/gscldata.aspx>

² Hussein S. (2012) *The use of 'large scale datasets in UK social care research*, Methods Review 5, National Institute for Health Research, School of Social Care Research, the London School of Economics.

³ Sharland E (2009) *Strategic Adviser for Social Work and Social Care Research*, Report to the Economic and Social Research Council Training and Development Board.

⁴ HM Government (2012) Open Data White Paper: Unleashing the potential. Crown Copyright http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Open_data_White_Paper.pdf

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- ⁵ The EEA (European Economic Area) includes the 27 nations of the EU plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.
- ⁶ Hussein, S., Moriarty, J. & Manthorpe, J. (2009) *'Variations in Progression of Social Work Students in England: Using student data to help promote achievement: Undergraduate full-time students' progression on the social work degree'*, London: Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King's College London; General Social Care Council.
- ⁷ Hussein S., Moriarty J, Manthorpe, J. and Huxley P. (2008) Diversity and progression among students starting social work qualifying programmes in England between 1995 to 1998: a quantitative study. *British Journal of Social Work*. 38 (8): 1588-1609.
- ⁸ Bernard, C., Fairtlough, A., Fletcher, J. & Ahmet, A., (2011), *'Diversity and Progression among Social Work Students in England'*, London: Goldsmiths, University of London.
- ⁹ Hussein S., Stevens M. and Manthorpe J. (2010) International Social Care Workers in England: Profile, Motivations, experiences and Future Expectations, February 2010. Final Report to the Department of Health, Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King's College.
- ¹⁰ Hussein, S., Stevens, M., Manthorpe, J., and Moriarty, J. (2011) Change and continuity: a quantitative investigation of trends and characteristics of international social workers in England. *British Journal of Social Work*. 41(6): 1140-1157.
- ¹¹ Evaluation of the social work degree in England team] Orme J. MacIntyre G. Lister PG. Cavanagh K., Crisp B., Sharpe E., Manthorpe J., Hussein S., Moriarty J. and Stevens M. (2008) *Evaluation of the New Social Work Degree Qualification in England, Final Report to the Department of Health*, Glasgow School of Social Work, Sharpe Research and Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King's College London.
- ¹² Harris J., Manthorpe, J. and Hussein, S. (2008) *What Works in 'Grow Your Own' Initiatives for Social Work?* London: General Social Care Council.
- ¹³ Hussein, S., Manthorpe, J. and Harris, J. (2011) Do the characteristics of seconded or sponsored social work students in England differ from those of other social work students? -A quantitative analysis using national data. *Social Work Education*. 30(3): 345-359.
- ¹⁴ Moriarty, J., Manthorpe, J, Hussein, S. Stevens, M., Sharpe, E. MacIntyre, G. Orme, J. Green Lister, P. and Crisp, B. (2011) The Social Work Bursary in England: impact of funding arrangements upon social work education and the future workforce. *The British Journal of Social Work*. First Published 5th September 2011. DOI: 10.1093/bjsw/bcr117