Literature Scan II

Readiness to Practise

Part of the project –
Enhancing the readiness to practise of newly qualified social workers
in Aotearoa, New Zealand: (enhance R2P)

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Executive Summary

The readiness to practise of newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) in Aotearoa New Zealand is a contested subject. In recent years, criticisms by public figures including government ministers and the Children's Commissioner have stimulated debate within education and practice sectors. Media critique of frontline social worker practise has highlighted many of the practice and resourcing challenges faced by social workers. Significant policy developments, in particular the government review and subsequent development and implementation of the Ministry for Vulnerable Children Oranga Tamariki, has also increased the scrutiny of the capabilities and role of social workers.

The readiness of NQSWs to practise effectively across different fields of practice and with a range of client populations may be affected by several factors. NQSWs will have completed a recognised qualifying programme that provides them with a foundation of baseline knowledge, skills and values. As a student the NQSWs will have undertaken a minimum of 120 days of practice placement; a significant contribution to their development as a beginning practitioner. The learning and capability development of NQSWs will continue once they are in practice and this may be significantly affected by their work environment, initial induction processes, supervision, and ongoing continuing professional development. To enable a more integrated model of social work education and practice to ensure all social workers, including those that are newly qualified, are held accountable and have the capabilities to perform their role adequately, it is recommended that a professional capabilities framework be developed for Aotearoa New Zealand.

1. Background - The Aotearoa New Zealand Context

The readiness to practise of newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) is both topical and important. In Aotearoa New Zealand social work graduates seek employment in governmental and non-governmental organisations working in highly complex practice situations with some of the most vulnerable people in our community. Social workers have a significant role in supporting and advocating for clients, challenging social inequities and upholding principles of human rights and social justice.

There are multiple stakeholders with a legitimate interest in the capabilities and readiness of NQSWs to practise. In 2014 there were 3,721 social work students enrolled on recognised programmes within 17 different tertiary education institutions (TEIs) (five Universities; nine Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs); two Wānanga, and one Private Training Establishment (PTE). In 2015, enrolment numbers increased to 3,885 across the 29 TEI sites (Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB), 2015). The task of the TEIs is to adequately prepare students to become beginning practitioners by the end of their four year qualifying programme. The SWRB, as the social work regulator responsible for ensuring the safety of the public from social workers, monitors and recognises the TEI programmes for the purposes of registration (SWRB, 2016).

Other stakeholders interested in graduate preparedness include the professional bodies, primarily the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) and the Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association (TWSWA); large-scale employers of social workers (for instance, Ministry for Vulnerable Children Oranga Tamariki (MVCOT) and District Health Boards); and non-government organisations that also employ newly qualified social workers (NQSWs). Importantly, the service users who interact with social workers also have a valid interest in their readiness for professional and effective practice.

The activity of social workers frequently attracts media, public and political attention and there is understandably considerable interest in the training and the cognitive and personal capabilities of NQSWs. In the United Kingdom (UK) social work educators have played a leading role in researching workforce requirements (Moriarty & Manthorpe, 2013, 2014) and designing outcome frameworks (Taylor & Bogo, 2014; The College of Social Work, 2012) that may support the readiness to practise of new graduates. In Aotearoa New Zealand the readiness to practise of NQSWs is under-researched and therefore it is timely to closely examine this area drawing on the perspectives of key stakeholders.

Phase Two of the 3-year Enhance Readiness to Practice project addresses the question:

- How well prepared are NQSWs to enter professional social work practice and how is their learning being supported and enhanced in the workplace?

In order to answer this question the following activities will be undertaken:

- Write a literature scan of literature relevant to practice readiness.
- Conduct a survey of NQSWs (those practitioners who qualified within the previous 24 months) and managers.
- Conduct semi-structured interviews with NQSWs and their line manager/ supervisor
- Hold focus groups with service users.

- Write a report that discusses the readiness to practice of NQSWs in Aotearoa New Zealand (anonymised).

The remainder of this document outlines the scan of the relevant national and international literature on the readiness to practise of NQSWs, with an emphasis placed on literature from England.

A Brief Note on Methodology:

A literature scan is a rapid overview of literature, gathering information from a wide range of sources, as opposed to in-depth, thorough reviews (Superu, 2016). Literature was sought by searching academic databases (such as Google Scholar and online databases), relevant websites and identifying relevant resources from reference lists. There were some limitations identified including some literature not being readily accessible, and the dearth of research on the readiness to practice of NQSWs. As a result, the substantive literature originates from England, and therefore the following scan emphasises social work educational developments in England, with less attention paid to other countries.

Further there has been minimal research conducted on the readiness to practice of NQSWs, and this research, in large part, has been small-scale, ranging from 15-70 participants. The studies generally have involved both qualitative and quantitative data collection, including surveys and in-depth interviews. The mixed methodology enables greater understanding of the information participants shared, as opposed to those which only used quantitative methods. Some limitations of other studies include: time and funding restrictions; little representation from voluntary or private sectors;

participants self-selecting, which means the likelihood of them being proactive in their learning and involvement within the profession is higher; language barriers; and small sample sizes, which limits generalisation (see Bates et al., 2010; Engelberg & Limbach-Reich, 2016; Frost et al., 2013; Manthorpe, Moriarty, Stevens, Hussein, and Sharpe, 2014).

2. Why be concerned with readiness to practise of NQSWs?

Social work as a profession is tasked to engage with "people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing" (International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2014, np). To uphold the reputation of this professional discipline it follows that there should be a concern placed on whether NQSWs are ready to work with service users. Further, to ensure the safety of the public, the readiness of social workers to effectively engage with the community should be of utmost importance.

The readiness to practise of NQSWs, and social workers generally, is sometimes questioned following high profile incidents that have generated political pressure or questions of public trust in the people who have been working in the community with vulnerable people (Currer & Atherton, 2008). Understandably, after such critical incidents the practise of people involved in the situation is scrutinised. In Aotearoa New Zealand the work of social workers has come under the media and political spotlights in recent times, usually after the deaths or injuries of children and young people who have had involvement with the former Child Youth and Family Services (now Ministry for Vulnerable Children Oranga Tamariki (MVCOT). For example, the death of Nia Glassie in 2007 as a result of abuse by those who were meant to care for her led to investigations around social worker involvement. However there have been child deaths as a result of abuse since, such as the 2015 case of Moko Rangitoheriri who died as a result of abuse has led to investigations regarding social workers who were involved with him before his death, scrutinising whether they did everything possible to ensure his safety (Savage, 2017).

The readiness to practise of NQSWs is important so that these beginning practitioners are working with individuals, whānau, hapu, iwi, groups and communities in a competent manner. Although Frost, Höjer, and Campanini (2013) suggest that the notion of 'readiness for practise' is framed by the political and cultural and economic contexts of the country where the newly qualified graduate is situated there are likely commonalities across similar jurisdictions about what factors might constitute the standard of 'readiness'. Canadian and American researchers Craig, Dentato, Messinger, and McInroy (2016) define competence as "a mastery of knowledge, skills and attitudes or values required

in professional practice" (p. 116). Further they suggest that the phrase 'readiness to practise' indicates having reached a desired level of professional capability. As part of defining graduate competency they identify that NQSWs should have initiative, be able to justify their decisions, and be responsible for their work (Craig et al., 2016).

There have been few efforts both nationally and internationally to evaluate the skills, knowledge and capabilities of NQSWs and their readiness to practise (as identified by Bates, et al. , 2010; Bogo et al., 2012; Engelberg & Limbach-Reich, 2016; Gambrill, 2011; Orme et al., 2009; Pithouse & Scourfield, 2002). Given the potential risks associated with social workers entering a profession where they frequently work with vulnerable people it seems necessary to research this topic thoroughly. Engelberg and Limbach-Reich's (2016) recent study of the views of 70 supervisors on the knowledge and skills of newly qualified employees highlighted that practice proficiency extensively drew on generic skills. They encouraged further evaluations internationally of NQSWs so as to better understand the developing practice of new graduates and their preparedness for practice. Competence to practice is usually founded on the idea that "social workers need the critical, analytical and reasoning skills developed within the degree-level education" (Frost et al., 2013, p.332). Gaining insight into how prepared NQSWs are to practise helps to ensure the quality of education being provided is adequate and also offers information as to where improvements, either during or post-qualifying, can be made (Engelberg & Limbach-Reich, 2015; Grant, Sheridan, & Webb, 2017).

It is believed the first year post-qualifying and the transition into the workforce is one of the most challenging times in an individual's career, regardless of their profession (Eraut et al., 2003). The first year comes with many different experiences and learnings as a result of added responsibilities, realisation of gaps in their learning before entering practice, and the various ways new graduates are transitioned and also socialised into their profession by their employing organisation (Eraut et al., 2003). It is evident there have been similar challenges for many years now, which emphasises the need to evaluate the readiness to practice of NQSWs in New Zealand.

3. Preparation for practice

The responsibility of social work education

In Aotearoa New Zealand, as elsewhere, tertiary education institutions (TEIs) are the primary avenue of training for social workers and thus they have considerable responsibility for ensuring that their graduates are ready to work effectively with service users, groups and communities (Lafrance, Gray, & Herbert, 2004; Skilton, 2011). As Lafrance, Gray, and Herbert (2004) eloquently state:

> Social work academics have a responsibility to provide society with a stock of capable professionals who will guard the public interest and advance the status of the social work profession (p. 327).

Jack and Donnellan (2010) argue that qualifying education should however be viewed as more of a foundation to continuing learning, rather than expecting NQSWs to be fully ready to practise when entering the workforce. Hussein, Moriarty, Stevens, Sharpe, and Manthorpe (2014) suggest that when challenges arise surrounding the performance of social workers, scrutiny is often placed on the quality of their qualifying education as opposed to how their workforce experiences have impacted on the quality of their practice, whether positively or negatively. After critical incidents such as a child death the confidence of the public in social workers generally decreases and disproportionate attention frequently falls upon the qualifying programme (Staempfli, Adshead, & Fletcher, 2015). For example, changes were made within the social work profession in England following a review by the Social Work Taskforce of frontline social work practice. As a result of the changes implemented, an independent review of social work education was carried out, which found many positives about social work curriculum and training, and suggestions were provided to transform and enhance the areas that could be improved (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014).

Longstanding debates about the purpose of social work education have focused on whether the primary objective is to prepare social work students for working in specific practice settings, or with general, transferable skills that they can adapt to changing political and organisational environments (Agllias, 2010; Moriarty, 2011; Watt, 1998). In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, the latter approach has been favoured with TEI programmes emphasising a generic curriculum, which is not overly prescriptive (Beddoe, 2014). This is endorsed by the SWRB regulatory framework that approves these programmes to develop graduates ready for practise and with the competencies to enable professional registration (SWRB, 2016).

Education providers are generally expected to equip students so they can develop social work values, knowledge and skills (Frost et al., 2013). There are however questions as to whether or not academic content is relevant; if students get enough general and specific skills and knowledge training for future employment roles; and whether they have relevant knowledge to sustain practice over time and across different social work tasks (Frost et al., 2013). Other scholars have suggested that TEIs should teach general social work programmes, and that specialist training, for example in mental health or child protection, could be a path for ongoing professional development (Staempfli et al., 2015). A perceived disparity between what is taught and the actual reality of practice raises further questions about whether social work curricula are 'fit for purpose' (Agllias, 2010; Wilson & Kelly, 2010).

Holstrom (2013) proposes that TEIs should also be developing student characteristics that are critical for the development of effective and wise social work practitioners. There is however no consensus as to what characteristics, knowledge and capabilities employers may be seeking from new graduates (Knight & Yorke, 2003). Preston-Shoot (2004) has reported discrepancies between what managers and NQSWs view as necessary skills when entering the workforce. In his study managers viewed procedural and instrumental skills such as record and time keeping as being essential, while new practitioners believed process and interpersonal skills were of higher importance (Preston-Shoot, 2004). Similarly, and again speaking from the English context, Manthorpe, Harris , and Hussein (2012) have indicated that there is inconsistency among the expectations of employers, educators and social workers about what education is expected and required to ensure social work students will be ready to practise. That said, based on the information Grant, Sheridan, and Webb (2014, 2017) gathered from their Scottish studies, social work qualifying education is generally seen to be appropriate and adequate in terms of preparing students for practising in the workforce. Information of this kind has not been comprehensively gathered in Aotearoa New Zealand at this point.

A study by Hay and Brown (2015) in Aotearoa New Zealand examined the perspectives of thirteen agency managers on practice placements. The findings illustrated that these managers had preferences for specific attributes including flexibility, humility, confidence and resilience (Hay & Brown, 2015). The authors also emphasised that in the qualifying programme "increased attention should be given to the development and assessment of student personal and interpersonal capabilities" so as to enhance both placement opportunities and future employability (p.712). These authors raise the pertinent question of the need to identify "what capabilities should be expected in social work students and graduates" (p.712).

Social work education as 'gatekeeper'

Social work education is often considered to be a 'gatekeeper' for the wider profession (Elpers & FitzGerald, 2013; Robertson, 2013). Curriculum, regulations and standards provide important frameworks for ensuring that NQSWs are ready to practise. If students meet qualifying programme standards then they are regarded as ready and suitable for beginning social work practice. Gatekeeping may happen at different stages in the programme, for example, at admission, in specific courses with assessments, during practicum courses or when doubts about suitability arise (Currer & Atherton, 2008).

In Aotearoa New Zealand as in other countries, NQSWs must be seen to be 'suitable' and 'ready' to become a social worker. There are however challenges in defining 'suitability' (Currer & Atherton, 2008; Moriarty, 2011) and further examination of what is meant by 'suitability and 'readiness' are required. There is also some tension between social work education being a period of professional formation (Clark, 1995) and whether judgements about suitability should be based on single incidents or events (Currer & Atherton, 2008). Apaitia-Vague, Pitt, and Younger (2011) question whether students in Aotearoa New Zealand may be discriminated against if they signal personal history such as mental unwellness. When being accepted into a social work programme, academic abilities are often focused on, although Lafrance, Gray, and Herbert (2004) identify that in addition to academic prowess, other areas need particular attention including: maturity; honesty and integrity; and sense of comfort with emotions.

TEIs may then act as gatekeepers at different stages of a student's journey through the qualifying programme. Selected entry is common in local qualifying programmes and students may be interviewed by tertiary staff, screened for criminal convictions, asked to self-disclose any matters concerning their fitness to become a social worker, required to write a short essay about themselves, and asked to provide references from community representatives. Once enrolled in a programme, students are expected to abide by relevant Codes of Conduct and Ethics; self-disclose any change in circumstances that might impact on their ability to continue in the programme (such as a particular criminal conviction); and undergo further police checking and screening, usually prior to placements. The introduction of the Vulnerable Children Act (2014) in Aotearoa New Zealand has added another level of screening for social work students, with all agencies who work with children who may be seen to be vulnerable requiring this process to be concluded before a student is accepted for placement. The regulations of the SWRB also set parameters that many TEIs have subsequently adopted on specific categories of a person being 'fit and proper'. These include: character; professional background; communication; criminal history and health (SWRB, 2017)

There is some concern that judgements about student readiness and suitability to practise could be harsher in the tertiary institution than in the workplace (Currer & Atherton, 2008) although it could be argued that this is not as likely in the Aotearoa New Zealand context due to the incorporation of SWRB standards into many of the TEIs own regulations and standards. That said, the SWRB Programme Recognition Standards which are the benchmark standards for all TEIs that offer qualifying programmes that will enable their graduates to apply for social work registration, do not explicitly require providers to assess the readiness and suitability of students in their programmes. This perhaps indicates an assumption that such measures are established by the providers as part of their entry selection and placement processes. TEIs do have to assess students against the SWRB ten core competencies and guarantee that all graduates meet the graduate profile indicators (see Appendix A). These measures may also be seen to be assessments of a student's readiness to begin practising as a NQSW.

The curriculum and readiness for practise

In Aotearoa New Zealand the TEI curriculum for social work has become increasingly targeted, primarily by politicians, as inadequately preparing NQSWs for practice. Since 2003 and the passing of the Social Worker Registration Act the social work curriculum has become more closely monitored and is now subject to a regular cycle of auditing and approval. Within this regulatory process there is however flexibility for individual TEIs to shape and deliver their own curriculum although the SWRB Programme Standards do have to be upheld. This document includes requirements associated with governance, curriculum, field education, admission criteria, professional and stakeholder collaboration and staff resources (SWRB, 2016). The 11 requirements under the curriculum standard traverse elements of design, subject matter, face-to-face, marae and online delivery components, assessment of the SWRB core competencies and readiness of graduates to work across fields of practice. The emphasis on skill development and field education in the SWRB document resonates with the considerable literature on the significance of field education (practice placements) on student development and learning (Elpers & FitzGerald, 2013; Hay, Ballantyne, & Brown, 2014; Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010). As Frost and colleagues comment "…there is little doubt that field placements are perhaps the most unequivocally appreciated element of the education" (Frost et al., 2013, p.338). Practice learning then should complement other academic courses (Bates et al., 2010; Moriarty, 2011; Moriarty et al., 2010) and provide students with opportunities to become practice-ready (Watt, 1998).

Practice assessors in Moriarty and Manthorpe's (2013) research viewed their role as central for skill and knowledge development of students, especially in terms of their capacity to link theory into

practice. They also recognised that variation between individual students was inevitable and therefore that some NQSWs would become more ready to practise than others. Placement learning may also be impacted by factors such as the student's interest in the field of practice and the compatibility of fit within the agency (Moriarty et al., 2010). Having practice experience within an agency, working within a team and understanding how policies guide practice is important for the development of skills, knowledge and understanding of how to work in an organisational context (Mann, 2010). Manthorpe, et al.(2014) reported that NQSWs who had been on placement in the agency where they were subsequently employed were more easily able to take on more complex cases quickly as they were already familiar with the policy and procedures. This resonates with the conversation between Hay, Franklin, and Hardyment (2012) in which they highlighted that practice experience can provide an overview of the organisational structure and core functions of the placement agency. They do however caution that the student role is protected and the transition to being an employee can be quite shocking as new graduates become exposed to a higher and more complex workload (Hay et al., 2012).

While practice placements may significantly contribute to the preparation of becoming a social worker, other academic and interpersonal components are also expected to contribute to a foundation of learning and practise for NQSWs (Bogo, 2006). Stone's (2016) doctoral research which included gathering the perspectives of 17 practice educators provides important viewpoints on NQSWs' readiness for practise. Her findings illustrate that while baseline knowledge, values and skills may support a student to pass their final placement, it is the individual student's approach to learning, emotional intelligence and resilience that will give confidence that they are more likely to be able to cope in a beginning social work role (Stone, 2016). She emphasises that, in combination, these are the six elements of competence that NQSWs require in order to be ready for practise

Frost, Höjer, and Campanini (2013) facilitated a comparative study of student perspectives on their readiness to practise. Students who were nearing completion of their qualification from England, Sweden and Italy were invited to respond to the following question: *do you feel ready for practise?* Their findings suggested that students "demonstrated a great deal of ambivalence about theory in their education" (Frost et al., 2013, p.336). In general, theories were not viewed very positively or applicable to practice although some students appeared to value macro theory. There was some sense of questioning the application of theory to social work practice. Further, many students found it somewhat difficult to articulate specific theories although many were able to name but not explain them, for example, systems theory and solution-focused theories. In contrast to the findings from Stone's study, the students in Frost et al.'s research varied on the extent they felt personal growth

and development was part of their education or of value to them post-qualifying (Frost et al., 2013). Overwhelmingly, practice placements were seen to be important by students in their study and many wanted more time provided for these (Frost et al., 2013).

Similarly, the students in Watt's (1998) study considered that observational and practice experiences that assisted with theory to practice competence and interpersonal learning, such as classroom exercises and placements were essential for their qualifying education. Students found it beneficial to have the opportunity to consult practitioners while on placement, and explore the practicality and reality of the theory and academic elements they had been taught (Watt, 1998).

In Currer and Atherton's (2008) study eleven social work and nursing tertiary staff in English universities were presented with three vignettes during a semi-structured interview and invited to discuss their decision-making process around the suitability of each of the students in the vignettes. Of note, the participants emphasised the importance of student's honesty, disclosure and accountability for them to be able to proceed through the qualification and also be a social worker in practice (Currer & Atherton, 2008). This connection with interpersonal attributes resonates with Stone's (2016) six elements of competence as outlined above.

Learning to be a reflexive practitioner and being involved in problem-based learning scenarios may also be valuable aspects of the social work curriculum. Fook (2002) suggests that NQSWs who have been exposed to the use of critical reflection during their tertiary training are likely to be more prepared for the pressure of working within an agency and with complex cases. Reflecting on personal prejudices and assumptions and reflection on practice situations contribute to the NQSWs practice foundation (Fook, 2002). Wilson and Kelly (2010) also identify the importance of reflective practice being taught in the qualifying programme and according to Craig et al., (2016), through education NQSWs should have gained enough self-awareness to be conscious of and eliminate personal biases when working with a range of people. New graduates who can challenge and raise issues concerning the exercise of power, oppression and discrimination may also be in a better position to practise effectively when entering the workforce (Bradley, 2008).

There are limitations on the curriculum and the ability of the TEI to prepare students to be ready for practise as NQSWs. Moriarty (2011) has suggested that in England the most common gaps found in the social work curriculum included practise-based skills, theory to practice skills and analytical skills needed for risk assessment. While some skills such as decision-making and communication may be taught to a certain extent in the TEI it may be more conducive to develop these in practice settings

(Moriarty, 2011). Therefore, while having a generic qualification may not hinder the practice of NQSWs, a lack of further learning and development opportunities in the workforce might (Grant et al., 2017; Mann, 2010). This reinforces the view that while the TEI has a considerable responsibility to implement a robust curriculum the learning and development of the NQSW should also continue in the workforce.

4. Out in Practice

Competence of the NQSW

As mentioned earlier, education providers in Aotearoa New Zealand need to ensure they teach in a way which assists NQSWs to enter the workforce and be able to meet the SWRB competencies. The expected capabilities of social workers can change throughout their career, as they become more experienced or enter leadership roles within organisations, meaning there is a separation between competence for practice (prior to practice) and competence in practice (post-qualification) (Frost et al., 2013). Having experience in the workplace to solidify learning and continue to develop as a practitioner provides further opportunity for graduates to become competent in their practice. This view is supported by Hussein, Moriarty, Stevens, Sharpe, and Manthorpe (2014) who suggest that not all NQSWs emerge from their qualifying education with the necessary knowledge, skills and expertise to practise in a specific field, for example, child protection, or at different levels of an organisation.

The transition from being a student to being a new graduate can be very challenging. Student life offers considerable flexibility and the supports offered by tertiary staff are no longer available (Hay, Franklin, & Hardyment, 2012). In addition there is increased pressure on NQSWs to manage multiple tasks and perform as an employee, rather than in the more protected student role (Seden & McCormick, 2011; Walker, Crawford, & Parker, 2008). Manthorpe, Moriarty, Stevens, Hussein, and Sharpe (2014) found that NQSWs may have to manage complex and sometimes volatile cases and this creates considerable uncertainty around whether they are ready for engaging with this level of work. NQSWs that were on placement in their employing organisation may face further pressure as they may be expected to already understand aspects of the procedures, policies and practice but often without having experienced a structured and comprehensive induction programme (Hay, Franklin, & Hardyment, 2012).

The ethical and professional competence of NQSWs was examined by Strom-Gottfried (2000) who scrutinised 781 ethics violations in cases between 1986 and 1997 in the United States of America. Approximately 33% were associated with 'boundary violations' and another 20% were assigned as 'poor practice'. The other identified categories included "competence; record-keeping; honesty; confidentiality; informed consent; collegial actions; reimbursement; and conflicts of interest…" (cited in Currer & Atherton, 2008, p.284). What constitutes appropriate professional conduct can be viewed differently amongst social workers and this raises a challenge for NQSWs who are still developing an understanding of competence (Jayaratne, Croxton, and Matson, 1997).

Variation in competence of NQSWS may be based on their prior experience within social service settings, along with some complex skills taking longer to develop, for instance applying and articulating the theory in their practice (Moriarty et al., 2010). Within practice, NQSWs are often more prepared for process-oriented components, such as building rapport and doing assessments with clients. However, previous research indicates they seem less prepared for instrumental aspects, such as case management and budgeting issues (Grant et al., 2014). Agencies may also sometimes expect NQSWs to have more knowledge about instrumental processes than what they do, assuming educators have taught this within the qualifying education (Grant et al., 2014, 2017).

The following four tables summarise the literature pertaining to:

- o Table 1 :Perceived competencies and capabilities from NQSWs (Bates et al., 2010; Evans & Huxley, 2008; Grant et al., 2014; Lyons & Manion, 2004; Moriarty, 2011; Preston-Shoot, 2004).
- o Table 2: Skills and knowledge required from a NQSW (summarised from a literature review by Moriarty, 2011)
- o Table 3:Employer expectations of NQSWs competencies and capabilities (Agllias, 2010; Yu et al., 2016).
- o Table 4: Service user expectations of a NQSW (Preston-Shoot, 2004)

Table 1: Perceived competencies and capabilities

What NQSWs felt competent in based on their qualifying education	What NQSWs wished they learned in qualifying education
- Report writing and assessment skills - Communication skills, - Social work methods and legislation, - Responding to cultural differences, - Evidence and research-based practice, - Commitment to social work values - Working in an organisation and inter-professional working - The role and responsibilities of a social worker - Applying theory to practice	- Transferable contextual information, e.g. budgeting and finance, record keeping, report writing, time management, case management, use of information technology - Making complex and challenging decisions - Dealing with aggression and hostility - Communicating with children - Understanding of theory about the nature of social problems - Methods of intervention and skills

Table 2: Skills and knowledge required from a NQSW

Skills and knowledge required from a NQSW
- Knowledge of legislation, local systems and resources, roles and responsibilities of other professionals and new research evidence   - Decision making skills   - Interpersonal and communication skills   - Record keeping skills   - Analytical skills   - Balance between sympathising and challenging

Table 3: Employer expectations of NQSWs competencies and capabilities

Employer expectations of NQSWs competencies and capabilities
- Record keeping   - Working in multidisciplinary teams   - Recognition of the need for supervision and committing to it   - Recognition of the need for referral, and being able to refer clients   - Advocacy   - Effective teamwork and communication   - Understanding of how wider society can impact on the client's circumstances   - Involvement in ongoing professional development   - Reflectivity and self-awareness   - Practice which aligns with social work values and ethics   - Empathic understanding and non-judgemental communication   - Self-direction and autonomy   - Practice informed by theory

Table 4: Service user expectations of a NQSW

Service user expectations of a NQSW
- Ability to create quality relationships, which includes a social worker being warm, empathetic, understanding, reliable and non-judgemental   - Adequate case management which does not make assumptions about people's wants and needs   - Counselling, listening and advocacy skills, insightful assessments, interpersonal and practical skills, and therapeutic work

The importance of the work environment

Managers play a significant role in supporting NQSWs in the workforce. There are various ways in which this support can be offered. The assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) in England has been touted as an example of a programme that significantly assists the professional development of NQSW capabilities. This 12 month programme supports the NQSWs in their first year of employment, primarily focusing on developing knowledge, skills and professional confidence (http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/). During the programme managers generally allocate reduced caseloads to NQSWs compared to those who have been practising for some time. Further, less complex cases are assigned to the NQSWs although due to the unpredictability of cases, sometimes these may be more challenging than expected (Manthorpe et al., 2014). In some organisations mentoring systems allow for more opportunities for co-working, although it can be difficult to get busy social workers to agree to this (Manthorpe et al., 2014). While the ASYE is an excellent initiative for NQSWs there are some challenges. Providing NQSWs with a supported transition can be a challenge if the necessary resources are not available such as a core, experienced and stable team of practitioners to balance out the reduced workload of the NQSW (Manthorpe et al., 2014). In addition it is possible for managers to offer too much support, which could restrict NQSWs from becoming independent professionals (Manthorpe et al., 2014). Managers may also find it difficult to provide extra support for NQSWs on top of their other responsibilities. As the programme requires the NQSW to be regularly assessed, the new graduates may be more motivated to actively participate if this assessment is based on work tasks and not too similar to their tertiary education (Manthorpe et al., 2014).

Although managers play a significant support role, not all of the NQSWs in Jack and Donnellan's (2010) study were satisfied with the timeliness or extent of support offered by them. For instance, several participants highlighted the pressure of having added responsibilities and challenges with accessibility of advice when making decisions about certain cases. Considering this, managers need to be realistic about the amount of time it takes a graduate to transition from gaining a professional qualification to functioning and practising as a professional (Grant et al., 2017; Manthorpe et al., 2012). Managers therefore play a significant role in the transition of NQSWs into the workforce, from facilitating an induction process to supporting the NQSW in their daily tasks. This transition into the workforce is often more effective for NQSWs if their managers are trained and supported appropriately to fulfil the complex responsibilities (Manthorpe et al., 2014). The interviews carried out by Manthorpe, Moriarty, Stevens, Hussein, and Sharpe (2014), suggest that social work skills are essential for managers to possess to ensure they understand the work practitioners do, especially

when supporting NQSWs. If a manager's needs are addressed, they will be able to support NQSWs more effectively and provide them with beneficial learning, such as mechanisms to cope with the realities of the social work profession (Jack & Donnellan, 2010; Manthorpe et al., 2014).

The role as a manager supporting a NQSW then could hold more responsibility and commitment than has been previously acknowledged especially during a NQSWs first year in practice (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014; Grant et al., 2017). While the notion of NQSWs 'sinking or swimming' when they first enter the workforce is somewhat commonplace, giving opportunities for managers and educators to collaborate on transition pathways and develop better understandings of what is taught by the TEI and what is expected from the employer may enable a smoother transition from the classroom to the field (Grant et al., 2017; Mann, 2010).

The broader context of the agency in which NQSWs begin their social work practice can also have a large impact on the transition experience of these new practitioners. The atmosphere of an agency, including the culture, practices, expectations and complexity of the work can have a significant influence on the confidence and competence of NQSWs (Jack & Donnellan, 2010). Realistic expectations of the capabilities of NQSWs is also required although in the study by Yu, Moulding, Buchanan, and Hand, many practitioners expected the new graduates to be working to a moderate or advanced level across the various fields of practice (Yu et al., 2016).

Strong team personalities, culture and black humour can also be challenging for a NQSW (Manthorpe et al., 2014). A variety of support networks within organisations can however provide opportunities that allow NQSWs to debrief and not become too overwhelmed by the emotional demand and stress of new tasks and learnings (Jack & Donnellan, 2010). Support from colleagues as well as from line managers during supervision is valuable (Grant et al., 2017). As Bradley (2008) suggests, working alongside colleagues who are encouraging, respectful, and understanding can be an empowering experience during the initial phase of a NQSW's professional career. Support and nurturing of NQSWs is more effective if it is a team effort, as building strong collegial relationships will contribute to job satisfaction levels and increase a commitment to the organisation (Hussein et al., 2014). The extent to which a NQSWs support needs are met by their organisations also determines how well they transition into the workforce, as frequently the reality of the job is unanticipated, thus heightening the stress of the graduate (Jack & Donnellan, 2010). Agencies in which NQSWs practice need to provide learning space where new practitioners can solidify their academic learnings through practice experiences, supervision and reflection (Preston-Shoot, 2004). However, learning opportunities may

not be as accessible in circumstances where agency resources, staffing, environment and support are inadequate (Frost et al., 2013; Yu et al., 2016).

Induction

When entering the social work profession, NQSWs may experience a range of induction processes that can influence whether their transition into the workforce is positive or negative. If an induction process is not implemented shortly after beginning employment, NQSWs may feel particularly vulnerable in the new environment (Hay et al., 2012). Although most NQSWs have some experience of being introduced into an organisation post-qualifying, Grant, Sheridan, and Webb (2014, 2017) emphasise that the likelihood of formal inductions taking place is relatively low. These authors also highlight that there are disparities between what is considered an adequate induction process; whether it is being oriented into the organisation and understanding its policies and procedures, or whether it is a transition period into the realities of social work practice (Grant et al., 2014, 2017). A sufficient induction should address a NQSW's personal and professional needs, as together these often govern how prepared a NQSW is to practise within the specific setting (Bates et al., 2010). The individual needs will vary according to the age and experience of the NQSW (Manthorpe et al., 2014).

An effective induction process can have considerable benefits for a NQSW's readiness to practise as they feel more prepared to manage their new role (Davis, Gordon, & Walker, 2011; Hay et al., 2012). Comprehensive inductions are essential for NQSWs in their first year of practice, as it allows them to feel confident, competent and to establish networks with their colleagues and other professionals (Bates et al., 2010; Grant et al., 2014, 2017; Moriarty, 2011). Kearns and McArdle (2012) also identify induction as being a process where self-efficacy and organisational culture is emphasised, leaving supervision and intra and inter-agency learning as forums for the integration and development of key skills and knowledge. Effective early employment experiences, such as induction, can reduce the dependence of NQSWs on their managers later in employment, having a greater positive long term impact for both the NQSW and other agency staff (Jack & Donnellan, 2010).

Inductions may vary in their form and focus. Formal, structured inductions provide NQSWs with a general understanding of an organisation, including its values, procedures, the legislation which underpins practise, and the responsibilities the NQSW will have (Bates et al., 2010). Induction may also include the assignment of a mentor, as well an introduction to the organisation, including details regarding organisational policies and procedures. In the first month an agreement on the NQSW's learning objectives, the expected number and complexity of cases, the level and frequency of

supervision, and how evaluation of the process will take place can be decided. The ongoing evaluative process is important for integration into the agency and development of the NQSW and may be focused on specific needs, what could have been done better and what the NQSW is doing well in their practice (Bradley, 2008). A period where NQSWs can shadow experienced social workers and co-work for the first three months of being in the workforce may allow them to become grounded and find their place within both the organisation and the profession (Jack & Donnellan, 2010; Manthorpe et al., 2014).

Similarly, a 'probationary year' post-qualifying, providing guidance and allowing for a smooth transition from being a student to a professional can alleviate considerable stress on the NQSW (Mann, 2010). Mentoring and coaching of NQSWs may be occurring in many social service agencies in Aotearoa New Zealand however this has not been well documented in the academic literature. Hay, Franklin, and Hardyment (2012) in their case study of the transition of a student into an employee at Child Youth and Family Services (now the Ministry for Vulnerable Children Oranga Tamariki) acknowledged mentoring in that agency is "… an accepted practice that supports the integration of the new graduate into the workplace" (p.7).

Supervision

NQSWs often view supervision as a time of learning and support as they find it beneficial to process their work when transitioning from a student to professional; including new skills and knowledge, and challenges they have faced (Agllias, 2010, Hay et al., 2012; Jack & Donnellan, 2010). First year social workers in Australia found that professional identity development was critical in the first year of their social work career (Agllias, 2010). It was essential they were provided opportunities to reflect on how their identity was evolving, and found supervision with a familiar, senior social worker was beneficial. However, often this type of reflection is not incorporated into supervision for NQSWs (Agllias, 2010, Grant et al., 2014; Preston-Shoot, 2004). Bradley (2008) emphasises that TEIs should educate NQSWs on the various types of supervision to prepare them for their practice. However, many NQSWs find the reality of supervision different to the taught models. Supervision can often be unstructured, postponed or cancelled and not address the topics which NQSWs view as necessary (Bradley, 2008). Having increased supervision sessions in the first year of practice may lead to greater confidence in managing workloads, engagement with the job, and improvements in the professional practice of NQSWs (Manthorpe et al., 2015).

In other studies, NQSWs have highlighted that they do not feel fully supported through the supervision process and do not receive the regular formal supervision which is deemed necessary (Grant et al., 2014; Jack & Donnellan, 2010). If they do receive regular supervision, it is often focused on case management, performance issues and accountability, as opposed to reflection on topics such as personal development, theory to practice and emotional wellbeing (Grant et al., 2014; Jack & Donnellan, 2010). While this administrative supervision was viewed as helpful for NQSWs to develop their professional practice and prioritise their workload, the maintenance of professional boundaries and managing stress were neglected elements (Manthorpe et al., 2015). Essentially, the focus of supervision has shifted away from the supportive and educative functions and onto administrative and procedural tasks, and while this may have benefits in case management and audit, it does not necessarily meet the needs of those developing their professional resilience. As acknowledged by Grant, Sheridan and Webb (2014), managers can find it difficult to meet the broader needs of NQSWs in supervision due to work loading and staffing pressures. In organisations with a significant number of NQSWS and low staffing levels of advanced practitioners, a vicious cycle of limited support and high turnover can eventuate (Manthorpe et al., 2014). Kinman and Grant (2016) suggest that awareness of the value of high-quality reflective supervision may develop more slowly in the first year of practice. Social workers in an Aotearoa New Zealand study were positive in their affirmation of supervision as a positive aspect of professional resilience throughout their career (Beddoe, Davys, & Adamson, 2014). The extent to which early career social workers' may have access to high quality reflective supervision requires further study.

Continuing professional development

While there may be no consensus on how to best measure 'readiness to practise' there is a distinction between thinking qualifying education is a developmental process and thinking it is an end product (Grant et al., 2017; Moriarty et al., 2011). In the Australian context, Moorhead, Bell, and Bowles (2016) suggest that NQSWs are often expected to enter the workforce as a finished product with the ability to perform work with limited resources and minimal ongoing support. The understanding of knowledge and skills that has been acquired through tertiary education, however, only provides a foundation for quality practice and ongoing professional development is essential (Grant et al., 2017; Moriarty, 2011). Therefore there is a need to gain further skills and knowledge from avenues wider than the qualifying social work programme, to ensure NQSWs continue to expand their abilities and keep up with changing societal challenges and organisational priorities (Moriarty, 2011).

The New Zealand Social Worker Registration Board defines continuing professional development as:

… the maintenance and enhancement of knowledge, expertise and competence of professionals throughout their careers according to a formulated plan with regards to the needs of the professional, the employer, the profession and society and is identifiably linked to the context of work and/or future career development (http://www.swrb.govt.nz/already-registered/continuing-professional-development).

Commitment by employers and NQSWs to ongoing professional development should not just be focused on further training opportunities but be grounded in initial induction processes and regular formal supervision (Howarth & Morrison, 1999; Preston-Shoot, 2004). NQSWs may be unaware of what is expected of them in terms of ongoing personal and professional development and opportunities to formulate what they want to learn as they enter the workforce may be limited (Grant et al., 2014). Professional development goals are essential with a focus in the first year or so of practice on transferring learning from being a student to being a beginning practitioner (Preston-Shoot, 2004). Within the first year of practice, specific role training, informal training and viewing the workplace as a learning hub have been identified to be of importance, further developing the knowledge and skills attained from formal education (Bates et al., 2010). Importantly, professional development should be individualised as NQSWs will develop various skills and knowledge at different times throughout their education and professional career (Wilson & Kelly, 2010).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, NQSWs need to have met several requirements in order to become fully registered. These requirements include completing 2000 hours of supervised practice post qualification; being a graduate of an approved tertiary programme; holding a valid competence certificate and meeting the criteria for being a fit and proper person to be a social worker (see http://swrb.govt.nz/). A social worker can be provisionally registered for up to eight years however they must keep their competence certificate updated during this time. Provisionally and fully registered social workers are required to undertake a minimum of 20 hours of continuing professional development every year. While it is expected that 'good' employers would support various learning opportunities for NQSWs there is no known research that has explored this important issue, specifically for an NQSW. In an analysis of the first SWRB audit of CPD logs, Beddoe and Duke (2013) noted that the audit demonstrated a lack of planned development of CPD in career goals.

5. Professional capabilities framework

In Aotearoa New Zealand there is currently no comprehensive understanding of what should be expected from NQSWs and social workers at other stages of their career. This limits clarity around what capabilities NQSWs should be expected to have so as to be able to practise effectively with individuals, whānau, hapu, iwi, groups and communities. Consideration of the development of a framework that can assist with this understanding is therefore timely and important.

In England the formulation of a Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) has enabled greater clarity for social workers, employers and the public in respect of reasonable expectations at each level of the social work career path, beginning at pre-entry to a social work qualifying programme. The PCF provides a tool within which the social work profession transparently judges the quality of individual, team and organisational practice (The College of Social Work, 2012). This Framework also recognises practitioners' past experiences as well as ongoing developmental areas. The PCF includes nine capabilities which are interdependent. The capabilities outline the minimum standards which a social worker must meet in order to remain fit to practise within the profession (Social Care Learning Forum, 2017). The Framework is flexible and therefore allows for assessment in any field of practice or practice situation.

The nine capabilities include:

- o Professionalism
- o Values and ethics
- o Diversity
- o Rights and justice
- o Knowledge
- o Critical reflection
- o Intervention and skills
- o Contexts and organisations
- o Professional leadership

Several advantages of implementing a PCF have been identified including its relevance to the various levels of professional development including for a NQSW, its visual representation, its holistic nature, and its role and contribution within education (The College of Social Work, 2015). The PCF also provides a foundation for social work as a profession in England, placing value on the profession, and providing better understanding for the public and those in other disciplines (Dunn & Yeoman, 2011;

Higgins, 2016). The PCF has contributed, at least in part, to building the trust of the public towards social workers through its focus on accountability and has helped to maintain social work as a profession within changing contexts (Higgins, 2016; The College of Social Work, 2015).

Whilst the PCF has considerable merit, significant challenges have been raised around the practical and realistic implementation of the framework, and whether funding, resources, and existing structures limit the extent to which it can develop and change practice (Dunn & Yeoman, 2011; Higgins, 2016). The need for everyone involved to be fully committed to practising under the framework was identified as a factor for its effective implementation (Dunn & Yeoman, 2011). The PCF provides a platform for the tertiary sector to evaluate, redesign and implement a social work curriculum that is relevant, measureable and fit for purpose. The TEIs then have a responsibility to ensure their qualifying programmes teach what is needed to reach the required standards (Social Care Learning Forum, 2017). The PCF is also used to assess pre-qualifying social workers on their placements thus contributing to a determination as to whether they are ready for practice. Evaluations of the PCF are few due to its recent implementation. Higgins (2016) however, suggests the development of the PCF has resulted in a more integrated model of social work education and practice, bringing the two together to ensure all social workers, regardless of what level of practising they are at, are held accountable and have the capabilities to perform the job adequately.

6. Conclusion

This brief overview of the literature aimed to orient the team, our research participants and the wider stakeholder community to the second phase of the enhance R2P project. This phase has the readiness to practise of NQSWs as the central focus. In our review we offered a brief background of the pertinence of exploring factors that may contribute to NQSWs being ready to practise. We then went on to explore elements of social work education, including the curriculum and practice placements, which provide a foundation for future practice. Readiness to practice is not only shaped through tertiary education but also within the work environment and the ongoing learning that occurs post-qualifying. Ensuring NQSWs are continuing to be educated and supported in the practice environment is essential. While this review has highlighted many of the components that contribute to a NQSW's readiness to practice, there is currently an absence of a mechanism in Aotearoa New Zealand that identifies key capabilities and at what stage of a social worker's development these could be expected to be achieved. To ensure a cross-section of stakeholder views on what these capabilities may be, a national survey of NQSWs and employers, individual interviews with NQSWS and

supervisors/managers and focus groups with service users will be conducted in this phase of the project. Further, the collaborative creation of a professional capabilities framework, the focus of phase 3 of this project, will provide an opportunity to address an identified need in the Aotearoa New Zealand social work environment.

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Appendix A: SWRB Core competencies and Graduate profile

Core Competencies (Social Workers Registration Board, 2015)

1. Competence to practise social work with Māori

2. Competence to practise social work with different ethnic and cultural groups in Aotearoa New Zealand

3. Competence to work respectfully and inclusively with diversity and difference in practice

4. Competence to promote the principles of human rights and social and economic justice

5. Competence to engage in practice which promotes social change.

6. Competence to understand and articulate social work theories, indigenous practice knowledge, other relevant theories, and social work practice methods and models.

7. Competence to apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

8. Competence to promote empowerment of people and communities to enable positive change.

9. Competence to practice within legal and ethical boundaries of the social work profession.

10. Represents the social work profession with integrity and professionalism.

o   Demonstrate the ability to work in a bi-cultural context and acknowledge the centrality of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to social work as a profession and in practice

o   Apply anti oppressive social work values, knowledge and skills to complex situations to stimulate personal and social change in a range of work and social contexts

o   Have the ability to work with individuals, families or whanau, communities and groups from diverse ethnic, cultural and indigenous backgrounds

o   Demonstrate resilience and the ability to manage interpersonal conflict and challenges that arise in the context of social work practice

o   Demonstrate knowledge of the origins, purpose and development of Aotearoa New Zealand social work within a global context

o   Demonstrate professional literacy and numeracy, critically evaluate scholarship, critique and apply diverse knowledge and research to social work practice

o   Demonstrate an ability to think critically, and effectively analyse, synthesise and apply information

o   Demonstrate the ability to work autonomously and make independent judgments from a well-informed social work position

o   Demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively with others in multi-disciplinary

teams, organizations and communities

o   Demonstrate a critical reflective approach to individual social work practice through supervision, peer review and self-evaluation

o   Demonstrate an ability to recognize own learning needs and participates in continuing professional development

o   Demonstrate an ability to effectively utilise ongoing professional supervision and a commitment to continuing professional development

o   Demonstrate understanding of, and ability to, integrate sustainability and contemporary social, political, psychological, economic, legal, environmental, cultural and indigenous issues within Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally into both social work as a profession and practice

o   Demonstrate an awareness of the level of skills, knowledge, information, attributes and abilities of a new social work graduate