

## **Return to the front line: a study on a project to prepare non practising social workers to re-enter children and families social work practice.**

The Social Work Reform Board and the Munro Review of child protection have highlighted the considerable pressures experienced by social workers in children's social work and identified key issues both in workforce planning and social work education. The purpose of the study is to identify the findings from the study and link them to the Reform Board and Munro agendas.

This paper is a report on a commissioned project for the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC). In 2009 London South Bank University Social Work Group successfully bid to develop a programme to encourage and support previously qualified social workers to return to practice. The social work team at LSBU sought wide consultation from stakeholders, including employers and young people leaving care. Nine modules were developed in key areas and the programme was launched in spring 2011. There were three critical stages to this project:

1. Developing the materials
2. Delivering and revising the programme
3. Implications for future children and families practice

Some of the key findings from the study are:

- The difficulties in defining a core children and family curriculum in a time of flux.
- The tensions between training and educating social workers.
- The need for the Reform Board and Munro Review to reflect the lived experience of social workers and to make recommendations that are in alignment with that experience.
- The importance of equipping social workers with the tools to manage stress, professional boundaries and interagency working.

The implications of the findings for social work training and practice will be discussed, specifically in response to the proposed reforms in social work training and practice.