

**Step Up to Social Work Programme: trainees' experiences so far.  
Are we seeing new wine in new bottles?**

Feedback from employers and practitioners to the Social Work Task Force indicated that there were concerns about both the quality of some of those emerging from social work courses and about the relationships between local authorities and higher education institutions. The Step Up route into social work provides one opportunity to address these concerns by recruiting high achieving graduates with experience of working with children and young people, on to training which has provided the opportunity for employers and HEIs to design a course for which both have equal responsibility.

The employment-based route into social work was developed in 2010 and in September of that year the first cohort of trainees started in eight regional partnerships around England. These students will be followed through the 18 month course as part of a wider evaluation.

The work reported was undertaken between September 2010 and March 2011. So far the trainees have provided feedback on the national recruitment, assessment and allocation process that they have experienced and on the first six months on the course. This feedback will inform an understanding of the current experience and the development of the offer made to any future cohorts.

The paper describes the methodology, reports the findings and explores the implications for the current and any future cohort, as well as for social work education more generally. The findings provide additional insight into, and possible solutions to, some of the concerns identified by employers and others.