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Becoming effective communicators with children in social work practice:

Who you are, not just what you know and do

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Preface - note on authorship and publications related to this thesis

I am hereby clarifying the authorship of several works co-written with others which I refer to in this thesis as they influenced the Communicative Capabilities conceptualisation which underpins my analysis. My initial ideas were developed through my collaboration on a Knowledge Review funded by the Social Care Institute for Excellence into the teaching learning and assessment of communication skills with children in qualifying social work education (Luckock *et al*, 2006). The primary research team for the Knowledge Review was Barry Luckock (colleague), myself, and David Orr (research assistant). We worked closely together on conceptualising initial working definitions of 'communication skills', developing the research questions, and forming conclusions. Luckock was the first author of the overall Knowledge Review; he was first author of the introduction, conclusion and a systematic review of pedagogic methods, and principal investigator and first author of the Practice Survey. I was principal investigator for both systematic reviews, first-author of the research review on effective communication with children within social work practice, consulted an advisory group of children and young people about research focus, questions and findings and worked with Orr on developing 'strings' for database searching and undertaking 'keywording'.

This Knowledge Review led to a journal article (Luckock *et al*, 2007) for which I was second author. Subsequent to this I then re-analysed the factors identified for the original report to categorise 32 dimensions of Communicative Capability needed for social work with children. Following discussion with Knowledge Review colleagues, I then mapped these to teaching content and pedagogical approaches typically included in a qualifying curriculum and discussed this in a first-authored journal article (Lefevre *et al*, 2008). Subsequently development of this conceptualisation has been mine alone, discussed in numerous conference papers (see Appendix 1) and set out within a book chapter (Lefevre, 2008b) and a single-authored book (Lefevre, 2010a).

The statistical significance tests referred to in Chapter 5 were run, using the Statistical Programme for the Social Sciences, by Tish Marrable, research assistant to my department. She also provided guidance on the statistical analysis and interpretation of results.

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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED FOR THE DSW (DOCTORATE OF SOCIAL WORK)

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SUMMARY

Shortcomings in the quality and level of social workers' communication with children have led to queries about the role qualifying training plays in equipping students for this challenging aspect of their practice (SWTF, 2009; House of Commons, 2009). This thesis seeks to clarify some of the factors and processes which support qualifying students in learning to become effective communicators with children. The evidence for what should be taught to students to enable them to communicate effectively with children and the programme structures and pedagogic approaches which best facilitate students' learning and development are explored. An original framework for practice is outlined which constitutes a taxonomy of 32 evidence-informed 'dimensions' of 'Communicative Capability' needed for effective social work practice with children, set within 'domains' of 'Knowing' (knowledge and understanding), 'Doing' (skills and techniques), and 'Being' (ethics, values, personal qualities and emotional capacities). The compass of the dimensions is broad and diverse, so requires teaching and learning opportunities across the whole curriculum including in fieldwork placements, rather than just through a discrete course or specific pedagogical model (Lefevre *et al*, 2008).

The Communicative Capabilities taxonomy has been used as a framework for analysing data collected from social work students on an MA qualifying programme which I teach. Taking a realist approach (Robson, 2011), as an insider (Drake, 2010), I sought to learn more about students' journeys towards qualified practice so as to identify any factors or processes which support or hinder students' learning and development. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected at four time points during the programme using self-efficacy scales, course feedback, and written responses to a case vignette, which were analysed for students' awareness of the Communicative Capabilities. Baseline data on student characteristics, intentions and experiences were gathered so that individual trajectories could be identified and mapped against these. Once students had been

qualified for between 16-18 months, follow-up interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of five participants using a semi-structured questionnaire. There were a number of limitations and methodological constraints, most notably those engendered by the lack of a comparison group and small sample, so findings must be regarded as emergent and tentative.

An analysis of students' learning journeys indicated trajectories were rooted in specific experiences, strengths and learning styles. Students would benefit from developing a personalised learning plan which would enable them to maximise their potential and plug gaps in their capabilities. Ways need to be found to enable students to build up from generalist proficiencies in communication, so that first generic, then child-focused, and finally child-specialist applied capabilities in communication can be developed to at least a basic level at the point of qualification. Drawing on Kolb (1984), a cyclical model of the teaching and learning process has been mapped to the development of Knowing, Being and Doing capabilities. Students enter qualifying training with pre-course concrete experience of communication which provides a valuable source for inductive learning through critical reflection. Related theoretical input enables them to conceptualise processes of communication (developing Knowing). Skills may be acquired and honed through active experimentation with techniques and methods both in the university and in placements which are subject to observation and feedback (Doing). Tutor modelling and experiential approaches to capability-building help engender the kind of thoughtful, ethical, contained and engaged use of self by students (Being) which matters to children. Learning needs to be integrated and consolidated so that it is not forgotten or absorbed solely into tacit professional knowledge (Eraut, 1994). The learning cycle has been developed into a proposed framework for how qualifying programmes could ensure a coherent and integrated learning experience.

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List of abbreviations

AYSE	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
CCCh-awareness	Awareness of the Communicative Capabilities needed for social work practice with children
CWDC	Children's Workforce Development Council
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
GSCC	General Social Care Council
HEI	Higher Education Institute
NOS	National Occupational Standards for Social Work
NQSW	Newly Qualified Social Worker
PCF	Professional Capabilities Framework
SPSS	Statistical Programme for the Social Sciences
SWRB	Social Work Reform Board
SWTF	Social work Task Force
TMVIP	Module on Theory, Methods and Values in Practice

1   Introduction and overview

1.1   Concerns about social workers' communication with children

The nature, frequency and effectiveness of the communication between children and young people and their social workers have moved to the heart of social work policy and practice with children and families in England[1] over the last decade. Underpinned by Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, law, policy and practice guidance now require that children are fully involved in all issues which concern them. The *Every Child Matters* policy directive, which has guided professional practice for much of the past decade[2], reflects this principle in its emphasis on the importance of practitioners 'listening to children, young people and their families' (DfES 2003, p.4). Requirements to engage with and listen to children were also included in the 'Common Core of Skills and Knowledge' for the integrated children's workforce' (DfES, 2005) and frameworks for assessment (Department of Health *et al*, 2000; DfES, 2006). These injunctions to all children's services workers are intensified for social workers by the specific legislation and practice guidance underpinning the statutory social work role which places a duty on social workers to ensure that the views and experiences of children who are in care, those requiring safeguarding or family support, disabled children, and those involved with judicial processes are sought and listened to and that they are consulted regarding assessments, decision-making and planning at a local as well as individual level (DCSF, 2008).

Ensuring that children are kept informed, their voices heard, and their feelings and experiences understood are not only ethical standards and statutory requirements, but practical considerations. Inquiries into the abuse, neglect and non-accidental deaths of children and young people reveal time and time again how risks to them may be increased if professionals charged with their care and protection do not spend time getting to know them, finding out what they think and feel and trying to make sense of their experiences (Brandon *et al*, 2008; Ofsted, 2009, 2010).   Participatory research has enabled young people to give a clear indication of what they want and expect from

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[1] The discussion of social work education, policy and legislation in this thesis will be from within the English context as devolution over the past decade has resulted in increasing divergence regarding regulation, policy, legislation, and standards and requirements for social work education across the four countries of the UK.
[2] And has yet to be supplanted by new policy directives from the Coalition government

their social workers. For example, children in care have outlined their wish for information, consultation, support, reliability and a trusted interpersonal relationship with a professional who champions their cause and makes them feel cared for as individuals (Munro, 2001; NCB, 2006; DCSF, 2007). Families overwhelmingly want social workers to be undertaking skilled direct practice with children, not just commissioning services (Blewett *et al*, 2007). But the value of this approach goes beyond preference:

> Positive and stable relationships with their social workers promote good outcomes for children and young people in the care system…. Research demonstrates that children who experience such relationships do better than those who do not (Gilligan, 2000; Bell, 2002; Dearden, 2004; Bostock, 2004) (McLeod, 2010b, p.773).

The quality of professionals' engagement with children and young people and the extent to which they are able to facilitate their participation through effective communication can consequently be seen as significant contributors to the quality of assessment, decision-making, planning and service provision.

And yet, despite these policy aspirations and clear practice guidelines, it is clear that even experienced social workers find communicating effectively with children to be a significant challenge. Serious Case Reviews continue to suggest that children like Victoria Climbié (Department of Health and The Home Office, 2003), Child B (Westminster Local Safeguarding Children Board, 2006) and Khyra Ishaq (Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board, 2010), who died from neglect and abuse in family contexts, might have been helped had a social worker got to know them and talked with them about their experiences. Assessments remain insufficiently child-focused with parents' views and concerns dominating and children's views and perspectives often ignored, sidelined, misrepresented, distorted or only partially conveyed (Cleaver *et al*, 2004; Holland & Scourfield, 2004; Davidson *et al*, 2006; Horwath, 2010). Workers often fail to explain the purpose and process of assessments to children, leaving them confused or disengaged and feeling not cared about (Hill, 1999; Cossar *et al*, 2011).

At the most basic level of face-to-face contact, one tenth of children in care in a recent consultation had never been given the opportunity to talk with a social worker on their own; one third said they did not see their social workers enough or could never get hold of them (Morgan, 2011). These findings repeat earlier messages that children "haven't met their social workers enough to get to

know them" (Morgan, 2006, p.14). Many children in care still report a lack of the kind of 'continuous personal relationship' with their social worker which would enable them to talk about their worries (Le Grand, 2007, p.5). Others are left with the impression that they cannot rely on what social workers say or what they promise (DCSF, 2007). The situation may be worsening, too, as there has been a 32% rise in calls to the children's helpline *Childline* (2011) over the past five years by children in care who felt they needed someone independent they could trust to talk to about their situation – something which should be expected from the social worker role (reported in *The Guardian*, 6 March 2011). Children clearly feel lost from sight and uncared for:

> It seems like they have to do all this form filling, their bosses' bosses make them do it, but it makes them forget about us (Boy, 16 consulted by 11 Million, in Laming, 2009, p.23).

> There's too much corporate and not enough parenting (Young person, in DfES, 2007, p.12).

The causes of this unsatisfactory state of affairs have been under increasing scrutiny. A workforce inspection found few examples of social workers using their skills and relationships to work directly with children; not only had practitioners lost their confidence in their proficiency but they no longer seemed to see face-to-face interactions and conversations with children as a priority among their other roles and tasks (Commission for Social Care Inspection, 2005). Their employers seemed unappreciative of the importance of direct work with children and, consequently, did not necessarily facilitate this. Practitioners have described the constraints and challenges of having to report on children's experiences, wishes and feelings according to the timescales of the court, child protection conferences, assessment frameworks, or the ICS[3] rather than by the pace at which children feel ready to communicate (Broadhurst et al, 2010; Horwath, 2010; Munro, 2011). They feel overwhelmed with administrative tasks which "divert[] time and attention away from personal contact and towards filling in forms and making telephone calls" (Schofield & Brown, 1999, p.22).

This is not a practitioner fantasy or excuse: the reports of the Social Work Task Force appointed by the previous government to undertake a comprehensive review of the barriers to effective practice

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[3] The ICS is the common abbreviation for the Integrated Children's System, a conceptual framework and approach to supporting practitioners and managers (in England) in undertaking assessment, planning intervention and review. It is particularly used as shorthand for the electronic case record system developed to record, collate, analyse and provide information, a system now being modified in the light of substantial criticism (Munro, 2011).

encountered by frontline social workers (SWTF, 2009a,b,c) and the independent review of the Child Protection system instituted by the current government (Munro, 2011) have validated many complaints by practitioners. It is clear that the initial deflection of social workers' focus away from direct practice through the 1990s' emphasis on managerialism and technical-rational approaches has been sustained over the last decade by staffing shortages, high caseloads, administrative burdens, and inadequate supervision (Broadhurst *et al*, 2010; Horwath, 2010). This leaves practitioners with the impression that personal contact with children is a lower priority than report-writing or data-inputting and means that the training, guidance, support, and uninterrupted time with children and young people required for high quality practice are not always there (Munro, 2011).

However, some children in these studies conversely report good communication and engagement by their social workers, so the question arises as to why some practitioners are able to engage and communicate effectively with children and young people despite unhelpful contexts. There does appear to be variability in workers' knowledge, skills, ethical commitments and personal qualities. For example, those who lack child development knowledge tend to be less skilled at pitching their communication at the right level (Cossar *et al*, 2011). Practitioners who are less committed to children's participation may downplay or even ignore children's views because they are wary of 'burdening' them with involvement in decision-making about sensitive matters or because they believe that they are not sufficiently able to make a useful contribution to difficult decisions (Leeson, 2007; Winter, 2009). By contrast, a more personal commitment to participation is associated with workers ensuring they make the necessary time and space for children, being more creative in the methods they employ, and persisting even when children are resistant or find it hard to engage (Thomas & O'Kane, 2000). Particular personal qualities, such as warmth, openness and friendliness mean some practitioners find it easier to engage in a child-centred manner and to build relationships with children where they feel safe enough to communicate (McLeod, 2010b). Emotional capacity appears also to be a factor: being continually bombarded with the emotional pain and distress of children and their families and required to make complex, finely balanced decisions (particularly when there is limited time to reflect or inadequate supervision) might be evoking defences in some practitioners which prevent them from fully engaging with or responding to the experiences of children (Rustin, 2005; Ferguson, 2011). These findings suggest that social

workers' individual capabilities – who they are, as well as what they know and do – may be as significant as the context within which they operate.

This variability of practice competence has led to the spotlight falling on the extent to which social work education in England prepares practitioners for direct practice with children. The *Care Matters: Time for Change* White Paper set the ball rolling, saying that government would:

> look at the social work qualifying degrees to ensure they equip social workers with the knowledge and skills to work in a modern children's workforce …. ensuring that social work students are properly trained in the tools and experiences they need to do their jobs … (and) that they are trained to be able to listen effectively to the views of children and young people in care (DfES, 2007, p. 127).

Two years later Lord Laming's (2009) official review of child protection in England following the public outcry over the death of Peter Connolly ('Baby P') questioned whether the generic qualifying degree equips social workers with sufficient specialist knowledge and skills for their demanding and complex roles and tasks with vulnerable children. This review fed into a cross-party select committee investigation into the content, focus and standards being set by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for teaching social work with children and their families in qualifying programmes (House of Commons, 2009). Around the same time, the Social Work Task Force (SWTF) was receiving evidence and feedback from employers, practice assessors and researchers that newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) were (among other concerns) lacking some of the practical face-to-face skills needed for their roles (SWTF, 2009a). In particular, the Association of Directors of Children's Services advised that qualifying training needs to provide some aspects of specialisation in work with children and their families and emphasised the importance of programmes developing social workers' interpersonal communication in line with the *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce* (Department for Education and Skills, 2005).

The Task Force conclusion was that certain areas of knowledge and skills, specifically including communication with children, are not being covered to the right depth in the English social work degree (SWTF, 2009b). Similar concerns had been raised by research in Wales (Taylor & Boushel, 2009) and Scotland (Bellevue Consultancy and Critical Thinking, 2006), suggesting the problem is not a localised one. Set up to take forward the Task Force recommendations, the Social Work Reform (SWRB) Board is now working to develop a new Professional Capabilities Framework for the English social work degree to improve matters (SWRB, 2010b). Munro (2011), following her own

independent review, has advised that these should include specific capabilities for child and family social work if the nature and quality of future direct practice is to improve consistently.

1.2   The focus of this thesis

If qualifying training is to be improved in such a way that the profession and public can be reassured that NQSWs will be ready to communicate effectively with children and young people as they move into practice, then more needs to be understood about the teaching and learning of students. This is an issue which has concerned me, as a social work educator responsible for this aspect of the curriculum at qualifying and post-qualifying levels. It has led me to a central research question which is to be addressed through this thesis:

> What factors and processes might support qualifying social work students in learning to become effective communicators with children?

Three sub-questions have enabled this overarching research question to be addressed:

> i.   What principles of best practice should be taught to students to enable them to communicate effectively with children?
> ii. What programme structures and pedagogic approaches best facilitate students' development towards becoming effective communicators with children?
> iii. What factors and processes support qualifying social work students in developing the self-efficacy and awareness of the 'Communicative Capabilities' they need to become effective communicators with children in their future professional roles?

I began to address the first two sub-questions by collaborating with colleagues on a Knowledge Review into the teaching and assessment of social workers' communication skills with children (Luckock *et al*, 2006). Commissioned by SCIE (the Social Care Institute for Excellence), this comprised two systematic reviews and a survey of current practices in qualifying programmes. One of the systematic reviews addressed the first sub-question through reviewing the factors which contribute to effective communication with children and young people in social work practice. In Chapter two I discuss how I subsequently developed the review findings into a taxonomy of 'Communicative Capabilities' for effective social work practice with children (abbreviated throughout to CCCh). They encompass dimensions of knowledge, ethics and values, personal qualities/capacities and skills and techniques, providing a framework for what a social work programme might aspire for its students to be able to 'know', 'be' and 'do' by the end of their

training (Lefevre *et al*, 2008; Lefevre, 2010a). Appendix 1 provides an outline of the practice, teaching, study, research and dissemination activities which have led to the development of this framework.

The other systematic review focused on the second sub-question: identifying the most effective teaching and learning methods and programme structures. This will be considered in Chapter three at greater length, with an outline of what is already known about HEI practices, review of research evidence, and consideration of methodologies for the evaluation of pedagogical approaches. Chapter three concludes with an introduction to the empirical research which addresses the third sub-question. This has evaluated the experiences, learning and development of students on a 21-month full-time qualifying MA programme on which I teach. I approached this study as an insider researcher (Drake, 2010), influenced by the critical realist approaches of Pawson & Tilley (1997), Sayer (2010) and Robson (2011), and guided by the national 'Outcomes in Social Work Education' project (Burgess & Carpenter, 2010a).

Aspects of the whole programme needed to be included in the evaluation as CCCh dimensions encompass a broad range of knowledge, values, personal qualities and skills. They are not just taught and learned through specific and focused communication skills sessions, but also within courses covering social policy and child development and during the required 200 'practice learning days' in social work agencies which are generally undertaken as two contrasting fieldwork placements. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed at five time points. Self-efficacy scales, written responses to a case vignette (measuring students' awareness of the CCCh), and student feedback were collected at the beginning (Time 1) and end (Time 4) of the programme, and at the beginning (Time 3) and end (Time 4) of a focused sub-module on communication with children which I had taught during the second term of the first year.

A simple evaluative approach to data analysis was not appropriate as it was not consonant either with the approach being used in my programme, or with my overarching research question. I was not evaluating a specific and concrete method which, if found to be effective, could be manualised and disseminated for other HEIs to emulate. Instead I was evaluating a 'whole programme approach' (Lefevre *et al*, 2008). My focus was on finding out, not just the extent to which students showed improved CCCh-awareness and self-efficacy, but in establishing what they learned and when, and establishing some of the factors and processes which appeared to lead to

increases/decreases in scores measuring these parameters. By adding follow-up interviews with a sub-sample of five students once they had been in qualified practice for more than a year, I set out to identify any emergent patterns or models which might explain the factors or processes supporting or hindering the development of self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness. The methodology for the empirical work is outlined in Chapter four, with the findings and data analysis discussed across four subsequent chapters: Chapter five identifies the points at which students' self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness increased and considers the factors which might have played a part in this; student feedback on the role and importance of programme learning opportunities is discussed in Chapter six; in Chapter seven attention turns to whether any trends could be discerned in the number of CCCh dimensions evidenced by students at different time points; the contrasting learning journeys towards effective practice of two of the interviewees are presented in Chapter eight. The concluding chapter returns to the overarching research question to consider recommendations for qualifying social work education and present an emergent model of the learning and development process.

1.3   How children and young people are defined in this thesis

The terms 'child' and 'children' are used as shorthand in this thesis to refer to both children and young people. This is not to minimise the often significant differences between them. Age will often be a significant factor in the mode of communication used; for example, interactions with most four year olds should employ simple concepts and vocabulary and might need to be play-based, whereas conversations with some 15 year olds might be more similar to those with an adult. Age also confers different legal rights and responsibilities.

However, those commonly referred to as 'children' or 'young people' share three common factors. The first is that all those up to the age of 18 are covered by legislation designed to safeguard them, promote their welfare and facilitate their participation. Secondly, they share the common legal and social status as minors, which gives them less power and control over what happens to them and limits the extent to which they can participate in society. The third is that children and young people have a particular need for information, interactions and discussions to be tailored to their individual needs and ways of communicating. While workers should always take into account

language and cultural differences between themselves and service users of all ages, and ensure they are working in line with their cognitive capabilities, primary language and modes of expression, this is particularly pertinent for children. On the occasions when a reference is made only to 'young people' in this thesis, it is generally to distinguish the particular needs, rights, responsibilities, capabilities and experiences of those in their teenage years.

2   The Communicative Capabilities needed for social work practice with children

2.1   Introduction

Chapter 1 set out the current context for practice, identifying deficiencies in the quality and level of social workers' communication with children and young people. Munro's (2011) review conclusions suggest that such shortcomings should be considered systemically, advising that, in addition to addressing contextual constraints on time and support, improvements will be required in the extent to which qualifying training programmes enable social workers' knowledge, skills and personal capabilities to develop. If consistently higher standards are to be achieved nationally, there will need to be clarity and agreement about what constitutes good practice as well as how best to educate practitioners to attain these enhanced standards.

The previous government set a requirement for 'good communication' at the heart of practice guidance with its *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge* for practitioners in children's services (DfES, 2005):

> It involves listening, questioning, understanding and responding to what is being communicated …. Communication is not just about the words you use, but also your manner of speaking, body language and, above all, the effectiveness with which you listen. To communicate effectively it is important to take account of culture and context, for example where English is an additional language. Effective engagement requires the involvement of children…in the design and delivery of services and decisions that affect them. It is important to consult with them and consider their opinions and perspectives from the outset. A key part of effective communication and engagement is trust…. To build a rapport with children…it is important to demonstrate understanding, respect and honesty. Continuity in relationships promotes engagement and the improvement of lives (DfES, 2005, p.6).

This is a helpful baseline, indicating the interpersonal and contextual nature of communication and some of the personal qualities and values which need to be embodied in the approach of professionals working in children's surfaces. It only begins to touch the surface of these issues, however, in part because it does not have a specific focus on the capabilities needed for communication with children within *child-specialist* social work roles and tasks: the proficiencies it discusses are what I term *generalist child-focused,* relevant for any workers in children's services from a range of disciplines and who may have no formal training.   Much more than this is needed to inform and underpin a qualifying social work curriculum.

Through conducting a systematic review of the evidence for what constitutes effective communication with children in social work practice, my colleagues and I were able to identify some of the factors which interrupt or inhibit communication between children and social workers and outline some emergent 'Core Conditions' necessary to effective practice (Luckock *et al*, 2006). The systematic review process and these findings will be summarised in Section 2.2. I was keen to develop this work further into a more coherent model for practice and used the Critical Analytic Study (CAS) for Phase 2 of this doctorate to explore a range of theoretical perspectives, including psychodynamic, communication and post-structuralist theories, as lenses which to interrogate the material elicited through the systematic review. This additional work (outlined in Section 2.3) enabled me to re-think and re-work the initial conceptualisation developed with colleagues into the CCCh taxonomy, which will be set out in Section 2.4.

2.2 Findings from the systematic review

2.2.1 Overview of the systematic review

My colleagues and I[4] undertook a Knowledge Review for the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to determine what was known about the teaching, learning and assessment of communication skills with children and young people in qualifying social work education (Luckock *et al*, 2006). The aim was to establish whether there was any evidence regarding what qualifying social workers should be taught (i.e. curriculum content on communicating with children) and how best to address this topic (effective pedagogical methods).

A discussion and critique of the methodology of the systematic review was provided in the CAS so will not be repeated here. Briefly, the review included both an in-depth quality appraisal and data extraction of twelve empirical studies reporting children's views on their communication with social workers, plus a research synthesis of a further 206 research reports, books, and journal articles discussing conceptual and theoretical work as well as small scale empirical studies and narrative accounts. Both the nature of the research identified and the themes that emerged from its findings were disparate and difficult to disembed. The search identified no high quality empirical studies on

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[4] My role and contribution to this is set out in the preface

the effectiveness of what were explicitly termed 'communication skills with children' in social work practice; it appeared that this had not yet constituted a discrete category of practice or knowledge to be researched. Findings on, and discussion of, communication with children had usually to be disentangled and extracted from broader inquiries into, evaluations of, and discussions about social work practice skills, methods of intervention, and case management.

Faced with this heterogeneous agglomeration of material it was not possible to develop a straightforward synthesis of findings towards a conclusion. Instead, in line with Sharland & Taylor (2006), the task was approached as an inductive, interpretative activity to develop a new conceptualisation of what might constitute 'effective communication skills with children'. A thematic analysis, rather than a summation of primary results, was the outcome. Neither a single, common approach to communication with children nor a narrowly defined consensual understanding of what constituted effectiveness was found. However, it was possible to identify factors thought to inhibit or impede communication between social workers and children as well as some 'core conditions' associated with promoting effective communication. These will be briefly reported in Sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4. As the nature of the literature identified did not allow for the formal research quality appraisal and weighting of evidence in synthesis which is characteristic of systematic reviews, these conclusions about inhibitory factors and Core Conditions for effective practice need to be viewed as suggestive rather than conclusive and definitive.

2.2.2   Updating the review

I have kept the literature search updated since the systematic review search was completed in 2005, but I have not repeated the full electronic database search as per the previous strategy as it was not the most successful way of identifying the most relevant literature. More than 27,000 academic papers, books or research reports had been identified through that search strategy, yet only a tiny number had been appropriate for inclusion in the review. Handsearching of the relevant journals, database searching of the most useful terms, and following up citations in other relevant studies had been found at the time to be a more effective way of identifying the relevant material so I have used such 'snowballing' techniques since that time.

It remains the case that no studies with a specific focus on the effectiveness of social workers' communication skills with children appear to be available in the published literature. Findings

relevant to the research question of that review continue to have to be disinterred from within other studies, particularly those reporting factors or strategies which facilitate children's participation in a range of social work contexts (for example Leeson, 2007; McLeod, 2007; Laws & Kirby, 2008; Winter, 2009) and consultations with children about service provision (such as Morgan, 2006, 2007; Beresford *et al*, 2007; Ofsted, 2009; Cossar *et al*, 2011; Morgan, 2011; Ofsted, 2011). Messages from recent studies are consistent with those identified through the systematic review so no change of direction from earlier conceptualisations has been necessary.

2.2.3 Factors which can impede communication between children and social workers

Communication between social workers and children is not the same as more general communication between adults and children. The nature of the social work role and task with the child and family provides both a backdrop to and mandate for any engagement and communication. Through the thematic analysis within the systematic review several inter-related contextual, structural, individual, cultural and interpersonal factors were identified which appear to interfere with mutual clarity of communication between children and their social workers and make children less keen or able to communicate. Some of these factors relate primarily to the characteristics or behaviour of the child or worker while others seem to emerge more from the interpersonal and social context of the communication:

- From the context
    - The impact of the social work context, role and task (Triseliotis *et al*, 1998; Broadhurst *et al*, 2010);
    - The relationship formed, including issues of trust and safety (Winter, 2009; McLeod, 2010b);
    - Structural and cultural oppression (Trotter, 2000; Kohli, 2006);
- From the child
    - Adverse prior experiences (de Winter & Noom, 2003; Davidson *et al*, 2006);
    - Psychosocial and cognitive development (Schofield & Brown, 1999; Laws & Kirby, 2008);
    - Emotions related to the reasons for the contact (Morgan, 2006; Freake *et al*, 2007);
- From the worker
    - Misuse of power and oppressive practices (McLeod, 2010a);
    - Failing to promote children's participation alongside their welfare (NCB, 2004; Leeson, 2007);

- An inability to understand and respond appropriately to children's indirect communications (Borenstein, 2002);
- Ignoring, missing or misinterpreting children's voices (Leeson, 2007; Cossar *et al*, 2011).

An ability to recognise the reasons such impeding factors occur and work to mitigate them is an essential aspect of effective communication in applied social work situations. A full discussion of the factors is provided in Luckock *et al* (2006) and an overview is provided as Appendix 2.

2.2.4 'Core conditions' to promote effective communication with children

SCIE, the commissioners of the Knowledge Review, had expected our research team to isolate a set of skills that social workers needed to possess if they were to be able to communicate effectively with children. Instead we identified a number of 'Core Conditions' which social workers needed to be able to put in place if the inhibitory factors were to be mediated and an environment conducive to communication were to be established. These are outlined in full in Luckock *et al* (2006) and an overview is provided in Appendix 3, but can be summarised as:

- Child-centred communication which takes account of the distinctive nature of communication with children in social work contexts and uses the 'hundred languages of childhood' (Clark & Statham, 2005; Howes, 2005);
- Provision of information and explanations in a style tailored to the child and situation (Bourton & McCausland, 2001; Ruegger, 2001);
- Engagement with children at a personal and emotional level, so they feel cared for and trust and safety can be established (Winter, 2009; McLeod, 2010b);
- A commitment to listening to children respectfully about their views, worlds and experiences and taking account of these in assessment, decision-making and planning (Dearden & Becker, 2000; Laws & Kirby, 2008);
- A capacity and awareness to work with 'depth' as well as 'surface' processes in communication so that indirect communications are also 'heard'(Ruch, 2005) ;
- Facilitation of participation through a recognition of children's competence as well as vulnerability and their rights as well as welfare needs (Thomas & O'Kane, 2000; Leeson, 2007);

- Anti-oppressive practice which attends to the effects of structural discrimination and is appropriate to children's cultural, religious and linguistic practices (Hodge, 2002; Morrow, 2004).

2.2.5   Review conclusions

The systematic review indicated that achieving effective communication with children is not a simple matter of employing a range of 'off the shelf' techniques, methods and micro-skills which can be readily assimilated and practised to be used in situ with a child. Instead it needs to take into account the factors which impede or interrupt communication and create the appropriate conditions for mutual engagement, information-transmission and meaning-making.   A more 'bespoke' approach is needed in which the worker draws upon a range of knowledges, personal attributes, ethical commitments and skills relevant for the particular child and situation.

2.3   Additional perspectives on communication processes

Following the systematic review I was keen to develop this initial conceptualisation of Core Conditions further to create a more coherent model with which practitioners could engage and which could be used to inform the teaching and learning of communication with children. I used the Critical Analytical Study for Phase 2 of this doctorate to explore a range of theoretical lenses which to interrogate the material elicited through the review.   This exploration led me to view interpersonal communication as an interpretive process of information exchange (Griffin, 2006) with the following characteristics and dynamics (see Lefevre, 2010a, for a fuller discussion).

Where children and social workers intend to convey some information to each other, they might directly pass 'basic messages' between them, conveying 'manifest content' in formal language which expresses material held within their conscious awareness (Griffin, 2006). For example, the social worker may be consulting a child in care about a forthcoming placement move and the child expresses views on this. This would be the case whether the dialogue is verbal, written (for example, letter, email or text) or conducted through sign language.

In every exchange, however, there is always also a 'meta-message', which may carry underlying information about the type of communication it is (such as a request or order), the state of the messager/iniator (including feelings, attitudes and intentions), the status of the messager (including

the power relationship with the 'receiver'), and the context from which the message is being sent (Marsen, 2006). This will have been encoded symbolically by the initiator into indirect forms of communication such as body language, facial expression, and paralanguage[5] (Mehrabian, 1981). Initiators may transmit more information than they intend or are aware of through these means. While these indirect meta-messages might reinforce and support the manifest content, they might also contradict it or indicate that it is not the full picture. For example, the hidden, unconscious or disowned feelings and motivations of either social worker or and child may be revealed unintentionally through facial expression, body language, or relational style.

The task of the receiver is, not only to hear the basic message, but to decode the meta-message through a process of interpretation (Keats, 1997), which requires knowledge of ethnic, social, cultural and linguistic norms, or habitus (Bourdieu, 1991; Lovell, 2001). Where divergences between them are not understood, workers and children may evaluate and construct meaning from what has been communicated very differently; misunderstandings are then more likely (Fiske, 1990; Halliday, 1996). If mutually acceptable and beneficial dialogue is to proceed, receivers need to provide an appropriate and encouraging response. Social workers in particular need to provide sensitive and attuned responses which indicate they have understood underlying or held-back thoughts and feelings and can manage any difficult issues implied (Spiegel *et al*, 2000). It is through such responses that children will sense whether their confidences or experiences have been understood, accepted and respected and whether they will feel safe or encouraged to proceed (Thompson, 2011).

Complex thoughts and feelings, interpersonal and social dynamics and difficult environmental conditions, such as the inhibitory factors identified through the systematic review, may limit, interrupt or distort the communication between social workers and children (Ekman, 2003). The 'noise' they create may prevent unconstrained and reciprocal dialogue and derail the establishment of shared understanding (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). By contrast, where facilitating relational and environmental conditions establish a safe space, children may be encouraged to share their thoughts, feelings, ideas and concerns (Dunhill, 2009).   Mediating power differentials and

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[5] Paralanguage refers to someone's speed of speaking, their tone of voice, the loudness, pitch and intonation of their speech, and so on

inhibitions and reducing distortions, distractions, muddle or manipulations may help create 'ideal speech' conditions (Habermas, 1984) for participative 'noise-free' dialogue and unconstrained, authentic and mutual exchange (Outhwaite, 1994).

Some of this discussion is underpinned by an ontological belief that 'real' or 'authentic' thoughts, wishes, feelings and ideas exist inside children's minds, waiting to be conveyed. The post-structuralist Derrida (1978) suggested, by contrast, that it is the very act of speaking, writing or signing thoughts and feelings that brings them into existence: the process of communication creates inner world feelings and experiences, not just reflects them. The context within which dialogue occurs may not just influence how a meta-message is conveyed but actually help to construct its content (Shotter, 1993). What a child says, signs or writes, for example, may be overly influenced by the social and cultural environment in which the message emerges and by the behaviour, presence and response of others. It may signify only a fleeting perception or passing mood, or what the child thinks the worker wants to hear, rather than representing what is thought and felt over time. Other aspects of what a child thinks or feels may be hidden, forgotten, emphasised, downplayed, or changed in the telling. This has implications for how professionals attempt to ascertain children's views, wishes and feelings in a given situation.

Communication is further mediated by the social, cultural and interpersonal context of communication. Practitioners' relational capacities and feelings towards the child may either facilitate or inhibit communication (Borenstein, 2002). The extent to which they have the time or resources for the work or good supervision may enhance or detract from their creativity, clear thinking and emotional engagement with a child. Pre-existing perceptions and assumptions, based on personal experiences, family views or media discourses can interfere with how workers are seen by children, regardless of what they actually do. Negative projections or transference based on internalised representations from earlier experiences might lead to children 'going silent' on the worker, not turning up to appointments, or hiding important information (Borenstein, 2002). Feeling disempowered or disadvantaged in the situation can also interfere with the manner in which children express themselves (Thomas, 2002).

This brief analysis of communication and interpersonal processes indicates that the effectiveness of communication between social workers and children relates significantly to the quality and nature of the interactional dynamics between them and their social and cultural environments. In order to

overcome any inhibitory contextual effects, practitioners need to provide 'facilitating conditions', free of 'noise' if they are to encourage children to engage and feel safe enough to share their thoughts, feelings and views. Emotional and cultural awareness and observational and interpretive skills are all needed if workers are to interpret effectively and provide culturally appropriate encoding and attuned responses.

2.4   The 'Communicative Capabilities ' taxonomy and 'Knowing-Being-Doing' model

2.4.1   *Formulating the model*

The Core Conditions provided an initial thematic framework for the Knowledge Review report, but they were insufficiently detailed regarding the processes involved and the inter-relations between them. They also did not provide a sufficiently clear and engaging conceptual model which could be drawn on readily to promote future good practice. The subsequent study of communication processes which I developed enabled me to interrogate the material further to construct a more detailed thematic framework of the kinds of capabilities which social workers would require to communicate effectively with children. In brief (as this process was discussed in the CAS) I worked from the initial surmise I had reached by the end of the systematic review that that social workers' ability to communicate well with children is not just about skills in 'Doing' communication but draws on what social workers 'Know' and who they are as people (their 'Being'). I saw these as 'domains' of Communicative Capability which were interactive and interdependent (see Figure 1).

Figure 1   Domains of Communicative Capability for social work practice with children
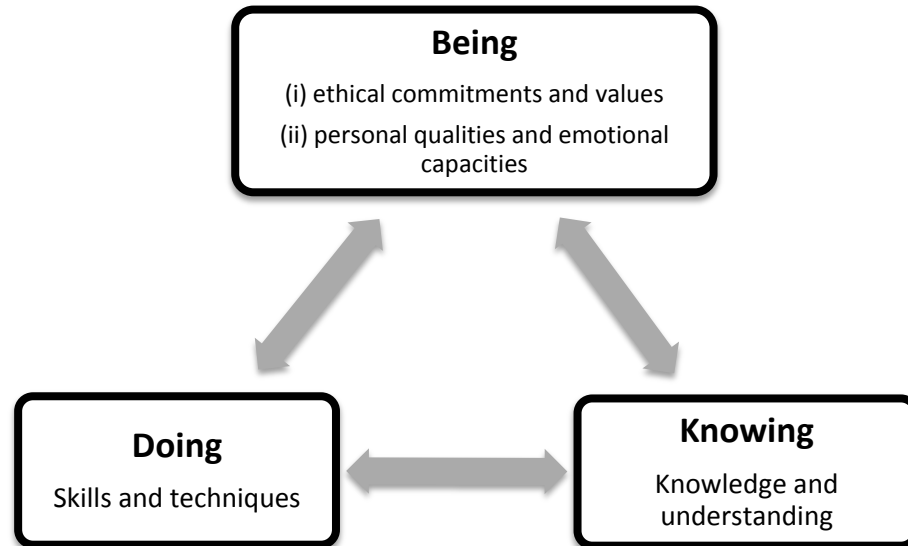
I went on to identify a taxonomy of 32 factors noted in the literature as facilitating effective social work communication with children which I have termed 'dimensions' of Communicative Capability[6]. I mapped these dimensions into the domains of Knowing, Being(i), Being(ii) and Doing. The whole taxonomy is shown as Table 1. The reader is referred to Lefevre *et al* (2008), Lefevre (2008b) and Lefevre (2010a) for fuller details of the domains and their constituent dimensions but a brief summary is provided here.

The 'Knowing' domain refers to the varied forms of knowledge and understanding which practitioners require in order to understand how best to communicate with children and young people. Propositional knowledge, based on research evidence and theoretical perspectives, enables practitioners to understand more about childhood, child development and how experiences of abuse, trauma, oppression, discrimination and social exclusion affect children's readiness and ability to communicate. This complements the understanding to be formed about a particular child, including their needs, strengths, characteristics, circumstances and preferences. 'Craft or skill knowledge', or 'knowing how to' (Schwandt, 1997), includes the methods or models which might

[6] The terminology of domains and dimensions has been borrowed from the Assessment Framework (Department of Health et al, 2000) which sets out a number of dimensions within three domains to structure the way in which information about children in need and their families needs to be collected and analysed.

provide helpful approaches. Understanding the purpose of communication within particular roles and contexts gives focus and direction to the work and enables 'noise' to be recognised and worked with.

Table 1   Domains of Communicative Capability and component dimensions

Knowing Knowledge and understanding	Being(i) Values and ethical commitments	Being(ii) Personal qualities and emotional capacities	Doing Skills and techniques
Knowing about…..	**An ethical commitment to….**	**Being able to….**	**Proficient in….**
• Child development • Effective models, approaches and methods for communicating with children • How (adverse) experiences affect children's communication • The purpose of communication in context • How the social work role and task impacts upon communication • The impact on communication of any of the child's inherited traits, capabilities or impairments	• Children's competence and right to participate • Eliciting and taking into account children's views and concerns • Anti-oppressive practice (e.g. re. power, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality) • Respectfulness • Reliability and consistency • Providing uninterrupted time • Maintaining confidentiality where possible • Providing information and explanations • Non-judgmentalism	• Recognise, manage and use one's own feelings (and counter-transference) • Show own humanity - expressing enthusiasm, warmth, friendliness, humour • Be sincere, genuine, congruent • Be open and honest • Be empathic • Work with depth processes in the work not just surface ones • Be comfortable to work with children's strong feelings • Be playful and creative • Help children feel safe and build trust with the worker • Engage and build relationships with children • Be caring and demonstrate concern for/to children	• Child-centred communication • Going at the child's pace • Use of play, symbolic, creative, non-verbal and expressive techniques • Using a variety of tools (e.g. ecomaps) • Interviewing techniques • Listening

Although I initially conceptualised 'Being' as one overall domain, I subsequently split it into two sub-domains: 'Being(i)' which covered values and ethical commitments; and 'Being(ii)' which focused on personal qualities and emotional capacities. Children are more likely to engage with workers who embody core social work values such as child-centredness, respect, honesty, inclusiveness and anti-oppressiveness (Munro, 2001; McLeod, 2007). These Being(i) principles are embedded within professional codes of practice and national occupational standards, but, ultimately, workers need to make an individual and personal commitment to developing and adhering to them. For example, success in communicating with children seems directly linked to the strength of workers' personal belief that achieving mutual communication is their responsibility (Thomas & O'Kane, 2000).

Children similarly highlight the importance of Being(ii) capabilities which enable practitioners to engage with them in an authentic and caring manner, build trust (Winter, 2009; McLeod, 2010b) and be able to recognise, contain, and respond in an attuned fashion to feelings they express either directly or indirectly (Borenstein, 2002).   It is not determined as yet whether these dimensions represent character traits which students should have already developed at the point of admission to programmes or whether they can be developed adequately through training.   For example, some individuals do seem to have a warm, playful, friendly, open and engaging manner which invites children and young people to communicate with them, and a general potential to be empathic, good-humoured, caring, emotionally available and resilient in their interactions with children and young people (Farnfield & Kaszap, 1998). This is not to say others cannot learn to communicate better, just that they may have more predispositional difficulties to overcome and will have to work harder to develop their emotional capability so that it can be used in a constructive and informed manner within interventions with a range of children.

The 'Doing' domain includes the skills, techniques and approaches which are required for embodied proficiency (Mensinga, 2011) in engagement and interactions (whether face-to-face or remote) with children within the full range of professional roles. The learning and deployment of discrete micro-skills and techniques are insufficient alone but need to be tailored so they befit a specific situation and child. The manner of listening should vary due to factors relating to the particular child (their cognitive capacity, primary language, previous experiences, any disability), the task (such as finding out their views, wishes and feelings, talking with them about a placement move), and the context (child protection investigation, care proceedings, or pre-sentence report).

2.4.2   Limitations of the taxonomy

In constructing this taxonomy I did not position the component dimensions hierarchically to delineate their relative evidence base or level of contribution to effective practice. An aspect of Communicative Capability was included as a dimension of the taxonomy if either there was robust empirical evidence of effectiveness or if a considerable proportion of the methodologically less robust research literature indicated its possible effectiveness.   As the discussion in Section 2.3 indicated, it had not been possible to develop the kind of straightforward synthesis of findings generally aimed for in a systematic review where the balance of evidence for particular argument can be reliably and transparently determined. A weighting of the level of contribution to effective

practice made by particular dimensions might potentially be achieved through a factor analysis. However, doing so would obscure a central feature which is that practitioners may well not need to draw on all dimensions in each and every face-to-face or virtual/remote encounter with a child. The balance of importance of different dimensions is likely to vary with every child and situation: a dimension particularly responsible for promoting effective communication in one setting may not be in another. In face-to-face encounters with vulnerable, abused and/or traumatised children, for example, the capacity to be warm, caring and inspire trust will be of central importance. In compiling a written or visual summary for a child of the conclusions of a court hearing or child protection conference, skills in child-centred methods, clear and concise writing and use of symbolic or visual techniques might be more important. On the telephone, a capacity to hear and comprehend meta-messages conveyed through tone of voice and spacing and to respond in an attuned matter might make the difference between a successful or unhelpful call. The taxonomy seeks to represent the range of CCCh which practitioners need for competence across the span of social work roles, tasks and contexts with children.

2.4.3   The fuzzy nature of categorisation

The boundaries of both the domain and dimension categories used in the CCCh taxonomy are fuzzy (Sostak, 1991). Fuzzy categorisation occurs when the constituents of a grouping share a similar central tendency or associated features but the extent to which they fit unambiguously into a category tends to be graded rather than entirely clear-cut (Alexander & Enns, 1988). Fuzzy boundaries allow for, even celebrate, the overlaps between dimensions or domains resulting from their dialectical interactional nature. For example, knowledge about *appropriate models, approaches, methods and skills in communicating with children* (from the Knowing domain) and the personal quality of being *able to be playful and creative* (a dimension of the Being(ii) domain), overlap with and feed into a practitioner's *use of play, symbolic, creative, non-verbal and expressive techniques* (Doing). Similarly, Being(i) ethical commitments to *children being competent and having a right to participate* and to *eliciting and taking into account children's views and concerns* underpin practitioners' manner of *listening* to such views (Doing).

There are particularly fuzzy boundaries between some dimensions in Being(i) (values/ethics) and Being(ii) (qualities/capacities). The capacity to be *open and honest* for example, was categorised within 'Being(ii)' as I conceived of this primarily drawing upon personal qualities in the individual

social worker. However, to some extent, they might also be seen as values-based and could have a secondary location within the Being(i) domain. This fuzziness is explored more in the empirical research as it created some methodological issues when the CCCh taxonomy was used as a framework for data analysis.

2.5   Concluding thoughts

This chapter set out to respond to the sub-question of 'What principles of best practice should be taught to students to enable them to communicate effectively with children?'. Through the initial collaborative work on the systematic review and an independent engagement with psychodynamic, communication and post-structuralist theories I was able to construct a taxonomy of 32 dimensions of Communicative Capability which are likely to facilitate effective communication between social workers and children. These may be drawn upon to inform the focus and content of the qualifying level curriculum. The broad compass of these dimensions means a range of learning opportunities and curriculum content would be necessary to cover them adequately: a 'whole programme approach' (Lefevre *et al*, 2008). In Appendix 4 I provide a mapping of the CCCh against my own qualifying programme to demonstrate this. Through referring to the taxonomy HEIs could consider how to boost the teaching and learning of dimensions which their programmes cover less well.

3 Developing social work students' communicative capability through qualifying training

3.1 Introduction

As was noted in the introductory chapter, the extent to which social work programmes are preparing NQSWs for their direct practice with children has been queried. There are concerns that certain areas of knowledge and skills, specifically including communication with children, are not being covered to the right depth in the social work degree, and a perception that this needs to be improved through revision of qualifying and continuing professional development courses (House of Commons, 2009; SWTF, 2009c). This chapter will consider the second of the three research sub-questions: how programme structures and pedagogic methods might best facilitate students' learning and development of the Communicative Capabilities for social work with children (CCCh). It begins with a brief exploration of how I developed my own curriculum content and pedagogical approaches and is followed by a discussion of the available evidence regarding how this aspect of the curriculum is taught and learned. The chapter ends with a consideration of how the research base might be strengthened.

3.2 Developing my own pedagogical approach

I have grappled with how best to promote students' learning and development over the past eight years as I became tasked with teaching social work students how best to communicate with children within the two-year qualifying MA programme at the university where I am employed. I used the Critical Analytical Study for year 2 of this Doctorate to explore in depth how my personal teaching approach had emerged iteratively and reflexively, learning from experience (Kolb, 1984). This exploration helped me recognise some of the tacit professional knowledges (Eraut, 1994) underpinning my approach. I had begun by drawing on the participatory experiential methods employed within my own professional trainings as a social worker and arts psychotherapist. Common strategies used within these had been to encourage students to explore their own experiences and ways of communicating through using creative and expressive methods, tools and techniques, and then to transfer learning to simulated communication with child service users through role plays. I combined these approaches with theories and techniques from adult learning

with which I had become familiar in my earlier training as a practice educator and had used when supervising and assessing of social work students on placement[7]. These included: critical reflection on students' pre-existing knowledge and experience to map patterns, link to theory and build new insights (Kolb, 1984); and use of problem-based methods (Wilkinson & Gijselaers, 1996) such as practice vignettes which engage students in exploration of the literature and group discussion to consider the best approaches (Ross & Wright, 2001).

Seeking to ascertain the effectiveness of my approach, I turned first to student evaluation forms which indicated the level of student satisfaction with methods used. This enabled me to refine my approach further. However, student feedback, when used in isolation, can be one-dimensional and subjective. It does not necessarily establish whether or not deep learning has taken place, which would be transferable into practice settings and sustained over time (Carpenter, 2011). Scrutinising students' written work and reading the direct observation reports on their practice completed by practice educators over the 200 days in fieldwork placements did enable to me to ascertain that when students completed the MA programme they had been able to demonstrate sufficient initial competence in their communication with children.

However, I was still left with a range of questions. Could the competence students were demonstrating by the end of the programme be definitively attributed to the curriculum content and pedagogical approaches used, or might it be due to other mechanisms which were not course-related, such as students' contact with children in their personal lives? Might some students already be competent on entry to the programme due to prior work experience? Might the learning and teaching approaches used have been more helpful for some kinds of students rather than others? What role did the taught curriculum play compared to the 200 days in placement? I realised through these questions that I knew little, too, about how other universities approached this aspect of the curriculum. Were our practices consistent? If they differed, which were more or less effective and why? Was there any empirical evidence which might support particular approaches?

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[7] All qualifying social work programmes in England must include 200 practice learning days which students spend in at least two fieldwork placements offering contrasting experiences of social work. Three direct observations are usually made per placement of a student's practice with service users and carers. For some students the observation role is split between an agency-based supervisor, who supervises their daily work, and by an off-site practice assessor, who is responsible for undertaking the majority of the direct observations and writing the final report which confirms competence across the National Occupational Standards for social work. Other students have just one person (based within the placement agency) undertaking both roles. The common title for those undertaking this role is now 'Practice Educator'.

My opportunity to interrogate these questions came through my involvement in the SCIE-commissioned Knowledge Review. Chapter 2 discussed findings from one of the two systematic reviews carried out. Section 3.4 will consider evidence from the other, relating to evidence for effectiveness of teaching and learning approaches. Preceding this will be a discussion of current practices in social work education gleaned from the Practice Survey of qualifying programmes within the Knowledge Review, an audit of children and families teaching within Welsh social work programmes[8] (Taylor & Boushel, 2009), and the *Evaluation of the Social Work Degree in England* (Department of Health *et al*, 2008).

3.3 Surveys and audits of qualifying programmes

3.3.1 The place of communication with children within the qualifying curriculum

The expectation that students learn to communicate with children is set out within the *Requirements for Social Work Training,* which include 'Communication skills with children, adults and those with particular communication needs' as one of the five 'key areas' to be covered within the qualifying curriculum (Department of Health, 2002, p.4). There is, however, no requirement for students to be assessed in direct practice with children. Unit 1 of the NOS, which students must be able to demonstrate at the point of qualification, obliges practitioners to provide evidence of skills in communication and information sharing and show that they 'recognize and facilitate each person's use of language and form of communication of their choice'. However, these skills are required only to be shown generically[9]: no specific reference is made to teaching and assessing students on their practice *with children*. This is in contrast to the expectations for post-qualifying courses where requirements for 'specialist' level skills in communicating and engaging with children (in line with

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[8] It is noted again that devolution is now resulting in a divergence of practices between England and Wales, but in 2008, when the audit was carried out, this was less marked.

[9] Generic principles, methods and skills were originally defined as those necessary for a whole 'genus' of social work, whether practised in hospital settings, with offenders, with adults with learning difficulties or mental illness or with children and their families (Seebohm, 1968). This led to the setting up of generic social services departments in England and Wales and the first generic qualification, the CQSW. While both Seebohm (1968, p.162) and Barclay (1982) indicated that practitioners would additionally need some additional specialist knowledge and skills for their roles, there has been a contested debate in social work practice and education ever since about the correct balance of genericism and specialism. While Lord Laming's recommendations from the Climbié Inquiry (Department of Health and The Home Office (2003)) influenced the government decision to separate children's and adults' services into different departments (DfES, 2003), there has been a more recent commitment to retention of a generic social work qualification (SWTF/Gibb, 2009). See Trevithick (2011) for a full review of the genericism/specialism debate.

the *Common Core*) are specified for both teaching and assessment (General Social Care Council, 2005).

The only directive regarding placements is that students have experience in at least two practice settings and of providing services to at least two user groups in contrasting settings. While it is most common for one placement to be in a children's services setting and the other in adults' services, this is not universal. Both the academic and professional standards for degree level study, set out in the *Quality Assurance Agency Benchmark Statement for Social Work* and the NOS (in Department of Health, 2002), are framed in generic terms. This has left much discretion to HEIs regarding the extent to which communication with children should be taught and the level of competence in this which students should be expected to demonstrate at qualification.

3.3.2   *A Practice Survey of communication with children in qualifying programmes*

As part of the SCIE Knowledge Review (Luckock *et al*, 2006), a Practice Survey was conducted to review current practice and emerging arrangements for the teaching, learning and assessment of communication skills with children on qualifying social work programmes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The survey took place in the spring and early summer 2005, two years on from the introduction of the social work degree in England in 2003, and one year on in the case of Wales and Northern Ireland. All HEIs in those areas were invited to participate: 38 module or programme handbooks from 29 HEIs were included and telephone interviews conducted with 32 HEIs responsible for 45 programmes. Details of the methodology can be found in the review report. It was not possible to gather data on the reported impact of teaching and learning in practice subsequent to qualification and professional registration as the first cohorts were still studying on programmes during the period of the survey.

Several inter-related findings stood out. Firstly, communication with children appeared to be obscured and marginalised within programmes. It rarely appeared discretely and visibly within the taught curriculum but tended to be incorporated among other courses. In part this appeared to be due to a dispersal of responsibility as rarely was one individual responsible for ensuring all relevant aspects were covered at both a basic and more intermediate level. Where it was integrated within modules focusing on core generic communication skills or applied practice skills, the focus tended to be more on direct contact with adults. In modules on broader aspects of social work with children

and families, indirect aspects of practice in safeguarding, care planning and case management dominated above direct practice. There was little coherence regarding how the broad compass of CCCh might be taught throughout a programme, such as where child development knowledge or statutory requirements for children's participation fitted with the learning of embodied skills for face-to-face interactions.

Matters were no better in practice learning. There was no guarantee that, at the point of qualification, all social work students would have had the opportunity for direct contact and interactions with a child, let alone being directly observed and assessed on this. This came in part from pressure on placements and the element of student preference involved which meant some students undertook both placements in adults' service settings. However, even those in statutory children's services placements did not always have opportunities for embodied practice with children, due to the culture of diminishing attention paid to direct work and the predominant focus on case management.

Secondly, and inter-related, programmes struggled to articulate explicit expectations regarding learning outcomes for communication with children, or the standards students were expected to attain. It was most common for students to be provided with a *foundation of generic communication skills* plus some basic *child-focused skills* early in their programme. These child-focused skills tended to be *generalist* in nature, that is concerning broad-spectrum opportunities for engaging, playing and talking with children rather than specifically addressing the challenges and constraints linked to communication within social work tasks and contexts. Some (not all) programmes then offered opportunities for students to build on this foundation towards *child-specialist applied skills* for communication with children within the social work role, for example, assessing abused or traumatised children within child protection investigations, or consulting with children as part of decision-making in care proceedings.

Thirdly, no distinctive, consensually-agreed approaches to teaching and assessing communication skills with children had emerged. This aspect of the curriculum seemingly had yet to attract the consistent and focused attention of programme providers. Teaching methods were often fortuitous, employed in a variable and unsystematic fashion relating to the availability, commitments, interests and expertise of the people providing the teaching, and the resources at their disposal. Both conceptualisation of what effective communication with children meant and pedagogical strategies

to teach this appeared uncertain or contested. For most programmes the focus was *skills acquisition* ('Doing' domain), with competence in (largely generic) communication positioned as a set of techniques and behaviours which could be learned through workshops and 'skills-labs' using role play or simulated interviews with service users (see Moss *et al*, 2007). Some programmes also prioritised the *capability-building* associated with the 'Being' domain, using group-based, experiential and interactive methods, drawing on both psychosocial approaches (such as child observation) and problem-based learning strategies, to develop the 'self' of the students and their capacity for emotional and ethical engagement and communication.

Fourthly, while children themselves were beginning to become actively involved in module design, teaching and assessment, there were contrasting views about how best to structure this involvement. On the whole their involvement tended to be brief and episodic in nature and was largely opportunistic rather than strategically planned.

3.3.3   An audit of Welsh social work programmes

The focus of an audit of social work programmes in Wales (Taylor & Boushel, 2009) was broader than the SCIE Practice Survey as it concerned the quality of teaching about children and families within Welsh qualifying programmes. However, several findings related to communication with children and were broadly consonant with the SCIE study.

The nature, quality and extent of teaching and learning of communication skills with children in Welsh qualifying programmes was found to be as obscured, disparate and marginalised as in the SCIE survey. A "lack of an overarching approach or connective tissue" was identified (Taylor & Boushel, 2009, p.17). There were no examples where one named individual held lead responsibility for the teaching and learning of practice with children and their families. The researchers similarly struggled to identify whether and where communication with children might be learned within a programme. While two programmes in the sample provided more in-depth skills training, these were generic in focus:

> …even using a very generous interpretation, three of the programmes seemed to provide no specific skills teaching within the HEI classroom curriculum on communication with children. A further three programmes provided one or two specific sessions, dispersed across the curriculum (Taylor & Boushel, 2009, p.29).

Programmes in Wales seemingly had still not developed a shared understanding of what should be included in the curriculum or how best to teach it. The extent to which HEIs and other stakeholders wished to see increased attention given to communication with children within the taught curriculum depended on how they saw the social work role. For example, an academic who stated "if they're not doing direct work with children, they're not doing social work" viewed communication with children as a core element of the taught curriculum (Taylor & Boushel, 2009, p.30). Some who disagreed with this viewed the learning of generic communication skills to be more important at qualifying level; both child-focused and applied child-specialist skills were seen as the remit of post-qualifying training. Others thought communication with children was best learned through placements rather than taught in the classroom, even though the variability in quality and availability of practice learning opportunities with children had not been addressed.

The participation by children and young people in programme planning and delivery had remained embryonic and opportunistic rather than strategic, with just two programmes having involved children and young people in planning groups or networks. Young stakeholders were, however, unanimous in encouraging the development of this area of the curriculum:

> [Young carer] Social workers should talk directly to children rather than through parents. Listen to what children are saying. It should be included in basic social work training. It might help students realise they do not want to work in C&YP work! Students need to learn 'you can't blank the child out'; don't always refer the child onto someone else (Taylor & Boushel, 2009, p.31).

3.3.4   The evaluation of the social work degree

A large-scale three-year research project was launched in 2004 to evaluate the effects of the change from a 2 year Diploma to a 3 year honours degree as the professional qualification in social work (Department of Health *et al*, 2008). Discussion of communication skills in this project was framed in generic terms only. Two-thirds of student respondents professed themselves to be 'very satisfied' with learning opportunities for communication skills within practice placements and, according to practice educators, there had been an improvement in the quality of students' communication skills within final placements compared to those seen in students studying for the DipSW (the previous social work qualification). Almost 90% of students had received at least one placement in a children's service setting, but there is no discussion of the extent to which practice learning opportunities offered direct engagement and communication with children. This would be

important to know, given the concerns raised elsewhere about a culture of little direct work with children. In relation to the taught curriculum, only one-third of students professed themselves to be 'very satisfied' with how 'communication and interpersonal skills' had been covered. As the quality and coverage of communication skills *with children* were not specifically explored in this evaluation it is not known how far it was generic rather than child-focused or applied specialist skills with children that were referred to here.

3.3.5 Conclusions from research on qualifying programmes

The SCIE practice survey and Welsh audit, three years apart, found similar trends. There was little agreement about the place, focus, and level of teaching of communication with children within the taught curriculum. All programmes included generic communication skills but only some could confidently assert that they included basic child-focused skills and fewer still included applied child-specialist skills. There remained disagreement as to whether generic proficiencies (primarily taught in relation to adults), rather than child-focused or applied child-specialist proficiencies, should provide the main foundation at qualifying level. The evaluation of the English degree indicated that students' generic communication skills had improved (despite some dissatisfaction from students about how these were covered in the taught curriculum) but the evaluation contributed to the obscuration of communication with children by failing to consider it specifically. The integral role of practice learning was emphasised in all three studies and most (not all) students were able to receive at least one placement within a children's service setting. However, opportunities for direct practice with children in placements remained variable, as has been noted by the Task Force (SWTF, 2009c).

These uncertainties have continued through the recent reprise of the long standing debate about whether the qualifying degree should be generic or specialist in focus (Luckock *et al*, 2007; Trevithick, 2011). Social work programmes currently have discretion regarding the extent to which they should teach communication with children and assess students' competence in this. It is this discretion which is likely to have led to the marginalised position of communication with children in many programmes and the diverging practices cross-nationally. The compromise being considered by the Reform Board is that programmes provide some element of specialism as a pathway in the latter stages of the qualifying training and that this is boosted through opportunities to develop more specialised expertise within an Assessed and Supported (first) Year in Employment (SWRB,

2010b). Following Munro's advice, the Professional Capabilities Framework currently under development by the Reform board is exploring the development of some consensual standards for this. My contribution to this process will be discussed in Chapter 9. My view remains as my colleagues and I have set it out previously:

> …it is insufficient for these skills and capabilities with children to be taught only at post-qualifying level… a basic level of communicative ability with children should be demonstrated at the point of qualification by all students (Lefevre *et al*, 2008, p.174).

3.4   Evidence for effective teaching and learning approaches

3.4.1   *Reviewing the literature*

As part of the SCIE Knowledge Review, a systematic review was carried out of evidence for the effectiveness of particular strategies for the teaching and learning of communication skills with children within social work education. Fifty four sources of literature were included. Thirty one of these reported some kind of empirical research findings relevant to the research question, with six meeting the criteria for in-depth quality appraisal and data extraction. The others comprised case discussions or conceptual papers related to the topic. A broad thematic analysis provided some support for the rationale taken to particular curriculum approaches.

In updating the literature review for this thesis, it transpired that the evidence base for particular teaching and learning strategies remains very limited. Most published works comprise student or educator self-report/description rather than systematic exploration of learning experiences or evaluation of improvements in students' capabilities. While there is more robust evaluation of generic communication skills for professional practice, and some for generic social work communication skills (Moss *et al*, 2007; Gilligan, 2008; Koprowska, 2010), there continues to be very little focus on approaches for teaching communication with children and no published studies specifically evaluating the teaching and learning of communication with children within qualifying programmes, other than my initial analysis of data from this thesis (Lefevre, 2010b).

3.4.2 Core themes in teaching and learning approaches

Four core themes were identified through the systematic review in how the teaching and learning of communication with children is structured and conceptualised in the literature. Firstly, this is not a discrete or well-formed area of pedagogical research. Findings are contingent and difficult to disembed from evidence about the teaching of practice interventions or generalist professional (rather than social work) communication skills. This makes it difficult to ascertain the best approaches for teaching the kinds of capabilities needed within child protection compared with, say, youth offending, or for assessment roles and tasks as opposed to therapeutic intervention or family support. Secondly, communication with different kinds of children, or in differing contexts or roles, is not covered consistently. For example, it is difficult to isolate evidence regarding specific approaches to teaching communication with younger children, teenagers, or those who have experienced trauma or abuse. These two factors limit the understanding of the best teaching approaches for applied contexts. Thirdly, studies focus almost exclusively on teaching individual face-to-face communication rather than on how written or more contemporary electronic forms of communication (such as email or text) or communication within family groups could be better learned. Fourthly, as within programmes, the main research focus is on methods for teaching skills and techniques in the 'Doing' of communication. There is little integration between these and approaches which enhance students' knowledge and understanding ('Knowing') or enable a wider development of their ethics, values, personal qualities and emotional capacities ('Being').

Two main approaches to the teaching and learning of communication with children were isolated through the systematic review: a behavioural approach to skills acquisition and a capability-building approach to developing 'use of self' (Ward, 2008). Both approaches are experiential in nature, involving learning through Being and Doing, following a primary underpinning philosophy that:

> Social work students cannot develop empathy, emotional regulation and attentive listening skills by reading a book (Napoli & Bonifas, 2011, p.646).

The influences of these two broad approaches were also seen in the Practice Survey findings. This may either be because the literature has impacted on the way HEIs conceptualise their teaching or because social work educators are choosing to write about/research their preferred approaches.

3.4.3   Behavioural approaches for skills acquisition (Doing)

As with the practice survey, the predominant research focus in the literature is on skills acquisition, positioning proficiency as a cluster of techniques or micro-skills which any trainee professional could learn. Theoretical/didactic approaches alone have been found to be insufficient for teaching communication and interpersonal skills; they require additional experiential methods to be used so that abstract concepts are experimented with and reflected upon and learning is embedded (Huerta-Wong & Schoech, 2010). Task-centred and behavioural theories of learning are key, such as systematic skills training through workshops or 'skills-labs', where theoretical teaching is followed with simulated role-plays to practise new techniques with children (for example, Pope, 2002; Saltiel, 2003). There is some empirical evidence for these approaches with children. Collins *et al* (1987), for example, found that systematic skills training can have a significant impact on students' development of empathy, warmth and genuineness post-intervention; however, evidence was gathered through written tests only and these, as the authors acknowledge, do not necessarily give a "representation of performance in an actual situation" (p.109).

What social work education most seeks to achieve is deep learning (Carpenter, 2005) where skills are made transferable to the practice context and can be drawn on at an intuitive as well as deliberative level (Howell, 1982; Meyer & Land, 2003). However, in the two studies which did include follow-ups (Mitchell *et al*, 1989; Gleeson, 1992), there was little evidence that skills taught were integrated and developed over time. This highlights the problem of whether and how training in communication with children becomes transferred into practice. The same problem has also been found in respect of generic and adult-focused communication skills: a SCIE-sponsored systematic review of the teaching and learning of generic communication skills for social work found that while "communication skills training generally increases skilfulness and is well received by students… improvements do not necessarily transfer to practice settings with service users" (Trevithick *et al*, 2004, p.viii).

Some studies query the prevailing trend for skills acquisition (Hodges *et al*, 1993; Pope, 2002; Horwath & Thurlow, 2004), suggesting that critical reflection on skills, techniques, and practice with children, incorporating theory and feedback from practice educators and tutors, is as helpful to students' learning as actual skills practice, and sometimes more so.

What seems clear from the literature is that "the philosophy of 'train and hope' is naively inadequate" (Dickson & Bamford, 1995, p.102). Skills acquisition approaches seem most successful where an initial commitment to self-directed learning is established, perhaps by developing personal action plans to facilitate the transfer of learning from classroom to workplace, and then sustained by follow-up interventions, such as supervised practice by someone familiar with the approach. A useful strategy might conceivably include engaging students in developing such personalised plans following initial skills training which directly focus on how techniques might be practised and consolidated in practice placements. Practice educators could then focus on consolidating learning through focused supervision and direct assessment of these skills in practice, but it is likely they might need either initial or refresher training from the HEI to ensure they are sufficiently familiar with the skills approaches being taught to students.

3.4.4 *Capability-building approaches to developing the self of the social worker (Being)*

The second key approach, also observed in the practice survey, is concerned more with the development of values and personal and emotional qualities in the student which enables their capacity for, and commitment to, the kinds of emotional and ethical engagements with children which are noted in the 'Being' domain of the CCCh taxonomy. This 'capability-building approach' is thought to develop students' use of self, such as their capacity for emotional and ethical engagement and communication. Both empowerment approaches and psychosocial philosophies can be distinguished in the literature as underpinning these approaches.

Empowerment-based strategies may facilitate the development of students' capacity to connect with children's experience of structural oppression (West & Watson, 2000), with tutors modelling participative and empowering methods in the programme, such as advocacy and problem-based learning (Mallon, 1997; Boylan *et al*, 2000; Ross & Wright, 2001; Smith & Bush, 2001). No robust evidence of the effectiveness of such approaches is currently available.

Psychosocial philosophies are thought to develop students' capacity to connect with children's emotional experience and 'internal worlds' and are discussed in the literature primarily with relation to the experiential child observation model based on that developed at the Tavistock Clinic. This largely psychodynamic approach is believed to provide a 'containing' and attuned reflective space

within which students feel safe enough to engage with the emotional realm and think about both themselves and the felt experience of children, thus enhancing their emotional awareness and capacity to engage (Ward, 2008; Mensinga, 2011). Through child observation being included in the DipSW qualification in the early 1990s as a way of reinforcing some specialisation within generic training (CCETSW, 1991), a well-conceptualised and richly illustrated literature emerged (see, for example, Briggs, 1992; Wilson, 1992; McMahon & Farnfield 1994; Bridge & Miles 1996) but only Trowell & Paton (1998) provide some empirical evidence, and this is of the benefits to learning of the child observation approach rather than the success of the transfer of this learning to direct practice with children. However, Trowell & Paton's study does indicate that students' personal development, professional knowledge about child development and behaviour, capacity to take an observant stance, awareness of difference and culture, ability to focus on the emotional inner world of the child, and self-efficacy in communicating with children were all enhanced by this approach. The requirements for child observation ebbed away, however, with the introduction of the new qualifying degree in 2003 so it is far less prevalent currently.

While little empirical evidence can be found for the effectiveness of either empowerment-based or psychosocial approaches, both are underpinned by a well-theorised epistemology that experiential learning is integral and that the *methods* of teaching, learning and assessment of communicative skill should *model* the approach itself, what Ward (1995) terms 'the matching principle'. So, for example, students might be taught about containment by having this modelled through a group tutorial approach which creates a safe space within which students can feel and reflect on a range of emotions and experiences (Mensinga, 2011).

Kolb's (1984) work on experiential learning offers a useful framework for understanding the learning process in which students engage (see Figure 2). In the first stages of the cycle, initial concrete experience in the real world may be observed and reflected upon. In fact, students enter social work training already with a wealth of experience in communication, although they may not have thought about how this has helped them to develop capability. For example, as children they will have learned how to communicate with both peers and with adults with whom they were in a range of relationships and contexts. In adulthood they will have experience of communication with other adults and children in both their personal and work lives, who have a range of abilities, interpersonal styles, and habitus, and with whom there might be significant power relationships.

Figure 2 Kolb's experiential learning cycle

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                    ┌─────────────┐
                    │  Concrete   │
                    │ experience  │
                    └─────────────┘
   ┌─────────────────┐        ┌─────────────┐
   │     Active      │        │ Reflective  │
   │ experimentation │        │ observation │
   └─────────────────┘        └─────────────┘
              ┌─────────────────┐
              │    Abstract     │
              │ conceptualisation│
              └─────────────────┘
```
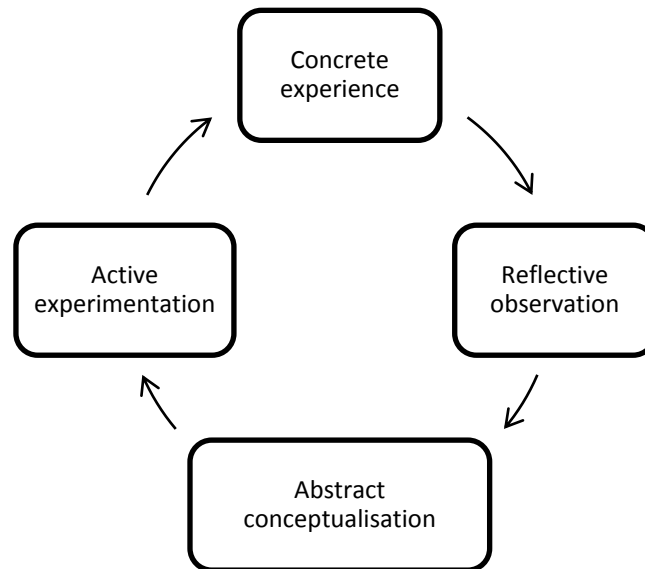
Students could be enabled very early in the programme to determine their existing strengths and learning needs in relation to this prior experience. This would help them identify capabilities which are transferable to other situations and support the building of realistic self-efficacy. I have described in Chapter 6 of my book (Lefevre, 2010a) a range of reflective exercises which students could be encouraged to engage in as part of such inductive learning and self-appraisal. Tutor input to enable students to engage with theory and research findings could enable dynamics and processes to be named (Knowing). Abstract conceptualisations might be formed and new ideas generated which students might actively experiment with, perhaps through problem-based learning, skills-labs (Doing), or group work processes (Being). By evaluating their efficacy students could then determine how best to operate in future practice experience – whereupon the whole learning cycle would begin again.

3.4.5   Conclusions regarding the evidence base

There is some evidence for the commonly used behavioural approaches to skills acquisition. These appear to be most successful where opportunities are provided to transfer learning into practice so it can be embedded, consolidated and integrated as deep rather than surface learning. Although there is little robust evidence for either empowerment-based or psycho-social approaches to capability-building, these highly conceptualised approaches could be taken as useful starting points for a curriculum approach which might then be subject to further empirical evaluation. They are

consequently at the core of the approach to teaching and learning communication with children in the MA Social Work for which I am responsible for this aspect of the curriculum.

3.5 Developing the evidence base

My colleagues and I, supported by a grant from SWAP[10], disseminated the Knowledge Review findings through conference presentations (see Appendix 1) and a journal article (Luckock *et al*, 2007). As I further developed the CCCh conceptualisation, I also presented this through keynote presentations, international conference papers (Appendix 1), a co-authored journal article (Lefevre *et al*, 2008), a book chapter (Lefevre, 2008b) and a single-authored book (Lefevre, 2010). The dearth of evidence regarding the most effective teaching and learning strategies and lack of consensus regarding curriculum focus and programme structures, however, left something of a lacuna.

This is not a feature unique to communication skills with children. Empirical evidence for educational approaches is lacking across the social work curriculum (Carpenter, 2005). This is of particular concern in an applied discipline such as social work as the outcomes of learning are so important: improving practitioner effectiveness should result in higher benefits for service users, carers and communities; poorly trained practitioners can be not only unhelpful but harmful.

Such concerns led directly to the Outcomes in Social Work Education Project (OSWE), a collaboration between SCIE, SWAP and SIESWE[11], which aimed to collect data on the effectiveness of teaching and learning methods in qualifying-level social work education. It sought to do so by involving representatives from selected universities in 'a learning set' to explore how they might evaluate their own teaching in order to generate more evidence for pedagogic methods.

3.5.1 Challenges in evaluating the outcomes of teaching communication with children

The OSWE project sought to compare measures of student knowledge and skills before and after teaching to evaluate whether the input (i.e. teaching) produced the desired outcomes (i.e. enhanced knowledge and skills in practice) (Burgess & Carpenter, 2010b). In this it was rooted within the

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[10] The subject centre for social work and social policy in the Higher Education Academy

[11] The former Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education, now remodelled as IRISS – the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services

'what works' agenda of evidence-based practice (Magill, 2006), taking the position that, by measuring changes in student behaviour or understanding over time, a better understanding would be formed about the potential outcomes of particular approaches than is currently provided by the kind of routine student ratings more commonly associated with end-of-course evaluations – what Orme (2011) dubs 'smiley face' evaluations. Such subjective feedback is classed only as Level 1 (lowest) on the scale originally devised by Kirkpatrick (1967) to measure the contribution of learning interventions, as it tends primarily to gauge the participants' satisfaction with training inputs. Outcomes indicating higher level changes, such as in attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, skills or organisational practice, which then lead to improved service provision, are not ascertained (Carpenter, 2005, 2011). To produce the best evidence, the following are thought to be necessary:

> Firstly, appropriate tools must be found to measure learning in relation to specified aspects of knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviour. Secondly, baseline measures must be taken to establish whether a later measure reflects learning over that period, rather than simply reflecting what the students already knew. Changes over time can thus be measured from the start of a module or programme to the end. This can enable us to compare the learning that takes place, either between two cohorts of students that differ in some way, or between two different types of teaching and learning opportunities. We might even be able to measure the impact of learning in terms of its impact on practice (Burgess & Carpenter, 2010b, p.8).

Such higher level evidence might be provided where several HEIs undertake comparable empirical studies before and after a teaching intervention. Then it could be possible to see not only whether student capabilities improve following an intervention at a particular HEI, but the extent to which one is more effective than another (Burgess & Carpenter, 2010b). Such comparative studies are logistically difficult as well as conceptually complex to implement, however, because of the particular nature of social work education. Qualifying programmes around the country differ widely on a range of parameters. The SCIE Practice Survey uncovered substantial variations in: curriculum content and learning outcomes (within the broad subject requirements specified); how and where the required topics are positioned within the programme; the epistemological paradigm underpinning the whole; and teaching and learning methods used. Some programmes are at Masters level, others undergraduate; and within this, some HEIs have much higher academic entry requirements than others (SWTF, 2009a). Students' readiness for self-directed study and engagement with abstract conceptualisation will differ considerably as a result. Student demography also varies, with some urban courses having much higher intakes of non-white, non-UK-born students, for whom English may not be the primary language. Differences in ethnicity,

culture, habitus, religion and language may make a significant difference to how non-verbal communication is interpreted. Some programmes have an entry requirement for pre-course work-based experience, others do not, and have higher numbers of school-leavers who have less prior experiential learning to inductively draw upon. These differences could potentially alter what needs to be learned or how learning takes place quite substantially.

Achieving comparability in the teaching and learning of communication with children is also particularly challenging as it is rarely, if ever, taught through one specific module (Luckock *et al*, 2006). Students learn about the CCCh across various elements of the taught curriculum and within placements. Who teaches particular topics and the level of tutor interest in, and practical experience of, the topic will not just vary across institutions but may change within the same HEI in different years. Students at one HEI could potentially have better access to high quality practice learning experiences with children than another due to local factors, and this advantage could potentially transfer between the two HEIs on different years. Factors such as these mean it is often difficult to determine exactly what has led to improvements in students' competence (MacIntyre & Green Lister, 2010). Holding constant factors such as these in evaluations can be extremely challenging, with the likelihood of the reliability of a comparative study being compromised: findings which indicate that students have benefited from a particular programme or approach might not be replicated if they had a different tutor or placement, for example.

3.5.2 Moving forward: planning empirical research

Communication with children in my qualifying MA programme was based on a coherent conceptual framework (the CCCh taxonomy) which sought to ensure key aspects of curriculum content were covered consistently across a range of module and learning opportunities in 'a whole programme approach' (Lefevre *et al*, 2008). The teaching and learning strategies which the systematic review had suggested might be useful were represented well across the programme, for example an experiential child observation sequence, problem-based learning, and behavioural approaches to skills acquisition were all included. However, the arguments advanced by the OSWE project indicated to me that I could not be confident of the extent to which particular teaching approaches, aspects of curriculum content or learning opportunities were effective and how they might be contributing to students' learning and development. For example, I did not know the impact on students' learning of a three-session focused sub-module on communication with children and

young people which I taught in the second term of the programme. Might there be ways this sub-module could be improved?

Joining OSWE I planned to undertake an in-depth prospective evaluation of the students' learning and development regarding communication with children which I hoped might answer some of these questions. Due to the methodological challenges I outlined in 3.5.1, including a lack of the resources required to set up the kinds of full-scale comparisons where all parameters could be held constant, I planned only a single programme evaluation. The methodological approach taken to this empirical work will be detailed in Chapter 4. The findings and analysis will then be reported in Chapters 5-8.

4   Methodology

4.1   A pilot study

I began the empirical research with a pilot study as an assignment for Phase 1 of this Doctorate, undertaking a small scale post-hoc evaluation with a cohort of MA students completing their training. As well as gathering subjective qualitative feedback on the students' perceptions of what had been helpful, I planned to evaluate their sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2008) and applied understanding for how to communicate with children. Self-efficacy was measured using self-rating scales. To ascertain the extent of students' applied understanding for practice, they were given a typical practice vignette to read and asked to provide written responses to questions about how they might plan their communication with the child and young person whose situations were described. The content of participants' vignette responses was analysed thematically to see whether they evidenced awareness of the individual dimensions of the taxonomy of CCCh.

These methods, all incorporated into my subsequent full-scale study, will be discussed in more depth in Section 4.4. The pilot evaluation indicated that the student sample generally felt confident in their capacity to communicate effectively with children and could evidence awareness of a good range of the CCCh. They could also identify a number of factors which they thought had benefited their learning. These included not only programme-related content, structures and pedagogic methods, but external influences such as pre-course experience with children. This insight enabled the questionnaires (discussed below) to be further refined for the full-scale evaluation.

4.2   Planning the prospective evaluation

The usefulness of the measures piloted led me to specify them in the initial research question for the prospective evaluation, which had a concern with the efficacy of my own programme at its heart:

> To what extent, and in what ways, does this qualifying MA in Social Work contribute to the development of students' CCCh-awareness and sense of self-efficacy in communication with children in social work practice?

My initial plan was to collect baseline data at entry to the programme (Time 1) so that increases in students' knowledge at particular points, including the end of the programme (Time 4), could be

measured and analysed. By also taking measures before (Time 2) and after (Time 3) the three-session sub-module which offered focused teaching and learning opportunities on communication with children, I hoped the particular contribution of that sub-module within the whole programme approach could be identified. Despite the limitations engendered by the lack of a comparison group, I hoped this approach could at least offer an initial contribution to the evidence pool.

Having collected this data (see Section 4.4 for further details) I undertook an initial analysis with a focus on the efficacy of the programme and the usefulness of the research instruments. My conclusion was:

> This is a small-scale evaluation but preliminary findings indicate that students perceived the curriculum content and pedagogical approaches of this MA programme to be useful to their learning. They felt more confident by the end of the programme that they could communicate effectively with children and young people. The vignette instrument suggested students had an increased understanding of how to apply the 'Core[12] Capabilities' of communication within written simulations of a practice situation (Lefevre, 2010b, p.107).

The generalisability of these findings, however, was very limited on several counts. Firstly there was no comparison group and the sample was very small. Secondly, I was not evaluating a specific, discrete teaching approach which could potentially be manualised and offered to other educators as a model to follow should it be found to be effective. Instead I had been exploring the possible benefits of a coherent conceptual framework to underpin both curriculum content/coverage and use of a variety of teaching and learning strategies – the 'whole programme approach' (Lefevre *et al*, 2008). An analysis of the data solely in these terms would not have enabled me to make a significant contribution to the knowledge base. What the discipline most needed, I believed, was a better understanding of which factors and processes most enhanced students' learning and development so that their self-efficacy and capability increased. Even without a comparison group, understandings about change in this specific context could then still provide idiographic generalisations (Williams, 2000) to inform social work education more broadly.

These considerations led me to modify my research question so that it moved beyond a preoccupation with the effectiveness of my own programme and teaching to offer the possibility of

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[12] I had originally used the term 'Core Capabilities' rather than 'Communicative Capabilities' but changed this recently following the proposal for a Professional Capabilities Framework by the Reform Board, so as to more clearly distinguish them.

learning more about what kinds of student seemed to become more confident and CCCh-aware, how, when and why. The sub-question for this empirical component of this thesis consequently became:

> What factors and processes support qualifying social work students in developing the self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness they need to become effective communicators with children in their future professional roles?

To help gauge the extent to which certain aspects of the programme had prepared students for competent practice once qualified, additional data collection was planned in the form of follow-up interviews (Time 5). An outline of the research process is provided as Appendix 5.

4.3   Methodological position

Social work students across a cohort have very varied starting points regarding confidence, capability, ontology, personality, motivation, pre-course experience, and intentions. This makes determining whether their learning and development is attributable to explicit pedagogical strategies or to other influences a very complex enterprise. As elaborated in Section 3.5.1, learning opportunities do not occur within carefully controlled laboratory settings but within heterogeneous 'real world' contexts. Development may depend as much on students' engagement and responses as on the nature and quality of the pedagogical interventions provided. Students are also exposed to a disparate range of interpersonal, cultural and institutional processes and influences, even when all are undertaking the same programme, due to the multiplicity of opportunities offered within the 200 practice learning days undertaken in two contrasting placement settings: diverse roles and tasks, encounters with a range of children, and differences in the capability, practice experience and theoretical orientations of the practice educators guiding and supervising them.

For these reasons I chose a methodological approach designed for the uncontrolled nature of social research in applied 'real world' settings: the realist approach (Sayer, 2010; Robson, 2011). Pawson and Tilley's (1997) approach to realist evaluation was particularly useful. By promoting inquiry into 'what works, for whom, and in what circumstances?' it enables researchers to learn more about how contexts and conditions may promote particular outcomes in social contexts. In my case, it has framed exploration of whether differing trajectories for increased/decreased self-efficacy and

capability might emerge for certain kinds of students, rooted in their own characteristics, motivations or experiences. My aim was to:

> ...seek to show how it is that in the particular situation in which the research took place, there was a particular causal configuration involving a set of mechanisms that had the particular pattern of results achieved. The task is to carry out an analysis of the possible causes which were in operation while eliminating alternatives which might have been involved (Robson, 2011, p.37).

The realist evaluation method is underpinned by critical realism's approach to analysing and weighting competing knowledge claims (Collier, 1994; Bhaskar, 1998; Archer *et al*, 1998). There is no attempt to identify absolute truths, as it is believed possible to identify only underlying tendencies rather than causal laws within social realities. Critical realism separates ontology (how the world is experienced) from epistemology (how experience is known and thought about). That is a congruent position for the considerations at the heart of my study, namely how practice might be improved to promote better outcomes for children. More relativist paradigms like constructivism might suggests that 'effectiveness' in communication could never be defined, as competing views on any interaction could be valid depending on perspective (Groff, 2004). However, from a critical realist position I am able to state that, while the way in which interactions are interpreted and evaluated is likely to be partial, subjective, socially constructed, and context-dependent, there still exists a social reality in which the purpose and goals of the communication between a child and social worker are achieved (or not), and that this will be partially dependent on how the social worker has behaved in that interaction. A practitioner may use words or concepts that a child does not understand or fail to appreciate what his or her non-verbal communication is conveying. Alternatively the worker may create an environment of trust in which the child feels safe to disclose worrying or distressing events.

4.4   Data collection and analysis

4.4.1   Overview of methods

A mix of methods seemed necessary to learn more about the factors and processes which could support student learning and development. Quantitative data collection could enable changes in students' self-efficacy to be measured. Qualitative data could allow students to provide insights into their experiences and perceptions so that any quantitative patterns could be interpreted. How and

why students had learned and the extent to which generalisable processes were reflected might then be better understood. Consequently, questionnaires incorporating both types of data were developed for the four time points when students were undertaking the programme (Times 1-4). Follow-up semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of the original cohort once they were in qualified practice (Time 5) were also undertaken. By interviewees reflecting back on their learning and development experiences and patterns of quantitative data, it was anticipated that the hermeneutic formation of knowledge would be enhanced (Guba, 1990). Such inclusion of participants' perspectives is consonant with critical realism's participatory and emancipatory aspirations (Robson, 2011).

4.4.2   The sample

The sample population for the evaluation was the whole cohort of 28 students who began the full-time, 21-month qualifying MA in social work at my university in a particular year. All 28 students agreed to participate in the first four time points of this research when questionnaires were administered and completed at least one questionnaire. The proportion of the cohort providing data at each time point varied, however (see Table 2). Although only twelve students (43%) completed all four questionnaires, sufficient numbers provided data at the different time points to enable statistically valid comparisons between paired time points (see Table 5 in Chapter Five). However, the small numbers and variations in those participating at different time points need to be held in mind as possible limitations. These limitations are discussed further as and when they arise in the data analysis chapters.

Table 2   Nᵒ of students providing data

Time points for data collection	Methods	Total nᵒ providing data	% n=28
T1	Questionnaires	25	89%
T2	Questionnaires	27	96%
T3	Questionnaires	18	64%
T4	Questionnaires	22	79%
T5	Interviews	5	18%

Purposive sampling led to five students being interviewed at Time 5 (see Table 3). They self-selected from a sampling frame of twelve students who met two criteria. Firstly, they had to be working post-qualification in children's services settings where communication with children and young people

was part of their professional role. Secondly, they had to already have demonstrated competence in communication with children, having been directly observed and assessed in their communication and engagements with children as part of both qualifying and post-qualifying training.

Table 3   The five interviewees

	Amanda[13]	Sarah	Vicky	Ben	Melody
Age at entry	22-26	27-36	22-26	22-26	22-26
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female
Ethnicity	White British	White British	White British	White British	White British
Disability	No	No	No	No	No
Time points with data completed	1, 2, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	2, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

4.4.3   Data collection stages

Time 1– the initial questionnaire

Time 1 (T1[14]) was the point at which students entered the programme, providing the baseline for prospective evaluation. Students were given a paper copy of the T1 questionnaire (Appendix 6) to complete in the classroom.   I explained the purpose and focus of the research and how confidentiality and anonymity would be preserved, and gained students' informed consent to the research using the form shown as Appendix 7. So that findings could later be analysed on the basis of particular characteristics and experience, participants' age, gender, ethnicity, pre-course personal contact and work-based experience with children, and intentions regarding future working with children were collected. Participants were asked to tick pre-determined categories to facilitate later analysis but opportunities were also provided for qualitative feedback so that insights into any emergent patterns would be possible (Robson, 2011). Two key variables were then measured: Students were asked to indicate their sense of self-efficacy on a 0-10 rating scale, where '0' indicated 'no confidence' in their capacity to communicate effectively with children, and '10' meant 'extremely confident' (see Section 4.4.4 for further discussion of self-efficacy); analysis of responses to typical case vignettes allowed CCCh-awareness to be appraised (see Section 4.4.5). Each student

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[13] Pseudonyms are provided

[14] The four time points will now be referred to as T1, T2, T3 and T4

was assigned a unique identifying number so that their particular responses through the time points could be tracked and compared over time. This allowed for exploration of the range of influences on students' development of self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness and the relative importance of such influences.

Time 2 – before the sub-module

T2 was just prior to the sub-module of three focused sessions on communicating with children. This was four weeks into the second term of the programme with eight days undertaken of the first fieldwork placement. Participants completed only the self-efficacy scale and the vignette exercise.

Time 3 - after the sub-module

The T3 questionnaire was administered just following the sub-module, three weeks after T2 and with a further twelve placement days having been undertaken. Participants completed the self-efficacy scale and vignette exercise again and were also asked quantitative and qualitative questions about their learning and development, including identification of which learning opportunities had been most helpful to them (see T3 questionnaire in Appendix 8).

Time 4 – the end of the programme

T4 came in the final week of the programme, fifteen months after T3. The participants once again completed the self-efficacy scale, vignette exercise and evaluative questions about the usefulness of learning opportunities. They were also asked how many placements they had had offering direct practice learning opportunities with children and whether/why their intentions for working with children in the future had changed.

Time 5 – the follow-up interviews

T5 data were collected once the participants had been in qualified practice for 16-18 months. Follow-up interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of five members of the cohort using a semi-structured interview schedule (more details in section 4.4.6). Interviews were audio-recorded, fully transcribed, and coded using Nvivo v8, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software package.

4.4.4   *Measuring and analysing self-efficacy*

Self-efficacy ratings were analysed laterally and sequentially across the cohort (using means) and for each participant (individual trajectories). Two-tailed matched pair T-Tests were used to examine changes in mean confidence self-ratings. These were analysed by a research assistant at the university[15], using the Statistical Programme for the Social Sciences v17 (SPSS). Findings are reported and discussed in Chapter 5.

Self-efficacy scales are a widely accepted measure of the outcomes of social work education, believed to represent more than students' opinions of their knowledge or skills:

> Self-efficacy is more than a self-perception of competency. It is an individual's assessment of his or her confidence in their ability (to) execute specific skills in a particular set of circumstances and thereby achieve a successful outcome (Holden *et al.*, 2002, p. 116).

While self-perceptions of confidence alone are not enough to guarantee proficiency in direct practice, there appears to be some relation between the two. For example, social work students have suggested that their perceived increases in confidence correspond to improvements in their communication skills (Koprowska, 2010). Those with high self-efficacy beliefs are also thought to be more likely to persist in the kinds of complex and challenging roles and tasks they face in practice, and to become more effective (Quinney & Parker, 2010). Confidence in capability is now being adopted by the Reform Board as one measure for students' and practitioners' self-measures against the new Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) (SWRB, 2010b).

Response shift bias needs to be considered when using such self-rating scales. This may occur when participants become more aware at the end of a learning intervention about what they did not previously know or could not do. In such situations, participants' self-efficacy ratings may be lower at the end of an intervention than at the beginning, not because their confidence has been damaged, but because it is now rooted in more realistic self-appraisal. This dynamic was considered in the recent evaluation of the Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) programme: a question was added at the final time point to enable practitioners to retrospectively rate what they thought their self-efficacy score should have been at the beginning (Carpenter *et al*, 2010). It would have been

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[15] The contribution of Tish Marrable, research assistant in my department, is here gratefully acknowledged.

helpful for me to have included such a question at T4. However, T5 did provide opportunities for the interviewee sub-sample to evaluate their scorings at the earlier time points. These are discussed in the analysis chapters.

My self-efficacy scale was simple and uni-dimensional, asking only about participants' confidence in communicating effectively with children. Others, however, have provided a series of parameters for students to self-rate against, isolating individual tasks and behaviours related to the topic under investigation (Quinney & Parker, 2010; Koprowska, 2010; Carpenter *et al*, 2010). In retrospect, I think it would have been beneficial for me to have provided something similar, using dimensions of the Communicative Capability as a basis. Students could have been asked, for example, "How confident are you now in drawing on child development knowledge to inform your approach to communication?" and "How confident are you now in using play and activities to communicate with children?". This would have enabled me to ascertain the dimensions in which participants felt more confident at particular points.

4.4.5   *Measuring and analysing applied learning*

A key aim of this research was to discover more about what students had learned at certain points in the programme. Ascertaining whether developments had occurred across all taxonomy dimensions immediately presented challenges as, although all may be embodied in performance (whether face-to-face or remote), some (such as personal qualities and skills) might only be evidenced through observing direct practice with a child, whereas others (such as child development) could be ascertained more straightforwardly through written exercises.

Given this, I considered whether the students' direct practice required observation and assessment. Analysis of the written reports of direct observations carried out by practice educators could potentially have provided relevant data. However, the diversity of practice learning experiences, and, indeed, the variability in focus and quality of practice educators' written reports, means there is little consistency between the aspects of competence observed and how these are evaluated. Training practice educators in assessing each student against the CCCh taxonomy would not have been practical. Their key requirement was to assess against the National Occupational Standards for social work and, as yet, there is no prior research to benchmark the performance of qualifying students (Orme, 2011). Even if I tried to control for this by undertaking observations of all 28

students myself, I could not have held the timing of observations constant: some students have their children's services placement in their first year, others in the second; appropriate opportunities for observation arise fortuitously during a placement, depending on a child's needs at a given time, so arise much earlier in the placement for some than others. This would have limited the validity of comparative analysis. In addition, ethical concerns would have arisen:

> Social work takes place in private spaces and observation is potentially intrusive on the delicate relationships between social worker and service user (Orme, 2011, p.36).

I decided that determining students' proficiency in embodied co-present practice (Broadhurst & Mason, 2011) would be more simply and appropriately ascertained at a broad level through whether or not students passed their placements. Applied understanding of how to communicate with children would, instead, be evaluated through a written task where participants' CCCh-awareness could be demonstrated.

CCCh-awareness could have been measured by asking students to name the factors which they believed contributed to effective communication with children and ascertaining how many of the 32 taxonomy dimensions were included. However, such questions are divorced from context and do not require participants to draw upon and demonstrate the applied understanding that they would need for a real life situation (Hughes, 1998). Competence in real-life practice might not be reflected (Collins *et al*, 1987; Trevithick *et al*, 2004).

Instead I decided to simulate a practice situation through presenting students with a hypothetical vignette of a typical scenario so that contextualised responses could be elicited (Poulou, 2001). Students were asked to read and provide written responses to scenarios in which a social worker needed to communicate (a) with a younger child aged 5-7 and (b) with a teenager. Such vignettes are thought to offer a reasonable approximation of people's likely responses in a real situation as a recognisable interpretation of the real world within a situated context is presented which stimulates feelings as well as thoughts (Neff, 1979). The contextual framework and conditions for an exercise can be clearly delineated and held constant so that statements are not made in a vacuum but in relation to the same simulated situation (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000). Data gathered were consequently more standardised and comparable, therefore increasing the internal validity of the study (Poulou, 2001). Finch (1987) has argued that comparability is further enhanced when fixed

choice responses, such as Likert scales, are offered. However, I rejected these as they require students to agree/disagree with certain statements, whereas I was seeking participants' spontaneous recall of the CCCh in relation to the scenarios.

Vignette-based evaluation methods have already been used successfully in measuring social work students' acquisition of knowledge (see, for example, MacIntyre & Green Lister, 2010) and professional development (Fook *et al*, 2000; Department of Health *et al*, 2008), but they do need to be interpreted cautiously. Strong claims regarding generalisability from fiction to real life should not be made as they may indicate more about what people believe they would do or would like to present themselves as doing, rather than what they might actually do in practice (Poulou, 2001; Hall & Slembrouck, 2009). No clear correlation has yet been drawn between evidence of applied understanding and embodied proficiency in direct social work practice.

As I was to be scoring the students' responses to see which of the CCCh taxonomy dimensions were evidenced, I provided questions which offered the potential for all dimensions to be demonstrated. I modified the vignette slightly on each administration, changing identifying details such as name or context but holding constant key parameters, such as issues relating to anti-oppressive practice, safeguarding and welfare. In this way I anticipated that comparable data would be elicited, but that 'scenario fatigue/boredom' might be avoided. The possibility of response shift bias again needed to be considered as participants' responses might have improved due to a familiarity with the research tool (Quinney & Parker, 2010), rather than because they had become more CCCh-aware.

The content of participants' vignette responses was analysed thematically to see for which of the 32 dimensions of the taxonomy they demonstrated awareness. On the basis of this each student was marked 'yes' or 'no' for each of the 32 dimensions and given a score for CCCh-awareness at each time point, which represented the total number of dimensions they had evidenced at that time point. Any rises or falls in a student's CCCh-awareness score between time points consequently represented increases or decreases in the number of dimensions apparent in their responses.

Coding participants' responses using this approach was interpretive (Campbell *et al*, 2004) as it required researcher judgement of which CCCh were implied or referred to within a vignette response. Ensuring consistency and reliability in rating was necessary. MacIntyre & Green Lister (2010), when measuring students' developing capacity to integrate theory and practice, dealt with

this by having two raters and cross-checking till a sufficient level of inter-rater reliability was established. As I was undertaking this research alone I rated all responses from the T1 vignette a second time, some months after the initial rating, and before the later responses were analysed to cross-check my reliability. Finding an 80% reliability rate between my two ratings, I examined the differences more closely. In each case this was attributable to a finely balanced matter of interpretation. Rating for the second time had already enabled me to become clearer about the criteria I was using to judge those on the borderline. I then analysed the other vignette responses immediately, so that these criteria were still clear and fresh to me. I highlighted responses where I was uncertain and blind-rated these a second time, making notes about why I judged the response in a particular way and reviewing those. Through this process I was able to achieve 100% reliability.

The level of CCCh-awareness across the cohort at each time point was analysed through ascertaining the cohort mean score for each time point. As with the confidence scales, two-tailed matched pair T-Tests were conducted using SPSS v17[16] to examine whether any changes in cohort CCCh-awareness were statistically significant. Patterns of change in CCCh-awareness scores over time for individual students and sub-groups of students were also explored descriptively. These findings are outlined and discussed in Chapter 5.

The number of students who had evidenced each of the dimensions at the different time points was counted to ascertain which of the dimensions had been evidenced by greater or fewer numbers of students at the end of the programme (T4) compared to the beginning (T1), and just after the sub-module on communication with children (T3) compared to just before (T2). This analysis and possible reasons for emergent patterns are discussed in Chapter 7.

I later considered that binary analysis of the vignette responses for whether a response either did or did not indicate knowledge of a dimension was rather a 'blunt instrument': a 'yes' score could be attributed for both very basic mentions of a dimensions (for example, just the word 'empathy') or for very detailed responses (in-depth, empathically-attuned responses to the child's situation). Gradations between individuals' responses were obscured. I subsequently re-analysed the five interviewees' responses to the vignettes according to whether or not there was no mention of a

[16] Again by the departmental research assistant, Tish Marrable

dimension (a score of zero), whether a basic response only was given (a score of '1'), or whether a more advanced response was provided, which was detailed and specific, or demonstrating the participants' awareness of complexities relating to the issue (a score of '2'). Additional findings using this more calibrated method are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

4.4.6   The interview approach and analysis

The semi-structured interview schedules inquired into interviewees'[17] perceptions of their learning journeys towards confidence and capability in communication with children. This was to provide a better understanding of "the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt 1994, p.118). Appendix 9 provides Melody's interview schedule as an example of the questions and prompts used. Each interviewee was given details of their self-ratings, CCCh-awareness scores and qualitative responses from the previous time points to facilitate them in reflecting back on their journeys of learning through the programme and sharing their responses to their patterns of confidence self-ratings and vignette scores. It was hoped the hermeneutic formation of knowledge would be strengthened through this (Guba, 1990). Through considering retrospectively how ready they were to communicate with children once qualified, I thought interviewees might also be able to provide further insights into the contributions and shortcomings of the programme, as well as how useful particular learning interventions had transpired to be. Interviewees were not asked to complete the vignette tool and the confidence self-rating scale at T5 due to the diversity of their practice and in-service training experiences since qualification.

I hoped to provoke a narrative which most represented what interviewees thought and felt, and intended to convey, not just what they happened to recall in the moment. Memory is notoriously unreliable and only the most recent or vivid experiences often stand out unless opportunities for reflection are provided (Munro, 1999). By providing the interview schedules in advance I believed that information less in their conscious awareness would be more likely to emerge. As most of the interviewees had jotted down prompts for what they wanted to include, this appeared to be a useful strategy.

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[17] I have generally used the term 'interviewee' to distinguish the five people who were interviewed at T5 from the rest of the participants in the overall study.

I did not stick rigidly to the order of questions as set out in the schedule, except for always beginning with the same initial question:

> *Please tell me in your own words as much as possible about how you and your learning developed during your MA Qualifying Training regarding communication with children and young people.*

This is because I wanted to the interviewees to be stimulated to talk about what was most meaningful and relevant to them, as opposed to just what I asked them about. This is particularly important when (as in this case) the interviewer comes with a particular theoretical framework for analysis in mind (the CCCh taxonomy). In such situations there is a danger that narrative which does not chime with the interviewer's own model is either not elicited or not heard (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interviewees generally used the initial question as a springboard to begin to explore their own concerns. We were then able to return together to the schedule later in the interview to cover the remaining questions. This made the interview much more of the kind of purposeful, professional conversation (Larkin *et al*, 2006) which may lead to unforeseen answers, including a new perspective on the research question:

> …. an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee… an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.2).

By watching the interviewees' body language, taking note of their paralanguage, I was better able to 'tune' my prompts into what they were trying to say, and enable them to expand (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009)

The interviews generated lengthy narratives which were transcribed. I needed to decide whether the most appropriate method of analysis would be inductive (such as in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2003)), or deductive (such as in theory-led thematic analysis (Hayes, 1997; Boyatzis, 1998)). While both approaches recognise that researcher's analytic preoccupations are inevitably brought to the process, the extent to which they influence the process varies. In inductive approaches the aim is that the themes identified, and even the final research questions, derive primarily from what participants say (Patton, 2002). By contrast, a deductive thematic analysis tends to be explicitly driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the topic, with themes for coding established in advance, linked to the research question and/or a pre-determined

theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As I was approaching the data with a highly conceptualised framework in mind, which had influenced the earlier data collection and analysis, I chose the latter method. Categories selected for coding included the 32 dimensions of Communicative Capability and the learning opportunities which students had described as useful in their T3 and T4 questionnaires (such as role play, practice learning, child observation, and pre-course experience). Coding was managed via NVivo v8. The thematic analysis facilitated interpretation of the patterns noted within the quantitative data and is discussed at a number of points during Chapters 5, 6 and 7 to illuminate the discussion.

However, like Eatough *et al* (2008, p.1773) I also found myself with each reading of the transcripts becoming "more 'wrapped up' in the data, becoming more responsive to what [was] being said" by the interviewees. As I began to act as 'storyteller' in the collection, analysis and thematising of the material (Drake, 2010) I came to see the importance of individual interviewees' whole journeys of learning and development taken towards self-efficacy and capability in qualified practice. Their differing pathways seemed to be related to their unique set of qualities, motivations, experiences, and learning trajectories.

As a result I additionally undertook holistic case analyses of two of the interviewees, incorporating data from all five time points. These two were selected as they had such contrasting trajectories: one (Melody) feeling highly confident about her work with children at the beginning of the programme because of her substantial pre-course experience; the other (Sarah) lacking a sense of self-efficacy with children despite her high CCCh-awareness score. In the narratives I 'storied' (see Chapter 8), I attempted to reflect Eatough *et al*'s (2008) caution not to lose either the distinction or the connection between the participants' own words and my interpretations by both including verbatim quotations and attempting to embed these within a coherent and integrated framework (Elliott *et al,* 1999). Their contrasting case analyses provide fuller insights into what different students might need if they are to reach their full potential (Flick, 2009).

4.5   Insider status

I was a concerned insider rather than objective outsider in this research. I was known well to the participants through general teaching, tutoring and dissertation supervision. Most particularly, I had taught the three-session sub-module on communication with children, so I was evaluating the

impact of my own teaching approach and curriculum design. Flick (2009) observes that some epistemological paradigms view insider-ness as necessarily undermining validity, so their proponents strive to ensure that:

> Studies are designed in such a way that the researcher's…influence can be excluded as far as possible. This should guarantee the objectivity of the study, whereby the subjective views of the researcher as well as those of the individuals under study are largely eliminated (Flick, 2009, p.13).

Risks of bias, subjectivity and undue or hidden influence certainly need to be surfaced, explored and their role taken into account. Insiders might see only the results which are most satisfying, or give more weight to them (Koprowska, 2010). For example, someone in my position might have struggled to learn that the students had not increased their knowledge or confidence following teaching. Such potential for bias is not inevitably played out, however; it can be mediated by rigorous self- reflection and transparency of the analytic process (Munro, 1999) and an openness to being surprised, even disconcerted by research findings (Sayer, 2009). Feminist epistemologists and life history researchers, among others, also suggest that neutrality in a researcher is not only unachievable but may not even be desirable (Drake, 2010). They question whether the researcher's experience, identity, ontology and opinions could or should ever be entirely split off, not only in interpretation of findings, but in the development of the research question and methodology chosen:

> The subjectivity of the researcher and of those being studied becomes part of the research process (Flick, 2009, p. 16).

Reflexivity demands that such dynamics are made transparent and subject to critical reflection rather than their existence be ignored, which can allow them to operate 'below the radar'.

Insider presence might be experienced by potential participants as overly persuasive, coercive or even off-putting (Drake, 2010). In my study there was a danger that some students would have completed the questionnaires or volunteered for follow-up interviews in order to 'please' me, as gratitude for positive earlier tutoring, or out of a sense of obligation (Goodenough *et al*, 2004). I strove to deflect this by leaving the room once questionnaires had been handed out, so students could simply leave should they not want to participate. I was concerned with the follow-up interviews that only participants who had built stronger relationships with me would self-select.

However, although three of the five interviewees had been my personal tutees, the other two had not and I had little personal knowledge of them. All gave as their reason for participation that they welcomed an opportunity to talk and think about the way they worked with children, an opportunity which they felt they were not really getting in workplace supervision. They appeared curious about their own professional development and keen to increase their future proficiency in communication with children. This suggests that, even if some were motivated by their pre-existing relationship with me, this was not the only reason.

It is possible that our pre-existing relationships might have constrained the interviewees in case they upset or angered me (Koprowska, 2010). However, the key focus of the interviews was not an evaluation of the programme, but an exploration of their individual learning needs and the extent to which they were able to utilise learning opportunities and draw on other life experiences to facilitate their learning. I also emphasised that I was particularly interested in receiving critical feedback about what had been less helpful or missing, as well as what had been useful, in order to inform not only my own approach but social work education more broadly. Of course, it is not always enough for participants simply to hear such a statement. They need to believe that it is authentic and to trust that the researcher is robust enough to hear and accept critical feedback. There is some evidence that students did believe this, as they were able to indicate at interview what they would have liked to have been different in the programme. However, again it is impossible to know what else might have been said to a 'neutral' interviewer and the limitations of this must be seriously considered.

Balanced against these potential limitations are the potential strengths and richness that the insider researcher position may bring. For example, I have a significant degree of knowledge about the programme, about how to communicate with children in social work practice, and about these students, all of which may be less readily accessible to the stranger or to the non-practitioner/non-educator. If such knowledge is subjected to critical reflection, then the insider researcher may be able to look afresh at situations, "to reflect upon the familiar as unfamiliar" in order to create new understandings (Campbell *et al*, 2004, p.126). It is possible that my familiarity and pre-existing relationships with the students helped them engage more readily in the interview. The interview transcripts of the three who had been my tutees were longer, more detailed, more self-appraising and more self-revelatory. They appeared to relax quite quickly in the interview and came primed to

start talking immediately in a self-reflective manner which indicated that they trusted that what they had to say was of interest and value to me and that I would not judge them negatively for revealing their struggles with their work.

4.6 Ethical issues

4.6.1 Gaining ethical clearance

Appropriate consideration of ethical issues enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of research (BERA, 2004). Ethical approval was obtained for the questionnaires in 2006 following the processes set out in the University's Standards and Guidelines on Research Ethics, and further ethical clearance was obtained in 2009 for the interviews. Space precludes full elaboration of all ethical considerations taken into account, but several issues are here discussed. These are deontological in nature, relating particularly to moral principles of autonomy and non-maleficence (Seymour & Skilbeck, 2002).

4.6.2 Informed Consent

In order to maximise the likelihood of questionnaires being completed at the first four time points, I arranged for students to complete the questionnaires when they were in the university as part of assigned teaching time. In this way, the questionnaire would not disadvantage them by encroaching on their private leisure time (Pokorny *et al*, 2001). However, this provoked two alternative difficulties. Firstly, I needed to ensure that respondents were not equally disadvantaged by losing teaching time (MacIntyre & Green Lister, 2010). My solution to this was to have the questionnaire simultaneously to act as course evaluation (which is a general requirement) and as a learning opportunity in its own right. The vignette tool was similar to an exercise I had previously asked students to undertake as part of problem-based learning to help transform nascent knowledge into deeper learning: undertaking the vignette exercise could be reasonably seen as consolidating a teaching intervention. Secondly, I needed to give particular attention to informed consent. Students were given written information about the study which clarified that their participation was entirely voluntary, that there was no requirement that they comply, and that they could withdraw at any time without any reprisals (Goodenough *et al*, 2004). They were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 7) which confirmed they understood these issues and which asked explicitly for

permission for their data to be used for research purposes as well as course evaluation. Once I had provided students with the questionnaires, I left the room so that they could more easily opt out without feeling pressured. Although none of the students in the study refused their consent, one did so in the pilot, so it can be assumed that sufficient opportunities to withhold consent were offered.

The twelve students in the sampling frame for the interviews were written to with information about the final stage of the research, and invited to interview. The five who volunteered were asked to complete an additional consent form prior to interview (Appendix 10).

4.6.3 Employer consent

Although at T5 the interviewees were qualified practitioners in the workplace, the interviews related still to the original university programme evaluation, so the respondents were being contacted in their status as former students to be asked about their qualifying training, rather than as local authority employees being asked about their current practice. For this reason, it was the university's ethical procedures which applied, rather than those of the employers. While agencies were not required to give consent to the research, it was considered respectful to inform them of the nature, purpose and process of the research in advance, and invite them to contact me should they have any queries or concerns. This was organised through the training manager in their organisation who was the key link person for any emergent issues and the agencies were able to confirm that they were happy for me to proceed and for their staff to participate during work time.

4.6.4 Payments

The interviewees were all given £20 in recognition of their time and trouble and to encompass cost of transportation and parking. While reimbursement of expenses is widely accepted, paid acknowledgement of effort is more contentious due to concerns about payments acting as inappropriate inducements so that people participate for the 'wrong' reasons (Alderson & Morrow, 2004). This might have been a possibility as the interviewees could have built up student debt during their qualifying training. However, all had been in full-time employment on a professional salary for 16-18 months. On balance, I considered that £20 was not so substantial a sum that it would have induced a participant to travel out to the university in the middle of a busy working day, to engage in an hour-long interview, unless they were already otherwise motivated to participate by

their own interest in the project. The payments could therefore be seen as acknowledgement rather than inducement (Head, 2009).

4.6.5   Anonymity

I confirmed to participants throughout that their names would not be included in the research and that any particular details which might identify them would be removed (Wiles et al, 2006). Students were allocated a unique identifier for the four questionnaires which enabled their data to be collated and compared without them being identified. Interviewees were informed as part of the consent process that they could only participate if they were happy to renounce the anonymity of their T1-4 questionnaire data to me so that I could draw on that information during the interview and analysis process. They were given pseudonyms for the reporting of the research so that their anonymity is preserved externally (Grinyer, 2002).

4.6.6   Confidentiality

Safeguards must always be in place should information emerge during a research study which would suggest that an individual might be at risk or that unethical, criminal or dangerous behaviours are taking place (Bostock, 2002). As all interviewees were students of the university as well as respondents, they were able to access the student advice and counselling service should they have needed additional support as a result of the interview (Corden et al, 2005). There were no obvious reasons why the interview should have provoked such a response, however. Drawing on my experience of written agreements in child protection practice, I formulated a clear protocol to follow should a participant disclose worrying or dangerous practice which could harm a child (Bostock, 2002). This included: discussing concerns with participants in the first instance; consulting with my supervisor; informing the participant's employer in the case of serious concerns about practice. Agency training managers were alerted to this protocol and the process was clearly outlined on the interviewee consent form.

4.7   Participant verification

The interviewees were sent a copy of the interview transcript to allow them to verify its contents, add information they may have missed and provide feedback on the process or overall content of the interview. Interviewees were also sent the first draft of the data analysis so they could respond

to the interpretations of their learning journeys. They were encouraged to indicate to me any areas of disagreement, to comment if they felt that the emphasis I had chosen was not consonant with their own, and to see if other considerations were sparked. The purpose of such 'member checking' (Flick, 2009) was not because I believed there to be a correct interpretation to be established, but because such joint exploration of differing interpretations can enhance the hermeneutic interpretive process of meaning making (Guba, 1990). Their perceptions would inevitably be influenced by their own ontology and epistemology, and could well differ from my own, so would have needed careful analysis to determine how differing views should be positioned. In the event the participants were in agreement with my interpretations and were able to provide additional insightful feedback which deepened the analysis.

5 Changes in scores for self-efficacy and awareness of the Communicative Capabilities

5.1 Introduction

The next four chapters provide an analysis of the data collected in an attempt to answer the third sub-question of this thesis:

> What factors and processes support qualifying social work students in developing the self-efficacy and awareness of the Communicative Capabilities (CCCh-awareness) they need to become effective communicators with children in their future professional roles?

This chapter identifies the points in the programme at which students' self-efficacy ratings and CCCh-awareness changed and consider any possible reasons for trends across the cohort. Divergences in learning and self-efficacy trajectories of different kinds of student will also be compared; for example, whether more or less prior work experience with children made a difference to confidence self-ratings and CCCh-awareness scores. Findings are complemented, where available, by qualitative data from the T5 interviews to help provide insight into patterns.

As already noted in Chapter 4, it must be emphasised that there is no comparison group for this research, the sample size is small, and participants' responses often lie across a considerable range. This has meant that while full cohort patterns could be tested statistically, differences and relationships between independent variables such as age, gender and the amount of pre-course experience could not. Trends are consequently discussed only tentatively, indicating possible issues which it would be useful for social work educators to take in consideration in curriculum planning and evaluation.

5.2 Sociodemographic data

Sociodemographic data were collected from the 25 students responding at T1 (see Table 4). The majority of the students (including four of the five interviewees) were female, white British, aged under 37, and without a disability.

Table 4   Sociodemographic data collected at T1

		% N=25
Age	Aged 22-26	48%
	Aged 27-36	40%
	Aged 37-46	12%
Gender	Female	84%
	Male	16%
Disability	Disabled	4%
	Not disabled	96%
Ethnicity	White British	80%
	White of non-British origin	8%
	Black African	8%
	Not stated	4%

5.3   Participation at different time points

All 28 students in the cohort agreed to participate in the T1-T4 data collection but only twelve completed all four questionnaires. This was due to students being absent when questionnaires were handed out rather than refusal. Sufficient numbers completed paired time points (Table 5) to make statistically valid comparisons. There were no distinctive differences between those who completed questionnaires at different time points regarding variables such as age or gender. T3 had the fewest completions but no sub-group (for example, the youngest students) was over-represented at any time point.

Table 5   Nº of students completing data at both time points

Paired time points	Total nº participating at both time points
T1 and T2	24
T1 and T3	17
T2 and T3	17
T2 and T4	21
T3 and T4	14
T1 and T4	19

5.4   Participants' experience with children

5.4.1   Pre-course experience

Students were asked at T1 to indicate, using pre-designated categories, the level of contact they had had with children and young people prior to the programme in their personal lives and through

work-related experience. Wide variations in levels of experience were apparent (see Table 6). Although most were not parents or primary family carers, 60% had had at least some personal contact with children before entering the programme, such as with nieces and nephews. However, 28% had had none or almost none. While just over half had had 'quite a bit' or a 'great deal' of work-based experience with children prior to the programme, 28% had had little or none.

Table 6   Pre-course experience with children

		% N=25
Contact with children in their personal lives	A high amount' as a parent or primary family carer	12%
	A medium amount	20%
	A small amount	40%
	None or almost no contact at all	28%
Work-based experience with children	A 'great deal' of experience with children/young people	12%
	'Quite a bit' of experience with children/young people	40%
	A 'little bit' of experience with children/young people	28%
	'No experience at all' with children/young people	20%

A possible limitation of these categories is that they are inexact, with participants needing to have made a subjective evaluation as to which one they belonged. So that analysis might be less skewed by individual variations, medium/high and none/very small levels of both categories were amalgamated in Table 7 when comparing possible relationships between personal contact and work-based experience. This analysis indicated that one fifth of the T1 sample were quite/very experienced both personally and professionally with children (this included interviewee Vicky) and almost one third (including interviewee Melody) had had a medium/high amount of work-based experience although little or no personal contact with children. Over one third, however (including interviewees Sarah and Amanda), had had little or no experience in either setting.

Table 7   Comparing prior personal contact and work-based experience

	% N=25
Medium/high level of both personal contact and work-based experience	20
None or a small amount of both personal contact and work-based experience	36
Medium/high personal contact but none/small amount of work-based experience	12
Medium/high level of work-based experience but none or a small amount of personal contact	32

5.4.2 Placement experience

By the end of the sub-module on communication with children (T3), the students had completed 20 days of their first placement. For over half of the cohort, this was in a children's services setting (see Table 8). By the end of the programme (T4), almost all of the respondents had had at least one placement where they had had the opportunity for face-to-face work with children and young people.   One third had had two and these were students such as Vicky and Melody who had formed a strong intention early in the programme to work with children post-qualification.

Table 8   Nº of placements offering direct contact with children

	% n=22
Neither placement with children	9%
1 placement with children	59%
2 placements with children	32%

5.5   Changed intentions regarding working with children in the future

Intentions about future work with children were collected at T1, T3 and T4. Chart 1 shows that the proportion with a firm intention to work with children in the future had increased by the end of the programme and that this increase had mainly occurred by T3.

Chart 1 - Changing future intentions
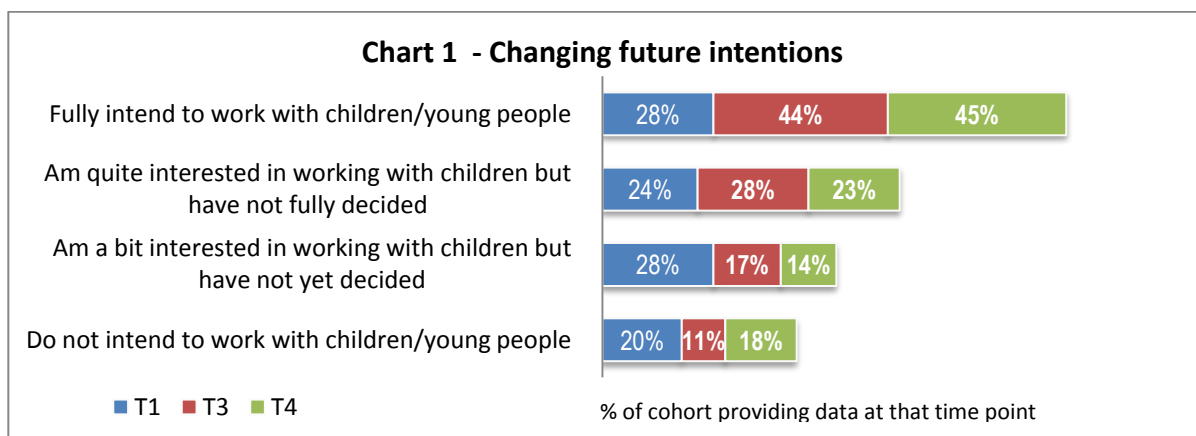
As there were some variations in which students completed questionnaires at each time point, the intentions of just the 19 students who completed T1 and T4 data are compared in Chart 2. The trends were similar, with the only notable difference being that the number who intended not to work with children post-qualification was higher.

Chart 2 - Changing intentions of the 19 students completing T1 and T4 data

Fully intend to work with children/young people — T1 32% | T4 41%

Am quite interested in working with children but have not fully decided — T1 21% | T4 21%

Am a bit interested in working with children but have not yet decided — T1 32% | T4 16%

Do not intend to work with children/young people — T1 16% | T4 21%

■ T1 ■ T4

% of cohort providing data at both T1 and T4

These charts suggest a trend of increased certainty about future working intentions. Participants were asked at T4 to give any reasons for changed intentions. Three-quarters indicated that placements had provided opportunities for them to find out where their aptitudes and interests lay. For example, interviewee Amanda who changed from being 'a bit interested' at T1 to *'quite interested but have not fully decided'* at T4 commented:

> [Amanda-T4] *I have not worked with children for any great length of time previously …. and I enjoyed it much more than I thought I would.*

Another student changed from being 'quite' to only 'a bit interested' because of the deficiencies of her children's services placement:

> [No19-T4] *I feel that I did not get enough opportunities to work with children through my placement. I had hoped that I would use the theories that I learnt at university for my practice based learning but that was not the case. I feel insufficient to work with children.*

The broad patterns discerned suggest placement experience can evoke students' interest in and commitment to working with children in the future, even for those who enter the programme without a clear initial motivation to do so. Where students have prior work-based experience with children it may also mean their future working intentions are rooted in realistic expectations. However, the numbers in each sub-group discussed were too small for statistical significance to be established, so no definite conclusions can be drawn.

5.6 Measuring self-efficacy

5.6.1 Cohort self-efficacy ratings

At each time point participants were asked to rate how confident they were in their capacity to communicate effectively with children and young people in a social work role, to measure their perceptions of self-efficacy. On the scale used, 0 signified 'no confidence' and 10 'extremely confident'. Chart 3 indicates the percentage of the cohort rating themselves at each position on the scale at the four time points, illustrating how self-efficacy rose substantially by the end of the programme.

Chart 3 - Changes in the % self-rating at different points along the 0-10 scale

% of cohort self rating that point out of 10

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
T1 (n=25)	0	0	4%	12%	12%	4%	16%	28%	20%	4%	0
T2 (n=26)	0	0	0	4%	19%	15%	8%	42%	12%	0	0
T3 (n=17)	0	0	0	17%	6%	0	17%	33%	22%	6%	0
T4 (n=22)	0	0	0	0	0	0	14%	27%	36%	23%	0
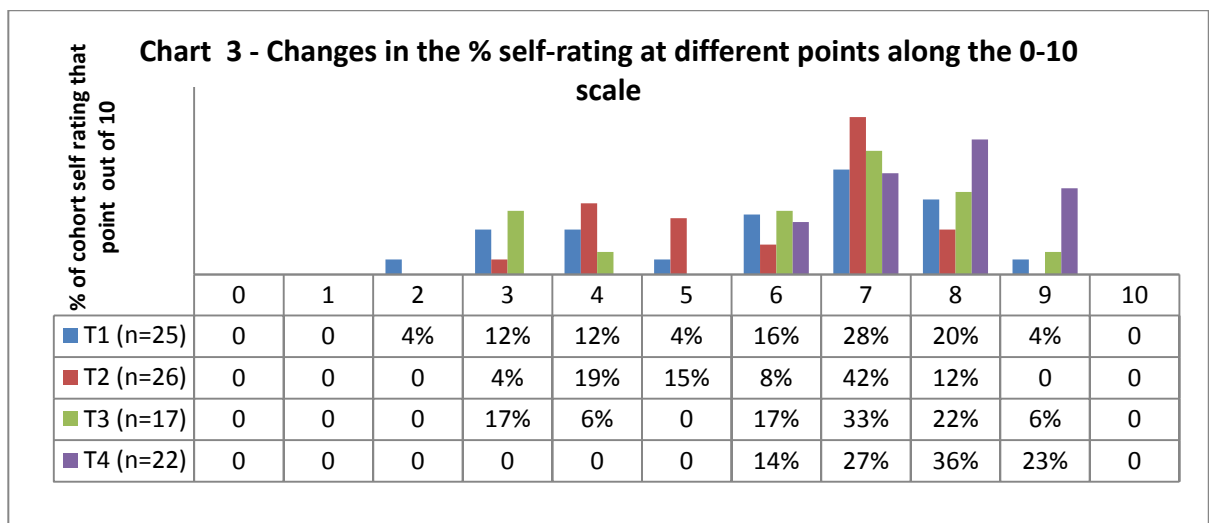
This is also illustrated by a comparison of the cohort mean self-efficacy score at each time point (Graph 1).

Graph 1 - Cohort mean self-efficacy rating

Mean for student confidence self-rating

T1 (n=25)	T2 (n= 26)	T3 (n=17)	T4 (n=22)
6	6	6.2	7.7

Cohort mean confidence self-rating
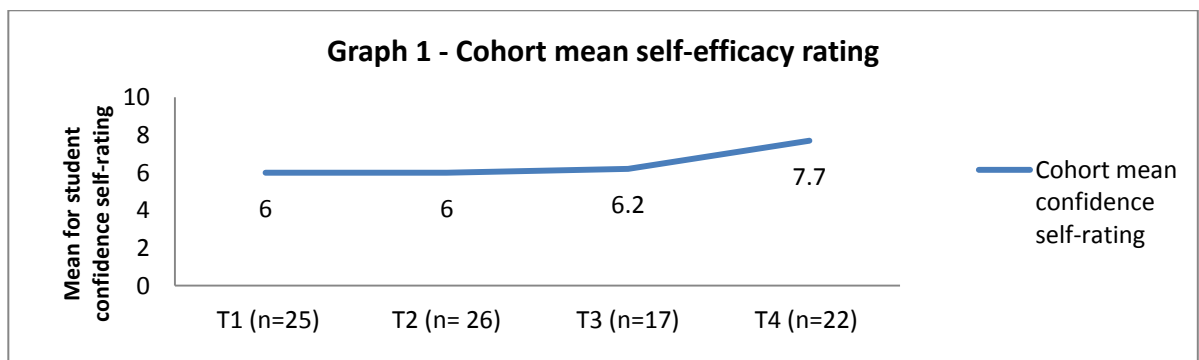
To determine whether these changes were statistically significant, two-tailed matched pair T-Tests were used to examine changes in student self-ratings, comparing only those students who had provided data at matched time points. The analysis presented in Table 9 indicates significant increases between T1-4 (p=.004), T2-4 (p=.000) and T3-4 (p=.012) (highlighted in bold font). These increases are discussed in more detail in the ensuing sections. While the tests do take account of small sample sizes when evaluating whether the effects could be due to chance, it needs to be considered that statistically significant findings might lack substantive significance when numbers as small as these are involved.

Table 9   Students' confidence in communication with children: two-tailed matched pair T-Tests

Paired comparison	Time point	Mean	Std. Deviation	For pair, N=	Std. Deviation for pair	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed) p=
T1&T2	T1	5.83	1.922	23	1.492	-.140	22	.890
	T2	5.87	1.546					
T1 & T3	T1	5.82	2.215	17	1.460	-1.163	16	.262
	T3	6.24	1.888					
T1& T4	T1	6.11	1.997	19	1.926	-3.336	18	**.004**
	T4	7.58	1.017					
T2 & T3	T2	5.93	1.624	15	1.727	-.299	14	.769
	T3	6.07	1.944					
T2& T4	T2	5.90	1.518	20	1.268	-6.525	19	**.000**
	T4	7.75	.967					
T3 & T4	T3	6.64	1.737	14	1.460	-2.929	13	**.012**
	T4	7.79	1.051					

The cohort mean of 6 at T1 indicates that the majority of the students were at least reasonably confident in their capacity to communicate with children at the beginning of the programme. There was a large range and high standard deviation at T1: around one quarter rated themselves as either highly confident (8 or 9/10) or very low in confidence (4/10 or lower).

There were no statistically significant changes in self-ratings at either T2 or T3, despite a decrease in the standard deviation at both points and a small upward shift to the cohort mean at T3. This suggests that more than a term of teaching, up to 20 days in placement and (for T3) the three-session sub-module on communication with children did not significantly enhance students' perceptions of self-efficacy.

By contrast there was a substantial increase at T4 compared to all previous time points. The number feeling very confident had more than doubled. As Table 9 shows, the increases in students' confidence self-ratings between paired time points T1-T4, T2-4 and T3-4 were all statistically significant (p>.01). As the increases T1-2 and T2-3 were not themselves significant, this analysis indicates that the key period in which the rise in students' confidence occurred was T3-4. T4 data were collected close to the end of the programme, fifteen months after T3. The role potentially played by teaching approaches and learning opportunities during that period merits consideration.

5.6.2 *Discussion of the rise in self-efficacy*

Ninety per cent of the 200 placement days were completed later than T3. Most of the students had had at least one placement during that time in a setting offering opportunities for engagement and interaction with children. They would have received guidance and supervision from a practice educator and should have been directly observed with a child at least once. Communicating effectively in interactions with children might have enhanced self-efficacy, particularly if there had been positive feedback from the child, parents, colleagues or practice educator.

Teaching on research methods, a theoretical course on key concepts in social work, and supervision of a literature-based dissertation took place T3-4, but seemed unlikely to have contributed to increases in self-efficacy. However, other aspects of the taught curriculum T3-4 might have done so, perhaps particularly those which consolidated and integrated practice learning, such as the module on Theory, Methods and Values in Practice (TMVIP) which ran alongside the placement in both years of the programme (see Appendix 4). In the second year students were divided into groups offering specialist input on either children's or adults' sector practice, depending on the nature of their placement. Tutor-led teaching on models, theories, and policies related to work with children, young people, their families and carers for those in the children and families pathway. Following Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model, critically reflective discussions on placement experiences with children enabled inductive reflections and formation of abstract conceptualisations. Practice-related assignments consolidated and integrated deeper learning.

It seems most likely that placements and the TMVIP module had contributed to this significant increase in self-efficacy by the end of the programme, but it does not mean learning from the earlier modules of the programme did not play a part. Placements would have offered opportunities for

experimentation with methods from the taught curriculum in embodied engagements and interactions with children. New understandings might then have been generated for further testing in practice through reflections within supervision, TMVIP, and in the writing of related assignments. If deeper learning had been promoted, which meant new ideas and skills could be deployed in a range of situations (Davies & Mangan, 2005), then this could have been responsible for enhanced self-efficacy. It is also worth considering whether students' self-efficacy for social work practice might have increased globally during the T3-4 period and whether this might have also influenced self-ratings regarding communication with children. This was not tested for.

5.7 Evaluating awareness of the Communicative Capabilities

Participants' responses to the case vignettes at each time point were analysed thematically to see of which of the 32 dimensions of the CCCh taxonomy they had demonstrated awareness. Each student was marked 'yes' or 'no' for each of the 32 dimensions and given a score for CCCh-awareness at each time point; this represented the total number of dimensions they had evidenced at that time point. The cohort means shown in Graph 2 illustrate a small decrease T1-2 and a larger increase T2-3, with a flat-lined score T3-4.

Graph 2 - Cohort mean scores for CCCh-awareness
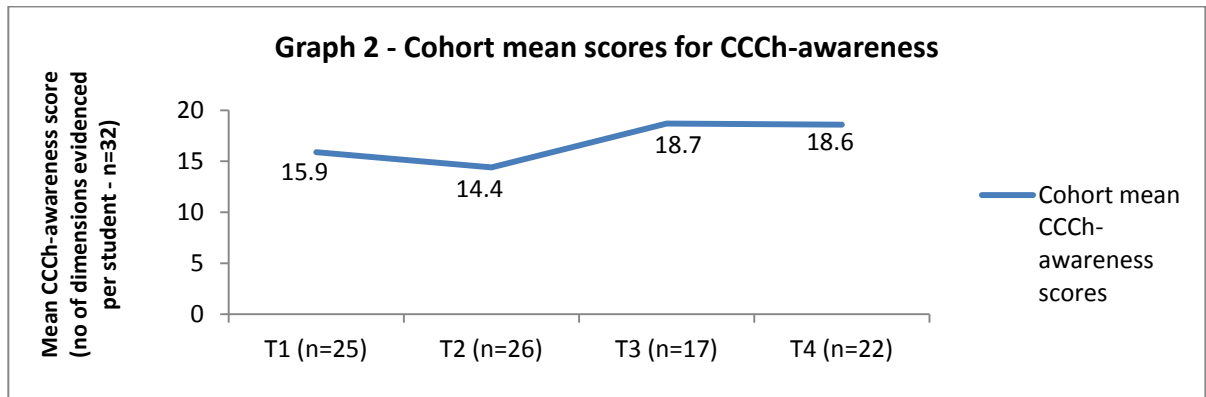
To ascertain whether these changes were statistically significant, two-tailed matched pair T-Tests were again used to examine changes in student self-ratings between paired time points. The analysis presented in Table 10 indicates significant increases between T1-4 (p=.004), T2-3 (p=.003) and T2-4 (p=.003), shown in bold. These are discussed in more detail in the ensuing sections.

Table 10   Students' CCCh-awareness: two-tailed matched pair T-Tests

Paired comparison	Time point	Mean	Std. Deviation	For pair, N=	Std. Deviation for pair	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed) p=
T1&T4	T1	16.05	3.118	19	3.649	-3.269	18	**.004**
	T4	18.79	3.047					
T2 & T3	T2	14.94	5.414	17	4.683	-3.470	16	**.003**
	T3	18.88	3.160					
T1& T2	T1	16.08	2.888	24	3.647	1.959	23	.062
	T2	14.63	5.199					
T2 & T4	T2	15.10	5.098	21	5.137	-3.356	20	**.003**
	T4	18.86	2.726					
T3 & T4	T3	18.93	2.921	14	3.251	.493	13	.630
	T4	18.50	3.082					

5.7.1   Cohort scores for CCCh-awareness

The vignettes were written with the intention that they would offer students the opportunity to demonstrate any or all of the 32 dimensions of the CCCh taxonomy in their responses at each time point. As all dimensions of the taxonomy were evidenced in at least some students' responses in at least one of the time points, this suggests that the vignette tool fulfilled this intended aim. However, the number of dimensions demonstrated by individual students (CCCh-awareness scores) varied considerably both within each time point and across time points.

At entry to the programme (T1) the mean number of dimensions evidenced by the participant group was 15.9, half of the total. Although the cohort mean score had reduced slightly at T2, due to a few more students scoring particularly low, this was not statistically significant (p=.062) so might have been due to chance. By T3 (just three weeks later) the cohort mean score had, however, increased significantly compared to T2 (p=.003).   The T4 mean score was almost identical to that at T3 (p=.630). Although the rises T1-4 (p=.004) and T2-4 (p=.003) were also statistically significant, as the T3-4 rise was not, this indicates that the main time period in which the significant increase in CCCh-awareness occurred was T2-3, namely the three week period during which the sub-module on communication with children took place.

5.7.2   Discussion of changes in CCCh-awareness

The high T1 scores indicated a good baseline level of CCCh-awareness among the group. Students for this programme were required to have pre-course experience in social care or a related

profession and many students had at least some pre-course personal and/or work-based experience with children, so it might be surmised that they were drawing upon pre-course learning to inform their responses at T1.

The only formal teaching and learning intervention the students experienced between T2-3 (when the significant increase occurred) was twelve days in placement. This constituted just 6% of the 200 placement days and only around half of the students were in a placement offering direct contact with children during that period. Even of those who were, it is highly unlikely that many learning opportunities during those twelve days would have been so formative that they would have had a bigger effect on their development than those between T3-4 (90% of the placement days).

The significantly improved CCCh-awareness scores at T3 strongly suggest that experiencing and engaging in the focused teaching and learning opportunities on communication with children offered by this three-session sub-module enabled students to recall and draw on the CCCh in the vignette exercise. Cohort mean levels of CCCh-awareness did not decrease over the T3-4 period despite no further focused teaching on communication with children. However, they also did not further improve, despite many students having supervised practice learning opportunities with children and undertaking reflective activities which supported these.

5.7.3   Trends in individual CCCh-awareness scores

Exploring CCCh-awareness scores participant-by-participant rather than just by cohort mean scores uncovers striking individual variations. Comparing the 19 students who completed both T1 and T4 questionnaires (see Chart 4) it can be seen that, whereas most students could evidence several more dimensions by the end of the programme, five demonstrated considerably more and four demonstrated fewer. Such individual trajectories raise questions about why there might be such wide variations, and why some students might evidence fewer dimensions at the end of the programme compared with the beginning.

Chart 4 - Difference in CCCh-awareness scores T1 -T4
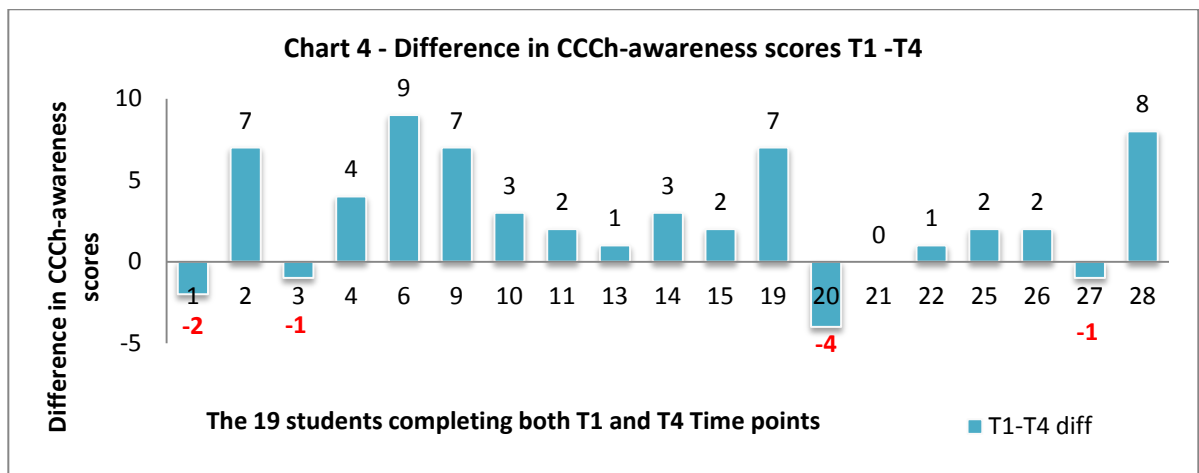
Examining the contrasting trajectories of Sarah and Melody (Graph 3) facilitates consideration of such questions. Melody's CCCh-awareness at T1 was lower than the cohort mean, but increased consistently through the time points; by T4 she had attained one of the highest scores. Sarah's T1 score indicated a good level of CCCh-awareness on entry to the programme. At T3 her score had increased, suggesting that the sub-module on communication with children had enhanced her CCCh-awareness. However, her score decreased again at T4 almost to baseline, raising questions about whether Sarah had forgotten whatever she had learned during the programme and/or whether some factor in the research process was preventing her from demonstrating any increases in her CCCh-awareness.

Graph 3 - CCCh-awareness trajectories of Sarah and Melody
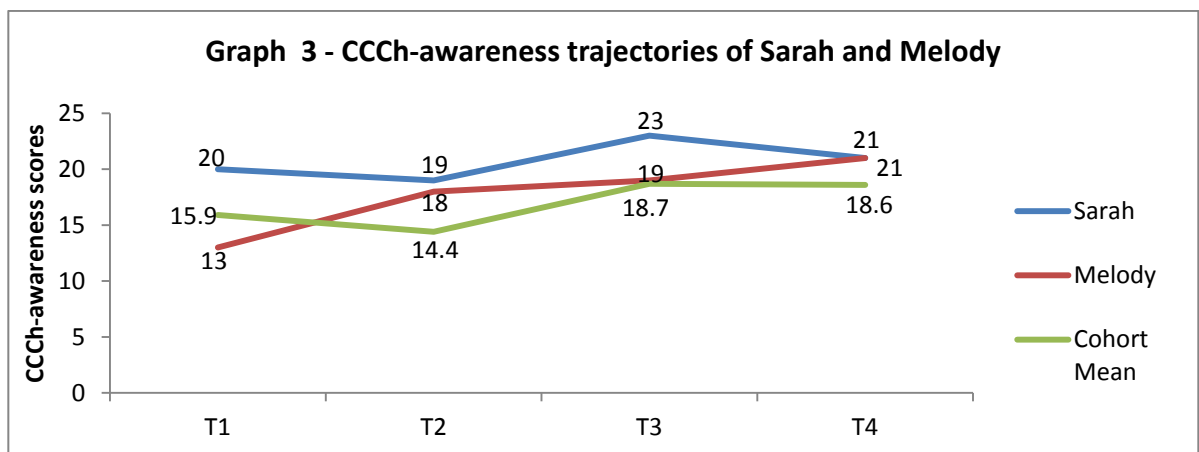
Diverging patterns such as these highlight how necessary it is to be cautious when focusing on individual results rather than statistically significant patterns across a cohort. A student might have been tired or worried by personal issues while completing the T4 questionnaire and so have written

a briefer response to the vignette. A particular dimension might also have been omitted from a student's vignette response because other dimensions were foregrounded in their awareness on a given day, due to idiosyncratic factors such as a particular placement experience. An improvement in students' CCCh-awareness score at T3 might have been due to response shift bias, for example students becoming more experienced in how to use the research tool rather than because they were more capable. Conversely, some might have experienced 'vignette fatigue' at T4, being bored or irritated by the exercise, with the result that their scores decreased comparatively.

This is where qualitative data are particularly helpful, as individuals themselves can provide views on the extent to which their patterns represented increased CCCh-awareness. Sarah, for example, spoke in her T5 interview of how she did not find the vignettes engaging or 'real' and had stopped trying with them at T4 because they made her too anxious:

> [Sarah-T5] I think I could have lost the will by the end. I remember on one of them I think I wrote very limited information on one of the last ones where I was actually getting a bit defensive about it all and thinking 'all right, I don't know, you know I don't know. … and feeling like it was highlighting how under-skilled I was and giving me quite a lot of fear: 'actually Sarah you're about to enter a profession and you can't answer these questions!'. Some people who had been working with children for a long time wrote loads and I was thinking, 'no!'. I probably, maybe in a different situation or environment, might have been more open to guessing ….. I think by the end I was probably a little bit disengaged with the process through defensiveness because it highlighted my own lack of skill and confidence.

This suggests that Sarah's lower T4 score might not have represented an actual decrease in her CCCh-awareness but was an artefact of her feeling irritated and disheartened with the tool. Melody, by contrast, felt the vignettes were realistic and that her responses represented her increasing capability through the time points. It is worth considering, however, that their views at interview may have been influenced by learning what their CCCh-awareness score trajectories had been. In future such research, it would be advisable to collect such views before students learn their scores.

5.8   Analysis based on socio-demographic factors

Self-efficacy ratings and CCCh-awareness scores were analysed by age at entry, gender, and ethnicity. No clear relationships emerged but any potential trends could have been obscured because of the small numbers in comparison sub-groups and missing data between time points. Regarding gender, of the four men in the cohort, only three had completed all four questionnaires,

so data were incomplete. The data available indicated that their self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness trajectories were each very different. The three students who were 'older' (37+) when they began the programme did not complete the T4 questionnaire.   The twelve students in the 'younger' age sub-group (aged 21-26 at entry) were compared with the sub-group of 10 students aged 27-36 at entry. Both sub-groups displayed identical mean increases in self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness between T1 and T4. Regarding ethnicity and disability, there were only two non-white students and one disabled student. Any comparison on the basis of these characteristics would have been too idiosyncratic to be valid and would have risked identifying these students. Running the study in future with a much larger and more varied sample might allow possible relationships to be identified.

5.9   Examining differing patterns of self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness

Whereas the cohort mean for self-efficacy rose primarily between T3-4, that for CCCh-awareness increased most between T2-3.   Referring only to full cohort means, however, obscures the multiplicity of individual trajectories and patterns within sub-groups. No participant had a consistent pattern of growth in both self-efficacy ratings and CCCh-awareness scores across all four time points. While some students grew in confidence over time, their evidencing of CCCh-awareness did not. Some were higher in CCCh-awareness, but had lower self-efficacy.

To interrogate these diverse trajectories, patterns and relationships between participants' self-efficacy ratings, their levels of CCCh-awareness, and their pre-course experience with children were explored. Gender and age had been included in sub-group analysis, although, as set out in Section 5.8, no trends regarding these features could be identified so these characteristics are not included in this discussion.   Sub-group analysis included: identifying CCCh-awareness and pre-course experience profiles of those with highest and lowest self-efficacy at T1 and those whose self-efficacy increased most/least T1-4; identifying profiles of those with high self-efficacy scores but low CCCh awareness at the beginning and end of the programme; analysing those with low self-efficacy but high CCCh awareness; consideration of those with most and least pre-course personal and work-based experience with children. Trends which were apparent through simple numerical analysis are discussed, however it must be emphasised that numbers in each comparison sub-group were too small for statistical analysis to be undertaken. As any apparent relationships or differences might be

fortuitous, they are discussed tentatively as a way of surfacing possible themes and issues for social work educators to consider.

5.9.1 Students with highest self-efficacy

Mean scores for self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness were identified for the eight participants who had rated their confidence as high at T1 and had sustained this level at T4. These are compared to cohort mean scores in Graph 4. Both self-efficacy ratings and CCCh-awareness scores are expressed as percentages for the purpose of comparison. While self-efficacy ratings of this sub-group were higher than for the cohort mean throughout, there was a noticeable dip in confidence at T2. The mean CCCh-awareness score for this sub-group was higher than the cohort mean at all time points. No discernible pattern is apparent regarding the number of placements with children, or the amount of personal contact these eight students had had with children prior to the programme. The key defining characteristic appears to be that all eight of these students had had 'quite a bit' or 'a great deal' of work-based experience with children prior to the programme. In fact, this sub-group represented nearly two-thirds of those with more pre-course work-based experience with children.

Graph 4 - The 8 students most confident at T1 and T4
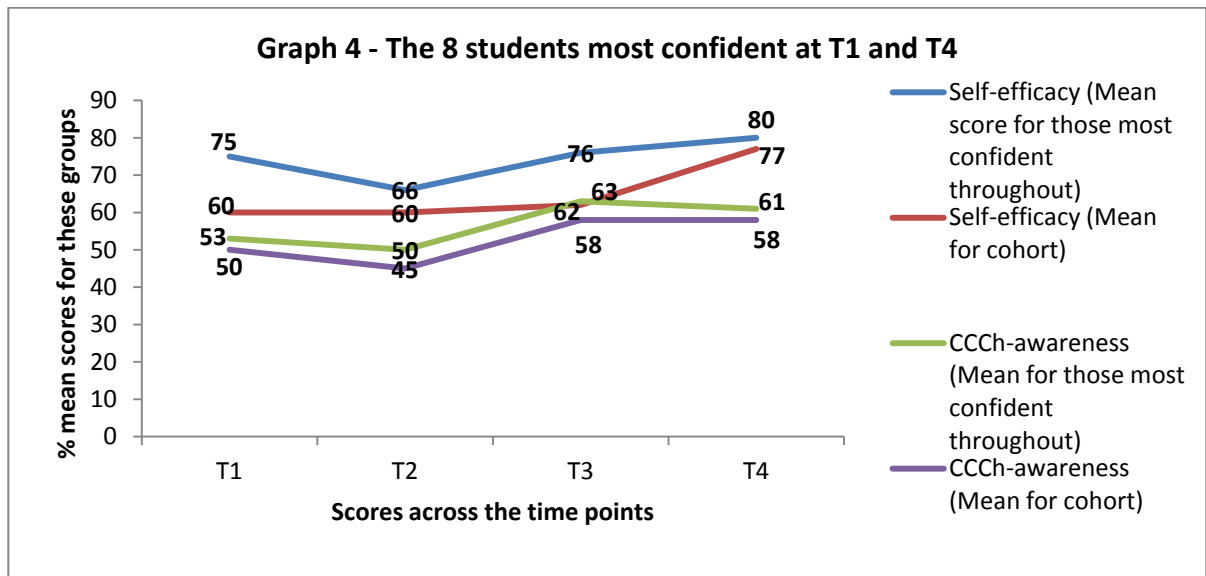
Interviewees Vicky and Melody were in this sub-group. Vicky had the highest overall scores for both high self-efficacy and high CCCh-awareness throughout the programme (see Graph 5). This convergence suggested that her self-efficacy might be based on a clear self-appraisal of her competence and Vicky confirmed this to be the case in her follow-up interview, clarifying that her

self-efficacy at the first three time points was rooted mainly in her solid foundation of embodied proficiency in direct contact with children which she had gained through having 'quite a bit' of both personal contact and work-based experience with children prior to the programme. She had found the vignette exercise relatively easy to complete and believed her high scores were an accurate reflection of what she knew. By T4 she had felt her theoretical knowledge was as strong as her embodied proficiency with children.

This set of profiles suggests that, not only can pre-course work experience promote students' self-efficacy in face-to-face work, but that those with higher self-efficacy are also able to evidence higher levels of CCCh-awareness.

Graph 5 - Vicky's confidence and CCCh -awareness
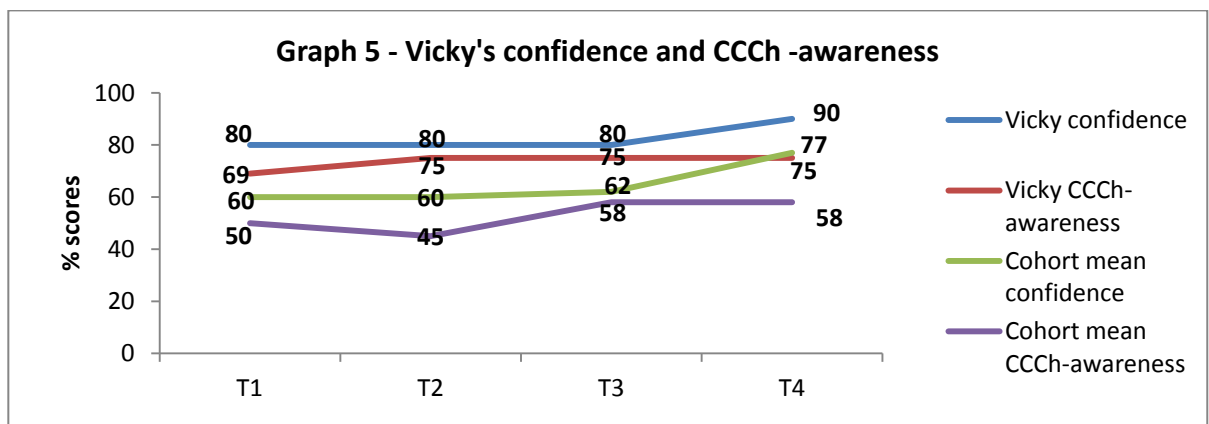
5.9.2   Students with most pre-course experience

In this section the mean scores for the thirteen students with most pre-course work-based experience ('quite a bit' or 'a medium amount') are compared with the eight who had most pre-course personal contact with children, the five with higher levels of both personal and work-based pre-course experience, and with the cohort mean scores. There were quite substantial variations in the numbers in each sub-group completing data at each time point, so emergent patterns need to be regarded with particular caution.

Chart 5 compares self-efficacy scores. It indicates how these three sub-groups generally had higher self-efficacy than the cohort mean, and that this was particularly so of the sub-group with both

personal and work-based experience with children. The T2 dip in self-efficacy was particularly apparent with these experienced students.

Chart 5 - Self-efficacy of the students with most pre-course experience with children

	T1	T2	T3	T4
Mean of those with most work-based pre-course experience with children	7.1	6.4	6.9	7.9
Mean of those with most pre-course personal contact with children	7.3	7.1	7.3	7.7
Mean of those with most pre-course personal and work-based experience with children	7.6	7	8	7.8
Cohort mean	6	6	6.2	7.7

Mean self-efficacy scores

- Mean of those with most work-based pre-course experience with children (n=T1-13,T2-12,T3-9,T4-11)
- Mean of those with most pre-course personal contact with children (n=T1-8,T2-7,T3-4,T4-6)
- Mean of those with most pre-course personal and work-based experience with children (n=T1-5,T2-4,T3-2,T4-4)
- Cohort mean (n=T1-25, T2-26, T3-17, T4-22)

Chart 6 compares CCCh-awareness scores. The experienced students had higher CCCh-awareness than the cohort mean at T1 and T2, suggesting that pre-course experience had provided valuable learning opportunities which could be drawn on in responding to the vignette questions. At T3, once the students had received the focused input from the sub-module, this difference was levelling out and it was no longer apparent at T4. The CCCh-awareness scores of the students with both personal and work-based experience were particularly high compared with other groups at T1 and T2 and remained elevated at T3. It was only at T4 that the difference had evaporated. This suggested that having both kinds of experience was particularly beneficial to learning. However, this was a very small subgroup, representing between only 2 and 5 students at any one time point, so patterns are particularly vulnerable to being skewed by a couple of strong students. The students with work-based experience had lower CCCh-awareness than the other sub-groups. This may mean that work-based experience was of less value to learning than personal contact. However, it may also be due to the fact that this was also the group with highest numbers and was consequently less vulnerable to skew by a couple of strong students.

Chart 6 - CCCh-awareness of the students with most pre-course experience with children

Mean CCCh-awareness scores %

	T1	T2	T3	T4
Mean of those with most work-based pre-course experience with children	51	46	57	56
Mean of those with most pre-course personal contact with children	54	56	54	59
Mean of those with most pre-course personal and work-based experience with children	58	63	61	57
Cohort mean for CCCh-awareness	50	45	58	58

■ Mean of those with most work-based pre-course experience with children (n=T1-13,T2-12,T3-9,T4-11)

■ Mean of those with most pre-course personal contact with children (n=T1-8,T2-7,T3-4,T4-6)

■ Mean of those with most pre-course personal and work-based experience with children (n=T1-5,T2-4,T3-2,T4-4)

■ Cohort mean for CCCh-awareness (n=T1-25, T2-26, T3-17, T4-22)

Bearing in mind the caveats expressed in relation to low numbers, this set of profiles suggests that pre-course work-based and personal experience may promote students' sense of self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness at earlier stages in the programme. Having both kinds of experience may make the strongest contribution. The advantages, however, are largely levelled out by the end of the programme.

5.9.3   Students with high self-efficacy/low CCCh-awareness

It is not only stronger students who can skew patterns in small sub-groups, but also those who perform weakly. Five participants who had had higher levels of pre-course personal or work-based experience had high self-efficacy throughout the programme but, unlike the mean for the sub-group set out in Chart 6, had some of the lowest scores for CCCh-awareness (see Chart 7). There were several possible reasons for this divergence in trajectories. Firstly, having prior experience might have led these students to develop unjustified over-confidence in their capabilities. Secondly, their high self-efficacy might have been rooted in realistic self-appraisals of capability but their CCCh-awareness scores did not reflect this because they did not fully engage with the vignette exercise. Thirdly, it may indicate that, while the CCCh-awareness scale can measure applied understanding *about* capabilities, it does not necessarily reflect students' proficiency in embodied engagements and interactions ('doing in action') - just as writing about how to play a musical piece would not convey the expertise in technique, interpretative ability and taste which is demonstrated in

performance. Such proficiency would be better measured through the direct observations of practice with children carried out by practice educators. (Gathering such information had been discounted for the reasons set out in Section 4.4.5).

Chart 7 - Students with high self-efficacy but low CCCh-awareness
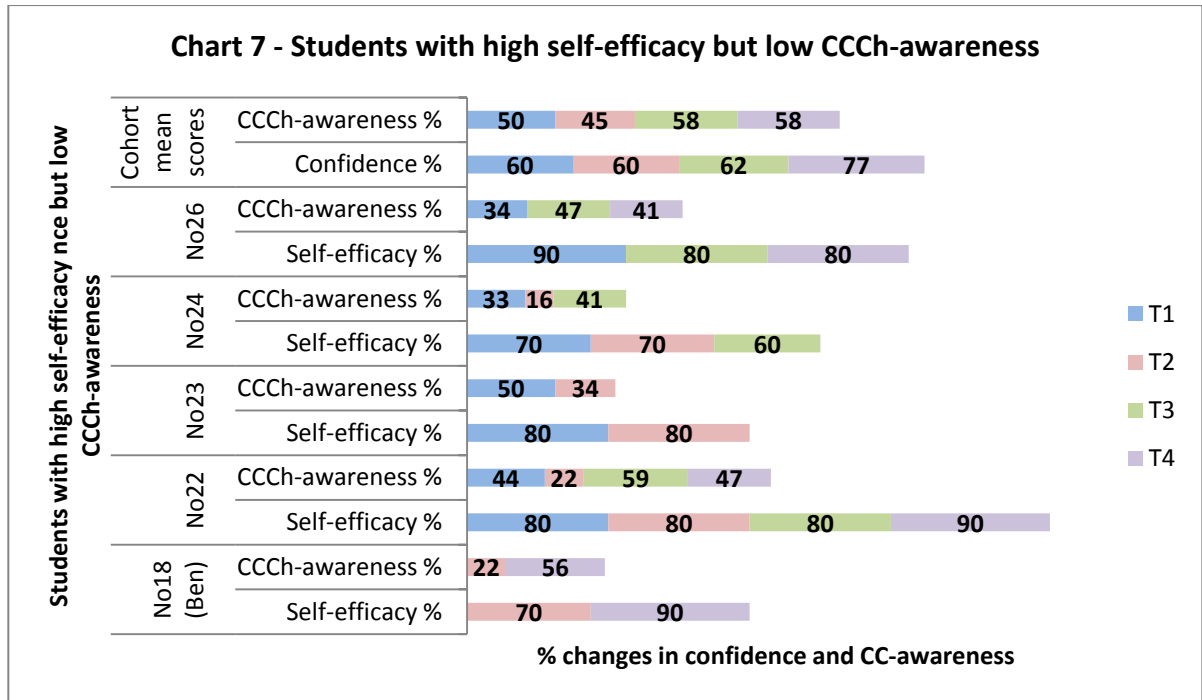
Ben, one of these five, shed some light on this during his T5 interview. He had high self-efficacy at the beginning of the programme because his pre-course work-based experience had shown him that he had a strong aptitude for engaging and relating to young people. Good feedback in placement on his direct practice with children had led to very high self-efficacy at T4. His very low CCCh-awareness score at T2 was an accurate representation, he thought, of his lower theoretical understanding at that point. His moderately higher T4 score demonstrated both a good improvement in his CCCh-awareness, and the fact that further knowledge was needed. At T5 he was cognisant of continued gaps particularly in his understanding of models, methods and approaches for direct practice which he was seeking to address through post-qualifying training, but continued to be confident in his capacity to engage and communicate directly with young people.

5.9.4   Students with least pre-course experience

The mean scores for the two sub-groups of participants with the least amount of either prior work-based or personal experience with children are compared in Chart 8. Two students (including

interviewee Sarah) were in both sub-groups. The mean self-efficacy rating for both sub-groups was lower at T1 than the full cohort mean, but those without pre-course personal contact with children had much lower self-efficacy perceptions. As their embodied proficiency with children had not yet been tested through direct practice at T1, their low self-efficacy could well have been based on an assumption that lack of experience meant limited capability. In contrast, the CCCh-awareness of both sub-groups was similar to the cohort mean at T1.

Chart 8 - Mean scores for confidence and CCCh-awareness of the students with least prior experience of children %
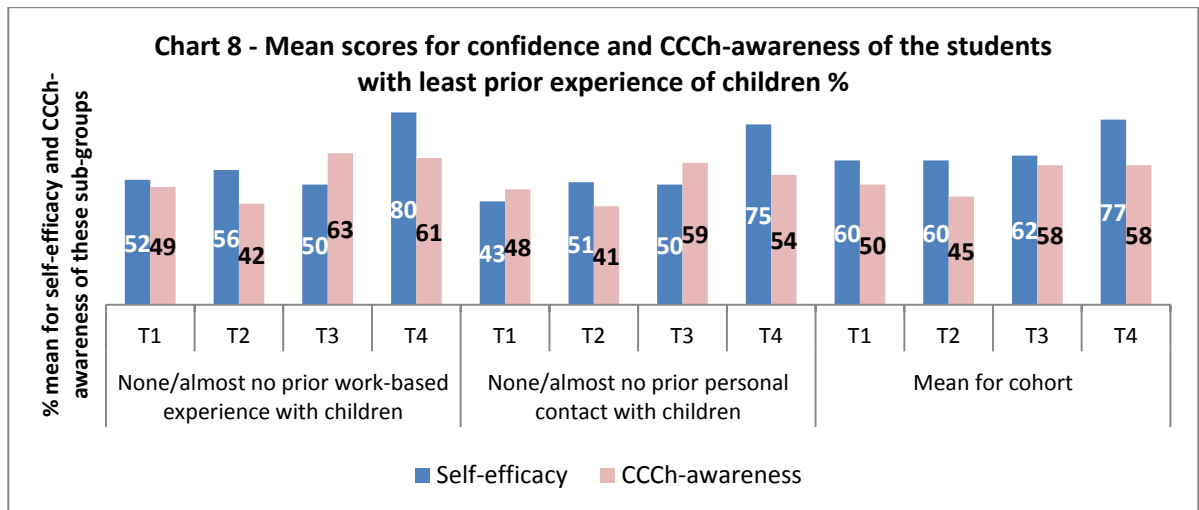
At T3, both sub-groups remained low in confidence, yet their CCCh-awareness scores had overtaken the mean. This suggested either that these students were not aware of how much they had learned, and/or that self-efficacy continued to be based on factors other than CCCh-awareness. By T3 students would have had few direct practice opportunities with children. By the end of the programme, the self-efficacy ratings of both sub-groups had risen substantially (although significance could not be established). This suggests that the self-efficacy of those without prior experience with children was able to 'catch-up' but that the full range of programme learning opportunities, including all placement days, might be needed for this.

Sarah was one of the two students with neither personal nor work-based experience prior to the programme. She self-rated particularly low in confidence at the beginning of the programme but much higher at the end (see graph 6). Her CCCh-awareness, by contrast, was higher than the mean throughout the programme. Sarah had had a great deal of pre-course experience with adult service users. This appeared to enhance her CCCh-awareness of dimensions relating to generic skills, knowledge, qualities and values. The transferability of this understanding, she believed in

retrospect, had helped her answer the vignette questions better than she realised at the time. Because she had lacked face-to-face experience with children, however, she felt extremely under-confident about her proficiency in direct practice with children. She expected it to be very different from working with adults and was quite fearful. As her first year placement was also with adults not children, her self-efficacy did not start to build until close to the end of the second year placement (discussed further in Chapter 8).

Graph 6 - Sarah's self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness
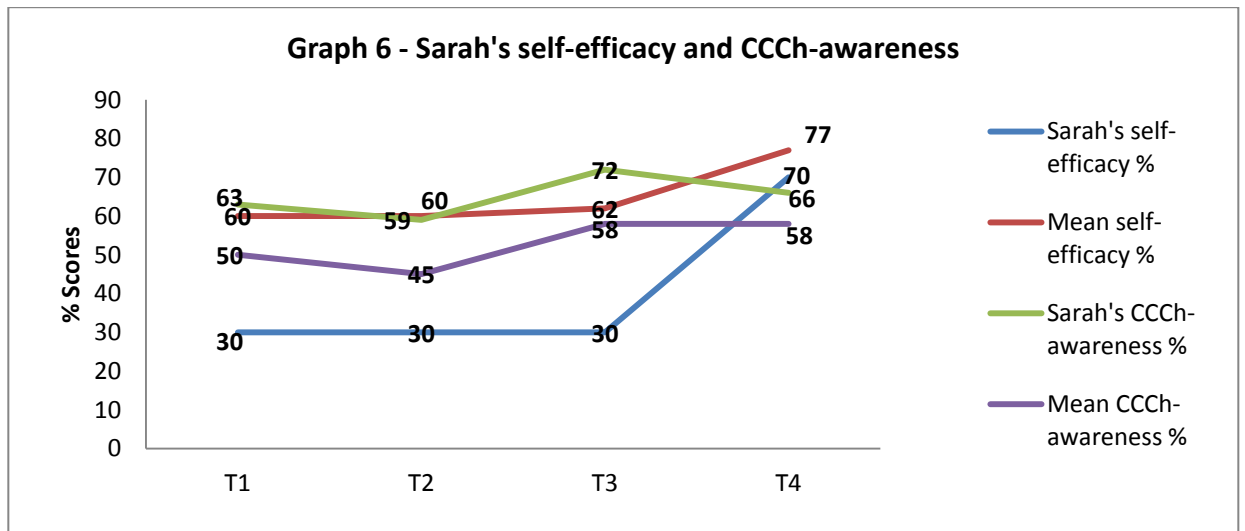
5.9.5   Students with lowest self-efficacy

The mean self-efficacy ratings and CCCh-awareness scores for the seven participants who were least confident at the beginning of the programme (including Sarah) are compared with the cohort mean in Graph 7. Most of this group had had no more than a small amount of pre-course work-based or personal experience with children. The mean self-efficacy ratings for this sub-group were very low at the first three time points, but rose almost to the cohort mean by T4. As with those who had least pre-course experience with children, 'catching-up' in self-efficacy was possible by the end of the programme. CCCh-awareness was almost identical to the cohort mean score throughout but did not seem to help students feel more confident. This appears to add weight to the growing indication that students' self-efficacy was not predicated on applied understanding but rather on the amount of prior experience with children and the sense of embodied proficiency this provoked.

Graph 7- The 7 students lowest in self-efficacy
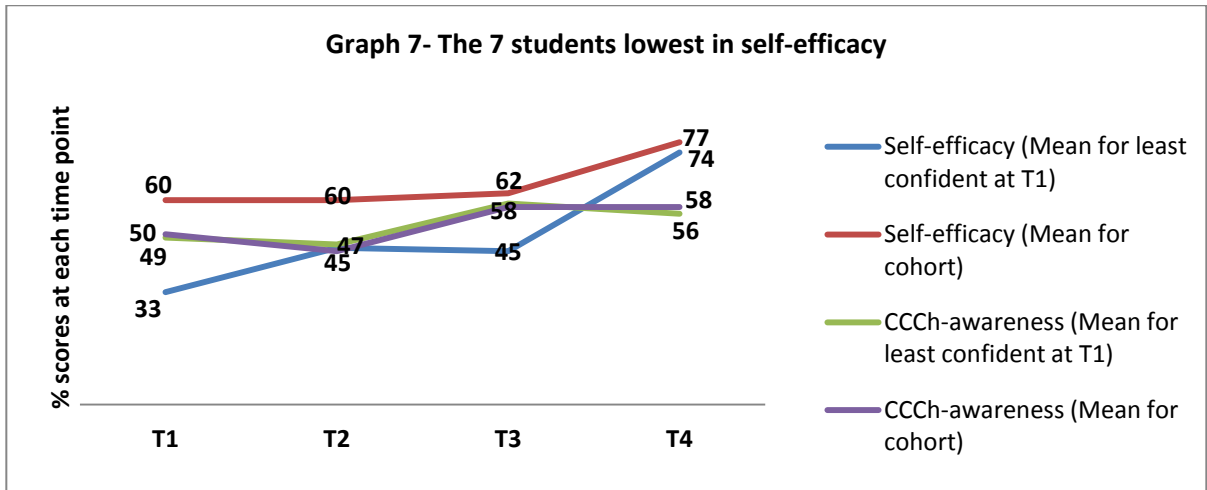
5.10 Conclusions regarding factors and processes associated with self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness

Over the course of this programme, statistically significant increases occurred in both students' self-efficacy in effective communication with children and their capacity to name and draw on the Communicative Capabilities in planning work with children in a simulated situation (CCCh-awareness). In itself, this is not surprising following a range of interventions over a 21 month period. The key question for this thesis is not whether this particular programme, or particular aspects of it, are associated with increased scores, and so could be said to be effective, but whether anything has been learned about teaching and learning processes which might be generalised as potential contributors to student learning of communication with children. Key areas for exploration have included how and why the increases in CCCh-awareness and self-efficacy occurred at different times for different kinds of student.

CCCh-awareness rose primarily between T2 and T3 and it seemed likely that this related to the child-focused learning opportunities provided by the sub-module on communication with children over that period. The elevated CCCh-awareness cohort mean was sustained at T4, despite no further specific teaching on communication with children. This may be because earlier 'surface' learning was reworked and transformed into 'deep' learning through practice learning which was reflected on in supervision and the TMVIP module, and embedded through related assignments (Davies & Mangan, 2005). However, the CCCh-awareness scores of some individuals flat-lined or even decreased at T4. Follow-up or 'recall' teaching and supervision with a specific focus can be helpful in

sustaining and embedding learning (Mitchell *et al*, 1989; Gleeson, 1992). For this reason, this MA programme now has a 'recall' day on communication with children in the second year of the programme and plans are afoot to give practice educators refresher training in communication skills methods being taught to the students, so that they focus specifically on these in supervision. No evaluation has been carried out on the impact of these innovations, however.

Cohort self-efficacy did not rise significantly over the period of the sub-module, but rather between T3 and T4. The un-confident and less experienced students were able to 'catch up' in self-efficacy, but only once the full range of programme learning opportunities had accrued. Several factors appear to have contributed to self-efficacy, but not in simplistic or straightforward ways. While some of the most confident students additionally had high CCCh-awareness scores, so seemed able to draw on theoretical concepts to plan and explain their practice, others did not. Some students who were quite low in self-efficacy at the first three time points had quite high levels of CCCh-awareness at those points.

Earlier in the programme the level of students' self-efficacy appears to have been associated primarily with the amount of pre-course work-based and personal experience with children. Given the lack of association between self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness scores at those first three time points, this suggests that initial and intermediate self-efficacy tends to be based primarily either on negative assumptions about lack of practical skill because of lack of familiarity with children (for those with low levels of experience) or on positive appraisals of self-proficiency (based on good feedback and self-recognised capacity in engagement and interactions with children prior to the course).

Under-confident students with high CCCh-awareness may be able to bring transferable generic capabilities (such as respect or listening skills) gained through pre-course experience in adult social care. By contrast, some students confident because of earlier experience may still have considerable gaps in their CCCh-awareness, particularly at earlier stages in the programme and when going into their first placement. Educators would need to identify whether any are over-confident and fail to appreciate that generalist proficiencies developed in a social care context with children, or with adults, are insufficient for the specific challenges of communication with children within social work roles and tasks. Providing opportunities for students to audit pre-existing expertise early in a programme and exploring the transferability of generalist and generic

capabilities may help both under- and over-confident students to gain a more realistic appreciation of both their strengths and learning needs and build self-efficacy.

Dips in some students' self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness at T2 suggest that, a term into the programme, and in the early days of placement, students might have been experiencing a 'shaking-up' of what they knew or felt confident in. This might well be a normative part of the student learning journey and could be functional if it stimulates students to address their own capability gaps. However, social work educators may need to consider whether students would benefit from particular support or guidance at that stage.

The limitations of the findings in this chapter must again be emphasised. Even where statistical significance has been established, cohort numbers are low and there is no comparison group. Where patterns and trends have been identified in sub-groups, these are not significant and might be fortuitous, so conclusions are to be treated cautiously. A number of caveats are also raised about the reliability and applicability of the CCCh-awareness scale. Firstly, it only represents students' theoretical understanding of the CCCh, and may not reflect embodied proficiency in face-to-face situations. Secondly, although a student's vignette response may have demonstrated awareness of a particular CCCh dimension, no explicit mention of another dimension does not necessarily mean the student was unaware or dismissive of it. The student may have simply chosen to write about other issues on that occasion, perhaps because of time, space, energy, inclination or chance. Using qualitative data alongside quantitative enabled students to illuminate some of these processes. Opportunities for all students to view and comment qualitatively on their score trajectories would have meant more reliance could have been placed on trends observed.

6 Students' perceptions of the most beneficial learning opportunities

6.1 Introduction

Attention now turns to other data gathered through the T1-4 questionnaires to explore which learning experiences the students believed enhanced their capacity to communicate effectively with children. Their responses are supplemented with T5 interview data where available to facilitate further illumination of the contributory elements. The way that this topic is taught within my programme is likely to be different from those elsewhere. As was seen in Chapter 3, there is a wide variation in how programmes conceptualise, structure and focus teaching on this topic. So, the purpose of presenting and analysing this data is not to analyse the effectiveness of the particular approaches within my programme but to identify some of the common factors and processes affecting how students engage with and respond to particular teaching and learning approaches and the extent to which this may support the development of self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness. It must be emphasised that the sample is too small for definite and generalisable conclusions to be made.

6.2 Feedback on the sub-module on communication with children

I ran a three-session sub-module in the second term of the programme on three Friday afternoons with each session lasting 2.5 hours. It provided didactic teaching, participatory discussions, and experiential exercises relating to communication, engagement and direct work with children and young people with the aim of developing basic child-focused skills and some applied child-specialist capabilities. The T2 questionnaire was completed just prior to the first session and the T3 questionnaire just after the third. T3 was only completed by the 17 students attending the third session, plus one absentee who proactively collected and completed the questionnaire. Attendance across individual sessions of the sub-module by the T3 sample group was moderate, with only two-thirds attending all three sessions (see Table 11). Qualitative feedback indicates that tiredness on Friday afternoons adversely affected attendance.

Table 11   Proportion of sessions attended

Which sessions were attended by those completing T3? % (n=18)		How many sessions were attended by those completing T3? % (n=18)	
1st Session	89%	All 3 sessions	66.7%
2nd Session	94%	2 sessions	27.8%
3rd Session	89%	1 session	5.6%

The participants were asked at the end of the sub-module (T3) to indicate whether named teaching and learning strategies had contributed to their capacity to communicate effectively with children and young people, and to rate the five most influential approaches. The directions I gave to the students on how to complete this question appear not to have been clear or simple enough as five forms were completed incorrectly, so only 13 responses could be drawn upon (see Chart 9). This has further limited the validity of the findings as they are based on the views of fewer than half of the cohort.

Chart 9 - Student views on the sub-module

Category	% of completed forms citing this aspect	% citing this in top 5 for importance
Any other feature - please specify:	0	
Didactic input on Communicative Capabilities	46%	8%
Experiential: role-playing a child service user	54%	46%
Experiential: role playing being a child	54%	38%
Reflecting on and sharing work-based learning	62%	38%
Tutor style (Modelling, managing group process)	77%	54%
Case study exercise	77%	69%
Participatory: discussion on relationships	85%	54%
Other didactic teaching input	85%	54%
Participatory: contributions from peers	100%	92%

% citing this (n=13)

■ % of completed forms citing this aspect   ■ % citing this in top 5 for importance

Pedagogical approaches used in the sub-module incorporated those reviewed in Chapter 3, including: opportunities to reflect inductively on pre-course concrete experience; experiential role plays relating to childhood (Being); didactic teaching and case discussions to enable students to form abstract conceptualisations (Knowing); active experimentation with skills through role play (Doing); and tutor modelling of a safe, empathically-attuned, boundaried learning environment (Being). All

teaching and learning approaches were cited as helpful by at least half of the participants and all approaches were in the 'top 5 for importance' for at least some, but there was little consistency among the group regarding ranking within the 'top 5'. While direct teaching input and the tutor style of modelling and managing the group process scored quite highly, students appeared particularly to appreciate learning opportunities which were participatory and/or experimental. In their interviews, Sarah and Amanda referred back to how peer-sharing of experience had contextualised and deepened their theoretical learning:

> *[Sarah-T5] That was really helpful. Really helpful in helping to kind of disseminate what we do and why we do it in regard to working with children, and about really being child focused. Yeah, contextualising all the work that I was doing within placement, it being about the child. Hugely helpful. It made me feel more confident, I think, in understanding what my role with children was.*

T3 questionnaires indicated that role play provoked both positive and negative reactions. Six participants did not include it on their list and two referred to it negative terms in qualitative feedback, for example:

> *[Nº5-T3] I could not imagine myself as a child in role play*

By contrast, seven participants thought role play exercises supported their learning, with five of these citing them as among the top five most important learning opportunities of the sub-module. This included Sarah who reiterated at T5 how role-play had enabled her to make an empathic connection with the inner worlds of children, a capacity which had stayed with her ever since.

Even when the learning opportunities that role play offers was appreciated, participants clearly found it very challenging and exposing:

> *[Ben-T5] I think because it really puts you on the spot and you know, you're with other people so you're having to show your skills and how you work and it can be very - I think it can be....really exposing but yeah, I do find it helpful.*

For Melody and Amanda the benefits of practising skills both as 'children' and with others playing children compensated for the awkwardness engendered:

> *[Amanda-T5] You know, some people don't mind it and other people hate it......One thing I'm really realising in the last couple of years is that I hate role play, I hate it, I hate it, but it's actually ... it's one of the best for me... I just feel ridiculous and freeze up and blah, blah. But I*

think, you know, just very kind of direct methods. You know, 'these are ways, now let's go and practise them' … for me are very effective…. Hideous at the time but actually really good!

[Melody-T5] It does put the fear of God into me as well because I hate role play…..Before I did it I thought 'we're a bunch of adults sitting in a room' - like I can get down and do that with children if a child's there, but it felt very odd sitting down and doing it when we were actually just a bunch of adults. But… it was so, so useful about challenging our responses and interpretations…. I think that it's really good at building up reflective skills.

Role play was also used at other points in the programme, for example in the second year TMVIP seminars where students were sharing and reflecting on practice learning. In all cases, what had made role play work, despite its uncomfortable nature, was whether or not a safe and playful space had been created by the tutor so that they did not feel too exposed or stupid if they experimented:

[Melody-T5] As long as it's safe … we had a lovely year group who were all really supportive….so I felt really lucky. We were safe to do that. It was done with humour as well, I think there was that, you know, this isn't 100% serious, this is about us being adults using a bit of humour to actually unpick some of those things… And some of the responses that [the 2nd year tutor] would come back with would be hilarious, but just to challenge our response to something that might have been a bit more bizarre or out there, to set us up for being ready for those things.

The structure of the course, with an intensive first term in the university, appeared to play a valuable role in creating a containing reflective space (Ward, 2008):

[Amanda-T5] The first term is quite, you know, it was very intensive but it felt very positive and it was good meeting course mates and I think we were very lucky, we had a really, quite a tight knit supportive year, and that's one good thing about having all the classes to begin with as well. And you know… that peer support as well really does help to establish that.

Having a safe learning space was described as vital to students' development of who they were on the programme (their Being). The dangers of not having this were pertinently expressed by Melody:

[Melody-T5] …just to know about yourself …if that safe space isn't there, there are parts of us that we will repress, you know, maybe thoughts that we have that are a bit un-PC or whatever, that might exist that we then just push away because it's not safe enough… the only way to challenge that is in a seminar space where it's okay to do that stuff. … That space where, you know what, I can fuck up, and nobody's going to judge me. I can say the worst thing ever and it can be really nicely challenged in a way that's constructive. So it's like we need all of those things that we're saying that the children need, so that respect, that safe space, the genuineness and being able to say what you need to say what you want to say.

Melody provided two 'key messages for social work educators' at T5. The first was for tutors to take time to develop the group process and model a supportive, safe, accepting and encouraging space. This echoes the recommendations of others such as Ward (2008) and Mensinga (2011). The other

was that focused teaching on communication with children would be more helpful if threaded throughout the training, rather than provided as a one-off sub-module:

> *[Melody-T5] I think it needs to be a continued strand throughout where you revisit, rather than a thing that's just in one block and this is what we're going to learn about, and then hopefully not put it on the shelf, but in terms of your learning 'cos then you're concentrating on something else.*

This alternative approach might better support consolidation and integration of learning (Gleeson, 1992), and could provide the required 'connective tissue' throughout the programme. However, it may be more challenging to achieve without a children's lead to map and monitor coverage of child-related learning opportunities (Lefevre *et al*, 2008).

Most other feedback on what students had found unsuccessful or unhelpful was minimal and generally idiosyncratic, apart from several who said that the timing of the sessions on Friday afternoons, "after very long weeks on placement", was unhelpful. Sarah referred again to this at T5, suggesting that this could have accounted for the low turnout on the final session (and hence the low T3 completion rate).

6.3   Factors students believed increased their self-efficacy and effectiveness

Students were asked both at T3 and T4 to choose from a list the factors they believed had contributed to their development of confidence and effectiveness in communication with children. The list included not only programme-specific learning opportunities but also other aspects of their personal and professional lives, such as pre-course experience with children. Participants were permitted to add any important elements which were missing. A few did, but there were no discernible trends. Students were also asked to cite the five elements most important to their learning and rate them 1-5 (1 was of highest importance). The factors cited by a substantial proportion of students are shown in Chart 10.

Chart 10 - Learning experiences which students believed had been influential

Learning experience	T3 citing this % (n=12)	In top 5 for importance at T3 (n=12)	T4 citing this % (n=22)	In top 5 for importance at T4 % (n=17)
Course teaching on values	58	42	32	12
Working with children/young people in a paid capacity…	33	17	32	18
Course teaching on observation			36	24
General reading			25	41	6
Guided reading from tutor	75	42	41	12
Modelling via the tutorial approach	50	17	41	41
Input from practice assessor/supervisor	50	25	55	47
Personal experience with children (non-parental)	67	33	64	53
Pre-course professional experience with children	67	50	68	59
Sub-module on communication skills with children and…	100	75	68	59
Course teaching on child development	100	91	82	53
Direct practice with children and young people in…	75	58	91	94

NB Observation was not taught until year 2 so was not asked at T3

Legend:
- ■ T3 citing this % (n=12)
- ■ In top 5 for importance at T3 (n=12)
- ■ T4 citing this % (n= 22)
- ■ In top 5 for importance at T4 % (n=17)

6.3.1 Placement experience

At T3 teaching on child development and the sub-module on communication skills with children were rated highest. However, these were overtaken at the end of the programme by 'Direct practice with children and young people in placement'. In contrast to the general inconsistency among the 'top 5' rankings, direct practice in placement was ranked highest at both T3 and T4. These changes at T4 may be due to several factors. The sub-module and child development teaching had only recently occurred at T3 and would have been fresher in students' minds at that point than T4. Students had only just started their first placement at T3 and only half were in a children's services setting. It may have been only once direct practice learning opportunities with children were experienced that the benefits of placements were fully realised. This suggestion receives some support by the increase at T4 in the perceived importance of the Practice Educator's input. It must be emphasised again that the numbers were too small for statistical analysis so these changes might be fortuitous.

At T5 all of the interviewees continued to feel that the nature and quality of practice learning opportunities with children strongly related to their learning and development. Where placements

were constructive, deep learning was promoted through active experimentation, and opportunities

for consolidation and integration:

> *[Amanda-T5] And I think it was during that placement that it really just started to click in a little bit more for me… and then when I went to [named area] Family Support as well, I was working with a much bigger age range of children and it just started all to connect up a little bit more.*

A placement in a children's service setting did not necessarily guarantee good quality practice

learning opportunities with children, however:

> *[Vicky-T5] Even though you can have a children's placement it doesn't necessarily mean that you will automatically be communicating with children, and I think actually some people probably could get through placements and maybe they would have a direct observation or maybe there would be some feedback, but they might find themselves never in that role where they are actually having to sit down and play with a child and think about the messages.*

> *[Sarah-T5] I felt like I understood a lot more about what the process might mean for a child but my hands-on experience of working with children hadn't developed a huge amount I would say…. What the course did not do was provide you with enough experience time with real children to actually do the learning you needed to do, and I think that's at the heart of everything really. And I might well have probably learnt more on the course had I had more direct experience of working with children because they would have triggered 'what's happening here', 'what's going on here' and 'gosh this is …' - do you know what I mean?*

These comments are in line with the research findings reported in Chapter 1 that a prioritisation of

administrative and case management tasks above direct practice with children has become the

norm in many agencies and some practitioners no longer feel sufficiently skilled, motivated,

resourced, supported or supervised to make the case for additional time with a child:

> *[Sarah-T5] Especially 'cos the work was so interventionary, you know. The immediacy of that intervention and the level of intervention meant that often actually you bypassed the child almost, 'cos it was about going to conference straightaway and the child doesn't sit in the conference if they're too young.*

My own experience of teaching qualifying and post-qualifying students on this topic over the past

decade leads me to suggest that an unhelpful spiral downwards is often in operation. Students on

placement often lack opportunities to work with children both because of the workplace culture and

because their supervisors are insufficiently skilled or motivated to train or support them in this role.

When these students move into qualified practice, they, too, are insufficiently skilled and may

perpetuate the cycle of avoidance of direct contact with children. By contrast, when a placement

does offer the opportunity for a foundation of embodied, child-focused proficiencies to be developed, as it did for Melody, this can spark an interest, enthusiasm and sense of self-efficacy which can be built on at later stages.

6.3.2   Child development teaching

Child development teaching was still rated highly at T4, although its relative importance had decreased from T3. Although it had not been taught since the first term of the programme, the CCCh dimension *knowledge of child development* was one of which all students in the cohort were able to demonstrate awareness by T4 (see Chapter 7). This suggest that, even where conscious recall of its benefits reduces, earlier learning may have been incorporated in the stock of tacit professional knowledge (Eraut, 1994) or 'practice wisdom' (O'Sullivan, 2005) that is held at a more intuitive and less conscious level.

The three interviewees who had rated child development teaching highly at T4 (Vicky, Melody and Amanda) continued at T5 to position child development knowledge as central to both making sense of what children communicate and how to find the best manner of expressing things to children of different ages and abilities:

> *[Melody-T5] Knowledge of cognitive functioning at various ages… their cognitive development and how they might be thinking and making sense of the world helps me to interpret what they're communicating to me… if a stage of development that they're quite concrete in their thinking and then feeling quite responsible for things around, that they might see things quite black and white and haven't yet learnt those shades of grey in-between. So I think making sense, being able to correctly interpret what they're saying, I think, is helped via knowledge of child development…. I still slip up, but when I'm talking to a six year old I might say something and they might just look at me, that I realise in that moment 'oh, rephrase that' and I go back and I say it again. So I hope I don't leave children baffled. But if I've managed to baffle them, I un-baffle them in the same session is what I hope!*

The interviewees felt this was particularly important because they were not parents and had not observed children growing and changing through their childhoods. Amanda told how she had come to regret not having realised at the time how important child development teaching would be to her subsequent practice and so had paid it little attention:

> *[Amanda-T5] Particularly doing duty and family support, just time and time again I was, you know, I'd have to go and look up child development. What was, roughly, what should children be doing at this age and that age? I mean that's just - again I was like 'why didn't I pay more attention in the child development?' I mean I tried to at the time but again I just didn't connect*

up why that would be important, and I was like 'okay, that's a really interesting academic course, that's really interesting', blah, blah but then, you know, just actually it clicking in your brain, and why it's important in practice kind of came later.

Sarah had also not seen the child development teaching as central to her learning, despite having no experience of children, either personally or professionally, prior to the course. Unlike Amanda, however, she did not later come to see such propositional knowledge as important. This appeared to be related to Sarah's inductive style of learning: rather than starting from the position of learning a theory and then expecting a child to speak or understand in line with developmental norms, Sarah preferred to first encounter children and later reflect on their capacities, forming abstract conceptualisations that related just to that child, rather than children in general. At the post-qualifying stage, she was using peer knowledge and support to supplement this:

[Sarah-T5] I ask my colleagues so many questions all the time about "could a four year old do this, what would happen if a five year old said this?", so it's been peer knowledge and support that I have used far more than theoretical developmental kind of ideas and stuff like that.

The Munro (2011) review has identified child development knowledge as a topic receiving insufficient attention in qualifying programmes. Participants did advise that they wanted more time spent on this. However, in my programme it seems the fault lay not only with the amount of teaching but with how to help students apply knowledge to situated contexts, so that they understood its relevance.

6.3.3   Pre-course experience with children

In Chapter 5 I suggested that prior experience might help to build students' self-efficacy if they were successful in direct engagement and interactions with children. Participants themselves thought the connections between direct experience and effectiveness were strong. As Chart 10 shows, more than two thirds cited pre-course work-based experience at both T3 and T4 as influential and at least half had placed it in their 'top 5 for importance'. Pre-course personal contact with children scored almost as strongly.

The interviewees continued to believe at T5 that the level of pre-course experience with children had been influential, either in its presence or absence. Sarah attributed to her lack of experience with children her being one of the least confident in the cohort. Ben, Melody and Vicky, who had among the highest self-efficacy scores, had all had 'quite a bit' of prior work experience with

children and all rated its contribution highly in the T3 and T4 questionnaires. Indeed Ben and Vicky both said that it was through discovering pre-course that they had an affinity for engaging and relating to children or young people that they had considered social work as a career.

Melody, Vicky and Amanda had also included their pre-course personal contact with children within their 'top 5'. However, at T5 Amanda explained her dip in confidence from 6/10 at T1 to 4/10 at T2 as a recognition that the pre-course personal contact had not been as useful as she had anticipated:

> *[Amanda-T5] …having done the first term and having started working on my first placement, just realising how much there was to learn about so many different things and maybe I thought 'well, why are you putting yourself at six? Actually you haven't got much experience working with children, in a social care setting how …' you know, 'how good would you really be with that'. And I think it was just kind of appreciating the scope of what I needed to learn that made me put myself there.*

This indicates the importance of developing realistic perceptions of self-efficacy.

6.3.4   Child observation

In the second year of the programme the student cohort observed a child or adult for five one-hour sessions in a naturalistic setting following the modified Tavistock method, where write-ups of the observations were brought to reflective small-group seminars (Briggs, 1992). This teaching approach did not score particularly highly as a contributor to effective communication: at T4 only 36% cited it as an important learning experience, although half of these placed it in their top five. It is known that some of the cohort observed adults rather than children so this may have been a factor, but no records were kept on this. At T5, the three who had observed children (Vicky, Amanda and Sarah) described it as a very valuable contribution to their learning of communication with children, as it enabled them to learn more about the natural ways within which children engage and interact and the types of indirect and direct forms of language they employed:

> *[Vicky-T5] That was a great learning curve for me because I'd never really been around children that small, so in some ways it was actually being in a home environment, watching them with their parents, learning from how the parents reacted with the children to that was how I should interact with them, and things like going to the toilet with them, things that actually if you haven't had children around you, you don't know what to do.*

This was especially helpful for Sarah who had had little face-to-face experience of any kinds of children prior to the programme and found the child observation exercise familiarised her with 'the

ways of children'. This learning approach also helped as she could focus on 'being with' children rather than 'doing' communication:

> *[Sarah-T5] … just being able to be around a child in a way that felt safe for me was really helpful. Then from that I was then able to explore the feelings and just kind of think what children do, actually that it's not a mystery or they don't all do their own magical thing, they just do what I normally do each day and get up, go somewhere, hang about, talk to their mates, eat some lunch, do some work and go home. Their world and my world aren't so different that I couldn't enter theirs, not with ease, but they aren't little aliens!*

Melody had decided to observe an adult with dementia during the qualifying programme because she already had a good understanding of children. She had subsequently undertaken a child observation during her post-qualifying training and now saw the helpfulness of the learning opportunities it offered:

> *[Melody-T5] I would say it is absolutely key. That [PQ child observation] module was brilliant at keeping me child focused. I learnt so much in that module, so that would definitely be up there [top of the list] if I'd done a child observation [on the MA].*

The Munro (2011) review has emphasised the importance of social workers having well-developed skills in observing and understanding children. This presents a dilemma for the generic social work qualification. If all students were to carry out formal child observations, this could be at the expense of the students intending to work in adult services' not developing the applied adult-specialist capabilities necessary for those settings. For students who do not have pre-course experience of children, undertaking child observation only post-qualification might be too late to ensure newly-qualified practitioners have the foundational understanding of children's internal worlds and social experiences so crucial to understanding and contextualising children's direct and indirect communications. The Reform Board are currently proposing a reduction of practice learning days from 200 to 170, with the remaining 30 days to be reallocated for skills development (SWRB, 2010b). This might conceivably provide space for more observational learning about both adults and children.

6.3.5   Other student feedback

Participants were asked in their questionnaires how the programme might improve the teaching and learning of communication with children. Suggestions included increasing teaching time for child development and applied skills, including using resources and tools, play therapy techniques and

how to communicate with disabled children. The five interviewees also recommended more practical training for direct work, including interviewing and counselling skills practice and using play-based techniques such as drawings, animals and figures to help children express themselves and to explain matters in child-centred ways. This was not just a focus on skills acquisition (Doing). Vicky remembered seeing how much some students needed to develop their capacity for playfulness, that it was not an aspect of self (Being) that all possessed:

> [Vicky-T5] …playing with children… you do begin to learn that not every social worker is like that. Not everybody finds it something that's easy. It can be quite difficult for some people.

Involving children in social work education is not as well-developed as involving adult service users and carers and Sarah suggested that more could be done on this:

> [Sarah-T5] There was an absence of the children's voice on the course, direct. I suppose you could read papers, research and books, have extracts about what an adult said, that when she was a child she didn't like X, Y or Z, or 'this child said' - but reading it in a text book and reading it from somebody who might have written it two weeks ago perhaps is a very different experience. Something a little bit more direct and of the moment about a child's experience.

Interestingly, Sarah appeared to have forgotten what Vicky had remembered vividly: a showing of the training video, 'The Child's World' (Department of Health *et al*, 2000), in which children speak directly about their experience of being assessed by professionals:

> [Vicky-T5] The film that we watched about the impact it has on children, about the change of social workers all the time and things like that. Interestingly I have a new case and I met with all the children last night and they called me by two or three different names first of their old social workers. Then the little boy said to me, "why do we have so many social workers?" and I thought 'yes, it reminds me of that video', because actually it's so confusing for them. I had to say, "This one left". "Why did she leave?". "She had another job". "What about him, what happened to him?" "He left too". "Are you going to leave?". … I think it enables you to think about what you become to those children and the impact of you perhaps then leaving or being taken off the case.

Over the three years since these students finished their training, the involvement of children across the curriculum has been developing. Using 'pump-priming' funding from the GSCC my department has built further links with advocacy organisations working with young carers and young people in care. They are now contributing to programme planning, developing training materials and actually presenting to students. Such PQ funding has now been withdrawn nationally, so there is a danger that hard-won progress by many HEIs may now recede.

The positioning of the sub-module was unhelpful for some students, such as Amanda and Sarah, as they were in adult placements during the first year when the sub-module took place. Because their pre-course experience with children was so limited, they did not feel they could make best use of some of the learning opportunities in the sub-module as they had nothing to 'hang' theoretical concepts on. It was only once they were in their second year placements that earlier teaching started to 'click'. Changing the timing of the sessions in this programme in line with feedback was not straightforward to achieve because of constrictions across the timetable. Ultimately it was decided to change the whole structure of the sub-module so that the three sessions gave way to two full days: one in the first year of the programme, with a follow-up 'recall' day in the second year. This now gives substantially more time to the topic, refreshes students' knowledge, and supports deep learning through enabling students to make further connections to practice learning. Subsequent student feedback forms indicate that this alternative approach is welcomed. However, attendance at the second year 'recall' day remains lower than ideal; those in concurrent adult service placements tend to absent themselves because they feel the focus is less relevant for them – again raising the tensions posed by a generic training.

6.4 Conclusions regarding students' perceptions of beneficial learning opportunities

Practice learning opportunities with children were seen by the majority of students as the most important contributor to developing confidence and effectiveness in communicating with children. Child development teaching and the focused sub-module on communication with children were also highly valued. A range of pedagogical strategies were welcomed, including didactic input, participatory discussions sharing experiences, role plays, experimentation with techniques, and tutor modelling. This breadth of preference may be because students embody a range of learning styles (Reflector, Theorist, Pragmatist, Activist) which need to be provided for if they are to have the opportunity of developing to their full potential (Honey & Mumford, 2000). Alternatively, or additionally, it may also be that, because effective communication draws on a broad base of capability, it would be impossible for only one kind of pedagogical approach (such as 'Theorist' style input of lectures, models and readings) to provide the breadth and depth of learning that is required. The very high numbers valuing a range of contrasting learning approaches would support these.

Some students clearly found some modes of learning to be more comfortable or congruent for them. Role play, for example, provoked strong positive and negative reactions. However, even those who found it frightening were able to value what it could offer and were able to indicate the kind of facilitating environment necessary to make it successful: a safe and constructive learning environment where mistakes and humour were permissible. This might suggest that any approach could be made palatable for all students if sufficient attention is paid to the context of learning by the educator – there is perhaps a parallel here with how social workers need to provide a facilitative environment for communication with children.

Pre-course work-based and personal experience with children was considered to be very influential in learning and development. Given the role such prior experience seems to play in contributing to an initial sense of self-efficacy rooted in embodied proficiency (see Chapter 5), it might be helpful for programmes to encourage students to gain such pre-course experience if they have expressed a motivation to work with children in the future. Child observation can give students without such experience a non-threatening window into children's lives and ways, as well as opportunities for developing enhanced self-understanding, attunement and containment (Being capabilities).

How to construct a programme so that learning opportunities are positioned optimally for all students is challenging and perhaps impossible to achieve. Students with limited pre-course experience with children seem to particularly value focused teaching and skills practice on communication with children being taught concurrently with their placement in children's services. Without this concurrency of learning experience, students might struggle to make sense of how the theoretical concepts or research findings they have been taught translate into embodied engagements and interactions. The same is possibly less true of adult-focused communication skills teaching as all students have more experience of communicating with adults, in personal lives if not in work-based contexts. However, it would be difficult, even impossible, for any generic programme to achieve concurrent child-focused teaching and child placements for all as perhaps only half of students in a given year will be in children's placements. Strategies to deal with this problem could include: encouraging some pre-course experience with children for everyone, even those without future intentions to work with children; providing follow-up teaching on communication with children concurrent with the final placement so that earlier learning can be refreshed; ensuring that

practice educators are familiar with the approaches to communication with children taught by the programme so they can provide follow-up guidance and supervision in placement.

Because of some inaccurately completed forms, the sample size for this set of data was particularly small. This means that any emergent trends have to be treated with particular caution as they may be idiosyncratic not only to this programme but just to this group.

7 Student learning of the domains and dimensions of Communicative Capability

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5 the analysis focused on how many of the 32 dimensions of Communicative Capability were evidenced within students' vignette responses, providing a score for how much CCCh-awareness each student exhibited at each time point. Attention now moves to *what* students had learned: the dimensions which were evidenced in students' vignette responses at each time point. The 32 dimensions within the domains of Knowing, Being(i) (values and ethical commitments), Being(ii) (personal qualities and emotional capacities), and Doing can be reviewed in Table 1, Chapter 2.

As previously noted, although use of words or concepts corresponding to a particular dimension demonstrate CCCh-awareness, absence of evidence of a dimension in a vignette response does not necessarily mean participants were unaware of it. They may have just chosen to write more about alternative issues on that occasion because of time, space, energy, prioritisation, preferences or chance. Some insights into *how* students had learned and the possible meanings of higher or lower CCCh-awareness scores at particular time points are provided through T5 qualitative interview data (Popay & Williams, 1998). Space constrains the amount of analysis presented here.

As was discussed in Section 2.4.2, although the taxonomy of 32 CCCh was developed following a systematic review, the categories were established thematically to provide a coherent conceptual model for good practice rather than through a formal factor analysis (Fabrigar *et al*, 1999). As noted in Section 2.4.3, the boundaries of both the domain and dimension categories are fuzzy (Sostak, 1991), particularly those categorised in the two sub-domains of Being. Using the taxonomy for research purposes rather than just as practice guidance has posed methodological challenges. Any attempt to prove through statistical analysis that changes between domains and dimensions at different time points were significant would have lent the distinctions between these categories more validity than is merited or was intended. For this reason statistical significance tests were not conducted on variations in the number of students evidencing particular dimensions or domains at the four time points. Any patterns identified in the forthcoming analysis are seen as indicative

tendencies only and provide insights into how the grouping of categories might be modified for further empirical testing.

7.2   Cohort evidencing of the dimensions and domains at the four time points

With these caveats in mind, Chart 11 (see over) sets out the proportion of students evidencing each dimension at the four time points.   It also indicates which of the domains each dimension was grouped within. It can be seen that the trend for the domains of Knowing, Being(ii) and Doing is for a higher proportion of the student cohort to have evidenced them within their vignette responses at T4 compared with T1. By contrast, the majority of dimensions in Being(i) are evidenced by fewer students at T4 than did so at T1.

Chart 11 - The proportion of students evidencing each dimension %

Domain of Doing: Proficient in....
- Using a variety of tools (e.g. ecomaps): 20, 7.5, 39, 59
- Interviewing techniques: 20, 48, 55.5, 27
- Listening: 60, 81.5, 78, 68
- Use of play, symbolic, creative, non-verbal and expressive...: 84, 63, 89, 100
- Going at the child's pace: 32, 33, 39, 45.5
- Child-centred communication: 80, 67, 94.5, 100

Domain of Being(ii): Being able to....
- Work with depth processes in the work not just surface...: 28, 28, 91
- Engage and build relationships with children: 68, 63, 94.5, 77
- Help children feel safe and build trust with the worker: 88, 89, 89, 91
- Be playful and creative: 12, 37, 72, 32
- Be comfortable to work with children's strong feelings: 16, 11, 28, 68
- Be caring and demonstrate concern for/to children: 44, 55.5, 67, 45.5
- Be empathic: 40, 59, 61, 50
- Be open and honest: 52, 33, 44.5, 32
- Be sincere, genuine, congruent: 7.5, 33, 18
- Show own humanity - expressing enthusiasm, warmth,...: 28, 44.5, 44.5, 36
- Recognise, manage and use own feelings: 80, 81.5, 89, 95.5

Domain of Being(i): An ethical commitment to....
- Eliciting and taking into account children's views and...: 96, 85, 94.5, 86
- Providing information and explanations: 52, 41, 67, 77
- Maintaining confidentiality where possible: 44, 15, 50, 18
- Providing uninterrupted time: 22, 17, 14
- Reliability and consistency: 8, 37, 11, 18
- Respectfulness: 36, 37, 17, 18
- Anti-oppressive practice: 60, 26, 28, 36
- Non-judgementalism: 72, 48, 17, 32
- Children's competence and right to participate: 11, 9

Domain of Knowing: Knowing about.....
- Effective models, approaches and methods for...: 96, 52, 78, 100
- How the social work role and task impacts upon...: 88, 70, 100, 77
- The purpose of communication in context: 60, 81.5, 94.5, 100
- How (adverse) experiences affect children's...: 72, 63, 83, 91
- The impact on comm of child's traits, capabilities or...: 15, 72, 45.5
- Child development: 84, 52, 83, 100

% of students evidencing each dimension

- % Students evidencing dimension at T1 N=25
- % Students evidencing dimension at T2 n=27
- % Students evidencing dimension at T3 n=18
- % Students evidencing dimension at T4 n=22

Chart 12 presents the mean number of dimensions evidenced per student within each of the domains, expressed as a percentage. Any comparison of substantive differences between domains, such as whether or not dimensions in the 'Knowing' domain are evidenced by more students than in the 'Doing' domain, has to be treated with some caution, as the number of dimensions within each domain varies. However, the internal changes within a domain between time points, for example between the mean number of students evidencing 'Knowing' at T4 compared with T1, can be reliably compared.

Chart 12 - % of participants evidencing domains at each time points

Mean n° of students evidencing domain %

	T1	T2	T3	T4
Knowing % (n=6)	73	55	83	85
Being(i) % (n=9)	41	33	34	34
Being(ii) % (n=11)	40	44	59	58
Doing % (n=6)	53	52	65	67
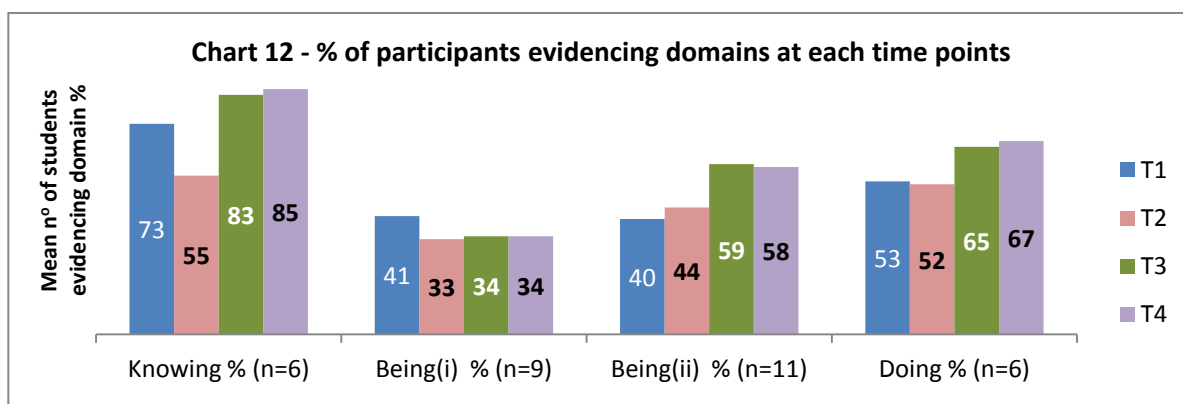
The domains of Knowing, Doing and Being(ii – personal qualities/capacities) appear likely to have been the contributors to the statistically significant rise in students' overall CCCh-awareness between T2 and T3 which was identified in Chapter 5. Chart 12 reveals that the T4 cohort mean score for these three domains was higher than at T1, with this rise occurring primarily between T2 and T3. As the sub-module on communication with children was the key universal additional learning experience between T2-T3, this suggests that the sub-module provided focused learning opportunities which either helped develop these domains of students' CCCh-awareness or, at least, foregrounded them in students' minds when completing the vignette exercise.

The trajectory for the Being(i - ethics/values) domain was markedly different: the mean number of students evidencing Being(i) dimensions at T3 and T4 was lower than at T1. Although the T2 score was also lower, this was true of two of the other domains, too. This might indicate either that students did not develop their Being(i) CCCh-awareness during this period, and/or that how they viewed these values and ethical commitments was marginalised compared with the other domains.

7.3   Changes in the proportions of students evidencing each dimension of Communicative Capability

The changes between the proportion of students evidencing each CCCh dimension at the four time points were further analysed. Discerning meaningful patterns is not straightforward as there were numerous rises and falls in percentage totals, many of which are not easy to interpret. Only patterns which are most readily discernible through simple numerical analysis will be discussed here and, as they were not subject to statistical analysis, are viewed tentatively.

At T1 there was considerable variation in the number of students demonstrating awareness of each of the CCCh dimensions in their vignette responses: some dimensions were evidenced by many students, others by just a few. No obvious connection could be found between the three dimensions which were not evidenced by any students at all; they all belong to different domains of Knowing, Being or Doing and do not have fuzzy boundaries with each other.

Some dimensions were evidenced by most of the students at T1 (see Chart 13). Of these, several (such as 'listening' and 'ability to use own feelings in the work') might be sub-categorised as generic capabilities in communication; that is, the kinds of capabilities which would be drawn on for communication with all user/carer groups, not just with children. As all students admitted to this MA programme were required to have pre-course work experience in social care or a related profession, this might have laid the basic foundations of these generic capabilities which students were then able to refer to in their T1 vignette responses.

Chart 13 - Dimensions evidenced by most students at T1 %
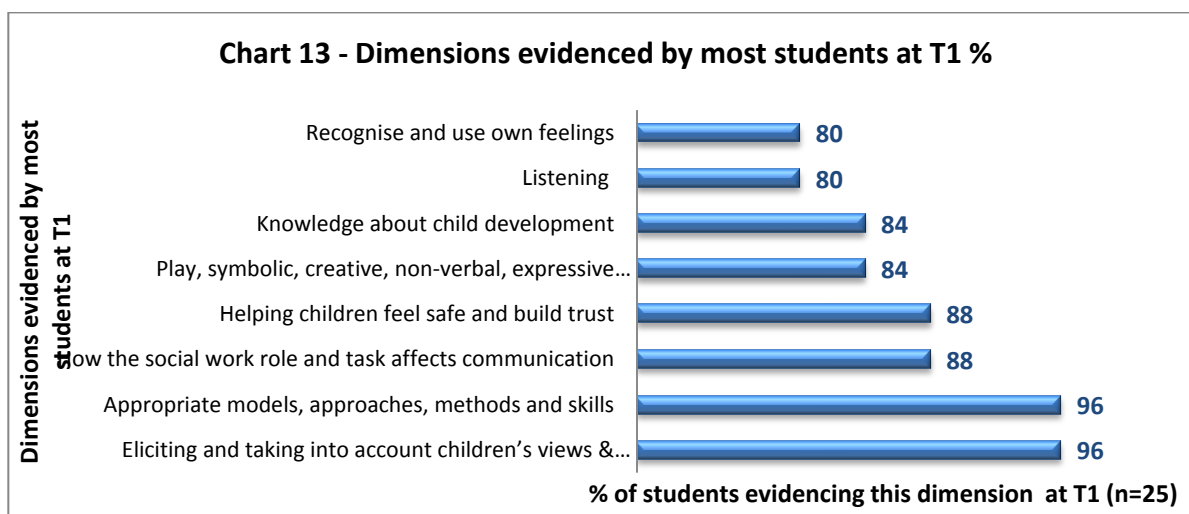
More of the highest scoring dimensions at T1, however, were child-related rather than generic. More than half of the T1 respondents had, 'quite a bit' or 'a great deal' of pre-course experience with children and this may have enabled a basic foundation of such child-focused capabilities to have developed. Indeed the thirteen students who were most experienced with children were slightly better at evidencing these dimensions at T1 (see Chart 14). This further supports the idea that pre-course experience might be encouraged for those who wish to work with children in the future.

There were numerous changes in the CCCh dimensions which were evidenced by students at T2 compared with T1: for 15 of the dimensions there was an increase in the proportion of students evidencing them at T2; for 16 there was a decrease. There is no obvious connection between dimensions where the proportions rose and fell the most. This reflects the earlier suggestion that there appears at T2 to have been a shaking up of students' way of thinking about communication with children due to being full of new ideas and concerns following a term of teaching and beginning placement.

Chart 14 - Highest scoring dimensions: comparison of those demonstrated by the most experienced students and those by the cohort

Dimensions scoring highest at T1	% of most experienced students evidencing dimension at T1	% of cohort evidencing dimension at T1
Recognise and use own feelings	92	80
Listening	77	80
Knowledge about child development	85	84
Use of play, symbolic, creative, non-verbal and…	100	84
Helping children feel safe and build trust with the…	85	88
Understanding how the social work role and task…	92	88
Knowing models, approaches, methods and skills in…	100	96
Eliciting and taking into account children's views &…	100	96

n=13

At T3 there was a marked rise in the number of dimensions evidenced by a higher proportion of the student cohort. This corresponded to the statistically significant rise in student CCCh-awareness T2-3 shown in Chapter 5. There is no obvious connection or patterning between dimensions with the biggest increase T1-3 and T2-3. Some had been evidenced by only a very few students at T2 and

subsequently rose substantially, while others already had a high proportion evidencing them at T2 but increased still further at T3.

Only five dimensions decreased T2-3 (see chart 15). Most were in the Being(i) domain, representing what might be called 'core social work values', such as non-judgementalism, respectfulness, reliability and consistency.

Chart 15 - Dimensions showing a decrease T2-3

Dimensions which decreased at T2

Doing
- Listening: 78 / 81.5

Being(i)
- Providing uninterrupted time: 17 / 22
- Respectfulness: 17 / 37
- Reliable and consistent: 11 / 37
- Non-judgemental attitude: 17 / 48

% of students evidencing this dimension

- % evidencing this dimension at T3 n=18
- % evidencing this dimension at T2 N=27
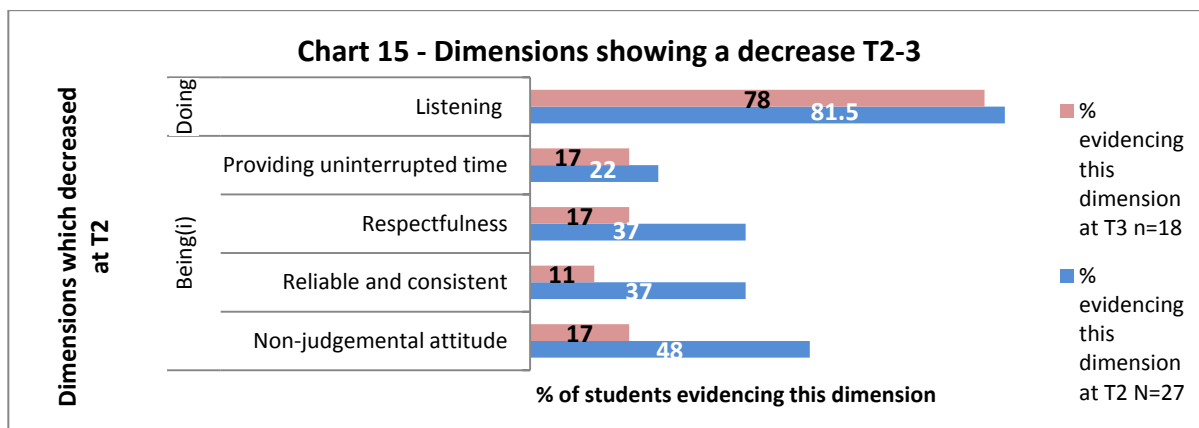
Those dimensions which had overall decreased the most T1-4 (see Chart 16) were also located in the Being(i) domain (ethics/values).

Chart 16 - Dimensions showing most decrease T1-4

Dimensions which decreased most T1-4

- Open and honest demeanour: 32 / 52
- Anti-oppressive practice: 36 / 60
- Considering issues of confidentiality: 18 / 44
- Non-judgemental attitude: 32 / 72

% of students evidencing this dimension

- % evidencing this dimension at T4 n=22
- % evidencing this dimension at T1 N=25
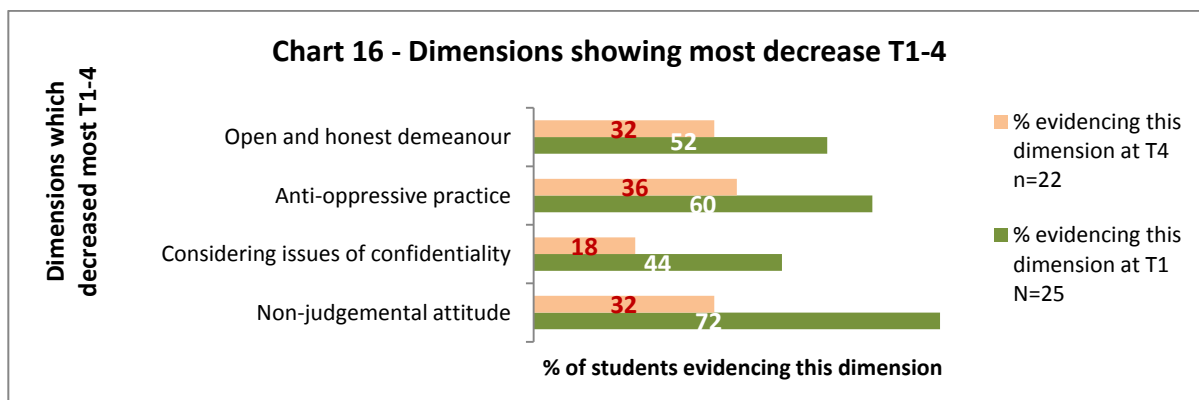
There are several possible reasons for these decreases in scores for dimensions in the Being(i) domain. One is that, by later stages in the programme, students may no longer have felt as committed to ethical practice as they had when they started the programme. Another is that core social work values figured less highly in their conscious recall compared to new knowledge and skills. Scrutinising these patterns, interviewee Melody thought the latter was more likely. She suggested that she and many of her peers would have entered the programme *because* of their pre-existing

values and ethical commitments and so were able to draw on and demonstrate these at T1. However, by T3 and T4 they had all learned new knowledge and skills which were at the forefront of their minds and, hence, more likely to be written about in the vignette exercise.

If Melody's supposition was correct, this would suggest that ethics and values might have become part of students' tacit professional knowledge, being drawn on at an intuitive rather than solely a deliberative level (Eraut, 1994). It might even reflect deep learning, still underpinning their practice, but just less subject to conscious recall (Meyer & Land, 2003). This would be a more reassuring interpretation than the alternative, which would be to assume that students no longer saw these values as important. Whichever, neither the taught curriculum nor practice placements seem to have been as effective as they might have been in emphasising to the students the importance of values and ethical commitments in their communication with children, or these dimensions would have been explicitly referred to by more of the students.

7.4   Patterns of change

Most dimensions of Communicative Capability followed one of four patterns of change.

7.4.1   Pattern 1

Pattern 1 (Graph 8) groups together dimensions where there was an incremental increase through the four time points in the proportion of students evidencing them. These were in a mix of domains. Three were already apparent in a majority of students' vignette responses at T1, indicating a good awareness of the importance of helping children feel safe, the purpose/context of communication and recognising and using their own feelings. However, *Going at the child's pace* started low and rose only modestly thereafter, so the programme appeared to have impacted on worryingly few students' awareness of this dimension. The practice context is said to be more preoccupied at present with workers following administrative timescales rather than the pace at which the child needs to communicate (Broadhurst et al, 2010; Horwath, 2010; Munro, 2011). Even though the importance of going at the child's pace was emphasised during the sub-module, the likelihood is that everything that participants saw and learned in placement would have countermanded this.

Graph 8 - Pattern 1 : Dimensions with incremental rise T1-4

Y-axis: % of students evidencing this dimension (0–120)

X-axis: T1 (n=25), T2 (n=27), T3 (n=18), T4 (n=22)

Legend:
- Understanding the purpose of communication in context (Knowing)
- Able to recognise and use own feelings (Being(ii))
- Going at the child's pace (Doing)
- Helping children feel safe and build trust (Being(ii))
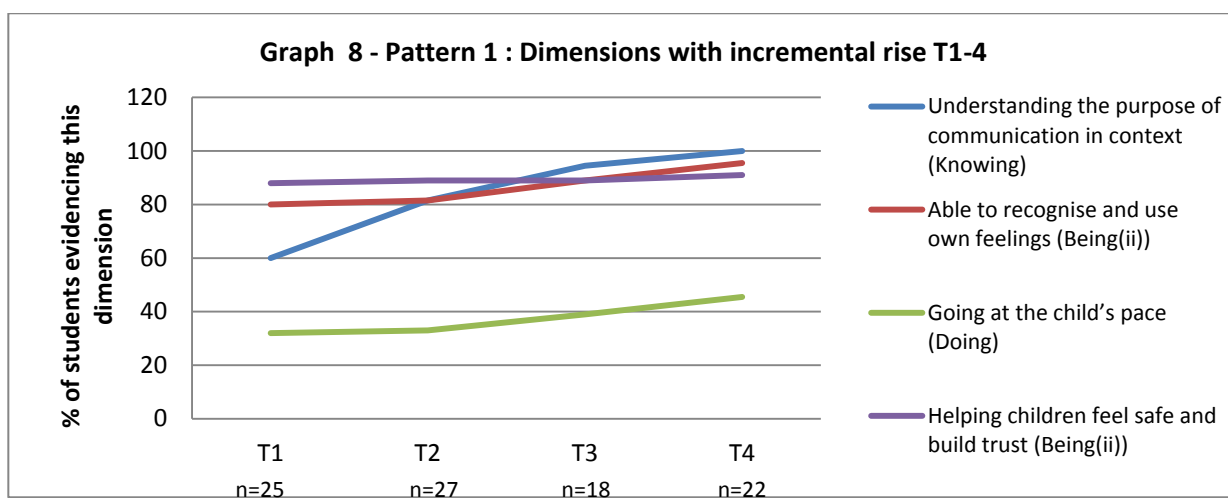
The narratives of the five interviewees, however, suggested that they were seeking to buck the national trend. They were all creating the necessary time to work at children's pace in order to achieve child-focused rather than administrative aims:

[Vicky-T5] It did mean working until about 11 o'clock that night but I took her to the placement, stayed with her, settled her in there.

This has not always been easy for them:

[Melody-T5] As a student I had mainly initial assessments, so you had your seven days of maybe one or two visits, so much less time to build that relationship with children and communicate with them… It was advocated to see the child tick the box, not to spend time with the child…At which point I was told that there wasn't room for relationships in this work and at which point I kept quiet, because I knew that I wasn't going to be shifted.

Although *Going at the child's pace* is a 'Doing' dimension, it appears to have been operationalised through these students' personal commitment which motivated them amid resistance from the organisation or child (Thomas & O'Kane, 2000).

7.4.2 Pattern 2

In Pattern 2 (Graph 9) the proportion of students evidencing these dimensions fell sharply at T2 and then rose strongly again at T3 and T4. The T2 decreases may be associated with what I have called a 'shaking up' of students' pre-existing knowledge, beliefs and perceptions at T2.

Graph 9 - Pattern 2: Dimensions falling at T2 then rising at T3 and T4

Legend:
- Knowledge of how (adverse) experiences affect children's communication (Knowing)
- Knowledge about child development (Knowing)
- Knowledge of models, approaches, methods and skills (Knowing)
- Providing information and explanations (Being(i))
- Feeling comfortable to work with children's strong feelings (Being(ii))
- Able to work with depth processes (Being(ii))
- Child-centred approach (Doing)
- Use of play, symbolic, creative, non-verbal and expressive techniques (Doing)
- Able to use a variety of tools (e.g. ecomaps) (Doing)

Those dimensions rising sharply between T2-3 were in line with the statistically significant rise in cohort CCCh-awareness over that period. However, the further increases T3-4 diverge from the cohort mean trend, which remained level over that period. Doing and Knowing dimensions are particularly represented in this pattern group. This might indicate that the sub-module provoked initial learning in these dimensions through the focused teaching T2-3, which was then consolidated and integrated through placement opportunities with children (some of which would only have occurred T3-4), reflected on in supervision and the TMVIP module, and embedded through the assignments. Basic *Knowledge about child development* and the *impact on children's communication of adverse experiences* may also have been reinforced experientially as students encountered more children in their placements.

The Being(ii) dimensions *Feeling comfortable to work with children's strong feelings* and *Ability to work with depth processes* may have also risen further T3-4 as students' emotional capacities

developed through supervised practice and reflective opportunities. By T5, the interviewees had all encountered a range of children and young people in deeply concerning and difficult situations but had varied in the progress they had made towards knowing how best to respond to them. Ben, who had low Being(ii) scores, recognised at T5 he still needed to develop his emotional capacities. Most of the young people he was encountering had a lot of anger as a result of experiencing domestic violence. He felt he was just 'using [his] instincts', and 'working at a shallow level' and would have appreciated clinical supervision to help him think reflectively about the processes engendered to manage them better. Vicky, in contrast, felt better equipped to deal with children's strong emotions, acknowledging them and discussing them, and managing her own feelings, so that the child could therapeutically work through issues. Vicky attributed her capacity to do this to a combination of her own personality, self-work on early parenting experiences, and helpful practice supervision during the programme and beyond.

Pattern 2 suggests that, where direct practice and reflective opportunities consolidate and integrate learning and support the development of use of self, CCCh-awareness may continue to rise through qualifying training.

7.4.3   Pattern 3

The cohort mean trend of CCCh-awareness identified in Chapter 5 was of an increase T2-3 sustained between T3-4. Pattern 3 diverges considerably from this, with marked increases T1-2 and noticeable decreases T3-4 (Graph 10). Many of these CCCh dimensions had been taught specifically in a sequence of sessions in the first term on counselling/interviewing skills (using Egan, 2001), so this is likely to account for them increasing at T2 and T3, which were both soon after.

The decreases for these dimensions at T4 is concerning as it suggests that the initial growth in CCCh-awareness at T2 and T3 may only have been superficial. Five dimensions were in the Being(ii) category, relating to personal qualities and emotional capacities. One question is whether practice educators might have been not only less likely to emphasise such dimensions in a context dominated by administrative practices, but may have even undermined them, contradicting what had been presented within the taught curriculum. Melody's comment about her supervisor telling her that there was 'no room for relationships' in practice comes to mind here. It is also possible that these dimensions were less well represented in participants' vignette responses at T4 because they

had become part of unconscious competence – just part of who the practitioner was, not what they knew and did.

Graph 10 - Pattern 3 : Dimensions rising T1-2 and fallingT3-4
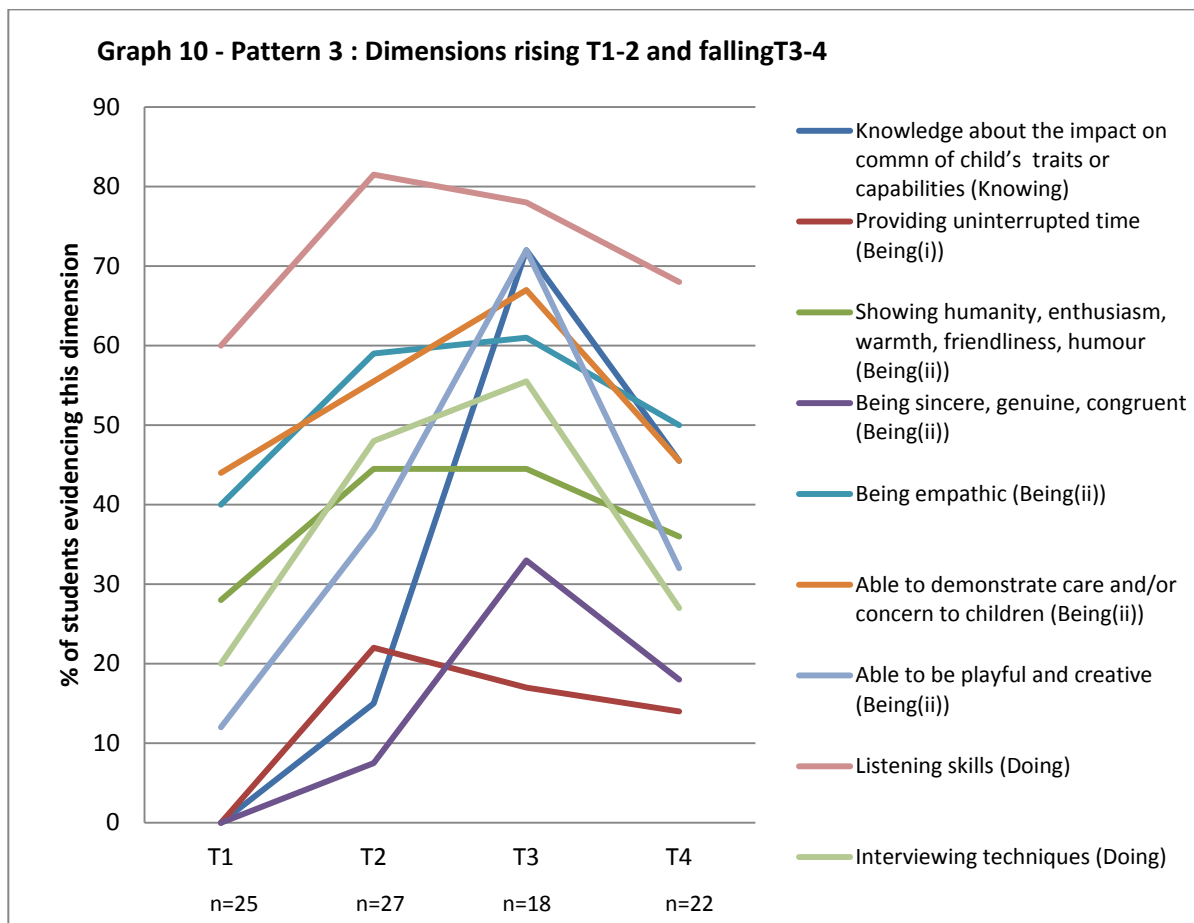
The T5 narratives suggested that the influence of these dimensions was strongly felt by these interviewees in qualified practice, building on their T1-T4 vignette responses which were characterised by *empathic* insights into children's experiences, *care and concern*, and a desire to be *genuine, warm and friendly* with children:

> *[Melody-T5] I think what I feel most confident with is our ability to relate to them and hope that I'm demonstrating genuineness because I genuinely love communicating with them… I'm definitely not pretending…. That's why I do the work really. And I can feel really emotional about it as well sometimes.*

It may be that these interviewees were idiosyncratic, a skewed sample who had particularly strong intrinsic aptitudes, capacities and commitments for engagement and communication with children.

Indeed, they had volunteered for interview because they wanted to talk about their interest in this work.

7.4.4   Pattern 4

The fourth pattern is of most concern, as the general trend of CCCh-awareness for these dimensions is downward, with T4 scores being lower than those at T1 (Graph 11). Even where there was a rise T2-3, this was usually only back to T1 levels following a drop T1-2. Two of these dimensions scored very highly at T1 and were still evidenced by around four-fifths of the cohort at T4 so provoke little real concern. However, the other five were only evidenced by around one-third or fewer at T4. These are all in the Being(i) domain (apart from *open and honest demeanour*, which is in Being(ii), but which I named in Chapter 2 as having fuzzy boundaries with Being(i)). This suggests that pre-existing awareness of values and ethical commitments is worryingly vulnerable to being disrupted during qualifying training.

Graph 11 - Pattern 4: Downward trend from T4 to T1
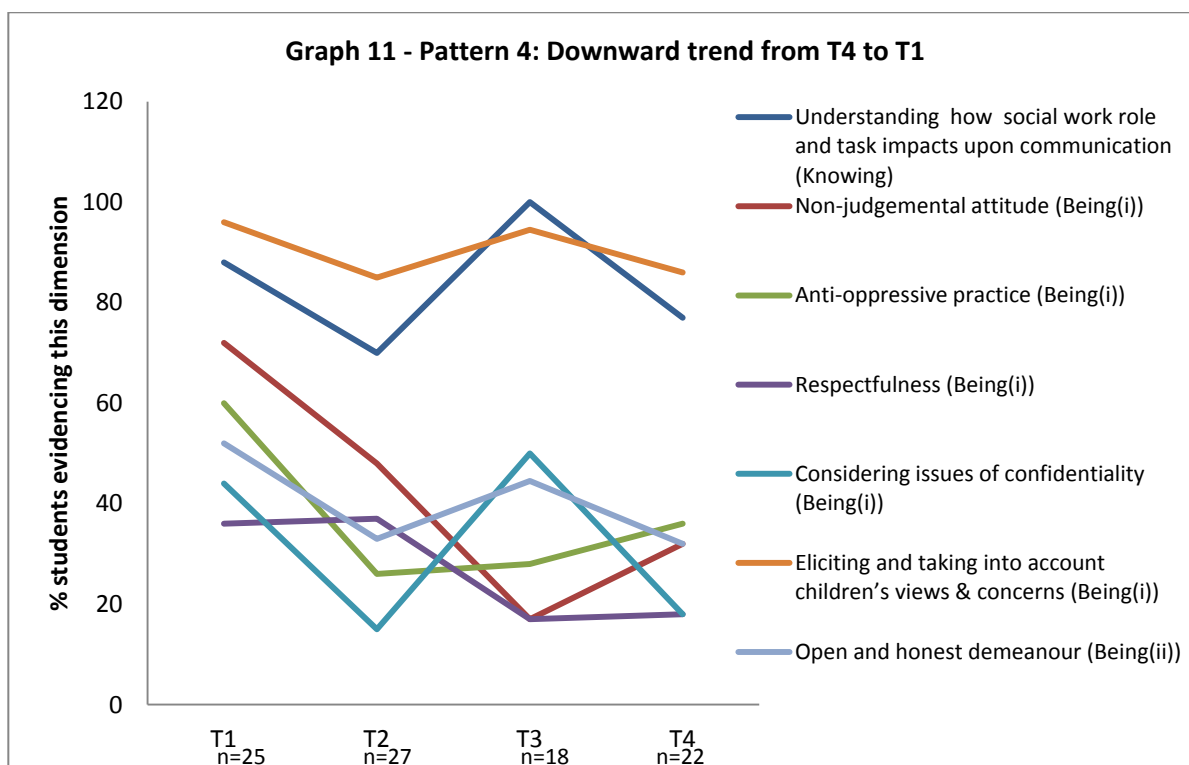
Despite each vignette offering opportunities for issues of power, culture, ethnicity, gender and so on to be considered, most students T2-4 made no mention of them, nor of how to form an anti-oppressive response. The interviewees were no different in this respect. Learning about these

issues was ongoing at T5. For example, both Ben and Amanda were struggling with gendered expectations from young people.

Generally the students' discourse T1-5 was much more about care, protection and engagement. Only Melody spontaneously referred at T5 to the importance of respecting children. When they saw the poorer scores for the Being(i) dimensions, the interviewees were horrified and sought to explain them:

> *[Amanda-T5] I guess by the end, you know, particularly respect and non judgemental attitude, it's so intrinsic to the whole course that maybe take it as given that that's, you know, you don't need to write again, that I'll treat, you know, have a non- judgemental approach to this.*

Amanda may be correct that these poor scores simply reflect the less conscious nature of fully integrated values. If this were the case then at least most practitioners would be acting in line with these ethical positions, although this would not be ideal, as values need to be within conscious awareness to receive ongoing critical scrutiny (Fook *et al,* 2000). However, children and young people continue to say that values such as these are not sufficiently enacted in practice with them (Morgan, 2006, 2008, 2011). It might be helpful, then, for qualifying programmes to ensure such values are regularly emphasised to ensure students are equipped to resist workplace cultures which undermine them .

7.5   Recalibrating the interviewees' vignette scores

The method used for analysis of participants vignette responses as set out in Chapter 5 was a simple binary one: students were scored 'yes' or 'no' for each dimension at every time point depending on whether their response demonstrated any awareness at all of that dimension. I was subsequently left with some concerns that this diametric system was too insensitive. By assigning a 'yes' score to both a brief answer from one student who merely mentioned a key word relating to a particular dimension and to another who gave a more detailed, rich and nuanced response in respect of a dimension, the quality and level of students' learning and development was not analysed as effectively as it might have been. I subsequently trialled a slightly more calibrated scale to re-analyse the vignette responses of the five T5 interviewees:

0 = no mention of dimension
1 = basic response (for example, mentioning a key word, such as trust or empathy, but giving little explicit detail relating to this)
2 = more advanced response (more detailed and specific discussion, and/or showing awareness of the complexity of the issues involved).

Table 12 sets out CCCh-awareness scores for the five interviewees using this 0-2 scale. Though the numbers are small, it is possible to see greater differentiation in students' progression using this method. While Ben improved the number of dimensions evidenced from 7 to 18, he gained no scores of '2' at all, so his improvement was not as strong as Melody, Vicky and Amanda, who substantially increased their scores of '2' by T4. While Sarah had evidenced a high number of dimensions throughout, there was almost no progression in her '2' scores, perhaps reflecting how she had 'stopped trying' with the vignette exercise later in the programme.

Table 12 Interviewees' CCCh-awareness scores using 0-2 scale

Time points	Amanda				Sarah				Vicky				Ben				Melody			
	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4
Dimensions scoring 1	13	9		12	19	18	21	19	16	16	16	11		7		18	13	17	14	14
Dimensions scoring 2	3	1		13	1	1	2	2	6	8	8	13		0		0	0	1	5	7
Dimensions using yes/ no scale	16	10		25	20	19	23	21	22	24	24	24		7		18	13	18	19	21

Exploring just the Being domains using this method (see Chart 17), it can be seen that while almost no Being(i) dimensions (values and ethics) were evidenced with a score of '2', many of the Being(ii) dimensions (personal and emotional qualities) had scores of '2' from Melody, Vicky and Amanda by T4. This more sensitised calibration could be useful in future research, not just to indicate which students showed deeper levels of CCCh-awareness, but which dimensions were evidenced in more thorough ways.

Chart 17 - Being dimensions evidenced by the interviewees

Melody	T4	3, 0, 5, 4
	T3	2, 0, 5, 4
	T2	3, 0, 8, 0
	T1	2, 0, 3, 0
Ben	T4	4, 0, 5, 0
	T3	
	T2	1, 0, 3, 0
	T1	
Vicky	T4	3, 1, 5, 5
	T3	3, 0, 7, 3
	T2	4, 1, 7, 2
	T1	3, 0, 7, 1
Sarah	T4	3, 0, 8, 0
	T3	3, 0, 9, 1
	T2	4, 0, 10, 0
	T1	5, 0, 7, 0
Amanda	T4	4, 1, 3, 5
	T3	
	T2	3, 0, 2, 0
	T1	4, 0, 3, 2

Legend:
- Being(i) dimensions (n=9) Total no evidenced with a score of 1
- Being(i) dimensions (n=9) Total no evidenced with a score of 2
- Being(ii) dimensions (n=11) Total no evidenced with a score of 1
- Being(ii) dimensions (n=11) Total no evidenced with a score of 2

7.6 Conclusions about when and how different Communicative Capabilities were learned

Almost all of the dimensions were evidenced by at least some students at the beginning of the programme, and some were demonstrated by most of the students. Students on this MA programme were required to have some pre-course experience in social care or a related field. The vignette responses would suggest that this prior experience has provided sufficient learning opportunities (either through specific training or experientially) for many students to enter the programme with not just generalist and generic but also some child-focused skills and knowledge which they could then inductively draw on and build towards specialist applied capabilities for social work with children.

Four patterns were identified in how the proportion of students identifying dimensions across the time points varied. At T2 there appeared to be a 'shaking up' of the students' way of thinking about their communication with children and young people. For dimensions that increased, there appeared to be a tentative connection with learning opportunities provided through the counselling/interview skills sequence T1-2. There was a tendency for scores for these dimensions to

decrease again later in the programme, seemingly forgotten or out of students' awareness (Pattern 3). It cannot be assumed, however, that this meant students were no longer drawing on these skills and personal qualities in their actual practice. Correlations between CCCh-awareness scores in a written exercise and embodied proficiency in direct practice situations have not been tested. It is possible that Pattern 3 dimensions which decreased later in the programme may have become absorbed as unconscious competence (Howell, 1982), practice wisdom (O'Sullivan, 2005), or tacit professional knowledge (Eraut, 1994) being drawn on at an intuitive rather than a deliberative level. However, when capabilities are out of awareness, they are less available for critical scrutiny and may become outdated or rusty. This could be mitigated by refresher teaching, perhaps as 'recall' skills days when students are on placement, as part of the new 'skills curriculum' proposed by the Reform board to replace 30 placement days.

Many of the Being(i – ethics/values) dimensions were evidenced by worryingly few students at T4 (Pattern 4) and remained less well-developed in interviewees' narratives at T5. This might suggest either that these were seen as less important, or that they figured less highly in students' conscious awareness compared with other aspects. Without a control group and without significance tests it is difficult to know if this is an artefact of this sample. However, critiques of contemporary child care practice (such as Munro, 2011) would suggest that such findings mirror a wider problem. Either way, programmes should ensure that Being(i) dimensions are emphasised throughout so that they are not sidelined when students focus on learning (and evidencing) propositional knowledge or practical proficiencies in placement. One future strategy could be to encourage practice educators to refer regularly to the CCCh taxonomy to see whether or not particular dimensions have been considered over the course of the placement and to create simulated opportunities to discuss these if they have not arisen serendipitously. They could also be emphasised in teaching that runs alongside placement.

Being(ii) dimensions (emotional capacities and personal qualities) were much more strongly represented within participants' vignette responses and the T5 interviews, particularly those dimensions which relate to practitioners forming safe and trusting relationships with children, where a genuine care and concern can be demonstrated, and difficult issues and feelings can be worked through and understood. The foundations for developing this 'use of self' (Mandell, 2008; Ward, 2008) appeared to be laid during some of the programme learning opportunities but the

journey of learning was ongoing: capacities are developed into honed capabilities once practitioners meet with a range of children in qualified practice. It also seems that many of the capacities and qualities that students build on existed, *in potentia* at least, prior to the programme, perhaps stemming from character traits, early parenting, personal development and work-based experiences. Indeed qualities such as empathy, warmth and a caring nature are likely to be part of the potential that universities look for at admissions interviews. However, even where some qualities are less apparent at the beginning of the programme, as with Sarah's lack of playfulness and creativity, much development can still take place later, if the learning conditions are facilitative.

The interviewees' narratives suggested they diverged from common trends in contemporary practice for social workers to reduce direct contact and distance themselves from children (Leeson, 2007; Winter, 2009). They may represent a skewed sample as they self-selected for interview because they found their contact with children and young people both enjoyable and stimulating and wanted an opportunity to reflect upon it. They did not appear to have been given more time for direct practice than the norm. It seems more that these interviewees had a personal motivation for, and enjoyment of, being with children and young people and were *creating* the opportunity for direct contact with children, in the face of managerial opposition, because of their strong ethical commitment to, and personal care and concern for, children. As has been suggested elsewhere (Thomas & O'Kane, 2000), it is perhaps the attitude of the social worker which counts most in achieving effective communication with children. But, as Vicky pointed out:

> [Vicky-T5] *There shouldn't be anything different about me, it should be something everybody's doing.*

These four patterns highlight that it is not easy to predict at which points in a programme student learning will most develop. While many students may be able to demonstrate awareness of a particular dimension in the immediate aftermath of focused teaching, this may only represent 'surface learning' which is later forgotten or cannot be transposed to other contexts, rather than the 'deep learning' which may be reworked, built on, and rendered transferable to other situations (Meyer & Land, 2003). Pre-existing CCCh-awareness may also be forgotten, or its importance downgraded, when other learning experiences become foregrounded. Some possible reasons have been put forward as to why cohort CCCh-awareness of some dimensions is consolidated and sustained through to the end of the programme, and not in respect of others. However, these

suggestions remain tentative as the sample is too small to test emergent patterns for statistical significance, so they may relate just to this particular sample.

8 Two contrasting learning journeys

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter a more in-depth analysis is made of the individual learning journeys of two of the interviewees, Melody and Sarah. The rationale for this different approach to analysis was provided in the methodology chapter, Section 4.4.6. In particular, these case analyses provide additional insights into what different students might need if they are to reach their full potential, as they illuminate how pathways towards capability and self-efficacy vary, depending on earlier experience, personal qualities and values and the extent to which learning and development carries on into qualified practice. Space precludes consideration of the learning journeys of all five interviewees so these contrasting trajectories have been selected because they are representative of two types of student in the sample. Both Melody and Sarah were white British, female and not disabled, features which they shared with the majority of the cohort.   Melody shared common features with the participants discussed in Section 5.9.1 and 5.9.2, sub-groups who had higher levels of higher self-efficacy and pre-course experience with children, and whose CCCh-awareness tended to increase during the programme. Sarah was in the sub-groups of students discussed in Section 5.9.4 and 5.9.5, who had little pre-course experience with children and were lowest in self-efficacy, although their CCCh-awareness was not necessarily lower than average. Due to space constraints, discussion has been limited to themes most strongly represented through the vignette, questionnaire and interview responses, or which strongly contrast with other interviewees' narratives.

8.2 Melody's learning journey: building on solid foundations

8.2.1 Melody's pattern of scores

Melody was in the younger age group at the start of the programme (22-6). She had had 'quite a bit' of pre-course work-based experience with children and a 'small amount' of personal experience with children. From the start of the programme Melody 'fully intended to' work with children in the future and pro-actively sought two placements in children's service settings. She had worked since qualification in a local authority family support setting.   Melody was one of the more confident students throughout the programme (see Graph 12), although she experienced a slight dip in self-efficacy at T2, as did several of the more confident students.

Graph 12 - Melody's self-efficacy scores

Self-efficacy ratings

Scores across the time points
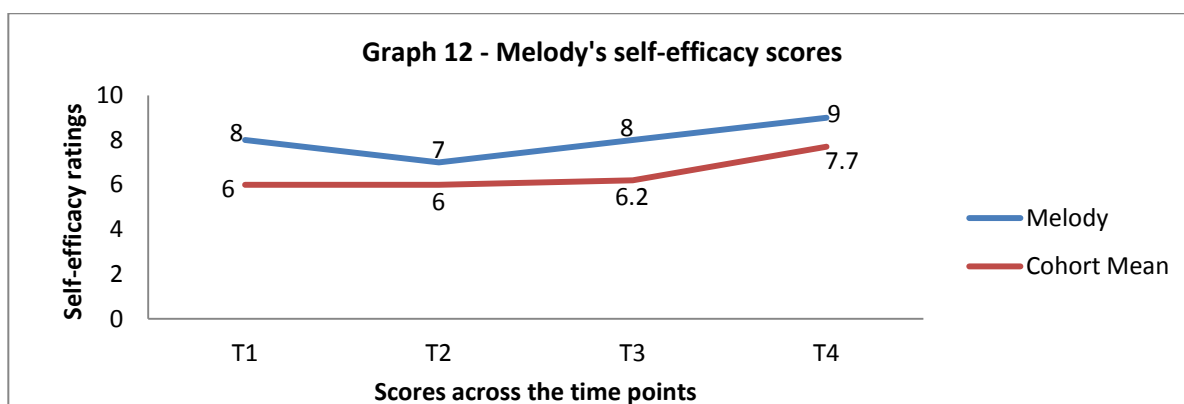
Melody
Cohort Mean

In contrast with her self-efficacy ratings, Melody's CCCh-awareness scores using the binary yes/no scale were lower than the cohort mean at T1 but higher than the mean at all other time points (see Graph 13). Whereas the cohort mean score for CCCh-awareness rose significantly between T2-3 (that is, over the period of the sub-module on communication with children), Melody's rose sharpest between T1-2, suggesting that this had been a period of intense learning for her. At T5 she described how opportunities to reflect on her earlier experiences in the light of theoretical input had enabled her to recognise and name what she had learned experientially. The T1-2 period had also dented her self-efficacy, however, as having just begun placement and having written several essays, she had begun to recognise how communication within the social work role required specialist knowledge, qualities and skills additional to those generic and child-focused capabilities deployed in non-qualified settings:

> *[Melody-T5] I felt possibly like it was this big thing that we have to do and, although we do it all the time, but … almost the more you learn possibly, for a while, the more deskilled you feel. You don't know about the world of communicating in various ways with children prior to doing the course and then, when it's opened up to you, you feel a little bit deskilled finding your feet, before you start to consolidate that learning.*

Graph 13 - Melody's CCCh-awareness scores using yes/no scale

CCCh-awareness scores

Scores across the time points
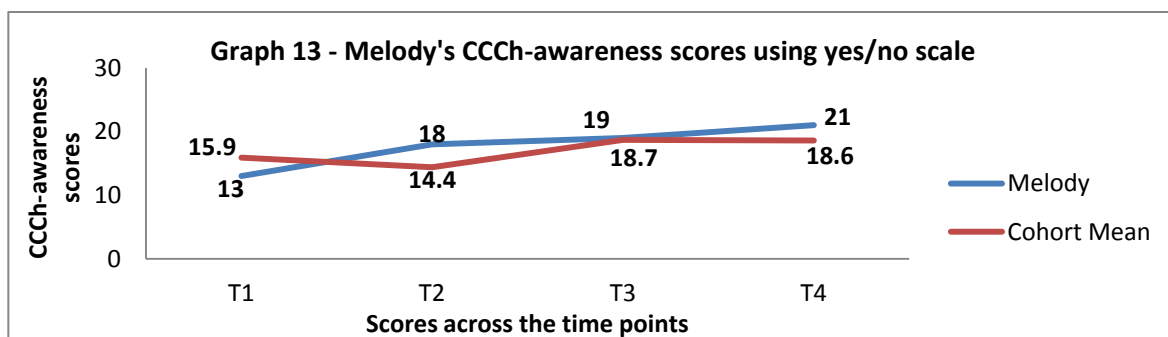
Melody
Cohort Mean

Chart 18 sets out CCCh-awareness scores for Melody using the more finely graded 0-2 scale. Here it can be seen that her scores of '2' increased substantially during the programme. This indicated that Melody was able at T3 and T4 to provide more detailed and nuanced vignette responses which demonstrated an awareness of the complexities involved in the scenarios.

Chart 18 - Melody's CCCh-awareness scores using 0-2 scale

No of dimensions scoring 1 or 2

- T1: 13 (score of 1), 0 (score of 2)
- T2: 17 (score of 1), 1 (score of 2)
- T3: 14 (score of 1), 5 (score of 2)
- T4: 14 (score of 1), 7 (score of 2)

Scores through the time points

■ Total no of dimensions evidenced with a score of 1
■ Total no of dimensions evidenced with a score of 2
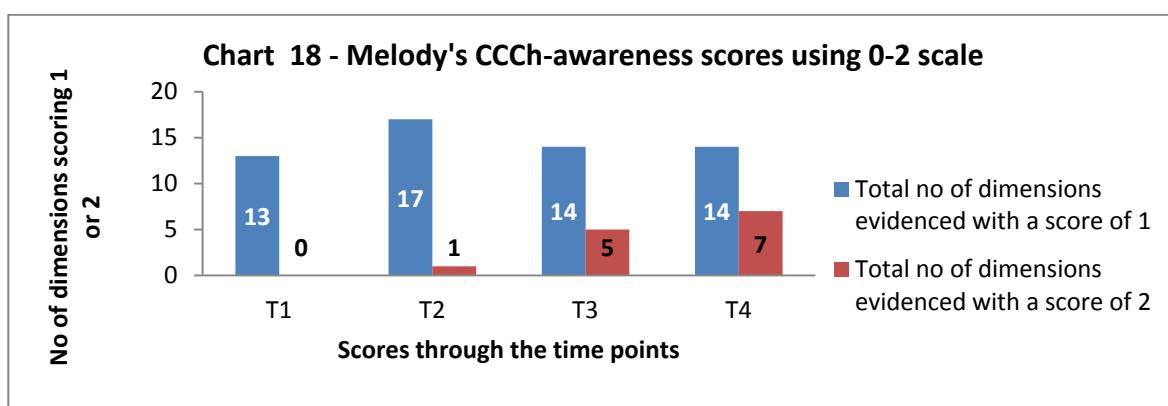
8.2.2 Particular strengths and learning needs

Commenting at T5 on her increased vignette scores at later time points, Melody described these as an apt reflection of real developments in her competence, which had been sparked by a combination of relevant reading, curriculum teaching, placement experiences and reflection on the learning these engendered. Re-reading the written responses to the vignette she had given at the different time points, she highlighted how these had developed from referencing mainly dimensions which were generic and generalist child-focused in nature at T1 and T2 to including at T3 and T4 dimensions which particularly related to child-specialist roles and tasks:

> *[Melody-T5] I think my practical training and understanding of the social work role clearly comes through the later answers, which is likely to be due to me having my second placement at a duty and assessment team. The earlier answers appear to be more based around the core skills of social work as opposed to more specific references [later] to 'core assessments' and the 'role'.*

In Chart 19 Melody's CCCh-awareness scores for each dimension using the 0-2 scale are grouped according to domain. The scores are shown as percentages, as the number of dimensions in each domain varies. This chart indicates which domains showed most or least improvement. Melody's Knowing scores were fairly stable through the programme, showing improvements by T4, particularly in respect of an increase in scores of '2' and an absence of scores of '0'. Doing (skills and techniques) spiked at T3, after the sub-module, although dropped back a little at T4. Being(i –

ethics/values) was weakest throughout, with no scores of '2' attained and a high level of '0' scores at each time point. Being(ii – qualities/capacities) showed strongest growth across the programme and signalled particular development in this domain. This is shown clearly in Melody's vignette responses. For example, she showed good self-awareness from T1 onwards, demonstrating awareness of a desire to 'rescue' which could risk her becoming 'too involved' and losing focus, or being frustrated with uncaring or abusive parents. These all indicate a strong potential for effective and well-considered use of self.

Chart 19 - Melody's CC-awareness scores grouped by domain
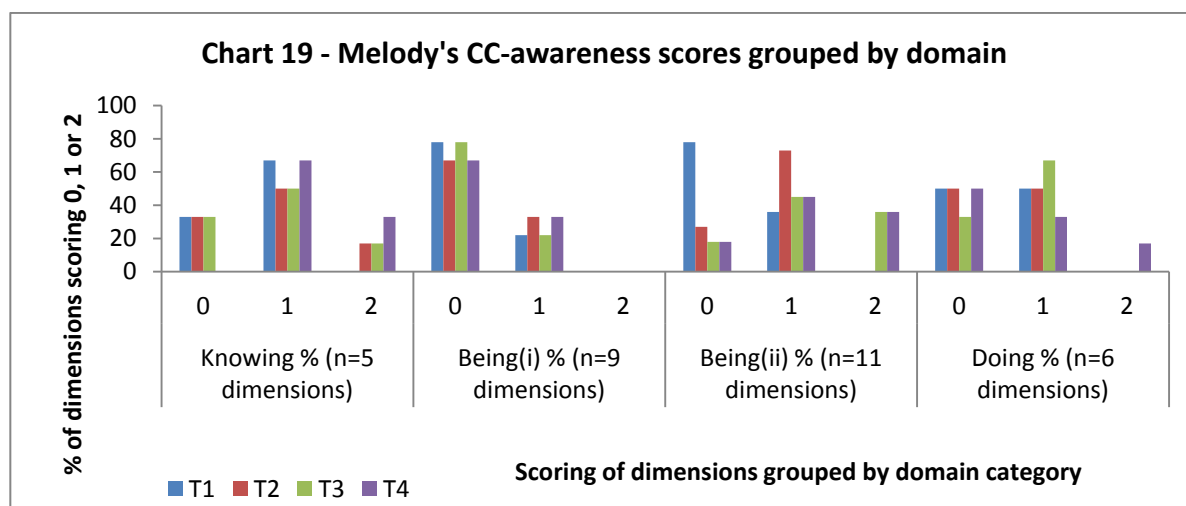
Chart 20 further breaks down Melody's pattern of CCCh-awareness to show the scores for each individual dimension.

Chart 20 - Dimensions evidenced by Melody

Doing: Skills and techniques – Proficient in

- Using a variety of tools (e.g. ecomaps): 0
- Interviewing techniques: 0 1 0
- Listening: 1 1 1 1
- Use of play, symbolic, creative, non-verbal and…: 1 1 1 1
- Going at the child's pace: 0
- Child-centred communication: 1 1 1 2

Being(ii): Personal qualities and emotional capacities – able to….

- Work with depth processes in the work not just…: 0 1 1
- Engage and build relationships with children: 0 1 1 1
- Help children feel safe and build trust with the worker: 0 1 2 2
- Be playful and creative: 1 1 1 1
- Be comfortable to work with children's strong feelings: 0 1
- Be caring and demonstrate concern for/to children: 1 1 1 1
- Be empathic: 1 1 2 2
- Be open and honest: 0 1 0
- Be sincere, genuine, congruent: 0 1 0
- Show own humanity - expressing enthusiasm,…: 0 1 2 2
- Recognise, manage and use one's own feelings: 1 1 2 2

Being(i): Values and ethical commitments to…

- Eliciting and taking into account children's views and…: 1 1 1 1
- Providing information and explanations: 0 1 1
- Maintaining confidentiality where possible: 0
- Providing uninterrupted time: 0
- Reliability and consistency: 0
- Respectfulness: 0
- Anti-oppressive practice (e.g. re. power, racism,…: 0 1 0 1
- Non-judgementalism: 1 1 0
- Children's competence and right to participate: 0

Knowing: Knowledge and understanding about…

- Effective models, approaches, methods and skills in…: 1 1 1 1
- How the social work role and task impacts upon…: 1 0 1 1
- The purpose of communication in context: 1 2 2 2
- How (adverse) experiences affect children's…: 0 1
- The impact on communication of any of the child's…: 0 1
- Child development: 1 1 1 2

Dimensions of Communicative Capability evidenced by Melody at each time point with score of 0, 1 or 2

■ Melody T1   ■ Melody T2   ■ Melody T3   ■ Melody T4

At T5 Melody commented further on her strong capacity for self-reflection, which she believed had enabled her to "identify the potential pitfalls within the work, of the personal impacting the professional". This did not mean that the "part of [her] that wants to rescue the children from having to go through that type of thing" had gone away, but that her increased self awareness and capacity to reflect and contain herself meant this enhanced her commitment to "offer children a safe space to kind of explore that stuff". This was an aspect of her life journey which required ongoing monitoring and development. When recently encountering a child who was very distressed at not being allowed to go home and live with her mother, Melody recognised that a rescuing 'voice' still came up inside of her that said:

> [Melody-T5] 'I just want to make it all better and so you can go back with your mum'. I almost felt like crying myself, it was so painful to see her so distressed.

At an earlier stage she would have struggled with this, but by T5, Melody had developed the capacity to contain both the child and herself:

> [Melody-T5] ...sit back, let there be silence, let there be crying, not having to fill it and allowing her to have that space.

Melody was able to recognise this to be the most appropriate response for a child who had not been heard or supported by other adults in her life. Reading on concepts such as 'containment' and 'psychological safety' (Schofield, 1998; Ruch, 2005) had helped Melody understand how to make such attuned responses. The counselling/interviewing skills sequence during the first term had also taught her that "you don't have to fill silences, they are important".   This would suggest that skills teaching which is underpinned by models such as Egan's (2001) can help enhance students' use of self, not just their competent use of techniques.

Melody's personal qualities and beliefs about what was important in work with children were in tune with a key approach taught by the programme, which was that the relationship formed with the child was central to the effectiveness of the work (Ruch *et al*., 2010). She continued to hold to this principle at T5 even when the restrictions of an over-proceduralised practice context challenged it. Supporting this personal ethical commitment where it exists already and instilling it where it does not is likely to be an important factor in facilitating high quality direct work and communication in the current context for practice. Nascent qualities and commitments were present already at T1,

generated not only from Melody's prior employment with children but also from personal traits and life experiences. These were then able to flourish, facilitated by programme learning opportunities.

Her engagement with the programme had caused Melody to confront some personal difficulties and unresolved earlier emotional conflicts which were not only provoking distress at the time but, she realised, might limit her capacity to use her 'self' safely in her work. This had led to Melody undertaking individual counselling through a university resource during the first year. She believed herself to have become more self-aware and emotionally available to children through this personal development. While counselling services are currently available at most HEIs, students often need support or guidance to recognise when these interventions might be necessary and to seek them out at the appropriate time. This is of particular importance in courses such as social work where unresolved issues risk adversely influencing students' engagement or performance. For example, encountering the anger, distress and fear of neglected or traumatised children can be so intense and unsettling that it can cause practitioners who lack emotional robustness to withdraw or distance themselves, while others become overwhelmed and lose their capacity to be containing and work effectively (Ferguson, 2011). In this MA programme, students participated in weekly or fortnightly group tutorials of 12 students which sought to provide a reflective space in which students could consider the relationship between their personal and professional selves and develop emotional resilience (Ward, 2008). The safe and containing tutorial space this offered was valued highly by Melody and supported her in recognising and addressing her need for counselling. It may be important for programmes with larger cohorts and lower levels of tutorial contact to consider how they would support their students in acknowledging and dealing with similar issues or conflicts which risk interfering with their practice.

Melody was shocked to see that her poorest CCCh-awareness scores were in the Being(i) domain (ethics/values) as this did not reflect her espoused commitment to ethical practice. Her interpretation was that her principles were embodied, influencing her work intuitively and unconsciously, rather than explicitly named. While that may have been the case, Melody's instinctive focus did seem to be more on care and understanding, whereas principles such as participation, oppression and rights were less in her awareness - she did not speak of them spontaneously at any of the time points. It seemed that Melody conceptualised and related to children almost solely as developmental and vulnerable 'becomings' rather than as also competent

and capable 'beings' (Uprichard, 2009). The programme did not seem to have successfully brought the complementary paradigm into Melody's awareness and, indeed, in her T4 questionnaire, Melody did not rate formal teaching on values as having been particularly influential. As the Being(i) dimensions were poorly covered by the students generally (see Chapter 7), this adds weight to the argument for course teaching on ethics and values to be boosted.

8.2.3   The most important contributors to Melody's learning

The learning opportunities or experiences which Melody named at both T3 and T4 as most important to her were broadly in line with those named by the cohort. The two she rated highest at T4 are here discussed as they illuminate some of the reasons why students might value such learning opportunities.

Pre-course work-based experience with children

Melody was employed pre-course as a teaching assistant for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and as a community family worker providing family support, transport for children in care and contact supervision. Both roles involved considerable face-to-face interactions with children. Discovering her aptitude for direct work led to Melody developing an unwavering determination to work with children post-qualification. Having a high level of experience had been particularly important to Melody as she was not a parent and had "always felt quite young doing this MA and young doing the job". It had supported her in building solid foundations of embodied proficiency in direct practice, which had, in turn, led to high self-efficacy ratings at T1.

Melody's T1 CCCh-awareness score, in contrast, was low. Examining which dimensions had been demonstrated at T1, it seemed that her prior experience had enabled Melody to develop, name and discuss in context a range of capabilities, particularly those which were generic in nature (such as a capacity to be empathic, caring and non-judgemental) and others which I have described earlier as generalist child-focused (such as knowledge about child development and a capacity to be playful which is useful in a range of settings with children). However, Melody was less aware at T1 of what I have called child-specialist applied capabilities (those primarily learned for and deployed within professional social work contexts), such as the use of particular tools, interviewing techniques, and how adverse prior experiences may affect children's communication. She found herself needing to learn much more about these during the programme.

Melody had also not been able to theoretically name in her T1 vignette responses many of the capabilities which she had learned intuitively pre-course, such as the importance of providing reliability and consistency, of building relationships and of helping children feel safe.   Melody remembered, however, how she had been able, in the early months of the programme, to inductively draw on and reflect upon her prior experiences within both curriculum-based and practice learning.   This had enabled her to learn much more quickly and was responsible, she thought, for her substantially higher CCCh-awareness score at T2.   Melody also believed it had supported her in developing competence in applied child-specialist social work capabilities so that her level of functioning became more advanced than that of some other students who had lacked her pre-course experience.

Practice learning experiences with children

Melody's clarity about future working intentions meant she had successfully argued for two placements in children's services settings. She emphasised at T5 the benefits provided by these complementary learning experiences, which enabled her to develop a high level of specialist competence by the end of the programme.   The focus in her first year placement was on engagement and communication with children rather than case management:

> [Melody-T5] *My first placement was with [an independent foster care provider] and whilst I didn't do a huge amount of adult social worky stuff, I did a lot of direct work with kids… Whether it was going on trips with them and just having those chats or actually doing life story work with children.*

This had provided exactly the transitional learning space that Melody needed, building on the basic generalist child-focused foundations provided by her pre-course experience into the applied child-specialist applied capabilities required for the social work role. Her second placement, in a statutory children's services Duty and Assessment Team where she was mainly carrying out initial assessments, reflected the national picture within statutory roles and settings of a focus on case management but too little direct contact with children (Horwath, 2010; Munro, 2011).   Because Melody already had child-focused skills in direct work, she was not disadvantaged by this and could make excellent use of learning about case management roles and tasks.

8.2.4 Concluding thoughts on Melody's learning journey

What stands out most from Melody's learning journey is the valuable role played by pre-course experience with children. This enabled Melody to build solid foundations of both generic and child-focused capabilities in communication at a basic level which meant she approached her learning in a confident and optimistic manner. Her experience instilled a familiarity with and an interest in children which motivated Melody to develop a personalised pathway for herself through the qualifying programme so that she could advance her basic child-focused capabilities in a less demanding setting in the first placement. Within the second placement she was then able to concentrate on developing these proficiencies within specialist social work roles and tasks with children which were more challenging and complex. With the ongoing commitment to the generic qualification, most students will continue to have only one placement in a children's service setting. HEIs will need to closely monitor the nature of practice experiences placements offer to ensure students are not disadvantaged by a lack of direct work opportunities with children. The type and level of practice learning experiences will also need to be carefully calibrated through the placement, so that less experienced students have some foundational child-focused learning opportunities earlier in the placement before they are expected to immediately deploy applied child-specialist capabilities in role.

Pre-course experience, then, can provide students with initial self-efficacy and with generalist child-focused capabilities in communication, but will not necessarily provide all the specialist knowledge, values and skills needed for the social work role, which require programme-related learning opportunities.

8.3   Sarah's learning journey: from terror to delight

8.3.1   Sarah's pattern of scores

Sarah was in the older age group (27-36) at the start of the programme. Although she had worked in social care for ten years prior to the course, this had been with adults so she had had no prior work-based experience with children to draw on when beginning the programme. She had also had no previous contact with children in her personal life. On entering the programme Sarah was 'quite interested' in working with children in the future, but had not yet decided if that were realistic and feasible. Her first year placement was also in an adult services setting so it was not until the second year of the programme that she finally had some contact with children, both in her placement (a statutory 'long-term' children's services team) and through the formal child observation.   By T4 Sarah had developed firm intentions to work with children post-qualification because of these experiences which she felt had developed her skills. Sarah has worked since qualification in a local authority looked-after children's team.

Sarah was one of the least confident students in the cohort, with scores of 3/10 at T1-3 (see Graph 14). By T4, like others who had lower self-efficacy when they started the course, her score had risen substantially to almost the cohort mean score.

Graph 14 - Sarah's self-efficacy scores
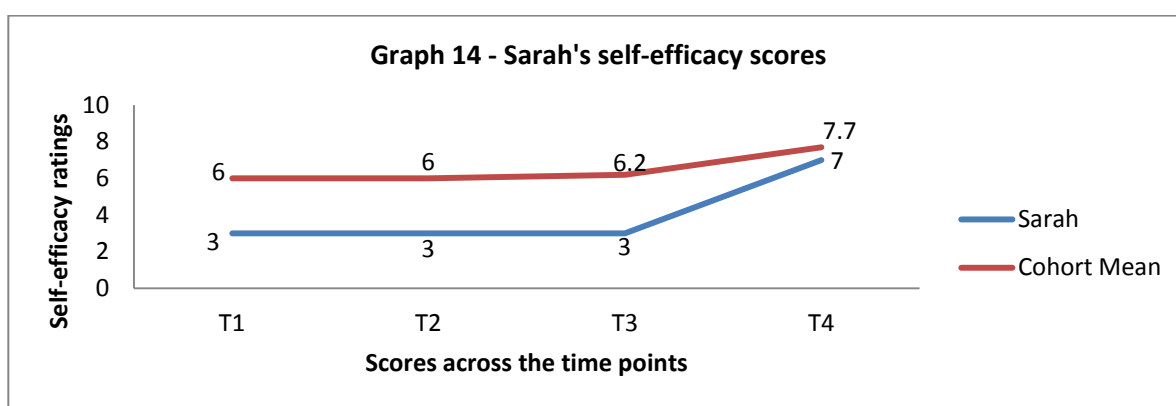
In contrast, Sarah's CCCh-awareness score (using the binary yes/no scale) was higher than average throughout (see Graph 15).   Her high T1 score indicated that her experience with adults had provided her with a solid foundation of learning. Her CCCh-awareness score fell slightly and then rose T2-3. This pattern was in line with the significant rise in the cohort mean score. However her score then also fell T3-4 almost back to baseline, which was not congruent with the mean.

Graph 15 - Sarah's CCCh-awareness scores using yes/no scale
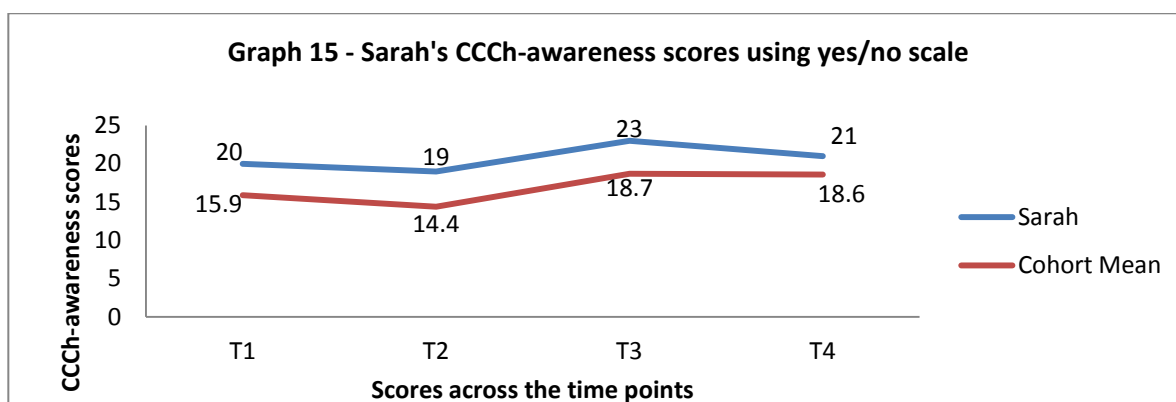
Chart 21 uses the more finely graded 0-2 scale to analyse Sarah's vignette responses. Unlike Melody, whose number of '2' scores increased considerably at later time points, Sarah's did not. This reinforces how Sarah's vignette responses showed little or no progression in the richness and depth of her vignette responses at T4 compared with T1. This is not the same as saying Sarah did not learn. As discussed in Section 5.7.3, her thin vignette responses at later time points seemed to be an artefact of the tool which made her feel anxious, disengaged and disheartened.

Chart 21 - Sarah's CCCh-awareness scores using 0-2 scale
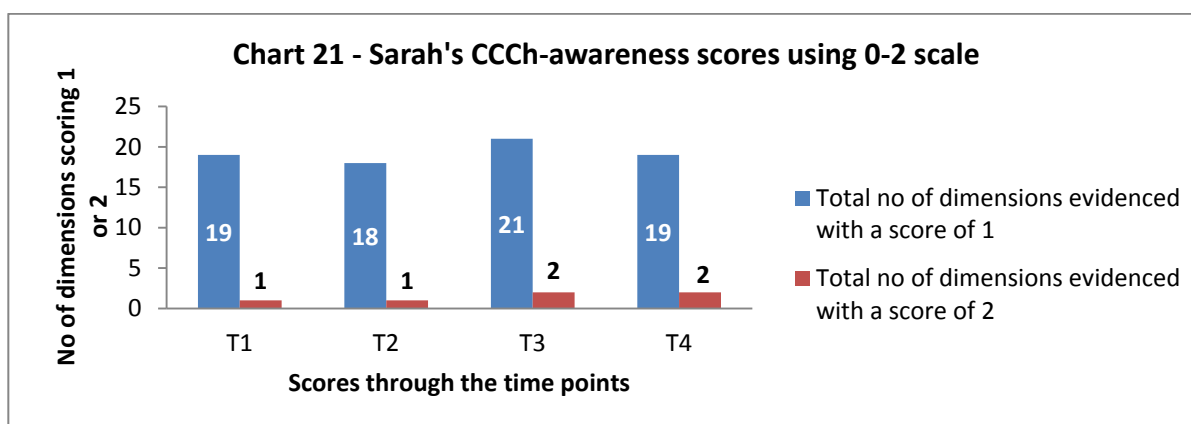
The CCCh dimensions which Sarah evidenced in her vignette responses were analysed using the 0-2 scale. In Chart 22 the scores are grouped according to whether the dimensions they referred to were in the domain of Knowing, Being(i) or (ii), or Doing. The scores are shown as percentages, as the number of dimensions in each domain varies. This chart indicates how, although Sarah had high scores, the dimensions she could evidence were not evenly spread across the CCCh taxonomy. Sarah's poorest scores were in the Being(i) category (ethics/values); her scores in this domain decreased considerably by the end of the programme. She was strong throughout in the domains of Knowing and Being(ii) (qualities/capacities), although there was a dip in Knowing at T2, in line with

the 'shaking up' of students' understanding which was discussed in Section 5.10. Sarah had low awareness of the Doing domain at T1-3 but this increased substantially by T4.

Chart 22 - Sarah's CCCh-awareness scores grouped by domain
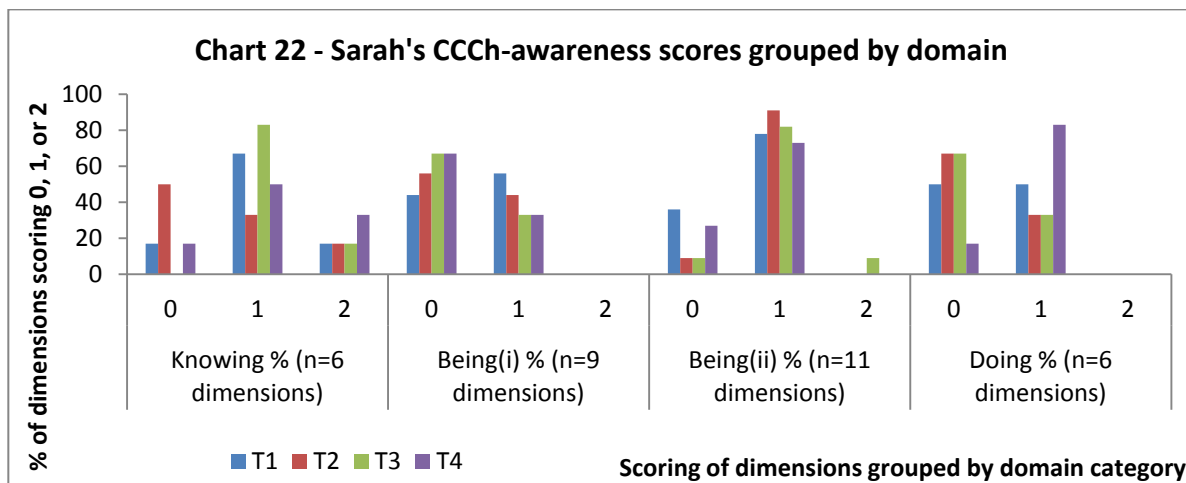
A more detailed analysis is shown in Chart 23 which indicates the score for each dimension at every time point. This indicates that Sarah was not only strong at T1 in the kind of generic capabilities for professional communication which she might have been expected to learn in her pre-course work in adult social care (for example, awareness of the importance of listening, openness, honesty and non-judgementalism), but that she had also been able to extrapolate inductively from this pre-existing knowledge base to evidence child-focused CCCh-awareness in the vignettes (such as child development, the importance of being playful and creative, effective models and approaches for working with children). Despite her lack of experience in children's services, she was also able to evidence the kind of child-specialist applied capabilities particularly associated with the social work role, including child development knowledge and how earlier adverse experiences and the social work context of the encounter might interfere children's capacity to communicate.

This suggests that extensive experience in adults' service services can offer a rich source of experiential learning. However, what it did not do was build Sarah's self-efficacy. Starting the programme without proven proficiency in embodied co-present communication with children left her feeling that professional work with children was "incredibly daunting".

Chart 23 - Dimensions evidenced by Sarah

Doing: Skills and techniques – Proficient in

- Using a variety of tools (e.g. ecomaps) — 0 1 1
- Interviewing techniques — 0 1 0
- Listening — 1 1 0 1
- Use of play, symbolic, creative, non-verbal and… — 1 0 1 1
- Going at the child's pace — 0 1
- Child-centred communication — 1 1 1 1

Being(ii): Personal qualities and emotional capacities – able to….

- Work with depth processes in the work not just… — 0 1 1
- Engage and build relationships with children — 1 1 1 1
- Help children feel safe and build trust with the worker — 1 1 1 1
- Be playful and creative — 1 1 1 1
- Be comfortable to work with children's strong feelings — 0 1 2 0
- Be caring and demonstrate concern for/to children — 1 1 1 1
- Be empathic — 0 1 0
- Be open and honest — 1 1 1 1
- Be sincere, genuine, congruent — 0 1 1 0
- Show own humanity - expressing enthusiasm, warmth,… — 1 1 1 1
- Recognise, manage and use one's own feelings — 1 1 1 1

Being(i): Values and ethical commitments to…

- Eliciting and taking into account children's views and… — 1 1 1 1
- Providing information and explanations — 1 1 1 1
- Maintaining confidentiality where possible — 0
- Providing uninterrupted time — 0
- Reliability and consistency — 1 1 1 1
- Respectfulness — 1 0
- Anti-oppressive practice (e.g. re. power, racism,… — 0
- Non-judgementalism — 1 1 0
- Children's competence and right to participate — 0

Knowing: Knowledge and understanding about…

- Effective models, approaches, methods and skills in… — 1 0 1 1
- How the social work role and task impacts upon… — 1 1 1 1
- The purpose of communication in context — 1 1 2 2
- How (adverse) experiences affect children's… — 2 2 1 2
- The impact on communication of any of the child's… — 0 1 0
- Child development — 1 0 1 1

Legend:
- Sarah T1
- Sarah T2
- Sarah T3
- Sarah T4

Dimensions of Communicative Capability evidenced by Sarah at each time point with scores of 0, 1 or 2

Sarah had believed her knowledge and understanding about children to be similarly low and was

very surprised to learn at T5 how high her vignette scores had been. She suggested it might have been helpful to have received feedback on her high scores at the time as this might have enhanced her self-efficacy and reduced her fear and uncertainty.

8.3.2   Key contributors to learning

At T5 Sarah described two clusters of learning opportunities as having had the most beneficial influence on her learning through the programme. These are now outlined.

The sub-module on communication with children

Lacking pre-course experience with children, Sarah relied on the training offered by the three-session sub-module on communication with children to provide her with a sufficient foundation in child-focused proficiencies so that she might then develop these towards child-specialist applied capabilities within her second-year children's services placement. She felt the sub-module had provided her not only with strategies and theoretical approaches for work with children but had helped contextualise the purposefulness of direct work:

> [Sarah-T5] 'Cos without that I would just be running around with children playing noughts and crosses and not really getting anywhere!

The experiential role plays had perhaps been the most significant contributor to her growing sense that she might be able to work effectively with children in the future:

> [Sarah-T5] … really helpful in terms of trying to get at what it might feel like to work with a child. I can remember at the time thinking 'this is my one opportunity to be able to try and get that experience'.

This was primarily because role-playing herself as a child had helped put Sarah in touch with the world of children and demystified the process of how to communicate with them:

> [Sarah-T5] I really enjoyed that kind of connecting with what it's like my experience was as a child. It doesn't actually feel like it's that long ago and thinking about children, empathising with a child's experience, I suppose, was really helpful. And about how actually you don't need to have masses of qualifications to be able to just play with a child. And the same kind of principles and ethics around working with adults apply to children, it's just in a different context … or not within a different context but you translate that differently depending on the age of a child maybe. I was complicating the idea of communicating, I think.

At T5 Sarah was still reflecting on her own childhood experiences to learn inductively about what might count as good communication and engagement in social work practice:

> [Sarah-T5] *The more I work with children the more I think about the adults that were around in my life when I was a child, and what made me warm to them, what made me feel comfortable around that and what didn't. It's not rocket science but there's some really basic stuff that goes on there about 'okay, why did I really like that person when I was a child?', and wanting to recreate that when I'm with children.*

The role-plays had helped Sarah realise that such work could be pleasurable. She was continuing to develop her own capacity for playfulness and ability to 'decentre from an adult to a child perspective' more readily (Colton *et al.*, 2001):

> [Sarah-T5] *I really enjoy that part of myself, and that reconnection with fun and just thinking actually there could be pleasurable moments in talking and communicating with children…I think some of my most constructive experiences with children to date professionally have been when we've got into the zone together and are just really enjoying each other. I've not necessarily been a child in that experience but I've really enjoyed experiencing their child-ness.*

Direct experience with children in placement

As Sarah's first year placement was in an adult services setting, her fears about her competence in direct practice persisted well into the second year of the programme:

> [Sarah-T5] *My second placement was working in a children and family team. I was bricking it before, absolutely bricking it, I can remember being absolutely rubbishy scared about the damage I'd inflict on small children!*

It was only by the end of the longer second placement in a statutory children and families team (T4) that her self-efficacy rose and she felt sure she could work with children post-qualification. Unfortunately, the opportunities for direct practice in placement had not been as rich as she needed them to be to really develop her capabilities:

> [Sarah-T5] *I probably felt more confident about children after that [second] placement but not hugely more confident and I certainly didn't feel a lot more experienced. I felt like I understood a lot more about what the process might mean for a child but my hands-on experience of working with children hadn't developed a huge amount I would say…..it's only now after 18 months' experience of really working a lot with children [post-qualification] that I get how little time I spent with children in my second placement. But at the time, because I had no experience working with children, any experience of children I think I thought at that point in time it was a lot.*

So, while the programme met many of Sarah's learning needs, it was really only the beginning of her development as an effective communicator with children. It had enabled Sarah to start identifying where her gaps in capability were so that she could continue to plug them post-qualification:

> *[Sarah-T5] I was aware that I was under-skilled but I kind of knew the areas, I could identify where I was under-skilled, there was a developmental pathway for me I suppose…. What I did know from the course was what I didn't know, and that was extremely helpful, so I knew what good practice with children meant theoretically, and that has underpinned my work so far.*

Taking stock, 14 months into practice, Sarah was pleased to recognise that she had made much progress in both her confidence and proficiency:

> *[Sarah-T5] In some respects I feel very differently now …. I don't get that sense of 'arrgh, I'm talking to a child now!' …So yeah, I think I've grown in confidence having thought more about that, and also from just having hands-on experience of working with lots of different children….experiences being terrible at times and really good at times and that being okay, and not feeling as if I'm like I'm with a small person and I don't know what to do now. That disabling kind of fear that I think that I probably had when I first started.*

In fact Sarah had become someone who found it easier and more congruent to communicate with children than with adult service users and carers:

> *[Sarah-T5] Actually probably in some respects I feel more confident now talking with children than I do with adults because… it's not necessarily simpler but you can get to somewhere sometimes more quickly perhaps…. even when there are loads of layers with a child there's still also that fundamental play thing going on so you can connect to both almost… with an adult play isn't part of their vocabulary necessarily so you've got all these layers to get through.*

8.3.3   Sarah's learning style

Sarah's preferential learning style was inductive and experiential (Coffield *et al*, 2004). She did not find propositional child development knowledge from the formal teaching sessions or follow-up reading helpful as she could not make sense of children in the abstract. Instead she learned best from what she observed and what she was engaged in and tailored her approach to the individual child within an interpersonal, unique engagement, on the basis of who the child was, rather than on preconceived expectations and assumptions:

> *[Sarah-T5] No. I have never gone into and inspected the child and thought 'they're this age' and thought about - afterwards I have and thought 'why have they said that', or 'would they have been able to have done X, Y or Z?'…. I've been able to go in and just do stuff with the child and then come away.*

A theoretical exercise, such as the vignettes, was perhaps less likely to uncover such strengths:

> *[Sarah-T5] No. 'Cos I think each of my children … I don't know … they are complete individuals and I could write until the sun goes down, if you gave me those now I could write huge essays, but without knowing an individual child I found it really difficult to picture a child to think what their experience would be like… I couldn't make up a child at this point in time, I couldn't see a child in my head to think about how they would be feeling. I could think about my own experience but then it didn't gel with the case study.*

The experiential child observation sequence consequently offered a particularly helpful source of learning to Sarah about how children behave and communicative. It offered a safe and reflective opportunity to engage with a child's experience through Being rather than Doing:

> *[Sarah-T5] …it was just really helpful being able to be around a child in an okay way, there weren't alarm bells ringing or children in tears or anything like that… I could feel safe because I wasn't having to directly face that child in the same way, or those uncomfortable moments around that child when he wanted to talk to me or whatever… that really helped my confidence both in terms of entering a child's world and my reaction to being in that child's world and what that meant for me, and how I saw that child and what was going through my head. But it was a paced, measured way, it wasn't you were thrown to a situation and someone's observing you with a child and suddenly you can't do anything…*

This was particularly useful to Sarah because she had not previously had such a window into children's ordinary lives. It enabled her to deconstruct some of her preconceptions about what it means to be a child and also to understand more about children's power position *vis-a-vis* adults in general and professionals in particular.

8.3.4   Concluding thoughts on Sarah's learning journey

Sarah's low self-efficacy, derived from her lack of pre-course experience with children, had been extremely unhelpful as it prevented her from recognising the transferability of her pre-existing capabilities and made her fearful of practice with children. Gaining even a small amount of face-to-face contact with children prior to the programme would have eased this terror. It would also have meant that she could have learned some of the basics of child-focused communication in a more relaxed setting rather than at the same time as developing the applied child-specialist capabilities needed for the social work role.

Sarah's primary learning mode was experiential and inductive. Ingesting propositional knowledge through didactic teaching was much less useful for her than for some other students. This reinforces the importance of programmes offering a variety of pedagogical strategies if all learning styles are to

be met. While Sarah had a reasonable amount of self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness by the end of the programme, she clearly felt herself at the point of qualification to still be at an early stage in her learning journey. The learning opportunities provided in the first year or so of qualified practice, such as that offered by the NQSW programme and Consolidation module of the PQ Specialist Award, are clearly crucial for students like her.

8.4   Conclusions established by an analysis of learning journeys

These two case analyses illustrate particular types of student on this qualifying MA programme. Caution must be expressed here regarding generalisability due to the small sample of students within one HEI from which they are drawn, which may not be representative of others. In particular, as Masters students, they began the programme ready primed for independent study at a high academic level. They were also both white and UK born with English as their first language. With these caveats in mind, a number of points have been drawn out which relate to the research question for this thesis.

Again it can be seen how the level of pre-course experience with children is influential in several, potentially contrasting, ways. Some students with a high level of prior work-based experience with children may begin qualifying training with high self-efficacy based on proven proficiency in direct practice. The absence of such experience can, by contrast, undermine self-efficacy, enjoyment of learning and motivation for future working with children. This appears to be the case even if a student has had substantial pre-course experience with adult service users.   Encouraging all students to have at least some contact with children prior to a programme either professionally or personally should not be discounted as students will then be able to reflect on what concepts and research findings mean in the context of embodied interactions and engagement.

In the absence of such prior child-focused experience, alternative and additional strategies may be beneficial. For students with pre-course experience in adults' settings, opportunities could be provided for students to 'mine' this experience for the generic capabilities it enabled them to develop and to recognise the transferability of these to practice with children. As not all programmes include prior experience as an admissions requirement, drawing on generalist experience of communication with other adults in their personal lives should also be considered. All students were children once and had experience of communication with other children during

that stage of their lives. This experience might similarly be mined, either through critical reflection or experiential role play exercises which enable students to draw on their personal experience of having been a child to inductively develop insights. A safe learning space needs to be created for such exercises as they can be exposing and emotionally unsettling, particularly if students' childhoods were traumatic, abusive or neglectful, or if there are/were significant losses of key figures. Formal child observation exercises can also provide a window into the lives and ways of children, without the simultaneous challenge of having to 'do something' with that child.

Students entering a programme without experience of children would particularly benefit from opportunities to develop a foundation of basic child-focused capabilities at an earlier stage. Many statutory placements offer learning opportunities focused on case management and students may find themselves having to encounter children in complex contexts before they have built up basic child-focused proficiencies in communication and engagement. Because Melody already had these, she could make excellent use in placement of learning about case management roles and tasks. For other students, such as Sarah, this can be deeply problematic. Students may be too busy focusing on administrative tasks in a statutory team to spend very much time getting to know the children with whom they are working. They may then be trying to develop the capabilities required for more advanced tasks (such as undertaking assessments) before they have even begun to make sense of the different ways children communicate. Without such foundations students might find themselves floundering in placement and perhaps even avoiding direct contact with children.

Where students are clear that they want to work with children in the future, there may be an argument for providing two placements in children's service settings, such as Melody received, where the first enables basic, child-focused proficiencies to be established which can be advanced in the second placement. This transgresses the fundamental principle of retaining a generic training, however (Trevithick, 2011). This staged approach could still be followed successfully even with a single children's services placement, however, if the practice educator ensures that opportunities for basic engagement and communication are provided in the earlier stages of the placement before more demanding tasks are allocated. Perhaps more important is to ensure that those wishing to work with children in the future undertake child observations where they have no pre-course experience, and that their second, longer, placement is in a children's services setting.

The case analyses enabled a real essence of these two students to emerge, highlighting their strengths and learning needs in a way that could not be easily surfaced through the thematic analysis. Both students appeared to be warm, genuine and open, with a capacity and a commitment to form trusted relationships with children, and use their 'self' in their practice. However, their trajectories of learning and development, and what they needed the course to provide, were very different. Ideally students, at qualification, should be able to draw on the full range of Knowing, Being, and Doing capabilities so they can provide the most appropriate responses required by children with diverse needs, characteristics, desires and experiences. Qualifying programmes need to be able to support students in 'filling in the gaps' so that they become as well-rounded a practitioner as it is possible for them to be. A somewhat personalised approach within programmes may be necessary to achieve this. This would include use of a range of pedagogical strategies to meet all learning styles, an early audit of capabilities to promote transferability of learning, and tailoring of placements to meet specific learning needs and aspirations, rather than simply basic requirements.

9   Conclusion

9.1   The potential contribution of this thesis

Because of shortcomings in the quality of social workers' communication with children and uncertainty about the extent to which qualifying programmes prepare students for this demanding and complex aspect of their practice, this thesis sets out to improve practice (and ultimately the experiences of, and outcomes for, children) both directly, through providing guidance on good practice, and indirectly, through enhancing the effectiveness of qualifying training.

I have sought to make a direct contribution to social work practice through creating a taxonomy of Communicative Capabilities (CCCh), which provides a framework of the knowledge, skills, values, ethical commitments, personal qualities and emotional capacities practitioners need for effective communication across the range of social work roles and tasks with children. Developing and presenting this framework through a book chapter (Lefevre, 2008b), book (Lefevre, 2010a) and conference papers (see Appendix 1) has enabled me to offer practitioners and students an evidence-informed model to underpin and develop their work. Reviews of my publications in key journals (Christopherson, 2008; Corrigan, 2008; Cooper, 2011) suggest that these contributions to practice are viewed as helpful by the discipline and profession.

Through interrogating the empirical research carried out for this thesis in the light of theories and research about teaching and learning of communication with children, I have sought to enhance understanding about the best ways to structure and focus qualifying training. The CCCh taxonomy can promote coherent and comprehensive inclusion of effective approaches to learning about the key principles for communication with children across the full qualifying curriculum. The dissemination of earlier ideas formed with colleagues through workshops and conference papers (see Appendix 1) has already offered social work educators some relatively robust principles to underpin teaching and learning. Representatives from the Department of Health, GSCC, Social Work Taskforce and Reform Board have discussed these issues with me in their attempts to develop the qualifying curriculum and my work with the Reform Board is ongoing (see Section 9.4).

Through this empirical work a number of factors and processes have been tentatively identified which illuminate some of the ways in which students learn to become effective communicators with

children. Findings have been discussed in depth in the conclusions to Chapters 5-8 and will be summarised in Section 9.2 within a provisional modelling of the teaching and learning process. Methodological challenges and the limitations of the approach taken are discussed in Section 9.3.

Using the CCCh taxonomy as an analytical framework for this empirical work has enabled me to revise it to improve its utility and quality. To better respond to the 'fuzzy boundaries' between categories, some CCCh dimensions have been streamlined and others more clearly delineated. The Being (i) and (ii) sub-domains have now been amalgamated as the distinctions were creating some false dichotomies. *Openness and honesty* could have conceivably belonged to both sub-domains, for example. Some dimensions had been previously placed solely in one category but have now been expanded and repositioned to appear additionally in another, where the single categorisation did not fully reflect its nature. For example, *Engage and build relationships with children* was previously positioned solely in Being due to its embodiment as an ethical commitment, but this neglected the applied aspect of relational practice, so in the revised taxonomy *Working in a relationship-based manner* now additionally appears as a Doing category. To make the taxonomy more user-friendly, brief headline titles for each dimension have now been provided with additional accompanying descriptors. The revised taxonomy is shown as Appendix 11. The right-hand column shows how the CCCh dimensions have been mapped to the Reform Board's draft outcome statements at qualifying level (SWRB, 2011) for the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). Appendix 12 shows my detailed mapping of the CCCh dimensions to the PCF outcome statements.

9.2   Modelling the learning process

Drawing on these empirical findings, on evidence for effective teaching and learning approaches, and on plans for social work education reform (SWRB, 2010b), I have formed a provisional modelling of a cyclical process in the teaching and learning about communication with children for social work practice (see Figure 3). This builds on Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Figure 2 in Section 3.4.3) to both reflect and to shape effective programme structures, curriculum content and pedagogical methods. I would suggest that three learning cycles occur in developing first generic, then child-focused, then applied child-specialist capabilities for communication with children over the course of a qualifying training. Each cycle will be considered in turn.

Figure 3 Cyclical process of learning to communicate with children

```
                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │   Initial Concrete experience│
                    │   pre-course, generalist  OR │
     ┌──────────────│   Focused experimentation    │──────────┐
     │              │   developing generic → child-│          │
┌──────────────┐    │   focused → specialist applied│   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Planning/    │    │   CCCh  (Doing)              │   │ Critical reflection   │
│ revising     │    └──────────────────────────────┘   │ and self-appraisal    │
│ personalised │                                       │ promoting inductive   │
│ learning     │                                       │ observations about    │
│ journey      │                                       │ communication         │
└──────────────┘                                       │ processes and         │
     ▲                                                  │ individual strengths  │
     │                                                  │ (Knowing)             │
┌──────────────┐                                       └──────────────────────┘
│ Self-appraisal│                                                │
│ against CCCh  │                                       ┌──────────────────────┐
│ taxonomy and  │                                       │ Theoretical input     │
│ PCF           │                                       │ Encounter with        │
└──────────────┘                                       │ theory/ research      │
     ▲                                                  │ (Knowing)             │
┌──────────────┐                                       └──────────────────────┘
│ Integration  │                                                │
│ and          │                                       ┌──────────────────────┐
│ consolidation│                                       │ Abstract              │
│ of learning: │                                       │ conceptualisation     │
│ Assignments  │                                       │ Name and interpret    │
│ and supervised│                                      │ inductive observations│
│ practice     │                                       │ (Knowing)             │
└──────────────┘                                       └──────────────────────┘
     ▲                                                           │
┌──────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Observational│          │ Experimentation with │
│ assessment   │◄─────────│ embodied course      │
│ in HEI and   │          │ learning opportunities│
│ placement    │          │ to promote           │
└──────────────┘          │ Being and Doing      │
                          └──────────────────────┘
```

9.2.1   Cycle 1: developing generic capabilities

The learning cycle for students appears to begin with **initial pre-course concrete experience of communication** which comes from at least two of five possible sources. All students come to social work training with *experience in adulthood of engaging, interacting and communicating in their personal lives with other adults.* This will include adults with a range of abilities, characteristics and interactional styles and in a range of contexts, for example: with adults with very high or low levels of cognitive functioning, or conditions such as aphasia; within numerous roles and settings and with

whom a variety of emotional and power relations exist (for example, as a family member, lover, friend, or as a patient of health professionals); and where either they or the other person might have been experiencing any one of a number of mood states (for example, excitement, distress or anger). Through this experience all students will have developed adult-focused proficiencies to either a basic or more highly developed extent depending on the way this experience has been reflected on and made use of.

All social work students also have prior experience of having been a child, and having engaged, interacted and *communicated with other children in their childhood*. Learning how to negotiate relationships, how to name and convey inner feelings and experiences, hopes, fears and intentions appropriately to other children, and how to read their communication is a primary childhood learning task, occurring largely in an experiential, interactional way, drawing on the 'hundred languages of childhood' (Edwards *et al*, 1993). As all children will have also had experience of communicating with adults in positions of authority, such as health and education professionals (even though few will have communicated with social workers themselves), this will have provided additional experience of negotiation of power relations. Some basic child-focused proficiencies might have been developed through these means.

Some students will also enter social work training having had *experience as adults of communication with children in their personal lives*, for example as a parent, older sibling, aunt/uncle, or with the children of friends or neighbours and others will have had *pre-course work-based experience with children.* These experiences will have enabled additional generalist child-focused proficiencies to develop, for example, how to communicate through play and activities, or tailoring language to the child's cognitive level.

These five routes offer rich sources of experiential learning which build on and might be transferable to applied social work roles and tasks with children. Testing for basic generalist proficiency in embodied communication, or the potential for this, is one way of determining suitability for social work training at the admissions stage. Indeed, group interviews have been recommended for inclusion in the admissions process as standard by the Reform Board as this facilitates appraisal of how students interact and engage with interviewers and other interviewees (SWRB, 2010b). Just as improvements have been made in including children on interview panels for local authority social

work posts (DCSF, 2008), involving children in social work admissions interviews must also be more robustly implemented.

Some students may be aware of the extent to which pre-course experience has enabled them to develop competence and, consequently, have moderate to high levels of self-efficacy. Other students may be less aware, or may not appreciate how far communicative experience with adults offers transferable proficiencies. For some students, the level of proficiency at entry may be only basic but, for others, could be more advanced, for example, where there has been extensive pre-course work-based experience in social care settings involving relevant in-service training, such as in play work, interviewing skills or basic counselling. To recognise existing proficiency and translate pre-course concrete experience into learning, a process of **critical reflection and self-appraisal** early in the programme is necessary to promote inductive observations about communication processes and self-audit of individual strengths.

In order to develop Knowing about communication with children, some form of **theoretical input** tends to be necessary. In the first cycle of learning (possibly equating to year 1 of an undergraduate programme, or the first term of an MA, and shown in Figure 4) it is proposed that the focus would be on building on pre-course generalist communication skills to develop generic communicative capabilities for social work. Through didactic input, guided reading and/or problem-based learning approaches on effective communication methods, students may be helped to form **abstract conceptualisations,** where earlier inductive learning is named and recognised, and new ideas generated for future practice.

Participatory, experiential learning opportunities for **initial experimentation** could then be offered to develop students' generic Being and Doing capabilities. For Doing, skills acquisition could be taught behaviourally, such as students interviewing each other about a real issue in their lives, or interviewing service-user educators either in real or role-play scenarios (Moss *et al*, 2007). Feedback could be provided through videoing, and observations/assessment from peers, tutors or service-user educators. Being might be taught through the capability-building approaches discussed in Chapter 3, including tutor modelling of a facilitating environment and students exploring their use of self within the context of a trusted tutor group (Ward, 2008). Learning could then be **consolidated and integrated** through a related assignment, such as one which requires reflective commentary on the videoed interchanges in the skills-acquisition sequence. To ensure continuity and sustenance of

learning into future placements, practice educators could be taught/reminded about the same skills approaches and Being Capabilities so that these will be reinforced in supervision and assessed in direct observations.

Figure 4 Cycle 1: developing generic capabilities

Pre-course generalist concrete experience				
Embodied engagements, interactions and communications with adults and/or children during prior personal and work-based experiences as an adult and child, across range of emotions/abilities				
As a child, learning to communicate with other humans	As an adult, learning to communicate with children in personal life	In work-based contexts learning to communicate with child service users	In work-based contexts learning to communicate with adult service users	As an adult, learning to communicate in range of personal life contexts

Admissions interviews
Testing of basic generalist proficiencies in embodied communication through interacting with interviewers and other interviewees

Cycle 1 of qualifying training: from generalist to generic
Prior to assessment of readiness to practice in first placement
Learning from and consolidating pre-course generalist proficiencies in communication and developing generic capabilities for communication

Critical reflection on prior generalist experience and self-appraisal
Guided reflection with tutors on pre-course generalist experience of communication leads to inductive sense making and interpretation of previous events, processes and relationships in communication

Encounter with theory/research (developing *Knowing*)
Didactic input of theoretical models and research findings relevant to generic communication across range of modules: including core social work values, anti-oppressive practice, principles of partnership and participation additional communication needs, role played by culture and habitus.

Initial abstract conceptualisation of experiential learning (developing *Knowing*)
Naming and situating what was learned experientially. Development of ideas for future testing in communication.

Initial experimentation: developing *Being* and *Doing*
through embodied, experiential, participatory techniques and the 'matching principle'

Developing *Doing*	Developing *Being*
Development of generic skills and techniques taught behaviourally to at least basic level. **Didactic input on approaches**: including informing, explaining, interviewing techniques, tailoring communication to style and needs of service user. → **Active experimentation** including skills lab practice of techniques with course peers and/or service user educators, with feedback on performance. → **Observation, reflection and feedback** from	Ongoing through programme, developing in complexity and intensity. → Tutor **modelling** of facilitating environment (containment, safety and appropriate emotional responses) and core values (matching principle) → **Problem-based learning** (matching principle) to a) model empowerment/participatory practice; b) develop interpersonal skills and ethical approaches in action. → **Reflection** Self-exploration in safe and trusted group environment → **Naming and theorising (abstract conceptualisation):** Tutor naming of group processes, personal qualities , emotional

peers/tutors/ service users. Students to have videos of their own interactions to observe and learn from → Assignment brings together abstract conceptualisation	capacities, values, ethics which are modelled by staff and students. →**Ongoing experimentation**: Development of use of self (Being) through performance in seminar groups (and later in placement)

Consolidation and integration of learning
1. Assignment: reflection on performance in skills experiments (Doing), e.g. critical appraisal of interviewing, naming skills and concepts, tying in what has been learned about Being
2. Practice educators to be inducted in the same skills approaches and reminded about Being Capabilities so that these will be explored/ reinforced in supervision and assessed in direct observations in future placements

Assessment of readiness for practice in first placement
Self-appraisal of existing proficiencies and capabilities against CCCh taxonomy and PCF.
Emphasis on transferability of learning → Building realistic self efficacy

Planning personalised learning journey to meet both CCC requirements and personal goals
Identifying focus for practice learning placements (Adult followed by child placement? Need for more basic service user experience first?); focus of future structured observation (with adult or child?) need for any personal development; and self-directed study

Cycle 2

At the end of the first cycle (possibly coinciding with the end of first year BA/first term MA), students would be **assessed for their readiness for practice** in their forthcoming first placement (this is a professional requirement). The video or assignment related to communication skills could provide a formal measure towards this process and students could be encouraged to **self-appraise** their level of proficiency and capability against the CCCh taxonomy, mapped against the PCF in Table 13. Students should then actively **plan a personalised learning journey** which will enable them to meet both CCCh requirements and personal goals. Specifically, they would need to determine where their aspirations for future practice seem to lie. Those who intended to work in children's services post-qualification would be best advised to undertake their second, longer placement in that setting, with a shorter adults' services placement in Cycle 2 of the learning journey, and vice versa. The level of pre-course experience with children and adults in different kinds of personal and work-based settings should also guide the nature of direct practice learning opportunities in placement. For example, students entering a children's services placement with little or no pre-course experience of children, would need to begin with basic experience of communication and engagement with children to develop initial skills and self-efficacy. This should also guide whether any future

structured observation exercises (Trowell & Paton, 1998) are conducted with an adult or child observee.

9.2.2   Cycle 2: developing child-focused capabilities

The second cycle of learning, as envisioned, would enable students to consolidate generic capabilities developed in the first cycle and begin to develop child-focused capabilities. There are four key aspects of learning in Cycle 2 which are anticipated to develop these in a dynamic and interactional manner: didactic input on child-focused knowledge (Knowing), structured child (or adult) observation (Knowing and Being), child-focused skills acquisition (Doing), and experimentation with new learning in placement. Self-appraisal and observational assessment against the PCF would lead to a revision of the personal learning plan prior to Cycle 3.

The chronological positioning of learning and teaching activities relating to the development of child-focused learning may have alternatively been concurrent to Cycle 1 rather than 2 (for example, during the first year of an undergraduate degree, or first term of Masters), but the learning process would still be as presented here, with the expectation that generic proficiencies would be taught/learned prior to child-focused ones.

The mapping of Cycle 2 in Figure 5 is predicated on the planned learning journey of a student who wishes to work in children's services in the future. The first, shorter, placement would consequently be planned as taking place in adults' services. Structured observations have been included as the literature set out in Chapter 3 indicates that a range of useful learning outcomes may be supported. Given that the Reform Board is proposing a reduction of practice learning days from 200 to 170, with the remaining 30 expected to form some kind of 'skills curriculum', observations could be positioned during this learning space. The student's personalised learning plan will determine whether the observation should be with a child or adult. It is assumed that most students with future intentions of working with children will observe a child in a family setting or social context such as a school, depending on prior experience of these. However, those with substantial pre-course experience of children might choose to observe an adult to broaden their awareness.

Adult-focused capabilities would also be developed in a concurrent cycle, but are not discussed here as they are not the focus of this thesis. The assumption is that those intending to work in adults'

settings in the future would undertake their child placement first. They might choose to observe a child, however, to ensure breadth of learning.

Figure 5   Cycle 2: developing child-focused capabilities

End of Cycle 1

Cycle 2 of qualifying training
Consolidating generic capabilities and developing child-focused capabilities
(1st Placement and child-focused and adult-focused teaching likely to run concurrently with iterative, interactive learning from each)

Practice Learning Opportunities with children in first placement

Active experimentation with service users (using earlier learning provides further **concrete experience**
→ **Reflection: Learning from placement experiences:** Inductive learning in supervision, making sense of communication in practice, interpreting what has occurred and understanding the relationships between people, processes, emotions and events
→ **Abstract conceptualisation** on placement learning through naming processes with practice educator and 'recall' days or 'theory-to-practice' seminars with academic staff. Critical reflection on transferability of learning from structured observation and child-focused (or adult-focused) teaching.
→ **Active experimentation:** Trying out new approaches in direct practice with service users throughout placement on basis of ongoing learning, including taught curriculum .
Ensure opportunities for **basic engagement and communication** with children come first if student lacks pre-course experience.
→ **Observation of direct practice and feedback f**rom practice educator
→ **Integration and consolidation of learning** through supervision and practice focused assignments
→ **Self-appraisal** against CCCh in placement assessment

Knowing
Didactic input through programme on child-focused capabilities
(separate input across programme with adult focus)

Taught through a range of modules, requiring children's lead for coherence and integration
- Child development (human growth and development)
- Children's social worlds (social relations)
- Children's participation (law & policy
- Theoretical models and research findings on most effective approaches for working with children, linking with skills practice
- Impact on communication of children's adverse experiences, insecure attachment.
- Meaning of child-centredness.

Doing and *Being*
Focused teaching sequence on child-focused skills and techniques (separate sequence with adult focus)
(possibly part of 30 days skills curriculum)
Concrete experience
i) role-playing oneself as a child
ii) as an adult communicating with peers role-playing children.
→ **Being** - Developing own playfulness and creativity and learning about the self
→ **Doing - Active experimentation:**
Skills-lab practice of techniques of play, techniques, tools and approaches with other students and possibly with service-user educators. Tailoring information, explanations, explorations and interventions to individuals, using 'hundred languages of childhood'.
→ **Observation and feedback f**rom peers/tutors/service users
→ **Consolidation and integration of learning**

Being and *Knowing*
Structured observation of child
(or adult, depending on pre-course experience and future intentions)

Concrete experience of observing
→ Internal **reflection** on self as an observer, building awareness of own affective responses, developing self-containment.
→ Tutor-led seminar discussions and guided reading making links to theoretical perspectives enables **abstract conceptualisations** to be formed**:**
→ learning about children (or adults) and how they communicate and engage.
→ **Active experimentation**
Trying out new approaches in direct practice in placement.

Teaching the practice educators the same skills approaches so that they will reinforce these in placement and assess students' direct practice in them.	→ **Consolidation and integration of learning:** Assignment which includes what has been learned about the self as an observer, about children (or adults) and about communication

Re-appraisal against the taxonomy: revision/refinement of personalised learning journey to guide direction of learning in final placement (planning)

Cycle 3

9.2.3   Cycle 3: developing applied child-specialist capabilities

The third cycle (Figure 6) would enable both generic and child-focused proficiencies to be developed towards applied specialist capabilities for social work practice with children to at least a basic level. Advancing these would then be the role of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) for NQSWs (SWRB, 2010b). Concrete experience and active experimentation in placement, with reflective learning in supervision, and observational assessment, would be supplemented by ongoing taught input in the HEI, to include the challenges of communication in social work contexts (Knowing) and additional models and methods skills (Doing). Ongoing development of use of self in the HEI and placement (Being) would be reinforced by tutors and practice educators naming these processes so that they remain in students' conscious awareness. Students would be re-appraised at the end of the programme against the PCF (to which the CCCh taxonomy has been mapped – see Appendix 11) so that transferability of proficiency and future learning needs can be identified for the ASYE.

Figure 6   Cycle 3: developing child- specialist applied capabilities

End of Cycle 2

Cycle 3 of qualifying training – 2nd placement **Consolidation of generic and child-focused capabilities** **Developing applied child-specialist capabilities to at least basic level**

Placement 2: **Focus on developing applied child-specialist capabilities for the SW role with children** **Concrete experience with children in placement**, initially concentrating on child-focused engagement and learning about children's lives and ways of communication → → **Reflection: Learning from placement experiences -** Inductive learning in supervision, making sense of particular challenges of communication in specialist social work roles

→ **Abstract conceptualisation** on placement learning through naming processes with practice educator to develop capability in communicating with range of children within SW role. Critical reflection on transferability of learning from taught curriculum and development of personal qualities/capacities, values and ethics

→ **Active experimentation – *Doing*** Trying out new approaches in direct practice with children. Aiming for child-centredness and participatory working despite constraining SW or complex contexts.

→**Observation and feedback f**rom practice educator on direct practice with children

Knowing **about communication for specialist social work role with children**

Taught curriculum:

- Refresher training on evidence-based models, approaches and skills (as part of 30 days skills curriculum)
- Refresher input on the role and importance of values and ethical commitments
- Purpose and mandate for communication within social work role, framed by law, policy, practice guidance and ethical frameworks
- How the SW role may constrain communication.

Being

Ongoing development of use of self for the social work role

- personal qualities, emotional capacities, and values, such as: sincerity, genuineness, empathy, robustness, use of authority, self-awareness, caring, respectfulness, working with children's, challenges and strong emotions

Learning approaches:

- Tutor modelling of providing a facilitating environment.
- Experiential groupwork opportunities to develop self-reflection, use of authority, listening, care of others, building trust.
- Naming of these processes by tutor (abstract conceptualisation)

Integration and consolidation of learning through supervision and practice focused assignments

End of placement: re-appraisal against the taxonomy and PCF

Emphasis on **transferability** of learning for future working situations and identification of future CPD learning goals for the ASYE → Building realistic self efficacy for NQSW practice.

9.3   Methodological considerations and limitations

A number of methodological considerations and concerns arose through this research. Firstly, the limitations must be re-emphasised. Most notably, the sample size was very small, there was no control or comparison group, and participants' responses often lay across a considerable range, so the extent to which findings may be idiosyncratic, not just to this programme but perhaps just to this cohort, have not been established. The cohort studied were on a Masters programme having already attained a high first degree, so were well prepared for self-directed study at a high academic level.   In this way the students might be very different from students on undergraduate degrees, particularly given that some HEIs have very low academic entry thresholds (SWTF, 2009a). On this programme there was an admissions requirement for at least six months pre-course experience in social care or a related field.   This is not a standard entry requirement across social work

programmes. The student demography, being largely white and UK-born, is also different to courses in many urban, particularly metropolitan, areas. Cultural and religious differences and whether English is the primary language may make a significant difference to students' habitus, values and perceptions of children and childhood.

These differences could potentially alter what needs to be learned or how learning takes place quite substantially. The small cohort size meant that, although significance tests could be conducted on changes in cohort confidence and CCCh-awareness, any patterns and relationships between other variables could not be tested statistically. Findings should be regarded as tentative and suggestive rather than definitive and conclusive. Ideally the study should now be repeated with several different HEIs, including undergraduate programmes with varied demographies, to see whether similar patterns, factors and processes emerge and whether generalisability of the findings can be assumed.

Cohort mean scores unhelpfully obscured the diverse trajectories of individual students. Understanding personalised needs and unique learning journeys is as important as responding to cohort trends, much as individual children have idiosyncratic strengths, vulnerabilities, hopes and fears and need a personalised response from their social worker. Where qualitative data have considered the same questions as the quantitative, this has enabled firmer insights to be established about the meaning of particular patterns for individuals, if not for the full sample.

A number of limitations emerged in relation to the reliability and applicability of both the self-efficacy and CCCh-awareness scales. The self-efficacy scale was simple and uni-dimensional, asking only about participants' confidence in communicating effectively with children. In future I would consider increasing the range of parameters measured as others in social work education have done (Quinney & Parker, 2010; Koprowska, 2010; Carpenter *et al*, 2010), asking students to self-rate for self-efficacy against the CCCh dimensions to give a clearer indication as to areas of struggle and development at particular points. I had not planned for the kind of response shift bias which may occur when using self-rating scales. For example, participants' self-efficacy scores may decrease at the end of a learning intervention when they become more aware of gaps in their knowledge or competence. If repeating the research I would, like Carpenter *et al* (2010), include a T4 question to enable students to rate retrospectively what they thought their self-efficacy score should have been at the beginning as well as qualitative opportunities to reflect back on their earlier scores.

The vignette exercise is a written test, so represents students' *theoretical* understanding of the CCCh rather than their proficiency in face-to-face situations. There might be considerable divergence between the two (Collins *et al*, 1987). Including evidence from practice as a further measure had been discounted due to the methodological complexities outlined in Chapter 4. Doing so in future research, however, could allow for some triangulation between measures of self-efficacy, CCCh-awareness and embodied proficiency to consider possible relationships.

No explicit mention of a particular dimension in a student's vignette response did not necessarily mean he or she was unaware or dismissive of it. The student may have simply chosen to write about other issues on that occasion, perhaps because of time, space, energy, inclination or chance. It was only through cross-referencing such scores to qualitative data, both in the questionnaires and interviews, that a better understanding was reached about what higher or lower scores at particular time points might have meant. Opportunities for all students to view and comment qualitatively on their score trajectories would have meant more reliance could have been placed on trends observed.

The binary analysis of vignette responses (using the yes/no scale) was not sufficiently calibrated to enable gradations in development of students' responses to emerge. The more detailed 0-2 scale, as used with the interviewees, provided more reliable data and I would use this in preference if the research were repeated.

The CCCh taxonomy provided a useful framework for analysis but this study indicated ways in which it required further development. The domain and dimension categories had been established thematically following a systematic review rather than through a formal factor analysis. The role of the taxonomy at its inception was to provide a coherent conceptual model for good practice rather than a schema for empirical testing. The relationship between the categories was conceived of as being dynamic and interactional and, from a practice relevance perspective, the fuzzy boundaries between some categories had been embraced. Using the taxonomy for research purposes rather than just as practice guidance posed methodological challenges as the sub-divisions of categories were not weighted and there were overlaps across dimensions in different domains. Patterns identified in the analysis could be seen as indicative tendencies only. This close scrutiny of the groupings, as well as further insights gained through the updated literature review, led me to make

the modifications to the taxonomy as shown in Table 13. As well as its enhanced practical usefulness for guiding good practice, this revised taxonomy may facilitate future empirical testing.

9.4 Moving forward

There will continue to be tough times ahead for educators such as myself in preparing students to conduct ethical and effective practice within an indicator-focused rather than child-centred workplace culture, particularly given that priorities for the social work practice role with children are currently so contested. My aim is now for the work reported in this thesis to be taken forward for dissemination and publication so that it can meet the objective of informing development of the qualifying social work curriculum. This is a critical time with much opportunity for potential influence. The Reform Board has proposed a new Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) which will ultimately benchmark standards and competences to stages within the revised qualifying degree as well as along career pathways (SWRB, 2010b). One sub-group of the Reform Board is working to implement Munro's *Recommendation 11*, that the PCF should "incorporate capabilities necessary for child and family social work… [to] explicitly inform social work qualification training, postgraduate professional development and performance appraisal" (Munro, 2011, p.12). Munro's recommendation was made because the PCF provides generic outcome statements, which require translation into specialist contexts, as well as calibration for expectations at different career stages. Munro has emphasised the importance of high quality direct work with children, critically reflective use of self, and specialist knowledge in areas such as child development, potentially providing a groundbreaking opportunity for the distinctive and complex nature of social work communication with children to be clarified and affirmed and for social workers to be able to develop the CCCh through effective qualifying training, highly specialised continuing professional development, and support and supervision in the workplace. She has not, however, specified outcomes for measuring effectiveness in communication with children nor guidance in how it might best be taught or assessed in qualified programmes.

In the absence of this, I presented a briefing paper (Lefevre, 2011) to the *Recommendation 11* sub-group showing how the CCCh might be mapped into the PCF so they can be developed during qualifying training, into the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) and through subsequent career stages. The mapping of the CCCh at qualifying level is shown in the right-hand

column of Table 13. I am contributing to another Reform Board sub-group which is mapping the PCF to post-qualifying continuous professional development and career stages. I have been invited to co-draft a curriculum resource guide for the teaching and learning of communication with children and adults, which will be published by the Reform Board.

My own capability as a researcher has developed significantly over the six years of this professional doctorate. When I began in 2005, I still saw myself primarily as a practitioner-educator who was making tentative steps into social work academia. The SCIE Knowledge Review (Luckock *et al*, 2006) was my first move into 'proper' research. Learning how to conduct a systematic review was a sharp learning curve into the critical and disciplined evaluation of research findings which has assisted me ever since. The most profound learning, however, came from exposure to a wealth of literature on what effective communication could mean for children and how social workers might help or hinder that process through their own capacities and commitments. It spurred my own motivation to try to find ways of helping students work from their own 'best selves' (Trevithick, 2005) so they might make a real difference to children's lives. Indeed, that 'making a difference' became the title of my book on social work communication with children. As with the students, having such a personal commitment has supported me in persisting through difficult times with the doctorate, such as when confronted with the challenge of developing basic statistical competence when my aptitude is for in-depth qualitative appraisal, thematic analysis and case study.

My next goal is to help create more knowledge about the micro-detail of social workers' direct work with children in child protection contexts so as to generate a new model or framework for high quality, participatory practice. Such direct work takes place largely in private spaces and little is known about what is effective or unhelpful other than what children or social workers report retrospectively. Such evaluation of earlier events is less reliable and more subject to bias. Gaining a full and realistic picture requires observing real practice and triangulating it with other data sources. To achieve this goal I have applied for an ESRC Mid-career Fellowship which would enable me to analyse the face-to-face communications and interactions of social workers and children within Core Assessments (Department of Health *et al*, 2000) as part of child protection plans. If I were to be successful, the benefits of the fellowship would not only be in receiving the resources to conduct the actual research but in gaining funding for training to further my research skills, including in Conversation Analysis (Hall *et al*, 2006), documentary and statistical analysis, and participatory, play-

based and visual research methods (Christensen & James, 2008; O'Kane, 2008). As a sole focus on Conversation Analysis can risk reducing observed events to episodic micro-particles divorced from context (Harré, 1998), the revised version of the CCCh taxonomy will additionally be used as a framework for analysis to provide a holistic impression of the relationship formed which can illuminate the nuances and complexities of the interactions between social workers and children, including emotions, psychological processes, visible power relationships and differing expectations. The ways in which children are enabled to communicate information about their experiences, perspectives and views, through both direct and indirect means, might then be better understood so that more effective approaches to participatory direct work could be developed. It is hoped, then, that social workers will be empowered to make a real difference to the lives and experiences of the children they encounter.

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11 Appendices

Appendix 1 *Relevant practice teaching, study, research and dissemination activities contributing towards the development of this thesis*

Time	Relevant practice teaching, study and research activities	Outputs/ Dissemination
1991-5	Social work practice in child protection	
1995-2003	Senior Practitioner/ Consultant in clinical setting with families at risk of abuse and neglect	Journal article: Lefevre, M (2004a) Playing with Sound: The Therapeutic Use of Music in Direct Work with Children, *Child and Family Social Work*, 9, 4, 333-345. Based on case-study exploration of my own practice.
1999-2003	Undertaking training as Integrative Arts Psychotherapist	Journal article: Lefevre, M (2004b) 'Finding the Key': Containing and Processing Traumatic Sexual Abuse, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 31, 3, 137-152. Based on a case study of psychotherapy with a teenager.
2000-2003	Tutoring on DipSW children and families pathway and PQ child care courses (seconded part-time)	
2003-ongoing	Lecturer and Senior Lecturer, teaching PQ child care and MA qualifying students. Responsible for 'communication with children' in the curriculum	
2005-6	Undertaking SCIE *Knowledge Review* with colleagues (2 systematic reviews and a practice survey)	Research report: Luckock, B., Lefevre, M. & Orr, D., with Tanner, K., Jones, M & Marchant, R. (2006), *Knowledge Review: Teaching Learning and Assessing Communication Skills with Children in Social Work Education*, London: Social Care Institute for Excellence. Journal article: Luckock, B., Lefevre, M. and Tanner, K. (2007), Teaching and learning communication with children and young people: developing the qualifying social work curriculum in a changing policy context, *Child and Family Social Work*, Vol. 12, 2, pp. 192-201. Conference papers • 'Communication skills with children: equipping the next generation of social workers', *Joint Social Work Education Conference*, Cambridge, 12.6.06. With Barry Luckock and Karen Tanner. • 'Communicating with Children and Young People in Social Work Education: A Workshop to Develop the Curriculum'. Tavistock Clinic, London, 21.2.07, with Barry Luckock, in conjunction with SWAP. • 'Communicating with Children and Young People in Social Work Education: Taking forward Curriculum Development'. 26.9.08,

		Resource Centre, London, with Barry Luckock, in conjunction with SWAP.
Oct 2005	Began the DSW	
Jan 2006	First DSW assignment – Phase 1a	Assignment title: A review and critique of Bell's (2002) research on how children's rights may be promoted through relationship-based practice.
Jan-June 2006	Further analysis of data gathered from the systematic review to develop the Communicative Capabilities taxonomy and consider how it might be taught and assessed within the qualifying curriculum.	Journal article: Lefevre, M., Tanner, K., and Luckock, B. (2008), Developing Social Work Students' Communication skills with Children and Young People: a model for the qualifying level curriculum, *Child and Family Social Work*, 13, pp. 166–176. Book chapter: Lefevre, M. (2008b) Being, Doing and Knowing: Core qualities and skills for working with children and young people who are in care, in B. Luckock and M. Lefevre, (Eds) *Direct Work: Social Work with Children and Young People in Care*, London: BAAF, pp. 21-39. Conference papers • Skilled communication with children to promote both needs and rights: a challenge for social work education and practice' at the *International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) Congress,* York, 4.9.06. • Lefevre, M. (2007) An Integrative Model for Developing Social Work Students' Communication skills with Children and Young People, *Joint Social Work Education Conference*, Swansea, July 2007. • Lefevre, M. (2007), Being, Doing and Knowing: Core Qualities and Skills for Working with Children. Keynote presentation at the NCB conference, *Communication With Children*, 30.11.07 • Lefevre, M. (2007), Effective Communication with Children and Young People, BAAF conference *Have social workers forgotten how to communicate with children?,* 12.12.07. • 'Not just what you do, but who you are': Knowledge, skills, values and attributes for effective communication with children. NCB conference *Communicating with Children*, 8.8.08
April -Sept 2006	Joined OSWE learning set. Third DSW assignment – **Pilot study for the evaluation**	Assignment title: Evaluation of the teaching of communication skills with children and young people in a qualifying level MA in social work. (A retrospective evaluation of an MA cohort just completing their training, using questionnaires and trialling the use of the Communicative Capabilities taxonomy as an analytic framework.
October 2006	**Time 1 data collection point** – at the beginning of the programme.	
Feb 2007	**Time 2 data collection** – just before the focused sub-module on communication with children	
March 2007	**Time 3 data collection** – just after the focused sub-module	
June 2007-	Intermission due to	Co-edited book: Luckock, B. & Lefevre, M. (Eds) *Direct Work: Social*

June 2008	competing work priorities and co-editing a book relevant to this topic.	*Work with Children and Young People in Care*, London: BAAF.
June 2008	**Time 4 data collection** – at the end of the 2 year MA programme	Monograph paper: Lefevre, M. (2010) Evaluating the teaching and learning of communication skills for use with children and young people, in H. Burgess & J.Carpenter (Eds) *The Outcomes of Social Work Education: Developing Evaluation methods*. SWAP Monograph 2. Southampton: SWAP, pp.96-110. Conference paper: Lefevre, M. (2008) 'Evaluation of a 'whole programme' strategy for developing social work students' skills in communication with children and young people', at the 10th UK *Joint Social Work Education Conference with the 2nd UK Social Work Research Conference*, Cambridge, July 2008.
Sept. 2008	Submitted Critical Analytical Study (CAS) for DSW	Assignment title: Improving communication between children and their social workers: An exploration of issues for social work practice, teaching and research.
April-June 2009	1 term intermission as completing book on communication with children	Single-authored book: Lefevre, M. (2010) *Communicating with Children and Young People: Making a Difference,* Bristol: The Policy Press
Nov 2009-Feb 2010	**Time 5 data collection** – once participants had been in qualified practice for 16-18 months	
March - Dec 2010	Data analysis	Conference papers: • 'Developing More Effective Ways of Teaching Trainee Social Workers how to Communicate with Children and Young People', at the *IASSW, ICSW and IFSW Biennial Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development,* Hong Kong, June 2010. • 'Communication skills with children and young people: Learning pathways to competent practice - through qualification and beyond, at the 12th UK *Joint Social Work Education Conference with the 2nd UK Social Work Research Conference*, Hatfield, July 2010.
Jan –Sept 2011	Writing up	Keynote seminar presentation Communicating with Children and Young People: Bridging the Gap Between Research Messages and Practice Constraints, at the *CWDC Early Professional Development Research Seminar,* June 2011, London.
Sept 2011	Submission of doctoral thesis	Becoming effective communicators with children in social work practice: Who you are, not just what you know and do.

Appendix 2   Summary of the factors which can impede or distort communication between children and social workers

Communication between social workers and children is not the same as more general communication between adults and children. The nature of the social work role and task with the child and family provides both a backdrop to and mandate for any engagement and communication. Child protection concerns, for example, might mean investigative interviews or assessment sessions need to be conducted with a child to learn more about any causes for concern. Such contexts affect how both children and practitioners feel and behave. In statutory contexts workers may be diverted from providing the kind of engaged, personal contact with children which facilitates their communication because of the administrative and bureaucratic demands of their role and pressure to provide the child's view to others within externally imposed deadlines rather than at the child's pace (Broadhurst et al, 2010; Horwath, 2010; Munro, 2011). Children may then be given less time or encouragement to engage and build trust (Winter 2009). This can adversely affect their readiness to share their views or experiences about traumatic or sensitive matters (Leeson, 2007; McLeod, 2010).

Children's previous experiences, emotions and psychosocial development may also affect their capacity or willingness to communicate. Insecurity of attachment, traumatic sequelae and feelings such as fear, embarrassment, uncertainty, anger and loss can all make children wary of social workers, or struggle to name and convey issues of importance to them (Freake *et al*, 2007). Trust is much harder to establish, misunderstandings, reluctance, resistance and avoidance far more likely when children feel frightened, controlled, or sidelined by social workers (Leeson, 2007), unsure about the consequences of what they say and suspicious of hidden agendas (Bell, 2002; Thomas, 2002).

The power and authority held by social workers, combined with children's legal and social status as minors, which gives them fewer rights and responsibilities than adults, can also be an inhibitor where it causes children to feel disempowered or disenfranchised (McLeod, 2007, 2010a). Where practitioners fail to recognise or mitigate power imbalances this can inhibit and distort communication through further perpetuating oppressive attitudes and assumptions (Thompson, 2011). This is particularly the case where there are issues of discrimination, difference or structural disadvantage (Trotter, 2000; Kohli, 2006; Freake *et al*, 2007). Children's relatively powerless position can also be reinforced by social work undertaken from an expert stance that fails to allow

children to explore, define and express their own experience (Holland & Scourfield, 2004) or to have their confidentiality respected (Munro, 2001; Morgan, 2007).

Children's capacity to participate should not be seen primarily as dependent on their own characteristics or capabilities as it can be promoted or derailed by the extent of practitioners' commitment to inclusion and the persistence, skills and creativity they deploy to promoting participation (Thomas & O'Kane, 2000). Particularly in statutory practice, social workers have had a tendency to position children primarily in developmental terms as vulnerable 'becomings', who need guidance and support, perhaps even 'protection' from the burden of giving their view (Munro, 2001). As a result children's opinions have not always been listened to, even by those aiming to protect or support them, and their right to a voice has been transgressed (Mcleod, 2010a). By contrast, professionals who recognise children's competence and support their rights may not always be as in tune with providing the guidance, boundaries or therapeutic understanding in communication that young people might need (Cooper, 1994). Unless a balanced, integrative perspective can be taken, either children's rights or their welfare might be compromised through the worker's manner of communication (Uprichard, 2007).

Appendix 3 *Summary of Core Conditions identified through the systematic review*

Social workers need to be able to engage interpersonally, ethically and emotionally with children if a relationship of trust is to be established: feeling respected, safe and cared for can promote children's expression of views, thoughts, feelings and worries (Bell, 2002; Morgan, 2006). This relationship cannot be achieved through the practitioner presenting a distanced professional persona but only through 'use of self' (Ward, 2008). Children need to meet a genuine, congruent and empathic human being who expresses enthusiasm, warmth, friendliness, humour, care and concern for children (Farnfield &. Kaszap, 1998).   Emotional awareness and resilience is also required to enable practitioners to work with and make sense of their 'depth' interpersonal processes with children, such as transference and counter-transference, the provision of a 'holding' and 'containing environment', and the use of mirroring, empathy and attunement (Ruch, 2005, 2007; Ward, 2008; Winter, 2009).

An informed understanding of the distinctive nature of communication with children takes into account children's needs and capabilities at different ages and stages and the impact on them of their experiences, any impairments, and the social, cultural and interpersonal context. This needs to be a critically reflective understanding, one which does not overly rely on stereotypes or received wisdom which might be inaccurate (Davis, 1998), discriminatory (Taylor, 2004) and/or culturally biased (Robinson, 2001; Goldstein, 2002). It will facilitate workers' capacity to employ child-centred communication through providing facilitating conditions, such as going at the child's pace, allowing children to have some choice in and control over both the process and the content of the communication, and preparing them for participation (Turner, 2003; Morgan, 2006; Oliver, 2010).

Practitioners need to be prepared to listen and to take into account both direct and indirect communications from children. Listening is not a passive process: children require attuned responses from the worker (Siegel, 2010), their views to be taken into account and their wishes followed wherever practicable (McLeod, 2007). This increases the likely success of interventions and promotes children's emotional and psychological welfare (Bell, 2002; Boehm & Staples, 2002; Hart *et al*, 2005).   Such active listening can be personally stressful and requires workers to have emotional availability and capability (Ferguson, 2011), particularly as children often convey their thoughts, feelings and experiences through indirect means, such as play, behaviour and relational style (Schofield & Brown, 1999).   Workers can also use these 'hundred languages of children'

(Edwards *et al*, 1993) purposefully as bridges to open up communication and learn more about the child's internal as well as external world (Wickham & West, 2002). Methods might include directive visual exercises, rating scales with cartoon facial expressions, ecomaps and genograms, or use of small figures to explore family relationships (Walton & Smith, 1999). Such tools can be powerful and require sensitive and skilled use, requiring workers to be able to be playful and creative in their interactions and be ready and able to deal with strong or unexpected reactions from children (Ringel, 2003).

Children need and are entitled to information and explanations about matters such as their rights and opportunities (Morrow, 2004), services which are available (Dearden & Becker, 2000), their family and personal histories (Holoday & Maher, 1996), and reasons for particular interventions or decisions such as a placement move (Bourton & McCausland, 2001). These need to be provided in ways which make sense to children, such as succinct and clear summaries of decisions in court or case conferences (Ruegger, 2001), or using visual or play-based methods to explain matters in either concrete or metaphorical ways (Hendry, 1988).

All of these Core Conditions need to be underpinned by a willingness and ethical commitment to the principles they embody which are rooted in core social work values such as reliability, respectfulness, transparency, and participatory, anti-oppressive and culturally sensitive practice (Munro, 2001; NCB, 2004; Freake *et al*, 2007).

Appendix 4 *Positioning of the Communicative Capabilities in relation to the MA programme structure*

This is a 21 month full time programme, encompassing six terms. The domain within which each dimension is categorised is noted in the chart below by inclusion of (K), (Bi), (Bii) or (D) after the dimension. For the purpose of this mapping, an assumption will be made that the first placement is in an adult non-statutory setting and the second in a statutory local authority children service's setting.

Term	Module	Aspect of Curriculum	Inclusion of Communicative Capability Dimension
Term 1 (Autumn)	Human Development and Social Relationships	Child development Children's social worlds	• Child development (K) • How (adverse) experiences affect children's communication (K)
	Partnership and Inter-Professional Practice (PiPP)	Children's rights and ethics of participation	• Children's competence and right to participate (Bi) • Eliciting and taking into account children's views and concerns (Bi) • Maintaining confidentiality where possible (Bi) • Non-judgmentalism (Bi) • Respectfulness (Bi) • Reliability and consistency • Being open and honest • Anti-oppressive practice (e.g. re. power, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality) (Bi)
	Law and Policy	Statutory requirements for children's inclusion	• Providing information and explanations (Bi) • Eliciting and taking into account children's views and concerns (Bi)
	Theory, Methods and Values in Practice 1 (TMVIP1)	Teaching on a variety of methods and core social work values	• How the social work role and task impacts upon communication (K) • The purpose of communication in context (K) • Reinforcing the core social work values taught in PiPP (Bi)
	Practice learning skills workshops	Interviewing skills using Egan model in videoed 'skills-labs'	• Be empathic (Bii) • Listening (D) • Interviewing skills (D) • Be sincere, genuine, congruent (Bii)
Term 2 (Spring)	TMVIP1 continues	Methods. Inductive learning from discussion of placement experiences	• Recognise, manage and use one's own feelings (and counter-transference) (Bii) • Show own humanity - expressing enthusiasm, warmth, friendliness, humour (Bii) • Work with depth processes in the work not just surface ones (Bii)
	1st Practice Placement (80 days, 4 days per week)	Direct practice learning opportunities with supervision and guidance from practice educators	Embodied experimentation of techniques (D) and personal qualities and values (B) with children which draws on underpinning knowledges (K). Assessment of competence including through direct observation of practice. Consolidation and integration of learning through practice-focused assignments.

	Practice learning skills workshops	Includes 3 session focused sub-module on communication with children	• Child-centred communication (D) • Effective models, approaches and methods for communicating with children (K) • Using a variety of tools (e.g. ecomaps) (D) • The impact on communication of any of the child's inherited traits, capabilities or impairments (K) • Providing uninterrupted time (Bi) • Going at the child's pace (D) • Be playful and creative (Bii) • Use of play, symbolic, creative, non-verbal and expressive techniques (D)
Term 3 (summer)	TMVIP1 continues	Discussion of placement experiences	Supporting inductive learning, linking of theory and practice, and consolidation and integration of learning (K, B, D)
	Practice Placement 1 continues		
	Research methods		
	Practice learning skills workshops	Motivational interviewing	• Effective models, approaches and methods for communicating with children (K)
Summer period	Dissertation supervision		
Term 4 (autumn)	Practice Placement 2 (120 days, 4 days per week)	Direct practice learning opportunities with children, with supervision and guidance from practice educators	• Help children feel safe and build trust with the worker (Bii) • Engage and build relationships with children (Bii) • Be caring and demonstrate concern for/to children (Bii) • Using a variety of tools (e.g. ecomaps) (D)
	TMVIP2	Related to children's services pathway, including specialist teaching and inductive learning from placement experiences.	• Be comfortable to work with children's strong feelings (Bii) • Using a variety of tools (e.g. ecomaps))D)
	Practice learning skills workshops	Methods and approaches	
	Situating Social Work		
Term 5 (spring)	Practice Placement 2 continues	As above	
	TMVIP2 continues	As above	
	Practice learning skills workshops	Methods and approaches	
	Observation seminars	Students observe a child or adult for 5 x 1hrs and discuss paper in	• Child development (if a child is observed) (K) • Recognise, manage and use one's own feelings (and counter-transference) (Bii) • Be empathic (Bii)

		seminar group	• Work with depth processes in the work not just surface ones (Bii)
Term 6 (summer)	Practice Placement 2 continues	At least one direct observation of communication with a child	Assessment of embodied proficiency in communication
	TMVIP2 continues	As above	
	Practice learning skills workshops	Methods and approaches	

Appendix 5 *Outline of the research process*

Time	Event	Format	Sample (cohort population)	Data collected and tools used
Jan-June 2005	Undertook Knowledge Review, followed by further data analysis which led to the Communicative Capabilities model			2 systematic reviews and a practice survey. Thematic analysis of the data.
Oct 2005	Began DSW			
June 2006	**Pilot study** for DSW assignment submitted Sept 2006	Written quest-ionnaire	13(22)	Retrospective evaluation of cohort completing their programme, using confidence scales, vignette tool, qualitative and quantitative feedback on student views
October 2006	**Time 1 data collection**	Written quest-ionnaire	25(28)	Sociodemographic data, student intentions for future working with children, pre-course work-based and personal experience with children collected. Confidence scales and vignette tool used.
Feb 2007	**Time 2 data collection**	Written quest-ionnaire	27(28)	Confidence scales and vignette tool used.
March 2007 (3 weeks later)	**Time 3 data collection**	Written quest-ionnaire	18(28)	Confidence scales and vignette tool used. Subjective student feedback collected using qualitative and quantitative questions. Intentions for future working with children gathered.
June 2008	**Time 4 data collection**	Written quest-ionnaire	22(28)	Confidence scales and vignette tool used. Subjective student feedback collected using qualitative and quantitative questions. Intentions for future working with children and number of placements with children gathered.
Sept. 2008	Submitted Critical Analytical Study (CAS) for DSW			
Sept. 2009	Reconceptualisation of the research focus away from the effectiveness of the programme towards exploring the mechanisms promoting student learning and development			
Nov 2009-Feb 2010	**Time 5 data collection**	Interviews lasting 60-90 mins	5	Semi-structured interview schedule gathering feedback on the journey of learning and contributions made by the programme and other learning experiences. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed
March 2010-Dec 2010	Data analysis			
Jan –Sept 2011	Writing up			

Appendix 6   *Time 1 questionnaire*

EVALUATION OF THE TEACHING OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS WITH CHILDREN IN THE MA SOCIAL WORK

Section 1 – About you (please tick the appropriate box)

1.

What is your Age?	Please tick
22-26	
27-36	
37-46	
47-56	
57+	
Prefer not to state	

2.

What is your Gender	Please tick
Male	
Female	
Other	
Prefer not to state	

3.

Do you have a Disability?	Please tick
Yes	
No	
Prefer not to state	

4. Please tick the appropriate box to indicate your ethnicity.

Ethnicity		Please tick
A. White	British	
	Irish	
	Any other white background - please write in: _____	
B. Mixed	White and Black Caribbean	
	White and Black African	
	White and Asian	
C. Asian or Asian British	Pakistani	
	Bangladeshi	
	Any other Asian background - please write in: _____	
D. Black or Black British	Caribbean	
	African	
	Any other Black background - please write in: _____	
E. Chinese	Chinese	
F. Any other ethnic group	Please write in: _____	
G. Prefer not to state		

Section 2 – About your experience with children

5.

Have you had a direct parenting role with a child?	Please tick
Yes	
No	

6.

As an adult, to what extent do you have/have you had contact with children in your personal life?	Please tick
Very high amount as a parent or main family carer	
Other very high amount of contact	
Medium amount	
Small amount	
None or almost none	
Please describe what your involvement has been, specifying frequency and amount of contact	

7.

Prior to coming on the course to what extent did you have work-based experience with children/young people?	Please tick
No experience at all with children/young people	
A little bit of experience with children/young people	
Quite a bit of experience with children/young people	
A great deal of experience with children/young people	

8.

Prior to coming on the course what were your intentions regarding working with children in your future social work career?	Please tick
Did not intend to work with children	
Was a bit interested in working with children but had not decided	
Was quite interested in working with children but had not fully decided	
Fully intended to work with children	

9. What reasons/ causes are there for you having developed these intentions?

10. Please ring round a number on the scale below where 0 signifies no confidence and 10 being extremely confident. How confident are you that you are able to communicate effectively with children and young people?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
no confidence										extremely confident

Section 3: Vignette Please imagine that you are the social worker in the following scenario:

Children: Lindy Hooper 15   Albie Donnelly 7
Adults: Tessa Edwards – mother to all three children – 33 White British

Vlashi Duka – 29, Albanian, Tessa's current partner
Andy Hooper - father to Lindy, 38 White British
Lester Donnelly – father to Albie, 37, Black British

Tessa is currently in a relationship with Vlashi. Tessa has a history of depression and self-harming. Andy has a criminal history and is currently in prison for armed robbery. Lester has had no contact with the family since Albie's birth. Lindy feels Vlashi doesn't like her and is bullying towards her. She feels he turns her mother against her. Lindy rarely goes to school and occasionally attends a pupil support service. This service is concerned about Lindy's involvement in various criminal and sexual behaviours. It appears she is using drugs, and shoplifting and having unprotected sex with local men to fund this. She recently needed hospital treatment after being found in the street having taken a severe beating, possibly from a pimp. Albie is becoming increasingly out of control at school, at home and in the neighbourhood taking part in various anti-social behaviours, e.g. damaging cars, spraying graffiti. Tessa confesses frankly to having absolutely no idea what to do with him and appears to be abdicating all responsibility. Vlashi takes a harsher line and is hitting Albie as a way of punishing him (no evidence of injuries). Tessa threatens to place Albie into care if the situation does not resolve. Please answer the questions as if you are the social worker assigned to this family. As well as any work you choose to carry out with the adults, you will be working directly with both Lindy and Albie.

11. Leaving aside the other social work roles and tasks you might need to undertake, what would be the *purpose of the communication* you would be having with Lindy?

12) What would be the *purpose of the communication* you would be having with Albie?

13) What would be the five most important things to do/think about in order to maximise the possibility of communicating effectively with Lindy?

14. What would be the five most important things to do/think about in order to maximise the possibility of communicating effectively with Albie?

15. What feelings and concerns might be around for Albie in the work that might impact on how he communicates with you?

16. What feelings and concerns might be around for Lindy in the work that might impact on how she communicates with you?

17. What feelings might emerge for you in working with/thinking about working with Lindy?

18. What feelings might emerge for you in working with/thinking about working with Albie?

19. How might your feelings have an impact on the work?

20. What methods would you use to engage and communicate with Lindy?

21. What methods would you use to engage and communicate with Albie?

22. What might be the most important skills for you to use with Lindy?

23. What might be the most important skills for you to use with Albie?

Appendix 7 *Consent form for T1-4 data collection*

Research Consent form

I .... give my free consent to participating in the above evaluation project. I understand that there is no requirement that I participate in this project. No pressure has been applied to coerce me into participating. I understand that I can withdraw from this research project at any time.

I understand that the purpose of this project is to evaluate how communication skills with children are taught on this MA in social work. The research findings will be used not only to guide future teaching of this aspect of skill but also to feed into national debates on this topic, through the Outcomes of Social Work Education project (OSWE). I understand that the findings of this research may be published.

I understand that a key research method used (vignette/case study) is also intended to be a learning method in its own right as well as a research method.

I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be preserved through this project. My name will not appear on my responses. I understand that more than one questionnaire will be collected from me during this programme and, for this reason, there needs to be a way of identifying my different responses so that they can be compared over time. I understand that I will be allocated a code/number for this purpose. The list linking student names to codes will be kept separate from other research information and will only be used to allocate questionnaires to students. Researchers will not seek to investigate how particular named individuals have responded to research questions. Research findings will be made available to me at the end of the project. I will have an opportunity to review my responses at the end of the project for my own development, should I so wish.

I am aware that if I were to find participating in this research personally unsettling I could gain support through approaching a student advisor.

Signed... Dated.....................

Appendix 8   *Time 3 questionnaire*

Section 1 – About you

1. Please ring round a number on the scale below where 0 signifies no confidence and 10 being extremely confident. How confident are you *at this point* that you are able to communicate effectively with children and young people?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
no confidence								extremely confident		

2.

Have you had a placement where you have had the opportunity to work with children and young people?	Please tick
Yes, one placement	
No, I was not given the opportunity even though I wanted this	
No, I sought opportunities for practice with other kinds of situations	

3. What are your intentions now regarding working with children once you have qualified?

What are your intentions now?	Please tick
Do not intend to work with children/young people	
Am a bit interested in working with children but have not decided	
Am quite interested in working with children but have not fully decided	
Fully intend to work with children/young people	

4. If your intentions have changed, please state why:

Section 2 – What helped your learning

5. Please indicate which (if any) of the following factors you feel contributed to your capacity to communicate effectively with children and young people.
In the **middle box** please tick **all** those factors which you think contributed.
In the **right hand box** please score **just the five** you think are most important from 1 – 5 (with 1 being the most important and 5 the least important).

Factors you feel contributed to your capacity to communicate effectively with children and young people	Tick if impor-tant	Score *just* 1 - 5 the five most important (1 = highest, 5= lowest)
Course teaching on child development		
Specific teaching sessions on communication skills with children and young people		
Course teaching on values		
Course teaching on other skills. Please specify ……………………		
Modelling via tutorial approach		
Modelling via course culture of learning		
Direct practice with children and young people in placement		
Input from practice assessor/on-site supervisor		

Guided reading from tutor		
Guided reading from practice assessor/on-site supervisor		
Other reading		
Experience with children as a parent		
Other personal experience with children		
Pre-course professional experience with children		
Working with children/young people in a paid capacity whilst on the course		
Other – please specify		

6. Which of the 3 sessions on communication with children did you attend?

        session 1   ☐

        session 2   ☐

        session 3   ☐

7. Which (if any) of the following elements did you feel contributed to your capacity to communicate with children and young people.

- In box C please tick all those elements which you think contributed.
- In box D please score **just** the **five** you think are most important from 1 – 5 (with 1 being the most important and 5 the least important).

A. Session the teaching appeared in	B. Exercise/teaching strategy	C. Tick if important	D. Just score the 5 most important (1 = highest, 5= lowest)
1st session	a) Experiential exercise reflecting on what was learned in professional experience		
	b) Experiential exercise role playing being a child		
	c) direct teaching input		
2nd session	d) research findings from systematic review		
	e) role-play exercise regarding a child client		
3rd session	f) case study exercise		
	g) discussion on relationships		
	h) direct teaching input		
general	i) tutor style (e.g. modelling, managing group process and discussions)		
	j) Contributions from student colleagues in the group		
	h) Any other feature - please specify:		

8. Was there anything that was missed out that you would have hoped/expected to be included?

9. Are there any teaching strategies which were unsuccessful, unhelpful, or could have been done differently?

Section 3 **Please imagine that you are the social worker in the following scenario:**

      Child: Carly Hunter 13

      Parents: Tessa Smith – mother to all three children – 31 White British

Lester Carshalton – 29 Black British
Ed Hunter - father to Carly, 38 White British

Carly is the child of Tessa and Ed. Ed was violent to Tessa. They split when Carly was 2. Ed has had no contact over the years with Carly. Tessa moved in with Lester Carshalton five years ago. Lester sees Carly as badly behaved and insolent. He frequently shouts at her and hits her on occasion. School have been worried about Carly over the last few years. She is withdrawn and a loner with few friends.   Her attendance and concentration are poor. She has become thinner and thinner. She refuses to discuss home life and has begun to miss even more school. When Tanya has her school medical she is found to be dangerously underweight and to have bruising in various places in her body. A specialist medical indicates these were not accidental and an Achieving Best Evidence Interview with Carly establishes the bruising was caused by Lester. After discussion with Lester, Tessa and Carly, it is agreed it would be best for Carly to stay in foster care pending further assessment to see what work needs to be achieved before Carly can safely return home.

Your role will be to carry out a core assessment with the family. As well as meeting with the parents you must meet and work with Carly to establish her concerns and seek her views, wishes and feelings. You will also carry out the key worker role with Carly as a looked-after child.

10. Leaving aside the other social work roles and tasks you might need to undertake, what would be the *purpose of the communication* you would be having with Carly?

11. What would be the five most important things to do/think about in order to maximise the possibility of communicating effectively with Carly?

12. What feelings and concerns might be around for Carly in the work that might impact on how he communicates with you?

13. What feelings might emerge for you in working with/thinking about working with Carly?

14. How might your feelings have an impact on the work?

15. What methods would you use to engage and communicate with Carly?

16. What might be the most important skills for you to use with Carly?

<u>Section 4</u> Please imagine that you are the social worker in the following scenario:

Annie moved in with Steve Sommersby eight years ago and had Tom a year later. Steve works away from home a lot on business and tends to be quite tired and preoccupied when he is at home. The bulk of childcare consequently falls on Annie who is trying to juggle this with a responsible job at the bank. She is finding Tom's behaviour very difficult to manage and is starting to become quite depressed.   Tom's school are concerned about Tom's aggressive behaviour in school towards other children and his difficulty in settling in class. They wonder if he may have ADHD.   When they tried to discuss this with Annie she seemed quite defeated and tearful. She said she was prepared to pay for any additional assessments which might help Tom but felt at the end of her tether and was thinking about putting him in boarding school. When leaving the school after the meeting, Tom was seen to kick his mother and run off. Annie collapsed on the floor in tears and another parent had to chase after Tom to ensure he was safe with near the busy main road.

Your role will be to carry out family support to prevent family breakdown. As well as meeting with the parents you must meet and work with Tom to establish his concerns and seek his views, wishes and feelings.

17. Leaving aside the other social work roles and tasks you might need to undertake, what would be the *purpose of the communication* you would be having with Tom?

18. What would be the five most important things to do/think about in order to maximise the possibility of communicating effectively with Tom?

19. What feelings and concerns might be around for Tom in the work that might impact on how he communicates with you?

20. What feelings might emerge for you in working with/thinking about working with Tom?

21. How might your feelings have an impact on the work?

22. What methods would you use to engage and communicate with Tom?

23. What might be the most important skills for you to use with Tom?

Appendix 9   *Semi-structured interview schedule for Melody*

1. Please tell me in your own words as much as possible about how you and your learning developed during your MA Qualifying Training regarding communication with children and young people.

2. Looking back, what do now you think you most needed to learn about and develop in yourself during your training to help you communicate with children effectively?

   - *PROMPTS: . knowledge, skills, values, and/or personal qualities - Knowing, Being and Doing*

3. Can you remember what thoughts and feelings you had at different stages on the course about needing to learn how to communicate professionally with children and young people?

   - *PROMPTS: relating to personal commitment, motivation or effort, blocks or resistance*

4. When you took part in the earlier stages of the research, you were asked to answer some questions in relation to your confidence at different stages. You rated it as follows:
   - Beginning (T1) = 7/10
   - Just before focused sub-module on communication with children (T2) = 7/10
   - Just after sub-module (T3) = 9/10
   - End of programme (T4) = 9/10

   What are your thoughts now about this pattern?

5. How able did you feel to communicate effectively and appropriately with children and young people once you began working in your professional role post qualification? Give examples

6. Looking back, what role did the programme play in preparing you for this?

   - *PROMPTS: What aspect or aspects of programme structure and content, including placements, stand out as being the most helpful?*

   - *PROMPTS: Make links with how capability in Knowing, Being and Doing (i.e. knowledge, skills, values, and/or personal qualities) was developed*

7. What different or additional learning opportunities would you have liked the course to have given you?

   - *PROMPTS: Any links with knowledge, skills, values, and/or personal qualities?*

8. When you took part in the earlier stages of the research, you were asked to answer some questions in relation to case vignettes. These were designed to test the extent to which participants could apply knowledge about how to communicate with children in typical case situations. Please look at this chart (below) which shows your scorings in relation to the case vignettes at different stages in the programme. You showed more awareness of many of these dimensions at the end of the programme compared to the beginning (these are highlighted in yellow). For some dimensions you didn't show awareness at the end even though you had earlier on (these are highlighted in pink).

   What are your thoughts now about this pattern of learning?

   PROMPTS: Do the increases you demonstrate fairly represent an increase for you in your understanding of how best to communicate with children?

The Communicative Capabilities Dimensions	Melody			
	T1	T2	T3	T4
Knowing – demonstrating knowledge/understanding about the following				
Child development	Y	Y	Y	Y
The impact on communication of any of the child's inherited traits, capabilities or impairments	No	No	No	Y
How (adverse) experiences affect children's communication	No	No	No	Y
The purpose of communication in context	Y	Y	Y	Y
How the social work role and task impacts upon communication	Y	`Y	Y	Y
Appropriate models, approaches, methods and skills in work with children	Y	Y	Y	Y
Being – Demonstrating a commitment to ethical stances/values or discussing the importance of these				
A stance that children are competent and have a right to participate	No	No	No	No
Non-judgemental attitude	Y	Y	No	No
Anti-oppressive practice (e.g. re. race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality)	No	Y	No	Y
Respectful approach	No	No	No	No
Reliable & consistent	No	No	No	No
Providing uninterrupted time	No	No	No	No
Considering issues of confidentiality	No	No	No	No
Providing information and explanations	No	No	Y	Y
Eliciting and taking into account children's views & concerns	Y	Y	Y	Y
Being – Demonstrating emotional capacities/personal qualities or discussing the importance of these				
Able to recognise and use own feelings (and counter-transference)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Showing humanity, expressing enthusiasm, warmth, friendliness, humour	No	Y	Y	Y
Being sincere, genuine, congruent	No	No	Y	No
Open and honest demeanour	No	Y	No	No
Empathic	Y	Y	Y	Y
Demonstrating care and/or concern to the children	Y	Y	Y	Y
Feeling comfortable to work with children's strong feelings	No	No	No	Y
Able to be playful and creative	Y	Y	Y	Y
Helping children feel safe and build trust with the worker	No	Y	Y	Y
Able to engage and build relationships with children	No	Y	Y	Y
Able to work with depth processes	No	No	Y	Y
Doing –micro-skills, techniques and approaches which would facilitate communication with children				
Child-centred approach	Y	Y	Y	Y
Going at the child's pace	No	No	No	No
Use of play, symbolic, creative, non-verbal and expressive techniques	Y	Y	Y	Y
Listening	Y	Y	Y	Y
Interviewing techniques	No	No	Y	No
Being able to use a variety of tools (e.g. ecomaps)	No	No	No	No
Total no of dimensions	13	18	19	21

9. You had 2 placements with opportunities to work with children and young people. Was that something you chose and, if so, why ?

10. You stated at T1, T2 and T3 that you fully intended to work with children and young people. Where did this motivation come from? How has affected your current choice of employment?

11. At T3 and T4, you were asked to indicate which (if any) of the following elements you felt contributed to your capacity to communicate with children and young people. You ticked all those elements which you think contributed and scored just the five you think were most important from 1 – 5 (with 1 being the most important and 5 the least important). Is there anything you would like to add or change about what you put previously?

Factors which contributed to you developing capability in communication with children	T3		T4	
	Yes/no	Out of 5	Yes/no	Out of 5
Course teaching on child development	Yes	4	Yes	5
Course teaching on observation	Not done till later in programme		Yes	No
Specific teaching sessions on communication skills with children and young people	Yes	2	Yes	3
Course teaching on values	Yes	5	No	No
Course teaching on other skills. Please specify	No	No	No	No
Modelling via tutorial approach	Yes	No	Yes	4
Modelling via course culture of learning	Yes	No	No	No
Direct practice with children and young people in placement	Yes	1	Yes	2
Input from practice assessor/on-site supervisor	Yes	No	No	No
Guided reading from tutor	Yes	No	Yes	No
Guided reading from practice assessor/on-site supervisor	Yes	No	No	No
Other reading	No	No	No	No
Experience with children as a parent	No	No	No	No
Other personal experience with children	Yes	3	No	No
Pre-course professional experience with children	Yes	No	Yes	1
Working with children/young people in a paid capacity whilst on the course	No	No	No	No
Other – please specify [specify respondent by respondent]	No	No	No	No

12. Just after the sub-module on communication with children you were asked which (if any) of the following elements you felt contributed to your capacity to communicate with children and young people and to score just the five you thought were most important from 1 – 5 (with 1 being the most important and 5 the least important). Is there anything you would like to add or change about what you put previously?

Teaching Session	Exercise/teaching strategy	If contributed	If scored in 5 most important
1st session	a) Experiential exercise reflecting on what was learned in professional experience	Yes	3
	b) Experiential exercise role playing being a child	Yes	
	c) direct teaching input	Yes	
2nd session	d) research findings from systematic review	Yes	
	e) role-play exercise regarding a child client	Yes	4
3rd session	f) case study exercise	Yes	
	g) discussion on relationships	Yes	1
	h) direct teaching input	Yes	
general	i) tutor style (e.g. modelling, managing group process and discussions)	Yes	2
	j) Contributions from student colleagues in the group	Yes	5
	h) Any other feature - please specify:		

13. Were there other experiences before or during your social work training which were also significant for you learning how to communicate effectively with children and young people?

   o *PROMPTS: Prompt for experiences as a parent, work or volunteer role prior to programme, paid work during holidays or at weekends etc.*

14. What would be your key message to social work educators about how best to help prepare students to communicate with children and young people?

Appendix 10   *Consent form for the Interviews*

Research project: Developing social work students' capability in communicating with children and young people: learning pathways through qualifying training

Participant's name:………………………………………………

I have read the research information sheet and, on the basis of that, can state my informed consent to participate in the interviews for this research study. In particular, I can agree with the following statements:

- I understand what the focus, purpose and methodology of the research study is.
- I understand that I am able to withdraw from the study at any stage with no sanctions being imposed and no negative consequences ensuing following withdrawal.
- I understand that any less positive critical feedback I provide about my learning on the MA Social Work programme at Sussex is as valuable and welcome as any positive feedback and that there will be no negative consequences resulting from less positive feedback.
- I am in agreement that Michelle can link up my interview with my responses in the earlier stages of the research as part of the analysis.
- I am in agreement with the procedures regarding confidentiality outlined in the research information sheet.
- I am aware that Michelle Lefevre is conducting this study and I know how to get in contact with her should I require further information or have any questions.
- I understand that ethical clearance has been gained from the University of Sussex and I know who I need to contact should I have further questions about this.
- I know how to contact Michelle to arrange a mutually convenient time and place for the interview.
- I understand that I will receive a copy of the interview format in advance.
- I consent to the interview being recorded and a transcript being prepared.
- I understand that I will receive a copy of the transcript of the interview and can amend or add to it if I feel it does not sufficiently represent my views.
- I consent to my data being included in Michelle's Doctoral Research thesis and in any subsequent publications as long as the guidelines regarding anonymity are preserved.
- I understand that I will be given a £20 voucher (for Amazon, M&S or similar) in recognition of my time and trouble.
- If the reflections I engage in during the interviews were to provoke particular distress or difficulty for me for any reason, I know who to contact for further support (e.g. the Student Advisors at the University of Sussex, Student Counselling at the University of Sussex, counselling through my employer scheme).

Signature (participant)…………………………………… Date……………………

Signature (Michelle Lefevre)……………………………. Date……………………

Appendix 11 *Revised taxonomy of Communicative Capabilities for social work practice with children*

Domain	Dimensions	Descriptors	PCF
KNOWING **Knowing about children and their worlds and how best to work with them within the context of social work roles and tasks**	Child development	Able to draw critically on research evidence about social, intellectual and psychobiological development to tailor communication to children's capacities.	5.3 5.6
	Additional communi-cation needs	Understanding how children typically encountered within social work contexts have additional communication needs due to disabilities or the effects of adverse experiences, including trauma, abuse, neglect, loss, discontinuity of care and displacement.	5.4 5.7
	Purpose and mandate	Clarity about the role and purpose of communication with children, and their right to participation, mandated by specialist social work roles and framed by law, policy, practice guidance and ethical frameworks.	2.8 5.2 7.11 8.2
	Knowing the particular child	Awareness of the importance of getting to know each child within their family, cultural and social context so that their individual manner of communication, including strengths as well as vulnerabilities, are understood.	5.4 5.5 5.7
	Evidence-based practice	Awareness of models, approaches and methods known to be effective in communicating with children.	5.8 5.11
	Constraining factors	Awareness of how the social work context, power relations, prior experiences and worker approach may interrupt or constrain mutual communication and understanding.	3.5 5.5
	Cultural interpretation	Awareness of the role played by culture, religion, ethnicity and habitus in the way information is encoded and interpreted between social workers and children	3.1 3.2
BEING **Being able to embody core social work values, make ethical commitments and draw upon personal qualities and emotional capacities through child-centred use of self**	Core social work values	Conveying trustworthiness through embodying core social work values so that children feel safe to communicate (includes openness, honesty and transparency; reliability and consistency; respectfulness; dedication; attention to confidentiality).	1.5 2.1 2.6 2.7
	Anti-oppressive	Working non-judgmentally and anti-oppressively to mitigate unequal power relations, stereotyping, disadvantage and discrimination based on race, culture, gender, class, sexuality, disability, health and age.	3.2 3.3 3.5
	Promoting participation	Personally committed to promoting children's rights and capacity to participate in assessment, decision making, planning and review	2.5 3.3
	Relating sincerely & genuinely	Embodying sincerity, genuineness and congruence so that the child encounters a relating human being, not just a professional persona.	7.3
	Empathic, robust and authoritative	Being empathic, emotionally robust and authoritative enough to recognise and respond appropriately to children's strong feelings and challenging behaviour, whilst maintaining appropriate boundaries.	1.9 1.11 7.11
	Self-aware	Able to acknowledge and manage own feelings and	1.7

		subjectivities and the impact on practice of own personal experiences/histories and values.	2.2 2.3
	Working with depth processes	Able to work with depth processes that arise in engagements with children, such as projection, splitting, and counter-transference, and with children's complex feelings and internal worlds.	1.7 7.3
	Relating in a caring manner	Genuinely caring about children so that, by expressing enthusiasm, warmth, friendliness, kindness, humour, supportiveness and concern, children feel they really matter.	1.7 7.3
	Playful & creative	Being able to be playful and creative and feel comfortable in using the 'hundred languages of childhood'.	6.1
DOING **Child-centred methods, skills and techniques for effective communi-cation**	Models & methods	Skilled in using models and methods known to be effective for communication with children.	7.1
	Tools & frameworks	Proficient in use of tools, formats and frameworks dictated by the role.	7.1
	Child-centred	Communicating in a child-centred manner by allowing children to have some choice in and control over the approach, process and pace of the communication and by using the 'hundred languages of childhood'.	2.7 7.1
	Facilitating environment	Providing a facilitating environment which is safe, boundaried, caring, supportive and uninterrupted.	1.8 7.3
	Non-verbal communi-cation	Able to read children's non-verbal communication, through observing paralanguage, body language, play and relational style, and respond appropriately non-verbally as well as directly.	7.1
	Play & creative methods	Incorporating play, activities and visual techniques to complement verbal and written communication.	6.1 7.1
	Interviewing skills	Skilled in interviewing techniques such as listening, prompting, cues and varied types of questioning.	7.1
	Promoting participation	Using persistence and creativity to elicit children's views, experiences and concerns and taking them into account.	6.1 2.5
	Informing & explaining	Able to provide information and explanations in a clear, tailored and sensitive manner using a range of modes.	7.2 7.9
	Working in a relationship-based manner	Able to engage children, and build, manage, sustain and conclude compassionate, boundaried and empathic relationships within which all interventions are situated.	1.7 5.6 7.3

Appendix 12 *Draft Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) Outcome Statements at Qualifying Level*
(correct at 14.8.11)

1. Professionalism: Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development	
1.1	Be able to meet the requirements of the professional regulator
1.2	Be able to explain the role of the social worker, in a range of contexts, and uphold the reputation of the profession
1.3	Demonstrate an effective and active use of supervision for accountability, professional reflection and development
1.5	Demonstrate professionalism in terms of demeanour, reliability, presentation, honesty and respectfulness
1.6	Take responsibility for managing your time and workload effectively, and begin to prioritise your activity, including supervision time
1.7	Recognise the impact of self in interaction with others, making appropriate use of personal experience..
1.8	Be able to recognise and maintain personal and professional boundaries.
1.9	Recognise your professional limitations, and how to seek advice.
1.10	Demonstrate a commitment to your continuing learning and development.
1.11	Recognise the need to manage and promote own safety, health, wellbeing and emotional resilience
1.12	Identify concerns about practice and procedures and with support begin to find appropriate means of challenge
2. Values and Ethics: Apply social work ethical principles and values to guide professional practice.	
2.1	Understand and apply the profession's ethical principles, taking account of these in reaching decisions.
2.2	Recognise impact of own values upon professional practice.
2.3	Be able to manage potentially conflicting or competing values.
2.4	With guidance, recognise, reflect on, and work with ethical dilemmas.
2.5	Elicit and respect the needs and views of service users and carers and promote their participation in decision-making wherever possible.
2.6	Promote and protect the privacy of individuals within and outside their families and networks, recognising the requirements of professional accountability and information sharing.
2.7	Demonstrate respectful partnership work with service users, carers and professionals.
2.8	Understand the ethics underpinning the law and guidance and recognise how and where the law promotes and constrains people's rights.
3. Diversity: Recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice.	
3.1	Understand how factors such as culture, economic status, disability, gender, ethnicity, age, faith and sexual orientation inform identity
3.2	Respect and take account of differences of people's cultures, experiences and life histories, questioning cultural assumptions where necessary.
3.3	Identify, promote opportunities for, and address challenges to, social inclusion.
3.4	Recognise personal and organisational discrimination and oppression and with guidance make use of a range of approaches to challenge them.
3.5	Recognise and manage the impact on people of the power invested in your role
4. Rights, Justice and Economic Well-Being: Advance human rights, and promote social justice and economic well-being.	
4.1	Understand and apply in practice the principles of social justice, inclusion and equality.
4.2	Recognise that the law may be used to promote people's rights.
4.3	Work within the principles of human and civil rights legislation to understand whether interventions are lawful and proportionate and to question where necessary.
4.4	Appreciate the impact of poverty and social exclusion and promote enhanced economic status through access to education, work, housing, health services and welfare benefits.
4.5	Recognise and promote individuals' rights to autonomy and self determination.
4.6	Recognise the value of, and aid, access to independent advocacy.
4.7	Differentiate and begin to work with absolute, qualified and competing rights, and differing needs and perspectives.

5. Knowledge : Apply knowledge of human growth and development, psychological, social sciences, law and social work practice theory	
5.1	Demonstrate a critical understanding of the application to social work of research, theory and knowledge from sociology, social policy, psychology and health.
5.2	Demonstrate a critical understanding of the legal and policy frameworks and guidance that inform and mandate social work practice, recognising the scope for professional judgement.
5.3	Demonstrate a working knowledge of human growth and development throughout the life course.
5.4	Recognise the short and long term impact of psychological, socio-economic, environmental and physiological factors on people's lives, taking into account age and development, and how this informs practice.
5.5	Recognise how systemic approaches can be used to understand the person-in-the-environment and inform your practice.
5.6	Acknowledge the centrality of relationships for people and the key concepts of attachment, separation, loss, change and resilience.
5.7	Understand forms of harm and their impact on people, and the implications for practice, drawing on concepts of strength, resilience, vulnerability, risk and resistance.
5.8	Demonstrate a critical knowledge of the range of theories and models for social work intervention with individuals, families, groups and communities, and the methods derived from them.
5.9	Demonstrate a critical understanding of social welfare policy, its evolution, implementation and impact on people, social work, other professions, and inter-agency working.
5.10	Demonstrate a critical understanding of research methods.
5.11	Recognise the contribution, and begin to make use, of research to inform practice.
5.12	Recognise the need to extend own knowledge through the expertise of service users, carers and professionals.
6. Critical Reflection and Analysis: Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision-making.	
6.1	Apply imagination, creativity and curiosity to practice.
6.2	Inform decision-making through the identification and gathering of information from multiple sources, actively seeking new sources; with support, question and evaluate the reliability and validity of all information.
6.4	Demonstrate a capacity for logical, systematic, critical and reflective reasoning and apply the theories and techniques of reflective practice.
6.5	Know how to formulate, test, evaluate, and review hypotheses in response to information available at the time and apply in practice.
6.6	Begin to formulate and make explicit, evidence-informed judgements.
7. Intervention and Skills: Use judgement and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support and prevent harm, neglect and abuse.	
7.1	Identify and apply a range of verbal, non-verbal and written methods of communication and adapt them in line with people's age, comprehension and culture.
7.2	Be able to communicate information, advice, instruction and professional opinion, so as to advocate, influence and persuade
7.3	Demonstrate the ability to engage with people, and build, manage, sustain and conclude compassionate relationships
7.4	Demonstrate an holistic approach to the identification of needs, circumstances, rights, strengths and risks.
7.5	Select and use appropriate frameworks to assess, give meaning to, plan, implement and review effective interventions and evaluate the outcomes.
7.6	Use a planned and structured approach, informed by social work methods, models and tools, to promote positive change and independence and to prevent harm.
7.7	Recognise how the development of community resources, groups and networks enhance outcomes for individuals
7.8	Maintain accurate, succinct and timely records and reports in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines, and use them to support professional judgement and organisational responsibilities.
7.9	Begin to demonstrate skills in sharing information appropriately and respectfully.
7.10	Recognise complexity, multiple factors, changing circumstances and uncertainty in people's lives, and be able to prioritise your intervention.
7.11	Understand the authority of the social work role and begin to use this appropriately and confidently as an accountable professional.
7.12	Recognise the factors that create or exacerbate risk to individuals, their families or carers, to the public or to

	professionals, including yourself.
7.13	Identify, with support in supervision, appropriate responses to safeguard vulnerable people and promote their well being.
8. Contexts and Organisations: Engage with, inform, and adapt to changing contexts that shape practice. Operate effectively within own organisational frameworks and contribute to the development of services and organisations. Operate effectively within multi-agency and inter-professional settings	
8.1	Recognise that social work operates within, and responds to, changing economic, social, political and organisational contexts.
8.2	Understand the roles and responsibilities of social workers in a range of organisations, lines of accountability and the boundaries of professional autonomy and discretion.
8.3	Understand legal obligations, structures and behaviours within organisations and how these impact on policy, procedure and practice.
8.4	Begin to work within an organisation's remit, and contribute to its evaluation and development.
8.5	Understand and respect the role of others within the organisation and work effectively with them.
8.6	Take responsibility for your role and impact within teams and be able to contribute positively to effective team working.
8.7	Understand the inter-agency, multi-disciplinary and inter-professional dimensions to practice and demonstrate effective partnership working.
9. Professional Leadership: Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others through supervision, mentoring, assessing, research, teaching, leadership and management	
9.1	Recognise the importance of, and begin to demonstrate, professional leadership as a social worker.
9.2	Recognise the value of, and take responsibility for, supporting the learning and development of others.