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**Assessment as the site of power:  
An interrogation of the involvement of 'others'  
in the assessments of social work students**

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**Ann Anka**

**Thesis submitted for the  
Doctorate in Social Work**

**University of Sussex**

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# Summary

University of Sussex

Ann Anka

Submitted for the Doctorate of Social Work

## **Assessment as the site of power: An interrogation of the involvement of 'others' in the assessments of social work students**

The thesis focused on the *field* of service user and carer involvement in the assessments of social work students. It examined the positioning of service users and carers in relation to other stakeholders involved in student assessments. Participants' views on what should count as service users and carers' feedback evidence at Continuing Professional Development (CPD) level were also explored. The rationale for the study centred on the relatively limited research studies focusing on service user and carer involvements in students' assessment, in comparison to their involvement in other areas of social work education. Further, the limited studies available appeared to be under theorised.

The study is situated in the qualitative research tradition and drew from narrative research methods. It was influenced by the practitioner-doctorate research paradigm (Drake and Heath 2011). The study drew from the theoretical insights of Foucault's (1972; 1980) notion of discourse and power/knowledge theory; and Bourdieu's (1990) concepts of field, capital and habitus, to analyse the dynamic power relations between those involved in the assessments of students.

Following ethical clearance from the University of Sussex, a semi-structured individual interview was carried out with 21 people. The sample consisted of service users, carers, social work students, social work employers and social

work educators. The voice-centred relational method of data analysis, developed by Gilligan (1982), was used to analyse the research participants' narratives about how they have experienced their involvements in social work students' assessments.

Participants' narratives revealed that the *field* of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessment is characterised by a complex mix of relationships, different power dynamics and power struggles. On the question of what should count as service user and carer evidence, in relation to what students are expected to demonstrate to service users and carers at CPD level, the research participants reported on qualities such as:

- Professionalism, good time-keeping, reliability and honesty
- Effective communication skills, such as listening, empathy and kindness
- Ability to support service users and carers
- Intelligence, 'structured empathy', mastery of practice and development of practice wisdom.

Although important, progressive difference in expectation at CPD level was not acknowledged.

The study makes five contributions to knowledge in the *field* of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments, as follows:

- (1) It adds to the body of research studies looking at service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments.
- (2) It sheds some light on what stakeholders involved in social work practice and education thought about the ASYE in 2010 before its implementation in 2012.

- (3) It contributes to knowledge on what participants feel service users and carers should comment on when assessing social work students at CPD level.
- (4) It offers theoretical insight into the different power relations, struggles, and power dynamic between stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments from Bourdieusian and Foucauldian perspectives.
- (5) Feedback of the interim findings was provided to Skills for Care to support the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) assessment in 2011.

The study concludes by arguing the case for social work and service user organisations to support service users and carers in their role as assessors of social work students.

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ASYE	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
CAS	Critical Analytical Study
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CWDC	Children's Workforce Development Council
DBIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
DFCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DoH	Department of Health
GSCC	General Social Care Council
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institute
NQSW	Newly Qualified Social Worker
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
SCIE	Social Care Institute for Excellence
SWRB	Social Work Reform Board
SWTF	Social Work Task Force
TCSW	The College of Social Work

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### **1 Introduction**

This chapter begins with a brief overview about the positioning of service users and carers in social work student assessments in England. This is followed by an account of my research journey and what led to this study. The discussion includes the relationship between this study and previous work submitted as part of the Doctorate in Social Work programme. Particular references are made to a substantial piece of work undertaken in 2010, namely the Critical Analytical Study (CAS). The aims and objectives of the study are then presented. This is followed by evolution of the research questions. A background context follows; this includes a discussion of the social, political and economic context at the time of writing. It also introduces the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), the case example used in the study. Following this a discussion of definitional issues is presented. The chapter ends by providing an overview of the structure of the thesis.

### **1.1 Setting the context: The positioning of service users and carers in social work student assessments**

The centrality of service user and carer involvement in social work education in England is now well established, both in policy and practice (Chambers and Hickey 2012; DoH 2002; HCPC 2012; Munro Review 2011; Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) 2010; The Social Work Taskforce (SWTF) 2009; Wallcraft et al 2012). The policy requirement for service user and carer involvement, implemented in 2002, emphasised their participation in *all aspects* of social work education (DoH 2002). However, research evidence suggests service user and carer involvement in the assessment of students is underdeveloped, under researched and under theorised (Dearnley et al 2011; Debyser et al 2011; Masters and Forrest 2010; Muir and Laxton 2012; Skoura-Kirk et al 2013; Stacey et al 2012; Wallcraft et al 2012). Studies also suggest that there are

numerous barriers to carer involvement in the assessment of social work students (Taylor et al 2009; Wallcraft et al 2012). This includes both practical and ideological barriers such as time, lack of resources, issues relating to payments and mistrust with professionals (Heaton 1999; Morrow et al 2012; Smith et al, 2012).

Further, research in England indicates that service users and carers occupy a less powerful position than academics in their role as assessors (Stickley et al 2011). Skoura-Kirk et al's (2013) study reported that whilst service users and carers are included as major stakeholders in social work student assessments, their involvements in assessments are peripheral. The less powerful position occupied by service users in social work education also appears to be an international issue. Writing from the Norwegian context, Askheim (2011) notes that although social work education in Norway has embraced the involvement of service users, they still do not participate on equal terms. Given the emphasis placed in policy to involve service users and carers in social work student assessments, and with research studies suggesting that this area is underdeveloped, under researched and under theorised, it is important to understand, as well as add to, the body of knowledge in this area.

## ***1.2 Rationale: a personal journey***

The impetus for this study came through a personal, professional and academic interest in service user involvement in social work education and the assessment of students. I qualified as a social worker at Middlesex University in 2001. During my final year at university I opted for the Palliative Care and Social Work pathway. Following my qualification I worked as an adult social worker for three years before entering lecturing in 2004. As part of my lecturer responsibilities I co-work with service users and carers in the teaching and assessment of both undergraduate and post-qualifying social work students.

Therefore I came to the study with prior knowledge and practical experience of working with service users and carers, both in teaching and the assessment of students.

My personal interest in service user involvement in social work education came when I first involved a mental health service user in one of my teaching sessions. I was inspired by the personal narrative of his journey, and experiences of accessing both mental health and social work services. I have continued to involve service users in a number of my teaching sessions, finding the experience particularly beneficial for students, because it helps bridge the gap between the literature and a service user's perspective from actual experience. However, although I embrace and advocate for service user involvement in teaching and assessment, I was concerned about the absence of national criteria by which service users and carers could make their assessment judgements of students. My concerns centred on issues of transparency, fairness, justice, equity and accountability, and the student's right to know what service users and carers are looking for when assessing them; plus, its implications for student assessments. Although there was some guidance for practice educators and post-qualifying practice mentor assessors in the GSCC/Topss (2002) National Occupational Standards at the time, no such assessment guidance existed for service users and carers. Yet service users and carers were identified in policy as key stakeholders in social work student assessments, both in practice learning settings and the academy (DoH 2002).

This led me to conduct a small-scale qualitative research study, for my Masters Dissertation in 2007, which sought the views of social work students about the involvement of service users and carers in their assessments. I found that although students welcomed service user involvement in their teaching, they objected to them participating in assessments. This finding echoed a similar



study undertaken in mental health nursing by Frisby (2001), where the students who took part in Frisby's research also objected to the involvement of service users in their assessed presentation.

I conducted a pilot study, into the role of service users in the preparation of social work students for practice learning, as part of my first-year assignment on the doctorate programme (Anka 2009). I employed qualitative research methods drawing on Husserl's descriptive phenomenology. Husserlian phenomenology is interested in subjective, lived experiences. It assumes that human beings experience reality by living through it (Dowling 2004). Researchers using this philosophy are tasked to identify and describe the true 'essence' or meaning of the phenomena as they appear to the research participants through the process of 'bracketing' (Dowling 2004). The philosophy underpinning Husserl's descriptive phenomenology shaped my ontology (our being in the world) and epistemology (how we come to know the world). I drew upon Husserl's notion of 'bracketing', the process of blocking any preconceptions, pre-existing personal knowledge and beliefs about the phenomenon under study in order to gain a new understanding about the research topic (Dowling 2004; Kleiman 2004; Wall et al 2004). The process involved the use of a research diary for reflection, and discussions with colleagues before and after each interview to ensure that my prior knowledge about the research topic did not influence the data-gathering process. Husserl argues that through the process of 'bracketing' we allow ourselves to gain a clearer and unaltered insight into participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon under study (Kleiman 2004).

The pilot data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews and a group discussion with one service user, a social work student and a social work educator. The data were analysed using Giorgi's (1997) descriptive

method for data analysis. The findings suggested that service users and carers bring a unique perspective to this area. In contrast to the findings of my MA dissertation, the pilot study results suggested that service users should have a role in assessing students as part of their preparation for practice. This led me to undertake a literature review on *what is known about the involvement of service users and carers in the assessments of students* in 2010 also, as part of the doctoral student assessment, the Critical Analytical Study (CAS). This explored published literature and research up to 2010. Key areas included the drivers for service user and carer involvement in social work education in general and in particular the assessment of students. The CAS looked at the nature of service user and carer involvement in the assessment of students, and the criteria used by service users and carers (Anka 2010). The principles underpinning the systematic review methodology proposed by Gough (2007) were used in the CAS. Twenty-one published research articles were reviewed. The TAPUPAS framework developed by Pawson et al (2004) was used to judge the quality of the papers selected (see Appendix 1). Following this, narrative synthesis and thematic content analysis were employed to analyse the literature review data.

The CAS literature review found that the nature of service user and carers' involvement in students' assessment varied between institutions (Anka 2010). Unlike other initiatives involving service users and carers in social work education, their involvement in students' assessments was underdeveloped and under researched (Anka 2010). In addition, reporting on the involvement of carers in students' assessment was limited (Taylor et al 2009). For example, Taylor et al's (2009) study of nine HEIs and two external organisations found that, of those interviewed, less than a third reported carers' involvement in the design of assessment tasks, criteria and processes. Taylor et al's (2009) findings suggested differences in expectations existed between carers and

service users and that there were reported tensions when service users and carers were involved in the same initiatives.

The findings also suggested that service user and carer involvement in student assessments tended to concentrate on specific areas, including providing feedback (Advocacy in Action et al 2006; Cole 1994; Cuming and Wilkins 2000; Edwards 2003; Elliot et al 2005; Ferguson and Ager 2005; Frisby 2001; Gee et al 2009; Moss et al 2007; 2010; Shennan 1989; Stickley et al 2010; 2011) and assessing students' fitness to practice through their initial portfolios, assessment of practice and/or presentations (Advocacy in Action et al 2006a; Bailey 2005; Cuming and Wilkins 2000; Edwards 2003; Frisby 2001; Moss et al 2007; 2010; Shennan 1998; Stickley et al 2011). Regarding the assessment criteria used by service users, the findings indicated that they mainly focused on value issues and practice skills, such as trust, ability to listen and reflect, effective communication, observation and interpersonal skills (Advocacy in Action et al 2006a; Bailey 2005; Elliot et al 2005; Moss et al 2010; Speers 2008; Stickley et al 2011).

In addition, the study found that service users and carers when assessing students used various subjective criteria. These ranged from assessing what a good social worker would look like (Elliot et al 2005), levels of emotional intelligence (Gosling et al 2005), and what Moss et al (2010) described as *"Would I be happy to have this student social worker visit me in my home?"* (p.231). Of the studies reviewed, only one clearly aligned the criteria used for student assessments to a module learning outcome (Bailey 2005). However, the evidence used to support this claim showed a disparity between the service users' feedback and the expected learning outcome of the module.

Further, a number of the studies reported on various benefits of involving service users and carers in students' assessments (Advocacy in Action et al 2006; Felton and Stickley 2004; Frisby 2001; Moss et al 2010; Taylor et al 2009). These include, for example, assisting students to develop empathy, ability to reflect on skills, values and how to relate to service users (Advocacy in Action et al 2006a; Moss et al 2010). Edwards (2003) and Shennan (1998) both suggested it added value to students' assessments but raised concerns about the abilities of service users to provide critical and fair assessments. An unexpected yet significant finding of the CAS study was how the notion of 'expert by experience' (Scourfield 2009) was used to either include or exclude service users and carers from student assessments. The literature review found that although service users and carers were involved in student assessments at classroom level, they were excluded from assessment appeal processes beyond the classroom (Crisp et al 2006). This included the criteria used for selecting external examiners and HEI-wide assessment policies, practices and regulations, which excluded service user and carer assessors from participating as members of examination boards. The CAS review also found that service users and carers from child protection social work and palliative care were least likely to be involved in social work students' assessments.

My experience and observations from practice and the CAS shaped the basis of this study. A number of perspectives and contemporary policy agenda support the involvement of service users and carers in social work education and students' assessments. These are justified from different perspectives such as: rights, inclusions, empowerment and accountability (Braye 2000; Beresford 2013). Beresford and Croft (1993) and Ward et al (2009) agree that service user and carer involvement is concerned with equal rights, citizenship, democracy, inclusion, respect, non-discrimination, self-determination and empowerment. Molyneux and Irvine (2004) suggest service user and carer involvement is underpinned by an understanding of oppression and the desire

to counterbalance these through participative and empowerment processes. For these reasons I support the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessments. I believe that an input from the perspectives of those with lived experiences about a particular situation can add value to our understanding of '*what it feels like*' to be in a situation. As well as giving service users and carers a voice, their inclusion in social work students' assessments provides students with unique insights from their perspectives. This is supported by Furness et al's (2011) evaluation of a practice-based inter-professional educational initiative. The authors noted that the inclusion of service users is crucial to learning as it brings novel insights into their perspectives. Such involvement also validates service users and carers' knowledge and expertise, as it brings to students' assessments a plurality of views and perspectives. It also allows service users and carers the opportunity to provide a critique of our engagement with them and to learn from these critiques (Doel and Best 2008). I provide further reflections about my position on service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments in Chapter 8.

The study arose due to my concerns about the lack of procedural fairness, and issues with equity and accountability in social work students' assessments with service users and carers. The CAS findings left me with a number of questions that I wanted to explore, including:

- What is it about the nature and context of child protection social work and palliative care that makes it difficult for social work educators to involve this service user and carer group in the assessment of students?
- What is unique in these areas of practice? What complexities prevent this service user and carer group from involvement in students' assessments, and what is the way forward?

The CAS findings led me to question whether the profession and the academy (including myself) are more inclined to work with those with whom we have something in common, rather than those we do not. The findings also sparked questions about how policies come into being, filter into practice, and the effects they have on those implementing them, as well as those at the receiving end. These questions led me to both Foucault's (1972; 1980) discourse and power/knowledge theory, and Bourdieu's (1990) concepts of field, capital and habitus. Both offered a useful lens through which to examine complexities in practice. Although the two theoretical frameworks are useful, I was unable to explore them in more depth in the CAS. The study offered the opportunity to explore the use of both Foucault and Bourdieu's theoretical frameworks further. (I discuss this in more detail in Chapters 3 and 6).

The study was therefore shaped by the 'insider' practitioner-research paradigm. Drake and Heath (2011 p. 1) note that *"insider research depends upon the researcher having some experience or insight into the world in which the research is being undertaken and this may be from a personal point of view as well as, or instead of, from a professional perspective"*. I discuss the research paradigms which shaped the study more fully in Chapter 4, 4.7 (Methodological paradigm).

The study makes five contributions to knowledge in the *field* of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments:

- It adds to the body of research studies looking at service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments
- It sheds some light on what stakeholders involved in social work practice and education thought about the ASYE in 2010 before its implementation in 2012.

- It contributes to knowledge on what participants felt service users and carers should comment on when assessing social work students at CPD level.
- It offers theoretical insight into the different power relations, struggles, and power dynamic between stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments from Bourdieusian and Foucauldian perspectives.
- Feedback of the interim findings was provided to Skills for Care to support the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) assessment in 2011.

I shall return to the contributions to knowledge made by the study in Chapter 8, 8.10. The aims and objectives of the study are now presented. For reference purposes, the Critical Analytical Study will be referred to as 'the CAS', and the present study will be referred to as 'the study' throughout the paper.

### **1.3 Research aims and objectives**

The study aimed to add to practice and the literature by using both Foucault and Bourdieu's concepts and theoretical framework for understanding how service user and carer involvements in social work students' assessments are structured and positioned. It was therefore aimed at capturing the 'lived' experiences of stakeholders (social work educators, social work employers, service users and carers) involved in social work students' assessments, including social work students themselves, in England. It also sought participants' views on what service users and carers should comment on when assessing social work students at CDP level. The research question which guided the study is now presented and discussed.

## **1.4 Research question**

Consistent with the qualitative research tradition, a broad research question was posed to enable the research participants to share their experiences. The research question which guided the study was framed as:

***"How are service users and carers positioned in relation to other stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students?"***

A subsequent question was added:

***"What are stakeholders' experiences of their involvement with service users and carers in social work students' assessments?"***

Methodological literature indicates that the research question forms the basis of all research studies (Blaikie 2007; 2010; Esterberg 2002; Robson 2002). Blaikie (2007, p.7) suggests that it is the foundation of all research and *"make(s) a problem researchable"*. The literature advises that the research journey should start with a research question (Blaikie 2010; Esterberg 2002; Robson 2002). Blaikie (2010, p.17) claims *"...formulation of the research question is the real starting-point in the preparation of a research design"*. He provides some guidelines around three types of questions that could be posed when formulating a research question in the form of: *'what'*, *'why'* and *'how'*. Blaikie advises that one could proceed from *'what'* and *'why'* questions to a *'how'* question, if existing research addressed these questions. A *'how'* question was chosen as the main research question for the study, because the CAS provided some of the answers to the *'what'* and *'why'* questions, on service user and carer involvement in social work education and in the assessments of students. The *'what'* and *'why'* questions were used in the CAS to explore the policy and legislative drivers for service user and carer involvement in social work education.



I initially struggled in formulating my research question. At the start of the study I framed it as:

***"How is the process of assessment at the proposed final stage of social work qualification viewed by service users, students, employers and Higher Education Institutions?"***

Feedback from doctoral students' workshops (18<sup>th</sup> June 2011) suggested that the question was unclear, so I changed it to:

***"How do service users, social work employers, social work students and social work educators view the process of assessment at the proposed Assessed and Supported Year in Employment?"***

Three sub-questions were added as follows:

- What are stakeholders' views about the ASYE?
- What should count as service user and carer feedback evidence?
- What are the challenges and opportunities faced by social work employers, service users and carers and social work educators in implementing the ASYE in the economic climate at the time of writing?

These questions guided the study up to the middle part of the data collection stages. The question further evolved and was reframed as:

***"How are service users and carers positioned in relation to other stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students?"***

Evolution of the research question resulted partly from changes in policy and the social and political landscape at the time of writing (see Chapter 1, 1.5 – Background), as well as from the emerging themes arising from the initial

interview data (see Chapter 4, 4.15). Within the practitioner-research paradigm, Drake and Heath (2011, p.65) cite Engerstrom (2001, p.5), who observes that *"people and organisations are all the time learning something that is not stable, not even defined or understood ahead of time"*. Further, Robson (2002), among others, notes that *"there should be a repeated revisiting of all of the aspects [of the research design] as the research takes place [in flexible design]"* (p.81). Like Robson (2002), Esterberg (2002) notes that it is common in qualitative research for the research question to change. He comments that many scholars have argued that qualitative researchers should remain open about what the field setting or the research site has to offer (Esterberg 2002).

There now follows a background context of service user and carer involvement in social work. The discussion includes what mandated service user and carer involvement in social work education. The social, political and economic contexts at the time of writing are also presented, this includes the background context of the ASYE used as a case study to explore developmental issues and the positioning of service users and carers in social work students assessments.

## **1.5 Background**

The literature suggests that service user and carer involvement in social work dates back to the 1970s (Mayer and Timms 1970). The late 1990s witnessed the implementation of various laws that legitimised service user and carer involvement in social work (Molyneux and Irvine 2004). These included the Children Act 1989, the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, and the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995. In addition, political lobbying by service users directly resulted in the implementation of policies such as the Community Care (Direct Payments) Act 1996, Valuing People (DoH 2001), and Independence, Well-being and Choice (DoH 2005). Other

government directives that made service user and carer involvement in social work a mandatory requirement include Best Value for local authorities, stipulated in the Local Government Act 1999; the NHS Plan (DoH 2000); and Making Every Child Matter a Reality (DfES 2004). Beresford (2013) suggests that dissatisfaction with the profession among people who used services, as well as among the general public, together with the push for public accountability were some of the reasons for service user and carer involvement in social work education. Others suggest that the push for service user and carer involvement was underpinned by neoliberal new rights ideology and values such as rights, marketisation and consumerism (Barnes and Cotterell 2012; Braye 2000). I shall discuss more fully in the latter part of the work a critique of the professional doxa which mandated service user and carer involvement in social work education and students' assessments under Chapter 6, 6.10, further reflection will be provided under Chapter 8.

The structure of social work education in England consists of undergraduate BA, postgraduate Master's and doctorate degree. Newly qualified social workers can participate in a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme of study, previously known as Post-qualifying Award in Social Work, although this is not mandatory. The requirement to involve service users and carers in *all* aspects of social work education in England was initiated under Part IV, Sections 63 to 66 of the Care Standards Act 2000 when the BA degree was introduced (DoH 2002). The involvement of service users and carers in social work education was made a requirement for the approval of social work degree programmes in England in 2002 (GSCC 2002). Since then a range of statutory structures and duties aimed at promoting their involvement in social work education, including the assessments of students, have been established (DoH 2012a, GSCC/Topss 2002; QAA 2008; TCSW 2012; 2012a). The Health and Social Care Act 2012 Act amended the Care Standards Act 2000 (c. 14). Section 213 of the 2012 Act provided for the regulation of social work education by the HCPC in England.

Since taking over the regulation of social work education, the HCPC has placed emphasis on the inclusion of service users and carers' involvement in social work education. The Standard of Proficiency (SoPs 9.1) stipulates that students should show evidence they "*understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships with service users and carers*".

As stated in Chapter 1, 1.2, service users and carers have continued to contribute to social work students' assessments since 2002. The literature in this area indicates that they have made significant contributions (Wallcraft et al 2012). However, although progress has been made since the degree programme was implemented (Orme 2010), social work education went through major reforms between 2009 and 2013 following intense scrutiny from the general public and media after the death of baby Peter Connelly (SWTF 2009).

In 2009 the Labour government commissioned the Social Work Task Force to review frontline social work practice (SWTF 2009). The Social Work Task Force made 15 recommendations to address *perceived* failings in social work (Moriarty and Manthorpe 2013; SWTF 2009). Eight of the recommendations directly affected social work education. In its Interim Report, the Social Work Task Force highlighted the following in the area of students' assessments:

*'...specific concerns have been raised about the... robustness and quality of assessment, with some students passing the social work degree who are not competent or suitable to practise on the frontline'* (SWTF 2009, p.24).

The Labour government responded by establishing the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) to oversee the implementations of the Social Work Task Force's recommendations. Among others the reform included the establishment of The

College of Social Work and the development of the ASYE, which is aimed at newly qualified social workers (HCPC 2012; SWRB 2010; TCSW 2012). The ASYE was initiated to help drive up standards and restore public confidence in social work practice (Keen et al 2013; Moriarty and Manthorpe 2013; SWRB 2011; SWTF 2009).

ASYE is an employer-led programme that replaced the previous programme of study for newly qualified social workers (NQSW) (SWTF 2009). According to The College of Social Work, the ASYE is aimed at ensuring that NQSWs are supported during their first year of practice (TCSW 2012). Students undertaking ASYE are assessed against the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) (TCSW 2012). This established a framework by which the professional capabilities of social work students and social workers are judged throughout their professional career (SWRB 2011; TCSW 2012). The PCF was launched by The College of Social Work, the body which took forward the recommendations of Social Work Reform Board (TCSW 2012). PCF replaced the National Occupational Standards Key Roles and Key Values (GSCC/Topss 2002), the previous competency-based tool for assessing social work students (TCSW 2012).

Although social work employers, service users and HEIs were initially recommended as the stakeholders in the ASYE assessment (SWTF 2009), service users were not included when the programme was launched and their involvement in the ASYE assessments was hardly discussed at the time (SWRB 2011; 2011a). Indeed, in 2011 the SWRB Final Report stated that the PCF: *...will support HEIs and employers to identify and assess learning needs and outcomes and enable students to understand how they can meet and demonstrate these outcomes* (SWRB 2011b, p.3). The SWRB had promoted the inclusion of service users and carers in social work students' assessments in all documentations to this point; consequently this statement indicates a lost opportunity to introduce assessment criteria which are meaningful to service

users and carers and which complement the roles of other stakeholders. This is important, as key academics have discussed the inclusion and evaluation of assessment methods that meet the needs of other stakeholder groups in social work education (Crisp et al 2006; Crisp and Green Lister 2002).

It also epitomises the SWRB's priorities at the time. It was only after the implementation of the ASYE that discussions began about the inclusion of service users in students' assessments. This is evidenced by the Skills for Care website, which maps the development and implementation of the ASYE in conjunction with the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and the Department of Education (Skills for Care 2012). The inclusion of service users and carers in ASYE assessments was initiated by Skills for Care in November 2012. The agency launched a virtual forum, which brought together a number of professionals (including myself), service users and carer contributors, to look at how the latter should be involved in ASYE assessments.

There were additional missed opportunities. Although the ASYE was initially linked to a *licence to practice* when it was proposed in 2009 (SWRB 2011a; SWTF 2009), this was later dropped. Furthermore, whilst there was strong support from the profession, including the SWRB, in 2011 to link ASYE to registration, the HCPC took the decision not to do so (SWRB 2011a). Following a number of consultations with major stakeholder groups in social work, the ASYE was approved by the SWRB in March 2012 and implemented in September 2012 (SWRB 2012). There is still no direct link between ASYE, registration and regulation (Keen et al 2013; Skills for Care 2012a; SWRB 2012). Rather, it was reported that The College of Social Work would hold a record of all candidates who successfully complete the ASYE (Keen et al 2013). The College of Social Work is a membership organisation: it therefore raises the question of whose interests are being represented.

There was a change in government, following Labour's election defeat. When it took office in May 2010, the Coalition government had confirmed its commitment to social work reforms. However, it abolished the General Social Care Council (GSCC), which governed and regulated social work education, in July 2012 (DoH 2010). This brought an end to the legal and policy requirements to involve service users and carers in social work education (DoH 2002). The HCPC took over the regulatory function of social work, including education matters, from the GSCC in August 2012. The HCPC launched a consultation with stakeholders in September 2012 on how service users should be involved in its approved programmes (Chambers and Hickey 2012). The consultation focused on general service user involvements; carers' involvements did not feature in the documentation (Chambers and Hickey 2012). The Coalition government commissioned Professor Eileen Munro to review child protection social work (Munro 2011). The Munro Review reported that qualifying social work students were lacking skills on how to effectively communicate with children and young people (Munro 2011). Following implementation of the ASYE, a new programme of study called 'Frontline' has been proposed. The programme aims to attract high-achieving graduates into social work. The proposal makes no references to whether, or how, to include service users and carers in students' assessments (MacAlister et al 2012).

The backdrop to the aforementioned changes was the financial crisis of 2008, which resulted in severe cuts to both private and public sector services (DFCLG 2011; Harrison 2011; HM Treasury 2010). HEI grants for teaching were cut by more than 8% and research grants by nearly 3%, compared to allocated funding in 2010 (HEFCE 2011). Capital spending in higher education was also down by 58% (HEFCE 2011). There was uncertainty about how these cuts would impact on the reforms of social work education: for example, whether

social work students would pay for an additional year in social work training, as the implementation of the ASYE coincided with the introduction of a new funding system for universities in 2012. There were further uncertainties about whether the bursary system for social work education would be retained. Although a decision was made in May 2013 to retain bursaries, the system of administration changed (DoH 2013). Bursaries were retained for postgraduates and undergraduate second and third year students (DoH 2013). Other concerns centred on how cuts in services would impact on the involvement of service users and carers in the assessment of social work students.

The cuts also created uncertainty about whether the ASYE would be implemented in the spirit of its original conception by the Social Work Task Force in 2009. These concerns were reflected in the minutes of Social Work Reform Board meetings (SWRB 2011a). In addition, although HEIs were consulted, their involvement in the delivery of ASYE no longer became a formal requirement (Skills for Care 2012). The Skills for Care's website stated that *"employers are ultimately responsible for the decisions about success and failure in the ASYE"* (Skills for Care 2012, online). Equally, while contemporary informal discussions at social work conferences organised by Skills for Care, Social Work Reform Board and The College of Social Work between 2010 and 2011 suggested that local authorities preferred the ASYE to be mandatory, this requirement was also dropped (Gibbs 2011; Woodham 2011).

## **1.6 Definitional issues**

The terms 'service user' and 'carer' are difficult to define because they mean different things to different people (Beresford 2013; Fox 2011; McLaughlin 2009; Robinson and Webber 2013; Scourfield 2009). Writing for the HCPC, Chambers and Hickey (2012, p.3) noted that the term *"service user" is an amorphous*



*concept which can be used to refer to a variety of groups*". Nor is the term broadly known internationally. For example, the term 'service user' has not been adopted in the North American Social Work education literature. Indeed the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (2008) makes no reference to service users and carers neither does it make their involvements in social work education and assessments an accreditation requirement. Similarly, Gutman et al (2012) note that the general term used in Israel to refer to people who use health and welfare services is 'clients'. In contrast, the discourse and concept of service user and carer involvement is emerging from Scandinavian countries (Kvarnström et al 2013; Kvarnström et al 2012; Quetzal Tritter and McCallumb 2006).

A review of the literature from the UK policy and professional social work context found that service users were defined by their relations to, or access to, health and social care services (Beresford 2013; DoH 2006; McLaughlin 2009). In other allied professions, the terms used include 'patient volunteers' (Webster et al 2012), 'patient voice assessors' (Muir and Laxton 2012), 'patients' (Reinders et al 2011) and 'client' (Debyser et al 2011). The literature from service users contrasts sharply with the definitions from the professional discourse. Beresford (2013) points out that most service users dislike the professional definition assigned to them. He states, "*people define themselves not in terms of services or practitioners, but rather in terms of their lives and their overall identity*" (p.189). Rimmer and Harwood (2004) refer to service users as 'citizens'. Other terms include 'expert by experience', used by some academics and service user educators (Fox 2011; McLaughlin 2009; Scourfield 2009). Barnes and Cotterell (2012), provide a list of terms that people who are involved in what is referred to as '*service user involvement*' would like to be identified by as:

*"consumers or users of specialist health and social care services, citizens with rights to fair and equal treatment; as experts in their own lives, the conditions, the experience and the management of their treatment; as partners in the design and delivery of services; as 'ordinary people' who can bring a lay perspective to health policy making; political activists; as researchers involved in the generation of new knowledge"* (Barnes and Cotterell 2012, p xxii).

Smith et al (2012, p.1461) summarise the problems of definition: *"terms such as 'service user involvement' and 'user participation' might be difficult to disagree with... it is often unclear what they mean or who the 'service users' in question might be"*.

The discourse of 'informal carers' presents its own definitional challenges. Like 'service user', the term 'carer' is also contested because it means different things to different people. Whilst carers are defined within law as those who provide *"regular and substantial care"* under s.1 of the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995, research suggests that not everyone who provides regular and substantial care to their loved ones would define themselves as a carer. Using a modified definition of 'carers' by the Council for Wales (<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/socialcare/carers/?lang=en>), Taylor et al (2009) encapsulate the different identities in which carers may view themselves:

*"...people who support family members or friends who need care, help or support. Carers can be adults caring for other adults, parents caring for ill or disabled children under the age of 18, or young carers under 18 who care for another family member. There is not a typical carer. Carers may be of any age, culture or religion,*

*and from a diverse range of backgrounds. Some carers do not see themselves as carers, but see themselves primarily as a parent, child, wife or husband, partner, friend or neighbour”* (Taylor et al 2009, p. viii).

As well as being socially constructed as providers of care from both professional and carers’ discourses, carers are also identified as users of social work services, through implementation of a number of policies and legislation including the Carers & Disabled Children Act 2000 and Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004. This trend is manifested in new policies implemented by the Coalition government. For example, the White Paper, *Caring for our Future: reforming care and support* (DoH 2012), and the Care Act 2014 defines carers in relation to their role both as providers of care and as recipients of social care services.

Further, debates exist about what service user involvement and/or participation entails. Review of the literature found that different languages are used, depending on the context. Service user and carer involvement is described as ‘citizen engagement’ or ‘service user’ or ‘carer participation’. Barnes and Cotterell (2012, p.xxii) point out that *“the language of involvement is wide ranging, confusing and at times seemingly contradictory”*. Chambers and Hickey (2012, p.3) cite Morrow et al (2012, p.19) who say that the *“language is developing rapidly in this field and different terms are used to mean different things in different research and healthcare contexts, and internationally”*. Adding to this confusion, the term ‘service user’ or ‘carer’ is not a fixed identity. My experience from practice suggests that most of the service users who participate in social work students’ assessments are uncomfortable with the term ‘service user’. For researchers, the different terminologies present challenges when using electronic search engines to locate research articles focusing in the area.

In the study I used the term 'service user' to refer to people with lived experiences of using both health and social care services, who bring lay perspectives of their experiences to the teaching, learning and assessment of students. I also refer to them as 'service user assessors' or 'carer assessors'. Although there are debates about the correct terminology, I decided to use the term 'service user' because it is the one predominantly used in the UK literature. The study adopts the definition of 'carers' offered by Taylor et al (2009) above. I now provide a map of the study's structure.

## **1.7 Structure of the study**

**Chapter 2** – This chapter presents the literature review. It builds on the literature review undertaken in the CAS; particularly focusing on literature published between 2010 and the spring of 2013. A variety of materials, including peer and non-peer reviewed papers, are examined to look at the positioning of service users and carers in relation to other stakeholders involved in students' assessments.

**Chapter 3** – This chapter discusses my theoretical influences: Foucault and Bourdieu. It presents their key concepts and the rationale for drawing from their conceptual frameworks for understanding power relationships between and among those involved in social work students assessments.

**Chapter 4** – The chapter focuses on methodological issues, the research design, and the strategies employed. It also discusses issues of ethics, method of data collection and the method of data analysis used. Audit trails of the methods used are provided to assist transparency and trustworthiness of the methods used.

**Chapter 5** – This chapter presents the findings which emerged from the empirical work. The findings are presented as *stories*.

**Chapter 6** – The chapter provides synthesis and theorisation of the findings. It builds on Chapter 3 by using both Foucault's notion of discourse power/knowledge theory and governmentality and Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus, to make sense of the interview data and the field.

**Chapter 7** – The chapter presents discussion of findings. This draws from the two literature reviews undertaken in the CAS and the study to locate the findings in the wider context of service user and carer involvements in students' assessments.

**Chapter 8** – This chapter provides a reflexive account of the research journey from a practitioner doctorate researcher perspective. It discusses the strengths and limitations of the methodology and methods used, as well as the study's outcomes and impact. A number of recommendations are also made. It concludes by presenting my personal and professional learning, final thoughts, and possible ways forward in light of the study's findings.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

The chapter has provided the context, rationale and impetus for the study. It explained my personal and professional journey, what led to the CAS literature review and how the learning and reflections from CAS informed the study. It also provided the study's aims and objectives, evolution of the research question and definitions issues. The literature review is now presented.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

### ***2. Introduction***

The chapter presents and discusses the literature review which was undertaken to examine the positioning of service users and carers in students' assessment. The discussion includes the literature search strategy, the inclusion criteria used, the number of papers reviewed and the findings. As discussed in Chapter 1, 1.2 (Rationale: a personal journey) the CAS literature review looked at what is known about the involvement of service users and carers in the assessment of students up until 2010. This chapter builds on the CAS review, addressing the period between 2010 and spring 2013.

### ***2.1 Literature search strategy***

Data for the literature review were sought from the electronic data bases Social Care Online (SCIE), SCOPUS and Applied Social Science Index Abstract (ASSIA). The search terms used were: 'service user involvement', 'carer involvement', 'service user AND students assessments' and 'children' and 'young people'.

### ***2.2 Inclusion criteria***

The inclusion criteria focused on papers reporting on the involvement of service users and carers in the assessments of social work students and other allied professional students. These included research studies published in English, undertaken in the UK and abroad between 2010 and spring 2013. Those focusing on the general involvement of service users and carers in education and training were rejected. However, they were used to draw attention to the lack of research in the area of service user and carer involvement in students' assessments. Abstracts were screened and full texts of articles which appeared

to meet the inclusion criteria were selected. Pawson et al's (2004) TAPUPAS framework was then used to evaluate the papers selected (see Appendix 2). The TAPUPAS framework comprises seven generic standards statements or principles for assessing the sources of knowledge used in social care. It consists of the following:

*Transparency – is it open to scrutiny?*

*Accuracy – is it well grounded?*

*Purposivity – is it fit for purpose?*

*Utility – is it fit for use?*

*Propriety – is it legal and ethical?*

*Accessibility – is it intelligible?*

*Specificity – does it meet source-specific standards?*

(Pawson et al 2004, p.ix)

Pawson and colleagues identify five different types of knowledge used in social care: organisational knowledge, practitioner knowledge, policy knowledge, research knowledge and service user and carer knowledge (Pawson et al 2004). Due to the nature of the research, I sought to include information from these different types of knowledge (Pawson et al 2004). Both peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed materials were selected. The decision to include non-peer reviewed materials was informed by Pawson et al's (2004) work. Within the traditional hierarchy of evidence, a non-peer reviewed paper would count as 'expert opinion' and be given less 'weight'. Pawson et al (2004) argue that whilst such categorisations are viewed as important, they fail to recognise the different types of knowledge used in social care. To assist with the operationalisation of the quality assessment judgement, retrieved papers were regrouped under three main categories: 'topic relevance', 'purpose' and

'application'. Different criteria were set against each of categories. The standard statement principles unpinning the TAPUPAS framework were used to guide the operationalisation of the categories and the subsequent criteria used.

The following criteria guided the selection process under the category 'topic relevance': *does the focus of the material/study under review contribute to answering my research question?* Papers focusing on the involvement of service users and carers in the assessments of students and/or those providing critical commentaries about service user and carer involvement in students' assessments were selected. This category was informed by the TAPUPAS standards statement principles underpinning Accessibility, Utility and Specificity. For the category, 'useful to know or fit for purpose', the criterion used was framed as follows: *Is the method used in the paper appropriate to address my research question?* TAPUPAS standard statement principles underpinning Purposivity, Utility, Propriety, Accessibility and Specificity informed the development. In contrast, the category 'application' was used specifically to assess methodological relevance. This category was informed by the TAPUPAS standard statement principles Transparency, Accuracy, Propriety and Accessibility. The criterion which guided the assessment judgement was framed as: *was the research methodology selected and used in the paper applied appropriately, was it clearly set out?*

## **2.3 Assessing the weight and quality of the evidence**

In assessing the weight and quality of the evidence, papers which met all the three criteria under topic relevance – useful to know (*is the method used in the paper appropriate to address my research question?*), purpose (*is the method used in the paper appropriate to address my research question?*) and application (*was the research methodology selected and used in the paper applied appropriately, is it clearly set out?*) – were rated higher than those that



fulfilled only two criteria. Papers which only met one criterion were included, but rated much lower.

This approach was adopted to allow materials written from different stakeholder perspectives and different viewpoints to inform the study. It was also used to inform my study design, as well as the evaluation, later on, of my study findings within the broader literature on how service users and carers have been involved students' assessments. Retrieved papers meeting all three criteria provided the most robust evidence needed to address the research question and the methodology used in the study. Taking into account the nature of the research, papers that met one or two of the criteria were also included, as they also provided helpful insights into how service users and carers have been involved in students' assessments.

Table 1 presents the literature search strategy and the number of papers located.

Electronic data base	Key word	Sourced	Numbers meeting inclusion criteria
Social Care Online	Service user involvement	140	3
Social Care Online	Carer involvement	83	3 (This included duplications with studies located using the key term 'service user involvement')

SCOPUS	Service user AND students assessment	46	8
Applied Social Science Index Abstract (ASSIA)	'children' and 'young people'	3	None
Studies meeting the inclusion criteria: The breakdown of studies which looked at the involvement of service users and carers (including children and young people) in the assessments of students published between 2010 and spring 2013.			
Journal			Numbers of studies located
British Journal of Social Work			None found
Journal of Social Work			None found
Nurse Education Today			7
Social Work Education: The International Journal			3
Practice Social Work in Action			None found
Children & Family Social Work			None found
Child & Adolescent Social Work			None found
Children and Society			None found
Professional Social Work			1 duplication
Social Care online (SCIE)			3
Innovations in Education and Teaching International			1
Medical Education			1
<b>Total</b>			<b>15</b>

Table 1- Literature search strategy and the number of papers located

A total of 140 papers' references were located on SCIE using the keyword 'service user involvement'; 83 resources were located using the keyword 'carer involvement'. These included duplication of the papers already located using the keyword 'service user involvement'. Titles and abstracts were screened at this stage to select the papers which sought to address the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessments; a total of three papers were selected. This included two non-peer reviewed papers. The SCOPUS search, using the key word 'service user AND students assessment,' located 46 documents. Further searches were undertaken through ASSIA using the key word 'children AND young people': three studies were located but none of them met the inclusion criteria. A total of 28 articles published between 2010

to the spring of 2013 were located. Of these, eight articles met the inclusion criteria.

In addition, the table of contents and list of advance access publications of *Social Work Education: The International Journal*; *British Journal of Social Work*; *Journal of Social Work*; *Practice: Social Work in Action*; *Children & Society*; *Children and Family*; *Social Work and Child & Adolescent Social Work* were hand searched. Studies specifically considering service users' involvement in the assessments of students were limited in comparison to studies which had looked at service user and carer involvement in other areas of social work education and research.

In the area of children and young people's involvement, 12 studies were located in the journals *Children and Society* (nine studies) and *Children and Family Social Work* (three studies). However, none of the studies located in these two journals met the inclusion criteria. Although the search identified that children and young people have participated as peer researchers in social work research or have been consulted in decision-making processes affecting the delivery of services, no research studies reporting on children and young people's involvement in social work students' assessments were located. Overall only three studies meeting the inclusion criteria were located in the seven key social work journals. These were located in *Social Work Education: The International Journal*. Further searches were undertaken to identify non-peer-reviewed literature or research by service users and carers from service user and carer organisations' websites about their involvement in the assessments of social work students. These included: Social Work Education Participation (SWEP), Participation Compass, Shaping Our Lives and INVOLVE. The search from the SWEP website located three studies. These included yet more duplicated materials located from the SCIE website. No studies were located

through Participation Compass, Shaping Our Lives and INVOLVED websites searches.

As a result, the literature search was extended to related professions such as nursing and medicine. The journal *Nurse Education Today* was reviewed from 2010 to spring 2013. This was undertaken manually, by going through the title pages of each of the volumes. Retrieved references were selected by title and abstracts. Studies which looked at service user and carer involvement in students' assessments were selected. Those examining involvement in training and education of students in general were rejected. In total seven studies were selected; this included duplications of the studies located using SCOPUS. Other professional education journals were not reviewed because the SCOPUS data identified that, aside from the studies already identified, only two journals had published articles about service user and carer involvement during the period 2010 to spring 2013. These were located in the journals *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* and *Medical Education*. Fifteen papers in total were included in the final literature review. Of these five studies were located outside of England.

## **2.4 What the literature says**

The literature review explored the positioning of service users and carers in students' assessments. It initially presents studies that looked at how service users and carers have been involved in social work students' assessments. This is followed by a discussion of studies examining how service users and carers have been involved in the assessments of related professional students' assessments. The literature review is structured under the following themes:

- The positioning of service users and carers in students' assessments

- Approaches to service user and carer involvement
- Challenges and barriers to service user and carer involvements in students' assessments

## ***2.5 The positioning of service users and carers in students' assessments***

The review of the literature found that service user and carer involvement in social work education was well reported (Duffy et al 2013; Shaw 2012; Skilton 2011; Skoura-Kirk et al 2013; Wallcraft et al 2012). However, limited studies were located on their involvement in students' assessments; the review found that this area was under theorised (Duffy et al 2013; Skilton 2011; Skoura-Kirk et al 2013; Wallcraft et al 2012). Three studies on service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments were found (Duffy et al 2013; Skilton 2011; Skoura-Kirk et al 2013).

Skilton (2011) reports on the involvement and evaluation of service users and carers in students' assessments at Kingston University in England. Skoura-Kirk et al (2013) looked at the involvement of service users and carers in the assessment of academic work of second year BA Social Work students at Canterbury Christ Church University, England. Duffy et al (2013) also reported on an evaluation of the processes and outcomes of service users and carers' involvement in students' assessments at a university in Northern Ireland.

Duffy et al's (2013) study focused on the involvement of service users and carers in role-play presentations by first-year social work students, which they noted was initiated by a service user. The findings indicated that both staff and students were mostly neutral or quite positive about service user involvement in the role-play assessments. The student participants reported that service user

and carer involvement in their role-play assessments would enable them to develop skills and confidence for practice. Duffy et al (2013) used a mixed-method approach to collect data that was pre- and post-involvement. The sample of those who participated in the pre-involvement assessments consisted of staff who taught on the module ( $n=8$ ), students ( $n=50$ ), and a focus group discussion with service users ( $n=3$ ) and carers ( $n=3$ ). The post-assessment sample consisted of the same number of staff, service users and carers. However, the number of students who took part dropped to 34.

Similar to Duffy et al (2013), Skilton's (2011) sample consisted of lecturers, students and service users and carers. Skilton (2011) provides a strong argument for involving service users and carers in social work students' assessments, as a way of enabling students to recognise the value of partnership work at the start of their training. This is how she describes the institution's partnership arrangements with service users and carers:

*"The partnership approach in all activities is underpinned by a staff commitment to seeking, listening to and valuing the views and perspectives of experts by experience, with an acknowledgement that the power to make final decisions is retained by academic staff"* (Skilton 2011, p.301).

She also makes clear that it was module leaders who made the final decision regarding academic grades. Skilton's (2011) experience is shared by Skoura-Kirk et al (2013). Skoura-Kirk and colleagues highlighted some of the tensions and constraints faced by social work academics, service user and carer assessors within HEI assessment systems and structures. The authors indicate that although service users were involved in the design and the delivery of the module, the university's regulations did not grant them the power to allocate final marks in students' assessments. Skoura-Kirk et al (2013) reported getting

around this by involving the service user assessors informally, enabling them to contribute to the assessment decision-making process. One of the authors, a service user, sums up the positioning of service users in HEI assessment systems and structures in the context of their involvement in social work students' assessments:

*"It still feels somewhat on the periphery of the 'partnership', where marking/assessing cannot yet take place by a service user where it forms part of the final mark for students, even though you might feel influential. Can a service user not also be an academic with this authority, given appropriate training and guidance for quality assurance?"* (Skoura-Kirk et al 2013, p.562).

Further, Wallcraft et al's (2012) study, commissioned by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), reported that unlike other areas of social work education, service user involvement in students' assessments was underdeveloped. The findings also suggested that involvement in students' assessments on post-qualifying programmes (now known as CPD) was weak (Wallcraft et al 2012). Wallcraft and colleagues used a combination of surveys, case studies and interviews. They also used reported data from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) on how service users and carers have been involved in social work programmes from 2008 to 2009 (Wallcraft et al 2012). In addition the authors interviewed 16 people with responsibility for managing grants for service user and carers' involvement. Chambers and Hickey's (2012) study, commissioned by the HCPC, reported similar findings. The authors explored the involvement of service users in the design and delivery of pre-registration education and training programmes approved by the HCPC. They confirmed that involvement in students' assessments was underdeveloped (Chambers and Hickey 2012). They used a mixed-method approach, consisting of qualitative interviews/focus groups and a questionnaire (Chambers and

Hickey 2012). Their sample was made up of professionals covered by the HCPC, students and service users. Unlike most studies in this area, which are often small-scale in sample size, Chambers and Hickey (2012) reported a response rate of 35%: 191 of the 540 questionnaires distributed. In addition to the questionnaire the authors conducted focus group interviews with service users and students. It is interesting that although carers had been involved in both health and social care, this study only focused on service users. In the area of students' assessments, the study findings indicated that service users were more likely to be involved through provision of informal feedback, rather than as part of a formal assessment (Chambers and Hickey 2012).

A non-peer-reviewed paper by Shaw (2012) adds to the body of knowledge in this area. Discussing the various ways in which service users and carers' feedback has been sought in practice learning settings, the author refers to questionnaires designed by students in conjunction with their practice educators. Significantly, Shaw (2012) questions the lack of critical discussion in the area of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments. He highlights the complexities of obtaining service user and carer feedback in settings such as child protection social work. Shaw remarks that the power relationship between service users and professionals in this setting may affect service users and carers' ability to provide open and critical feedback.

As in social work education, the studies in *Nursing Education Today* reported that, despite the growing body of literature on service user and carer involvement in the medical and social care profession, limited studies exist regarding their involvement in students' assessments (Dearnley et al 2011; Debyser et al 2011; Muir and Laxton 2012; Stacey et al 2012; Stickley et al 2010). Muir and Laxton (2012) indicated that although service users and carers have long been involved in the training of medical students, they have played a



passive role in assessments. This was echoed by Debyser et al (2011), who concurred that although service users play a central role in psychiatric nursing, they are '*seldom formally*' involved in providing feedback on student nurses' practice training assessments (p.198). Stacey et al (2012), although agreeing with the principle of service user and carer involvement in student assessments, advise that caution needs to be exercised. The authors question whether service users and carers should be involved in student nurses' assessments without a required evidence base demonstrating its effectiveness. They argue that without the evidence base and research guidance on how curriculum planners should involve service users, there is the danger that this will be a tokenistic 'tick the box' exercise (Stacey et al 2012). The authors indicate that whilst the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2008) provides a list of mentor and practice teachers' requirements in their 'Standards to support learning and assessments in practice', no such references are made to service users and carer assessors (Stacey et al 2012). They conclude that:

*"the omission leaves open the possibility of enormous variation in the ways in which students are assessed and the possibility of service users and carers being exploited and undermined in a process which is expected but underexplored"* (Stacey et al 2012, p.482).

Reinders et al's (2011) research, argued that, theoretically, patients who consult general practice trainees are the ones best positioned to give feedback. The authors carried out a controlled trial into the effectiveness of service user involvement in general practice trainees' communication skills in the Netherlands (Reinders et al 2011). The sample of those who took part in the intervention group consisted of ( $n=23$ ), and ( $n=30$ ) for those in the controlled group. Their study did not provide conclusive evidence on whether involvement

of service users in students' assessments improved general practice trainees' communication skills.

## ***2.6 Approaches to service user and carer involvement***

Reviewing how service users and carers are positioned in students' assessments, most of the papers reported involvement by means of providing feedback to assessments (Debyser et al 2011; Muir and Laxton 2012; Reinders et al 2011; Webster et al 2012) or developing assessment tools (Munro et al 2012; Muir and Laxton 2012; Stickley et al 2010; 2011). Webster et al's (2012) study explored the experiences, views and evaluation of service user and carer involvement in giving feedback to nursing students at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. As in the studies in social work education, Webster et al (2012) reported that service users were involved in a clinical skills simulation scenario. The authors emphasise the lack of a criterion against which service users and carers could make their assessment judgements. They cited Bokken et al's (2010) systematic review, which identified a lack of standardisation in this area and recommended providing training for service users and carer assessors involved in students' assessments. Debyser et al (2011) explored the feasibility of involving service users and carers in psychiatric nursing students' assessments by means of providing feedback. Debyser et al's (2011) sample consisted of service users, students, nurses and teachers. Muir and Laxton (2012) also researched the experience of service users involved in giving formative feedback to third-year medical students at the University of Leeds. The authors used their study to inform the development of a multi-sourced, inter-professional practice feedback form, which included service users and carers' feedback. Muir and Laxton's (2012) sample consisted of four (n=4) service users.

Similar to Muir and Laxton's (2012) work, Stickley et al (2010; 2011) involved service users and carers in the development of an assessment tool for nursing students' practice. In contrast to most of the papers in this area, Muir and Laxton (2012) and Webster et al (2012) provided training and support for the service users and carers who were involved in the students' assessments. Munro et al (2012) reported on an innovative study at the University of Glasgow. Service users and carers were involved in assessing and awarding grades to students on a task which required the students to research and produce an information leaflet for patients newly diagnosed with inflammatory bowel disease. Similar to Munro et al (2012), Dearnley et al (2011) explored the views of students, service users and carers, and practice assessors about involving service users and carers in the assessment of health and social care students during practice placements. Their study identified a number of benefits as well as challenges, such as managing ethical issues, the timing of seeking service users' feedback, and validity and reliability, in particular the capacity of certain groups of service users to perform assessment.

Of the papers reviewed, only one attempted to measure the effectiveness of service users' involvement in students' assessments (Reinders et al 2010). Most of the papers located in the allied professions' studies employed qualitative research methodologies (Debyser et al 2011; Muir and Laxton 2012; Stickley et al 2010; Webster et al 2012). The sample size of service users and carers involved in the studies was often very small. Only one study used a quantitative research method (Reinders et al 2010). Like the studies located in the social work journal (Duffy et al 2013; Skilton 2011; Skoura-Kirk et al 2013), only one study located from the allied health care professions attempted to theorise its findings (Chambers and Hickey 2012). Further, the review identified that the authors from allied health professions set out their ethical clearance processes clearly (Debyser et al 2011; Stickley et al 2010; 2011; Webster et al 2012),

whereas these were not described by those publishing in the social work journal (Duffy et al 2013; Skilton 2011; Skoura-Kirk et al 2013).

## ***2.7 Challenges and barriers to service user and carer involvements***

Chambers and Hickey (2012) identified issues regarding reimbursement/payment, reported power struggles and resistance to the idea of service user involvement. In terms of the wider HEI assessment system, the review of literature found that provision of internal structure and support for service users and carers was almost non-existent (Chambers and Hickey 2012). In contrast, it highlighted the availability of resources and guidance to support academics new to the process of students' assessments (QAA 2012). For example, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA 2012) provides guidance on how to design and conduct assessments. Although the involvement of service users and carers in service provision has been a policy requirement in the UK since the 1990s, it is not reflected in this particular publication. Rather, the publication refers to other stakeholders in students' assessments, such as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and employers, failing to acknowledge service users and carers (QAA 2012).

The literature findings provide an indication of how service users and carers in the area of students' assessments are positioned in key social work and related professional journals. The literature research did not identify any studies that have looked at how young service users and carers have been involved in the assessments of students. The review showed that most of the participants involved in the various studies reported, both from social work education and the allied health professions, consisted of students, lecturers, and adult service

users and carers. Although Debyser et al (2011) and Chambers and Hickey (2012) included practitioners in their sample, they mainly consisted of health care practitioners rather than social work practitioners. This provided the scope to include social work employers as part of my study sample, not only as a way of addressing this gap, but also to create the opportunity to hear their experiences and views on how have experienced the involvement of service users and carers as key stakeholders in social work students assessments. Further, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, of the studies reviewed only Chambers and Hickey (2012) attempted to theorise their findings. My study aims to add to the literature by using both Foucault and Bourdieu's concepts and theoretical framework for understanding how service user and carer involvements in students' assessments are structured and positioned. Foucault and Bourdieu's concepts are discussed in Chapter 3.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented and discussed the literature review. A range of academic literature, including peer and non-peer reviewed materials has been examined on how service users and carers have been involved in students' assessments between 2010 and 2013. The review drew from studies both in the UK and abroad. These included materials relating to other professional education fields, such as nursing and medicine. The number of research articles published in key social work academic journals focusing on the involvement of service users and carers in social work students assessment, as compared to those located in the allied health profession journals, provide some insights into the prominence given to their involvements in students' assessments. What follows is a discussion of my theoretical influences.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical influences: Foucault and Bourdieu**

### ***3. Introduction***

This chapter discusses the two theorists who influenced my work, Foucault and Bourdieu. It provides a brief biography of the two theorists, a discussion of their conceptual frameworks and how their concepts informed the study.

Foucault and Bourdieu were French philosophers who studied at the same university, Ecole Normale in Paris. Unlike Bourdieu, Foucault was not a sociologist; he questioned the very existence of the social sciences, including sociology. Foucault suggests that we tackle truth by questioning it as a discursive formation. Of interest to this study is the question of how service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments was first articulated, how it was called into being, how it was translated into policy and practice, and how it affects practice (Foucault 1972). In contrast, Bourdieu focused on social practice and was interested in who profited or benefited from the constructed object, once it was called into being. Bourdieu focused on who had access to resources, who was included and who was excluded. There are differences between the two philosophers in terms of their methodology and theoretical perspectives. Foucault is presented first, followed by a discussion of Bourdieu.

### ***3.1 Michel Foucault***

Foucault (1926–1984) was a philosopher and historian. He wrote extensively across disciplines such as history, philosophy, sociology and literary theory

(McNay 1994). Foucault was against biographical profiling; he challenged the notion of the author. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he notes, "*I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same*" (Foucault 1972, p.19). I have therefore stayed true to him by providing this very brief biography. Of interest to the study is his earlier work, the 'archaeological' phase – particularly his discussions on discourse – and his later work, the 'genealogical' phase, which focused on the relationship between power and knowledge, and the governing of self. Foucault's notion of discourse is used in this study to examine how service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments was initiated and implemented. His discussion of power/knowledge is also used for understanding and theorising on the power relationships between service users, carers and other stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students. The notion of governmentality is used to analyse disciplinary technologies, such as students' assessments, and the policy initiative of service user and carer involvement in students' assessments. Disciplinary technology is described as a mechanism of power, used to shape the conduct of individuals (Foucault 1980). The study argues that the policy initiative places all stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments at the heart of disciplinary technology, which then regulates not only the conduct of those directly involved, but also the institutions providing social work education programmes. I begin with a discussion of Foucault's notion of discourse.

Foucault believed that knowledge is connected to discourse and is controlled in every society through mechanisms of power (Foucault 1972; 1980). He viewed discourse as a system of statements that construct an object (Foucault 1972). Foucault (1980) posits that discourse provides a way of thinking or talking about something. He suggested that power is experienced through language, forms of thinking, and practice. Citing Foucault, Hall (2001, p.73) contends that "*physical things and actions exist but they only take on meaning and become*

*objects of knowledge through discourse*". This is echoed by McNay (1994, p.68), who states that *"it is not the individual who imparts meaning to discourse, rather it is the discursive formation that provides an array of 'subject positions' which individuals may occupy"*. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1972) draws attention to the various definitions of discourse within the literature. He clarifies his intended use of the term by suggesting that *"discourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of existence"* (Foucault 1972, p.107). He also suggested that discourse can be defined as a group of statements which belong to a system of formation:

*"By systems of formation, then, I mean a complex group of relations that functions as a rule: it lays down what must be related, in a particular discursive practice, for such and such an enunciation to be made, for such and such concept to be used, for such and such strategy to be organized"* (Foucault 1972, p. 74).

Foucault argued that 'systems of formation' reside in discourse itself. His notion of discourse (1972) is interested in the discursive formation, made up of a group of statements/system of rules and practices that come together to enable the subject to appear at a particular time in history. Foucault demonstrates that some systems of rules may be new, whilst others may already be in existence. His archaeological notion of discourse relates to excavating and laying bare the interplay of rules and structuring processes which enable someone to take up a particular subject position. In order to analyse how the subject is called into being, or takes up a particular subject position, Foucault suggests that the analytical process should consider the discursive formations and the enunciation modalities that made it possible. The process includes an analysis of what he terms 'statements'.

Foucault viewed the 'statement' as a unit of discourse that also has a function or an utterance. For example, the 'statement' takes up the enunciative function



by calling the subject into being (Foucault 1972). According to Garrity (2010), the statement determines what position the subject must occupy in relation to its enunciator. The analytical process also requires an examination of the relationship between statements and discursive formation. Yet Foucault (1972) described the statement not in its totality or logical sense. Rather, he viewed statements as "*systems of dispersion*" (Foucault 1972, p.115). He argues that during the analysis one should not link 'statements' together at the sentence level in a grammatical, logical or psychological sense, instead regarding them as united at the statement level (Foucault 1972). Additionally, Foucault suggests an analysis of other structural processes that make it possible for the object to take up the subject position. This involves analysis of interactions between different elements, such as institutional techniques and ways of working (Foucault 1972). Such an analysis examines the belief systems and system of rules that govern a particular area of practice; for example, who is allowed to speak, when they are allowed to speak, who is silenced and who personifies the discourse (Foucault 1972; Hall 2001; McNay 1994). Downing (2008, p.49) notes that:

*"the enunciative modality comprises the position the subject occupies with regard to the specific field of knowledge – he or she may be a listening subject, questioning subject, or seeing subject with a given situation, with each role carefully delineated and delimited by and within a given discursive context"*.

Citing Foucault (1972), Hall (2001, p.72) suggests that discourse "*defines and produces the objects of our knowledge*". Together with his interest in the 'already-said', Foucault was interested in the 'never-said', which he referred to as "*an incorporeal discourse*" (Foucault 1972, p.25), arguing that:

*"The manifest discourse, therefore, is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this 'not-said' is a*

*hollow that undermines from within all that is said"* (Foucault 1972, p. 25).

Through his notion of marginality, Foucault encourages us to look for marginalised discourse. For Foucault, discourse is an activity which involves writing, reading and exchange. Firstly, using Foucault's ideas about discourse, one might ask a series of questions in the context of the study: What made it possible for service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments to occur when it did? Who called them into being, and what subject position do they occupy in social work students' assessments? How are they written or talked about? Foucault provides a useful lens through which these questions and the positioning of service user and carer involvements could be analysed.

As well as discourse, Foucault (1980) was interested in how power operates in the day-to-day interactions between individuals, groups and institutions. He notes, *"power means relations, a more-or-less organised, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations"* (Foucault 1980, p.198). Foucault was particularly interested in how institutions exert power over individuals and groups; he held the view that power and knowledge are intrinsically linked. Suggesting that *"knowledge and power are integrated with one another"* (Foucault 1980, p.52), Foucault went on to assert that power is not located in individuals or institutions but is everywhere (1980). Additionally, Foucault held that there is a *"triangle of power, rights and truth"* (1980, p.93). He viewed power as a strategy rather than as a possession; he states,

*"in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence" ...one can't say that change at the capillary level of power is absolutely tied to institutional changes at*

*the level of the centralised forms of the State"* (Foucault 1980, p.39).

Foucault (1980) did not view power as something located only in the powerful, who use it to oppress the powerless, as espoused by Marx. Rather, drawing from the notion of sovereign power, he argued that the exercise of power has shifted from being located in one individual, who has the ultimate authority, to being based on disciplinary power, where individuals are persuaded to self-discipline and self-regulate conduct. He contended that in order for power to move from above to below, there has to be capillarity from below to above concurrently (Foucault 1980). Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) suggest that to understand how power operates, it is necessary to examine the micro-practices and political technologies in which one's practice are formed. Political technologies are used to refer to mechanisms of power and power relations that shapes ones practice. Foucault (1980, p. 25) asserts the *"body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it"*. Foucault's (1980) power/knowledge theory provides a useful lens through which to examine power relations between service users and carers and social work as a profession, including my role as practitioner-researcher.

Equally important is what Foucault referred to as 'panopticism' and his notion of governmentality (Foucault 1980; 2000). Although these two concepts were not used by Foucault in a sequential way, as applied in this work, they are both relevant to the study. Foucault (1980) used 'panopticism' as a metaphor for disciplinary technology drawn from Jeremy Bentham's architectural plan of prisons, in which inmates were subjected to surveillance. He used the concept to illustrate how power operates, *"by the term panopticism, I have in mind an ensemble of mechanisms brought into play in all the clusters of procedures used by power"* (Foucault 1980, p.71). The notion of governmentality relates to

the government of others and self (Foucault 2000). Foucault (1997) referred to governmentality as "*techniques and procedures for directing of human behaviour*" (p.81). Foucault viewed governmentality as a complex system of power exercised through institutional procedures, policies and practice (Foucault 2000).

The assessment of students is arguably a form of such 'governmentality', as it is used to ensure that students' conduct not only meets the expectations of the profession, but also that of service users and carers. I would argue that social work students are subjected to disciplinary powers through surveillance, such as service user and carer involvement in their assessments. For example, students' assessments are linked to fitness-to-practice and 'suitability' (HCPC 2012b). Constructed as an apparatus of *correction*, social work student assessments could be viewed as a *political technology of the body* in which service users, carers, social work educators and social work employers play a significant role in shaping the conduct and behaviour of would-be social workers. It could also be viewed as a panopticon, as it is used to ensure that students self-regulate and conduct themselves as expected by the profession and service users and carers (Foucault 1980). This equally applies to social work educators, social work employers, service users and carers with the responsibilities of assessing students.

Foucault (1980) also held the view that power engenders conflict and resistance; creating the space for those who are subjected to power to resist its effects. He observed that "*where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power*" (Foucault 1979, p.95). Foucault viewed this as useful and argued that it is through this process that knowledge becomes refined. Rouse (1994, p.110)

suggests that *"conflict thus becomes the locus for the continuing development and organisation of knowledge"*.

It is worth noting that Foucault's ideas and writing have been criticised for inconsistencies (Habermas 1994; Kelly 1994; McNay 1994). Foucault (1972) acknowledges these inconsistencies. Critics have accused him of providing a one-sided analysis of institutional power (Habermas 1994; Kelly 1994; McNay 1994). Despite these criticisms, Foucault's conception of discourse and power has received some attention in social work; particularly in the area of service user and carer involvement in health and social work (Chambon et al 1999; Heaton 1999; Hodge 2005; Humphreys 2005; Stickley 2006). For example, Chambon et al's (1999) text, *Reading Foucault for Social Work*, provides a useful critical examination of social work knowledge and its relationships with service users and carers. Similarly in the area of service user and carer involvement, Lewis (2012) used Foucault's power/knowledge theory as a framework to analyse the emotional experiences related to service users and carers' involvement in mental health services. In the area of carer involvement, Heaton (1999) used Foucault's ideas to examine how carers were 'called into being' in social work.

Although Foucault used disciplinary power to describe particular historical institutions, such as prisons and mental asylums, parallels can be drawn to the area of social work students' assessments, in helping to examine how service users and carers were called into being, as well as how they are positioned in relation to other stakeholders in students' assessments. Foucault's notion of discourse and power/knowledge theory are equally useful in examining the positioning of studies in key social work journals reporting on how service users and carers have been involved in social work students' assessments. A key question that one would ask would be why there are so few studies (Duffy et al

2013; Skilton 2011; Skoura-Kirk et al 2013) published in this area? I shall be taking forward Foucault's conceptualisation of power by developing further his "*one-side*" analysis of institutional power. This will be undertaken by including not only service users and carers as part of my sample, but also the relevant teaching and learning participants - social work students, social work employers and social work educators - in my study. I return to Foucault's conceptual framework under Chapters 6 - Synthesis and theorisation of findings. I now turn my attention to Bourdieu.

### **3.2 Pierre Bourdieu**

Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) was a French sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher (Grenfell 2008; Wacquant 2006). His writings cut across disciplines, theory and methodology, covering areas such as sociology, education, arts, anthropology, cultural history, linguistics and philosophy (Wacquant 2006). Bourdieu reconciled and synthesised different schools of sociological thought, drawing from Marx and Mauss, Durkheim and Weber, Cassirer, Bachelard and Wittgenstein, and Merleau-Ponty and Schutz (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Wacquant 2006). This is unique because some academics argued that combinations of these theorists' work are either discordant or incompatible (Wacquant 2006). Bourdieu opposed the dichotomies between objectivism and subjectivism (Grenfell 2008; Wacquant 2006). He practised what he preached, using different methodological approaches in his own research, including statistical techniques, direct observations and interactions, interviews and discourse analysis (Wacquant 2006). His research outputs ranged from an ethnographical study of the Algerian Kabyle tribe, to the arts, unemployment, education, language, fertility, and analysis of class, sports, politics, law and intellectuals (Grenfell 2008; Wacquant 2006). Bourdieu drew extensively from both his practice and academic knowledge to inform his work. He was concerned about the theory/practice divide and sought to address this. He developed the concept of 'habitus' (see discussion in 3.5) as part of his theory

of practice to overcome the dualism between objectivism and subjectivism. Central to Bourdieu's theory of practice are the concepts of field, capital and habitus (Bourdieu 1990). These concepts are inter-connected and function in relation to one another (Grenfell 2008; Maton 2008). In a conversation with Wacquant, Bourdieu contended that, "*capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field*" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.101). He also states, "*the habitus and the field maintain a relationship of mutual attraction*" (Bourdieu 1999, p.512).

Together they provided a useful framework for analysing the complexities of relationships between and among the different stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments. I shall start with Bourdieu's concept of *field*.

### **3.3 Field**

Bourdieu viewed the *field* as a number of settings where social practice took place (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). *Field* is configured as an arena where social relationships are characterised by different interests and power relationships (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Houston 2002). Bourdieu (1998, p.40-41) described his notion of field as follows:

*"A field is a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and others who are dominated. Constant, permanent relations of inequality operate inside the space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the relative power at their disposal. It is this power*

*that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies”.*

Bourdieu provides as examples the fields of education, university, the economy, journalism, religious and the literal world (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Each *field* has a distinctive set of rules. He identified subfields within these; suggesting that each subfield is bounded by its own rules, regulations and logic of practice (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). For example, within the field of ‘university’, subfields would include different faculties and/or disciplines with their own disciplinary histories, literature, and rules and regulations. This is in addition to the university-wide history, literature, and rules and regulations.

Important to the concept of field is the concept of *doxa*, or what Bourdieu (1990) refers to as ‘the rules of the game’, an embodied and practical understanding of know-how. Doxa entails what we know without awareness that we know it. Deer (2008, p.120) suggests “*doxa refers to pre-reflexive intuitive knowledge shaped by experience, to unconscious inherited physical and relational predispositions*”. It can be thought of as a taken-for-granted, unquestioned rule, which is followed unconsciously by social actors. The concept of doxa is significant because it is underpinned by the related concept of symbolic power and notion of habitus (see 3.5). Doxa is either reflective or conscious. Bourdieu (1977, p.168) points out that the doxa:

*“...is unaware of the very question of legitimacy, which arises from competition for legitimacy, and hence from conflict between groups claiming to possess it”.*

In the context of student assessments, doxa could be viewed as tacit or practice knowledge, or knowing what a ‘pass’ essay would look like without actually referring to an assessment guideline; for example, ‘*I know a 2:1 when*



*I see one'* (Ecclestone 2001). Similarly, service users and carers know what a 'good social worker' looks like when they encounter one.

In any given field, Bourdieu contends that there is an unequal distribution of capital. Positions in the field are also dependent on the kinds of capital possessed by social agents or institutions occupying that field. He asserts that social agents or institutions operating in the field have vested interests in maintaining these positions (Bourdieu 1990). The field is therefore seen as a site of conflict, arising as a result of the competition between social agents, or '*players*', for capital. Drawing from Bourdieu, Thomson (2008) argues that what individual social agents or institutions can and cannot do is determined by the environmental conditions of the field. What can be undertaken in the field is governed by the 'rules of the game' and the position occupied by that individual within that particular field.

### **3.4 Capital**

Bourdieu discusses four interconnected forms of capital: cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). The concept of cultural capital relates to the acquisition or possession of specialist knowledge gained through primary socialisation and the process of education. This includes language, taste, experiences and narratives (Thomson 2008). Social capital relates to networking or relationships with others, whilst economic capital refers to wealth defined in either monetary terms or financial resources (Thomson 2008). In contrast, symbolic capital consists of power, authority and prestige. Bourdieu envisaged a process whereby one form of capital could be transformed into the other. This includes, for example, translating cultural capital into economic capital, or developing one's network (social capital) through economic or cultural capital; or the translating of economic, cultural

and social capital into symbolic capital. Capital is viewed as the currency of the field. According to Bourdieu, "*capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field*" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.101). Bourdieu contends that in the *field* "*players can play to increase or to conserve their capital... in conformity with tacit rules of the game*" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.99). He suggests that within the field, individuals or institutions compete for capital by strategically positioning themselves, deploying their capital to either improve or maintain their positions (Thomson 2008).

### **3.5 Habitus**

Habitus refers to durable principles of judgement and practice which form the basis of our actions in the field. Bourdieu (1990, p.52) defined the habitus as a "*system of structured, structuring dispositions*". The habitus is structured by our past and present circumstances (Maton 2008). It is 'structuring' because it is also shaped by our present and future practice (Maton 2008). Individual social agents operating in the field carry a habitus; they may also share a homogeneous habitus with other members of the field. Bourdieu contends that the homogeneity of the habitus enables the product of collective histories to be reproduced in the form of a shared disposition. The habitus is expressed through how we communicate. This is described by Bourdieu as durable ways of "*standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking*" (Bourdieu 1990, p.70). Deer (2003) contends that it also shapes how we interact with the social world. Bourdieu suggests the habitus is a:

*"system of dispositions to a certain practice, is an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour, and thus for the regularity of modes of practice, and if practice can be predicted...this is because the effect of the habitus is that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances"* (Bourdieu 1990a, p.77).

The habitus is continually reshaped by our encounters with the outside world (Bourdieu 1990). Through these encounters it is asserted that we develop strategies and techniques, which form the basis of our actions or accumulate capital which can be used or exchanged in the field. Bourdieu (1990, p.55) suggests *"as an acquired system of generative schemes, the habitus makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production"*.

The concept of habitus was developed through Bourdieu's anthropological field work on kinship structures with the Kabyle tribe in North Africa. The notion of habitus attempts to address the question of how human actions are regulated without being obedient to external structures (Bourdieu 1990; Swartz 2002). Discussing the genesis of the habitus, Bourdieu (1990, p. 65) states, *"I can say that all of my thinking started from this point: how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?"* Bourdieu (1990) posits that it is through the workings of habitus that practice is linked with capital and field. The inter-relational nature of the three concepts means that one has to understand how each concept informs the other to fully appreciate and discern how a particular social field is structured and operates. Although broader than this, put simply, the concept of the field is dependent on the capital possessed by social agents occupying that particular social field. Equally, how social agents operate within any given field is also dependent on how past and present dispositions are shaped by the concept of habitus. According to Bourdieu, the concepts of field, capital and habitus acquire their meaning only in relationship to one another. For Bourdieu, *"habitus, field and capital can be defined, but only within the theoretical systems they constitute, not in isolation"* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.96). He asserts that it is the interaction of habitus, capital and field that generate the 'logic of practice' (Bourdieu 1984, p.101). Reay (2004, p.436) asserts that *"habitus can be used to focus on the ways in*

*which the socially advantaged and disadvantaged play out attitudes of cultural superiority and inferiority ingrained in their habitus in daily interactions”.*

### 3.6 Constructing the field

For the study, the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessments was constructed as a *field*. According to Bourdieu (1996 [1989]), the process of field construction requires a "*set system of criteria that could account for the set of meaningful and significant differences that objectively separate [entities within the field] or, if you will, enable the set of relevant differences among [them] to arise*" (p.232). Since 2002, stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments include service users and carers, social work educators and social work employers (DoH 2002). Drawing upon this, the field construction took into account the significant differences between those involved in social work students' assessments. For example, there are differences in the positions occupied, as well as the type of capital and systems of dispositions (*habitus*) that define those involved in the assessments of students.

In addition, the *field* of social work students' assessments creates its own tensions; there are different expectations among stakeholder groups on what a qualifying social worker should look like (SWRB 2011). For example, service users are not homogeneous; service user groups have differing expectations of a qualifying social worker. Research also indicates that service users and carers have different expectations of social workers (Taylor et al 2009). These tensions are not unique to the service user and carer relationship. Within the profession, both in the academy and practice, research suggests that those in practice think social work educators are out of touch with practice (SWRB 2011). Although these issues exist, there is a shared interest within the social work profession and social work education to continue involving service users in the teaching and assessment of students (HCPC 2012; TCSW 2012).

### **3.7 Locating Bourdieu in social work education literature**

Bourdieu's conceptual framework has received very little attention in social work education literature and research. Emirbayer and Williams (2005, p.689) noted that despite the occasional ritualised reference to famous texts and Bourdieu's key concepts, "*social work remains largely unfamiliar with his ideas*". Garrett (2007) concurs, observing that this has been a neglected area. He draws attention to Dominelli's (1997) *Sociology for Social Work*, which he shows failed to include Bourdieu's ideas in the text.

Further, although Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus have been extensively used in the area of educational research (Deer 2003; Grenfell 1996; Grenfell and James 2004; Nash 1999; Reay 2004), they have received very little attention in social work research (Emirbayer and Williams 2005; Garrett 2007; 2007a). Emirbayer and William (2005, p.689) make the case for using Bourdieu's concepts in social work research by arguing that it offers a "*new way of thinking about how power operates in social life*". It is worth noting that Houston (2002) used Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital to explore cultural reproduction, and their relevance in social work practice, with those marginalised by race, gender and ethnic background. Parker (2005) also used Bourdieu's concept of habitus to explore how social care workers constructed dementia and dementia care through their daily practice activities at a UK day care centre. Garrett (2007a) examined the relevance of Bourdieu for social work, reporting that it has now found a new interest in Bourdieu. For example, Fairtlough et al (2013) used Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus to discern their findings of how black social work students have experienced practice learning. In the area of service user and carer involvements, Lewis

(2012) used Bourdieu's notion of capital to explore the emotional context of service user participation in mental health.

Although Bourdieu's work is highly regarded within the literature, critics argue that his concept of habitus is deterministic and that it does not allow for change (Archer 2007; King 2000). Others have argued that he failed to engage with issues such as the domination of women, race and disablism (Garrett 2007; Jenkins 2002). I am taking forward the strengths of Bourdieu's concepts - field, capital and habitus - to examine the dynamic relationships among and between stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments. The issue relating to disablism will also be explored through participants' narratives to ascertain the extent to which disabilities affect service user and carer participation in social work students' assessments.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

The chapter looked at Foucault's notion of discourse, power/knowledge theory and governmentality. It also explored Bourdieu's concepts - field, capital and habitus - and their relevance to the study. The thesis is interested in examining the different power relations among those involved in social work students' assessments. It acknowledges that the realities of power relations and dynamics of power inherent in service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments would only be known to those involved in the assessments of students. It argues that both Foucault and Bourdieu's conceptual frameworks and theories discussed in this chapter offer the scope to examine power relations between and among those involved in social work students' assessments. They are therefore used to inform analysis of the interview data in Chapter 6. What follows is a discussion of the methodology.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### ***4. Introduction***

The study is situated in the qualitative research tradition, drawing upon the narrative research approach. The chapter discusses what informed the choices made, the research methodology and methods used. The discussion includes the principles underpinning qualitative research methodology and narrative research approach, research design and influences, abductive and retroductive reasoning, the practitioner-research paradigm and developmental evaluation. It also presents and discusses the sample strategy used, recruitment, method of data collection, issues of ethics as well as the method of data analysis and development and identification of themes.

### ***4.1 Defining the methodology***

Qualitative research methodology was used. The broad aim of the study was to capture different voices, perspectives and the 'lived experiences' of stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students. The methods used are situated in constructivist, interpretivist, participatory, critical realist and practitioner-research paradigms. To contextualise the research methodology and methods used, I begin by discussing the principles underpinning the qualitative research methodology. This will be followed by the narrative research approach.

Qualitative research is embedded within post-positivist philosophy. It is inductive, constructive and interpretive (Williams et al 2008). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research methodology assumes that multiple realities exist and that truth is subjective, able to change over time (Patton 2002; Williams et al 2008). Qualitative research methodology is concerned with gaining a deeper



understanding of the meaning of human actions (Schwandt 2000). It is also interested in human experiences, and how individuals or groups make sense of their 'lived' experiences (Merriam 2002; Patton 2002). It seeks to discover individual experiences, perceptions, opinions, beliefs, feelings and definitions of situations. This research methodology adopts the view that reality is socially constructed and should be interpreted rather than measured. Therefore the qualitative research approach relies on textual and visual data rather than numerical or statistical data. Due to its situational and in-depth nature, qualitative research – unlike quantitative – does not lend itself to statistical generalisation (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Critics suggest that qualitative methods are time-consuming, lack rigour and efficacy. However, Sarantakos (2005) suggests that these criticisms are the nature of qualitative methods and should be deemed strengths rather than weaknesses. Sarantakos (2005) further contends that the value of a qualitative research methodology lies in its ability to pursue systematically the kind of research questions that are not easily answerable by quantitative experimental designs. Sinclair (2000, p.8) points out that *"qualitative research draws attention to features of a situation that others may have missed but which once seen have major implications for practice"*.

#### **4.2 Rationale for conducting qualitative research**

I selected qualitative research methodology for the following reasons: firstly, it suited the study's aims and objectives. Secondly, it is exploratory by nature: it offers the opportunity to explore newly emerging fields where relatively little is known. Thirdly, it allows research participants to tell their stories about their lived experiences from their perspectives. Fourthly, it permits the examination of contextual and setting factors in more depth. Fifthly, it is flexible and can

adapt to change (Patton 2002; Robson 2010); and lastly, it is in congruent with social work research.

The impetus to use qualitative methodology was shaped by the relatively limited research studies available focusing on service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessment at CPD level, and particularly on the ASYE. Qualitative research methodology offered the opportunity to explore this newly emerging field (the ASYE was new at the time of writing). Boeije (2010, p 33) concurs that "*qualitative methods hold the premise to yield findings that reflect the participants' perspectives and that fit the substantive field. As a consequence it is expected that the findings will have relevance for the field and can be easily transformed into interventions for practitioners*". A key objective of the study was to add to the body of knowledge on how stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments at CPD level have experienced the involvement of service users and carers. I was interested in what Patton (2002) described as 'information rich' data, rather than on drawing statistical inferences about these experiences. Qualitative research methodology therefore offered a better opportunity than quantitative research methodology. Considering the type of knowledge sought, it was also felt that qualitative research methodology would be most appropriate to allow those involved in social work students' assessments to describe their experiences of involvement in their own words. This would allow them to give words and meaning to their lived experiences.

The use of qualitative research methodology allowed these multiple perspectives and voices to be heard. It provided the opportunity to bring together, into a coherent whole, different stakeholders' perspectives about how they have experienced the involvement of service users and carers as co-assessors. I was also interested in examining whether there would be differences in perception and ways of involvement at different institutions and practice settings where service user and carers' involvement in social work

students' assessments took place. In addition, I took the view that individual past histories and cultural, political and social influences were likely to shape their perceptions, lived experiences and the meaning they gave or attached to their involvement. Qualitative research methodology provided the opportunity not only to examine context and setting factors, it also allowed the examination of the complexities of practice, including social and political factors.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, qualitative research methodology is flexible and responds to change. In the context of the study, it offered the opportunity to modify the research question and the direction of the research when the political landscape changed and new information emerged (see discussion in 1.4 and 1.5). Lastly but not least, qualitative research methodology is congruent with social work research. I am part of the research journey. I now discuss qualitative research methodology and social work research.

### **4.3 Qualitative research methodology and social work research**

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) posit that research design "*situates researchers in the empirical world and connects them to specific sites, persons, group, institutions....*" (p.22). Although social work research draws from both quantitative and qualitative research traditions, the use of quantitative research methodology is reported as rare in the UK (Shaw and Norton 2007). The literature suggests that most social work research tends to adopt a qualitative approach (Shaw 2003; Sharland 2013). This is supported by McCambridge et al's (2007) review of the kind of research methodology presented in the *British Journal of Social Work*. Scourfield and Maxwell's (2010) survey of social work doctoral students' research in the UK identified that qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, methods were mostly used by those undertaking the traditional PhD in Social Work and the Professional Doctorate in Social Work. Of the 136

people who took part in their study, 56% reported using qualitative methodology, with 30% reporting using 'mixed method'. Only 5% reported using quantitative research methodology (Scourfield and Maxwell 2010). Sharland's (2013) study supports this; she notes that qualitative research is the methodology most used in social work research. Further, in the international context, particularly in Europe, Dellgran and Hojer's (2003) study indicated that the qualitative research method is mostly used by social work students. Of the 89 doctoral dissertations and more than 500 theses from both Masters and undergraduate work analysed, the authors identified qualitative research methodology was the most dominant method used in social work education in Sweden and Finland. Mertens and Ginsberg (2008, p.488) posit that qualitative research methods are *"well suited to social work research, in part because they allow for the emergence of the complexity of human experience, couched in issues of differential access to power"*. The aforementioned underpinned my rationale for opting for qualitative research methodology.

There are different types of qualitative research methodologies. I initially considered using Straussian Grounded Theory and Ethnography to allow the observation of the processes and social interaction among those involved in the discussions and development of the ASYE. However, I was denied access. This led me to the narrative research approach which is now discussed.

#### **4.4 Narrative research approach**

The narrative research approach is rooted in the qualitative research tradition. It takes the view that truth is multiple and subjective. A narrative research approach is interested in the study of the stories that people tell to make sense of their lived experiences, and/or the stories that researchers inquire into (Pinnegar and Daynes 2007; Robson 2011). There are various definitions of

narrative research (Lai 2010; Riessman and Quinney 2005). Riessman and Speedy (2007, p. 428) point out that *"the term narrative carries many meanings and is used in a variety of ways by different disciplines, often synonymously with story"*. Bruner (1991) suggests that narrative presents a mode of thinking, a way of making sense of our world. Roulston (2010, p. 162) provides a simple definition by suggesting that *"a narrow definition of narrative is that it is a 'story'"*. According to Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), stories refer to the phenomenon being studied and narratives are forms of representations that describe human experiences as they unfold through time. Citing Franzosi (1998), Esterberg (2002) adds that a story is what happens and narrative is the telling of it. According to Elliott (2005, p.3), *"a narrative can be understood to organise a sequence of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood in relation to that whole"*.

A key feature of narrative is the notion of temporality, the claim that a narrative is a story with a beginning, a middle and an end (Elliott 2005). Bruner (1991, p.6) suggests narrative is *"an account of events occurring over time"*. A completed, composed narrative is said to consist of *"an abstract of what the story is about, what is going on, who, when and what of the story"* (Sandelowski 1991, p.162). Labov's (1978) earlier work suggested that a complete narrative structure consists of the following: abstract, orientation, complicating, evaluation, resolution and a coda. Whilst I agree to some extent with the analyses offered by Sandelowski and Labov as to what constitutes a complete narrative, it would not seem desirable for every complete narrative to follow this structure. Underpinned by post-positivist ontology and epistemology, narratives are viewed as forms of reality, challenging positivist claims about rationality and the belief in one universal truth. Indeed, researchers such as Becker (1999) and Riessman (2003) agree that different people structure their stories differently and not necessarily in the sequence proposed by Labov. Becker (1999), for example, used poetry to organise her study on

understanding older people with chronic pain. I believe different cultures and the diversities of lived experience have a bearing on how individuals frame their stories. Bruner (1991, p.4) points out that narratives are *"a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and 'narrative necessity' rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness"*. The narrative research approach is interested in identifying and understanding multiple layers of meaning within personal stories: *"who produces them, who is accepted and who is silenced"* (Squire 2008, p.5). As a research methodology, narratives provide validation for research participants' lived experiences. According to Riessman and Quinney (2005), narrative research focuses on human interactions and relationships. A key advantage of the approach lies in its ability to capture social representations, such as feelings, images and time. There are various narrative research methods (Riessman and Quinney 2005). The approach is based on interactivist, interpretivist, constructivist and post-modernist research paradigms (Koch 1998; Riessman and Quinney 2005; Sandelowski 1991). Therefore it draws from diverse epistemological and theoretical methods (Riessman and Quinney 2005). Roulston (2010, p. 163) cites Riessman (2008) who suggests that narrative inquiry encompasses *"stories told by research participants' 'interpretive accounts developed by an investigator', and 'even the narratives a reader constructs after engaging with the participants' and investigator's narratives"*.

There are no agreed methodological guidelines on how to conduct such research. Nor are there any clear guidelines on how to analyse narrative data (Hardy et al 2009; Riessman and Quinney 2005; Squire 2008). Polkinghorne (1995) proposes two ways in which narrative research can be conducted, *"as analysis of narratives and narrative analysis"*. Polkinghorne (1995, p. 5-6) explained that the former referred to *"studies whose data consist of narratives or stories, but whose analysis produces paradigmatic typologies or categories"* whilst the latter referred to *"studies whose data consist of actions, events, and*

*happenings, but whose analysis produces stories*". Drawing from Bruner's notion of paradigmatic and narrative mode of thoughts, Polkinghorne (1995) suggested that each mode of thought orders our ways of knowing, how we make sense of our lived experiences and our construct of 'reality'. Polkinghorne (1995) offers some guidelines for researchers using narrative methods, and proposes that researchers using paradigmatic reasoning should examine data to identify general notions or concepts. He suggests that researchers using paradigmatic reasoning "*seek to locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data. ...The researcher inspects the different stories to discover which notions appear across them*" (Polkinghorne 1995, p.13). Paradigmatic reasoning is closely linked to theory building and hypothesis testing. It is interested in identifying relationships between themes and concepts.

In contrast to Bruner's (1985, cited in Polkinghorne 1995) paradigmatic reasoning, Polkinghorne (1995) locates the narrative mode of thoughts (narrative cognition) in identifying human actions. Narrative reasoning places importance on the difference and diversity of people's behaviour and the meaning they attach to them. Polkinghorne (1995, p.11) cites Carter (1993, p. 6), who suggests narrative reasoning "*captures in a special fashion the richness and the nuances of meaning in human affairs*". Polkinghorne says that researchers adopting narrative reasoning (narrative analysis):

*"collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories... analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements, and narrative analysis moves from elements to stories"* (1995, p.12).

Narrative research method has successfully been used across disciplines including nursing, medicine, psychology, sociology, socio-linguistics and social

work (Fenge and Jones 2012; Gillard et al. 2012; Hardy et al 2009; Koch 1998; Lai 2010; Morley 2012; Phillips et al 2012; Smith 1999; Riessman and Quinney 2005). Writing from a nurse researcher's perspective, Hardy et al (2009) suggest that narratives as a research methodology allow participants to tell their stories and experiences about their illness, or capture a participant's journey from illness to health. A number of writers advocate the use of narratives in both social work research and social work education (Gibson 2012; Larson and Sjoblom 2010; Phillips et al 2012; Rutten et al 2010). Riessman and Quinney's (2005) review of the literature on how social workers and social care professionals have employed the concept of narratives in professional writing, identified that the narrative approach has been used in four broad areas: improving practice, educating social work students, reflections on the field, and in empirical research (Riessman and Quinney 2005). Larson and Sjoblom (2010) advocate the use of narrative method in social work research, asserting that its focus on service users' stories, gives a voice to those who are marginalised or seldom heard. Fenge and Jones (2012) successfully used a multi-method participatory action research design to engage the voices of older lesbians and gay men in their social work research. The authors used life stories to listen to how their subjects made sense of their position and identity in rural societies in Wales. In Australia, Morley (2012) drew on the narrative principles of storytelling and critical reflection in her study which focused on one child protection social worker's experience of working in this field. In Ghent University, Belgium, Rutten et al (2010) explored the potential use of fictional narrative as a cultural tool in social work education, in the form of a film and performed drama.

I was drawn to narrative research because, as the discussion of the aforementioned studies illustrates, it is congruent with social work values. Qualitative narrative research is interested in gaining insights into people's experiences. It acknowledges and places value on individuals' lived experiences,



and how they interpret their own lives and the meaning they attach to this. A narrative research approach is used in the study because it allows people to share their perspectives in a less intimidating way (Cant 2008). Whilst Holland and Wheeler (2002, p. 202) caution that participants are likely to be selective in recounting their experiences, the authors also note that *"the remembered events, as well as the experiences people choose from their vast store of memory, focus on the significant aspects of their social reality"*.

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007, p.5) suggest that *"narrative inquiry begins in experience as expressed in lived and told stories"*. Narrative is used to refer to a 'storied way of knowing'. The terms *stories* is used in this study to mean the research participants' lived experience of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments. I take the view that individuals' storied lives are located within a wider network of personal and social relationships and are in turn structured by the political and cultural context within which they interact with each other. My interest in using narrative as a research methodology does not lie in structural analysis of *the way a story is told*. Rather, I am interested in the content of *'what is said'*. Holloway and Freshwater (2007) suggest that in the telling of stories, research participants have the potential to shape their own worlds and identities. Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 375) concur, suggesting that:

*"people shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful"*.

## 4.5 Research design

The research design was informed by the abductive reasoning developed by Peirce (1931, cited by Blaikie 2007), and retroductive reasoning developed by Harre (1970, 1972, cited by Blaikie 2007) and Bhaskar (1997). I was interested in the meaning that the research participants attached to their involvements in social work students' assessments as well as uncovering the underlying mechanisms that structured the *field*. Blaikie (2010, p.89) suggests that the aim of abductive research strategy is to discover and describe *"why people do what they do by uncovering the largely tacit, mutual knowledge, the symbolic meaning, intentions and rules, which provide the orientations for their action"*. Abductive reasoning is reported as effective in allowing the discovery of new phenomena and for theory building. The abductive strategy was firstly used to inform the exploration of interviewed participants' intentions, meanings and motivations for service user and carer involvement in the assessment of social work students.

Harre and Secord (1972, p.101, cited by Blaikie 2007, p.104) contend that *"while social actors' accounts are the starting point, are taken seriously, they are not accepted uncritically"*. As such, retroductive strategy was also used to inform the examination of hidden processes and underlying mechanisms which structured the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessment processes. Retroductive research strategy is interested in answering 'why' questions (Blaikie 2007, 2010). It also allows researchers to work back from the research data in order to examine social structures that are external to social actors. According to Blaikie (2007), retroductive research strategy starts by constructing a hypothetical model to assist in the discovery of structures and mechanisms that are said to produce the phenomena. Drawing on Blaikie's (2007) ideas on retroductive research strategy at the beginning of

the study, I hypothesised that there would be differences in how the different stakeholder groups have experienced the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessments. The retroductive strategy was therefore used to explore whether such differences existed.

#### **4.6 Developmental evaluation**

In addition, the principles underpinning developmental evaluation were used to explore developmental issues leading to implementation of the ASYE. Examples from the development and implementation of the ASYE were used to locate the positioning of service users and carers in the assessment of CPD candidates (see Chapter 1, 1.5 – Background).

Pioneered by Patton (2011), developmental evaluation is described as a new approach to programme evaluation. It emphasises development, learning-by-doing and the use of data for continuous programme improvement (Dozois et al 2010; Fagen et al 2011; Patton 2011). Patton (1994) initially defined developmental evaluation as: *"evaluation processes and activities that support the program, project, product, personnel and/ or organizational development"* (p.317). Developed as a response to the perceived limitations of traditional evaluation (Dozois et al 2010; Patton 2011), developmental evaluation is reported as appropriate for evaluating emergent initiatives or innovations (Dozois et al 2010; Patton 2011). Patton (1994, p.318) suggests it is *"useful in innovative settings where goals are emergent and changing rather than predetermined and fixed"*. He identifies 'innovations' to include new projects, programmes, policy reforms, organisational change and/or system interventions. Dozois et al (2010) suggest that developmental evaluation overturns many of the assumptions of traditional evaluation methods because it is embedded, rather than detached, continuous rather than episodic, and focuses on learning rather than judgement. It allows flexibility by enabling evaluators to change

their strategies or direction of the study when critical events occur; for example, to make adjustments based on what is possible and desirable. According to Patton (2011), what is desirable may be situational and may also change over time.

Developmental evaluation differs from traditional forms of evaluation where the focus is either on programme improvement in the context of formative evaluation or outcome-measurement. Instead developmental evaluation focuses on development, learning, and providing feedback to support change. Patton (2011, p.5) suggests developmental evaluation “*adapts to the realities of complex non-linear dynamics rather than trying to impose order and certainty on a disorderly and uncertain world*”. Although Patton (1994, 2011) acknowledges the place for traditional forms of evaluation, he advocates the use of developmental evaluation in situations that are:

- highly emergent and volatile (e.g. the environment is always changing)
- difficult to plan for or predict because the variables are interdependent and non-linear
- socially complex, requiring collaboration among stakeholders from different organisations, systems, and/or sectors
- innovative, requiring real-time learning and development (Gamble 2008, cited by Dozois et al 2010, p.18; Patton 2008)

Patton (2011) also proposes the use of developmental evaluation where there are ongoing developments and one wants to learn from the development. He locates developmental evaluation within the broader context and framework of utilisation-focused evaluation (Patton 1994; 2011); asserting that the central aim of a utilisation-focused evaluation is utility and actual use. Such an

evaluation shifts the focus from methods or objects of evaluation to the intended use and users. In this process, 'intended use' is concerned with how the evaluation findings will be used as well as who will benefit in the real world. Patton (2011) observes that the evaluator's role in developmental evaluation is vitally important in providing feedback to a team. He describes developmental evaluation as an evolving methodology, and suggests it does not rely on any particular research method, design, tool or method of data collection; rather it focuses on what can shed light on key questions (Patton 2011). Dozois et al (2010, p.26) add that it is "*an adaptive, context-specific approach*". As such, there is no prescribed methodology. The "*'right' method is determined by need and context*" (Dozois et al 2010, p.26).

Such principles informed the study. For example, very little was known about the ASYE in 2009 when it was proposed. While uncertainties are not new to social work (Dickens 2011), there were high levels of uncertainty in England at the time of writing, particularly between 2009 and 2011. The principles underpinning developmental evaluation influenced who was included in the study and the interview schedule. It was used to explore stakeholders' conceptualisations of what service users and carers should comment on when assessing ASYE candidates. Feedback from the interim findings was provided to Skills for Care in 2011 to inform the development of ASYE assessments (see Appendix 3).

#### **4.7 Methodological paradigm**

The study is situated in the practitioner-research paradigm (see Chapter 1.2). It is underpinned by constructivist, participative and critical realist ontology and epistemology (Heron and Reason 1997). It was initially influenced by the philosophy underpinning Husserlian phenomenology (see Chapter 1, 1.2).

Robson (2002, p.534) defines the practitioner-researcher as *"someone who holds down a job in some particular area and is, at the same time, involved in carrying out systematic enquiry which is of relevance to the job"*. My role as a practitioner doctorate researcher formed part of the research context. The practitioner research paradigm provides the space for practitioners to review their practice and undertake research to enhance their work and professional skills (McCrystal 2000). According to McLeod (1999, p.8) practitioner-research refers to *"a research carried out by practitioners for the purpose of advancing their own practice"*. Shaw (2005) argues that practitioner-research goes beyond the definition offered by McLeod (1999). McCrystal supports Shaw's (2005) views and argues that in addition to the development of new skills, it provides a

new way of informing accountability. Drake and Heath (2011) add that practitioner researchers engage in the creation of new knowledge. Relating this to the doctoral practitioner researcher, the authors suggest "*becoming a researcher involves learning and practicing technical skills as well as the more sophisticated integration of learning how to relate research, higher education and work*" (Drake and Heath 2011, p.68). According to McCrystal (2000), engagement in practitioner research activities raises professional standards.

In the study I was positioned both as an 'insider' and 'outsider' practitioner-doctorate researcher. Moore (2012, p.11) suggests "*'insiders' are individuals who have a place in the social group being studied before the start of the investigation and 'outsiders' are non-members of the group*". Although I worked as a social work lecturer, and therefore came to the study with insider knowledge about service user and carer involvement in student assessments, I had no previous experience of using social work services.

In addition to the above, the study is grounded in constructivist, participative and critical realist ontology and epistemology (Heron and Reason 1997). Constructivist theory holds that many multiple constructions of 'reality' exist, that 'truth' and meaning are relative and epistemologically subjective (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Guba and Lincoln 1994). Constructivist epistemology holds that we do not discover knowledge, instead we construct it (Schwandt 2000). Constructivism takes the view that social reality is produced and reproduced by social actors; that meaning is constructed through interaction with individuals (Orme and Shemmings 2010). This perspective holds that 'truth' and 'reality' change over time as we interact with others in our attempts to make sense of our world (Schwandt 2000; Orme and Shemmings 2010). Although the constructivist ontology underpinned the initial thinking, I felt that there are differences between our social constructs and our 'lived experiences'.

This shift in thinking occurred after I completed a pilot study in which I struggled with the Husserlian principle of 'bracketing' (see Chapter 1, 1.2). This led me to Heron and Reason's (1997) 'participative or participatory' world view. Like Husserlian phenomenology, the participative world view places importance on lived experiences. However, it proposes four different ways of knowing. A participative world view assumes that 'reality' is lived. 'Reality' is viewed as a process, and it is dependent on the relationship between the knower and what is to be known (Reason 1981). Drawing from Husserl and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological concept of being-in-the world (the notion that we are interconnected with and interdependent on others), the participative world view asserts that knowing occurs at the interface between our interactions with a world, others, events and/or place (Heron and Reason 1997). The participatory ontology views the earth as a 'living whole'. Heron and Reason (1997, p.276) suggest that the participatory world view *"allows us as human persons to know that we are part of the whole, rather than separated as mind over and against matter"*.



According to Heron and Reason (1997, p. 289), participatory ontology assumes that 'reality' is both "*subjective and objective, co-created by the mind and given cosmos*". Ontologically the participatory paradigm assumes the world as objectively given and subjectively represented in the human mind. Heron (1996, p 11) asserts that "*it is subjective because it is only known through the form the mind gives it; and it is objective because the mind interpenetrates the given cosmos which it shapes*". Heron and Reason (1997) suggest 'reality' is created through interactions and active participation between the mind and a given cosmos. Participative ontology holds that the experiential knower perpetually shapes what is 'real' by filtering it through their experiential encounters with a world or with others through four ways of knowing (Heron 1981).

Heron (1996) delineates these four ways of knowing as experiential, presentational, propositional and practical. Experiential knowledge arises from our direct encounters with the world. It involves face-to-face direct contact and interactions with a world, a person, a place, an event or a process. Experiential knowing assumes that we articulate reality through participative empathic resonance with a being, so that as a knower one feels both attuned to it or distanced from it (Heron and Reason 1997). Presentational knowledge emerges out of experiential knowledge, through how we tell stories, talk about places and/or particular events using imagery and concepts.

Heron and Reason (1997, p. 281) assert that presentational knowledge "*symbolize[s] both our felt attunement with the world and the primary meaning embedded in our enactment of its appearing*". Similar to presentational knowledge, propositional knowledge is grounded in experiential knowing and entails knowledge articulated through theories and concepts. Practical knowledge, on the other hand, relates to "*how-to-do something' knowledge*", and is demonstrated through skills and competence (Heron 1981, p.27).

Participatory epistemology holds that researchers are an integral part of the world they study (Heron and Reason 1997). Knowledge production is therefore conceived of as a *co-creation* with the research participants (Heron and Reason 1997). Reason and Bradbury (2001) assert that it encourages research engagement *with* people rather than *on* people.

Heron and Reason's (1997) participative world view and its expanded epistemology strongly resonated with my world view and ways of knowing. I believe that we come to know through our encounters with others, events and processes, and that reality is lived, felt and shaped by presentational and propositional knowledge. To give one example, I came to the study with experiential knowledge of working with service users, carers and social work employers as a co-assessor of students. I also drew from both Bourdieu and Foucault's theoretical concepts to make sense of the field of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments. Following the pilot study, I concluded that pre-existing knowledge about a phenomenon under study is important and can enrich one's research study. However, whilst I agree with Heron and Reason (1997) about the importance placed on lived experiences, I would argue that there are points of difference and similarities in how we experience and come to know about a given world. How I came to know about the field of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessment as a lecturer is arguably different from that of a student who is at the receiving end of an assessment process, or that of a service user or carer. Although our points of similarities could be argued as *fulfilling* the legislative and policy requirement, it is likely that individuals may have different motivations and agenda for service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessment. For example, it is likely that not every academic will share my perspective for involving service users and carers in students' assessments or would undertake research into this area for the improvement of practice.

Heron (1996, p. 114) asserts *"we learn more profoundly about our worlds when we are more interested in enhancing them with excellence of action than in learning about them"*. Although I share Heron and Reason's sentiments, I am also interested in how mechanisms and structures can either constrain or enable social actors' desire to take action. My practice observations suggest that although some stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments come to the field with a genuine interest to either add to or change practice, structural issues can either enable or constrain what can and cannot be done. This is supported by the literature and research, which confirms that structural barriers to service user and carer participation exist (Chambers and Hickey 2012; Carr 2004, Skilton 2011; Skoura-Kirk et al 2013). My interest in structural issues and their likely impact on the motivation or the desire to participate led me to critical realism (see Chapter 4.5 – the rationale for using retroductive research strategy). McEvoy and Richards (2006, p.71) suggest critical realism *"involves moving from the level of observations and lived experience to postulate about the underlying structures and mechanisms that account for the phenomena involved"*. Critical realists assert there are real, unseen mechanisms in the natural and social world that shape our conduct and social events (Houston 2010). Critical realist ontology assumes that reality exists in three separate domains:

- empirical – experiences, observable events
  - actual – events which may or may not be observed
  - real – structures and processes that make reality and produce events
- (Mingers 2000, p. 1261)

The critical realist position provided the opportunity to analyse the structural processes that shaped the research participants' lived experiences, realities and constructed 'truth'. Houston (2010) concurs that there is a concordance between the participative world view and critical realism. Using evaluative research as an example, he argues that the combination of the two philosophies can help to illuminate processes that shape outcomes. Bhaskar

(1997) also contends that our understanding of a given phenomenon can be greatly enhanced by gaining a deeper level of understanding of the interactions between mechanisms and context. I provide a reflective account of what my ontology means for my world view in Chapter 8.

#### ***4.8 Deciding who to study: the research participant – sampling procedure***

The following provides a discussion of the sampling method, recruitment and the research participants.

The sample design initially consisted of selective and heterogeneous sampling, followed by theoretical sampling and extreme or deviant case sampling. Selective sampling entails the deliberate selection of research participants with specialist knowledge about the topic under investigation (Coyne 1997; Draucker et al 2007; Schatzman and Struss 1973). Schatzmans and Struss (1973, p.39) state that selective sampling is shaped by the researcher's *"framework, by his starting and developing interests"*.

The study needed to engage with the lived experience of different stakeholders, regarding the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessments to provide the 'information rich' data needed. Using the principles underpinning selective sampling strategy, I initially selected:

- social work students
- social work managers
- social work educators
- service users and carers

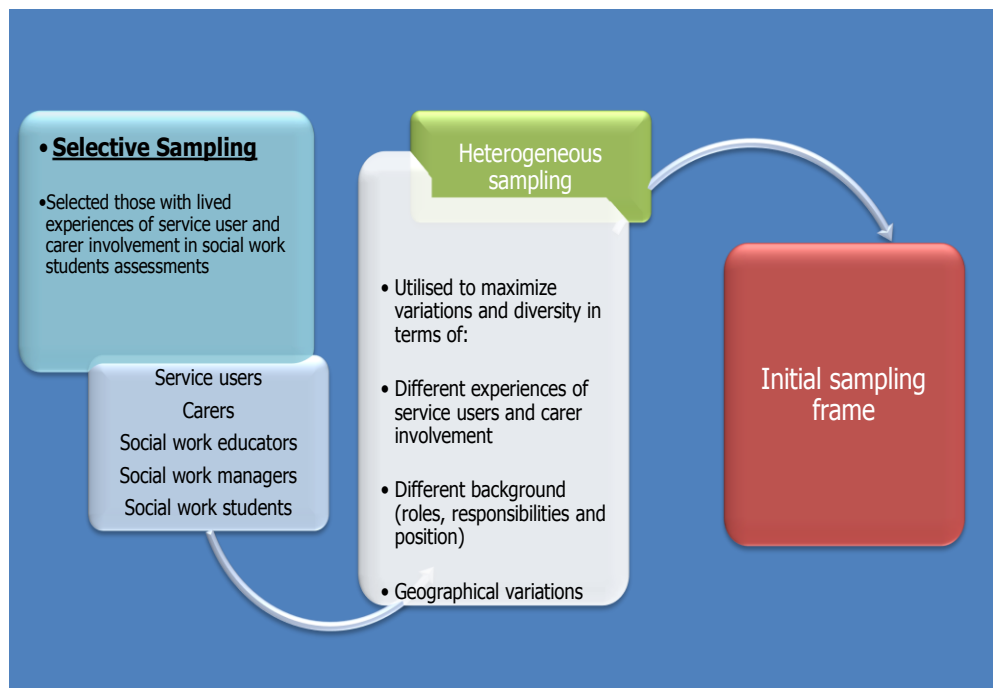
In addition to the above, a heterogeneous sampling strategy – also referred to as maximum variation (heterogeneity) was used (Patton 2002; Robson 2002). Robson (2002, p.266) refers to heterogeneous samples as *"a deliberate*

*strategy of selecting individuals varying widely on characteristic(s) of interest*”. According to Patton (2002) a maximum variation sampling strategy aims to capture and describe key themes that cut across wide variations. A heterogeneous sampling technique was employed to allow the examination of different background histories (e.g. roles, responsibilities and positions) as well as different views and perceptions among those who took part in the study.

The literature suggests that including variations in the sampling frame can enhance transferability. In addition to selecting different stakeholders with lived experience of service users and carers’ involvement in social work students’ assessments, the selection process focused on different HEIs and different social work employers. The focus on different HEIs and social work employers was undertaken to allow the examination of different forms of involvement. Table 2 presents an audit trail of the initial sampling frames. It is followed by

Table 3, which sets out the final sampling frame.

### Audit trail – utilisation of selective & heterogeneous sampling

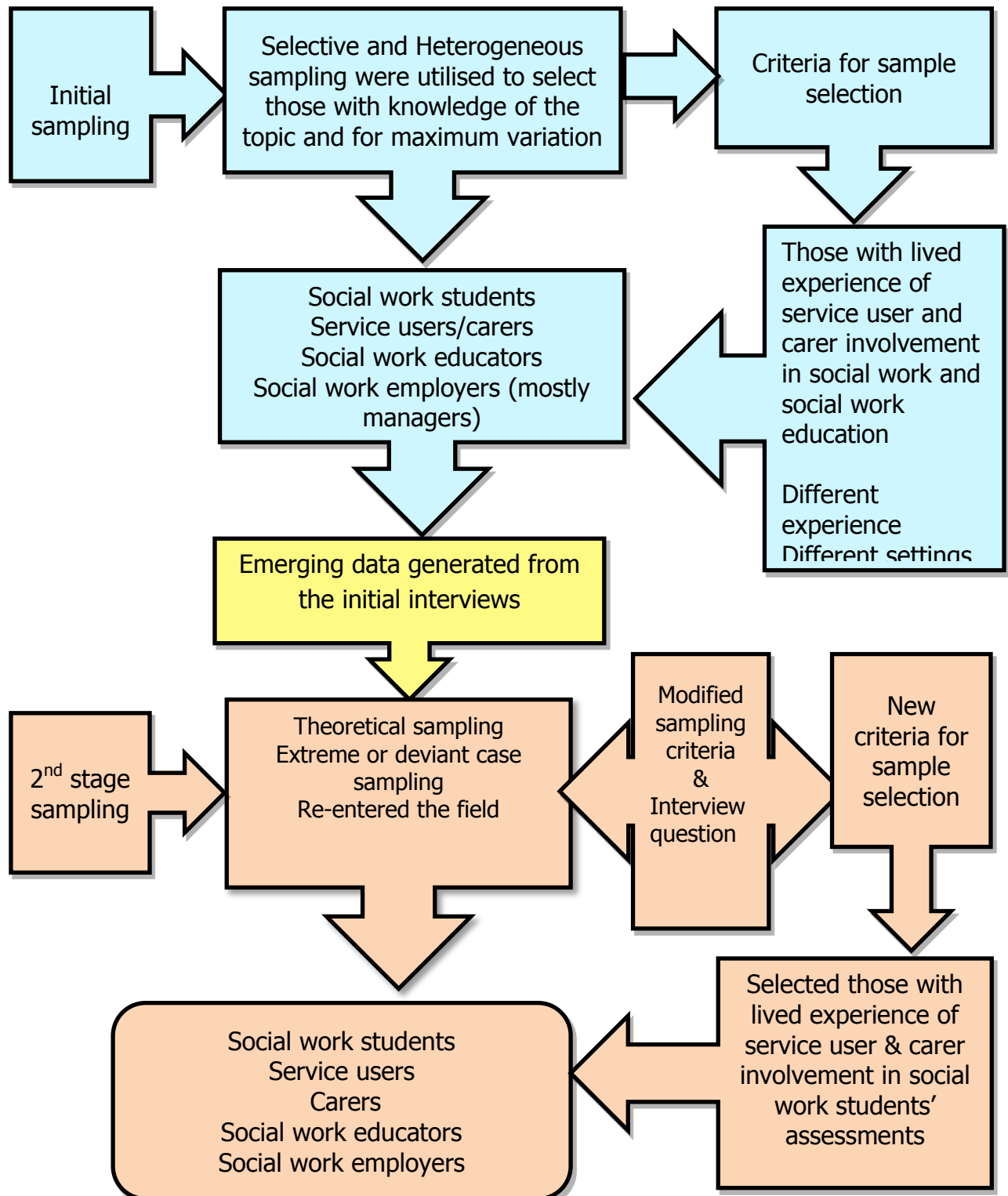


### Table 2 – Initial sampling frame

As the study progressed, a theoretical sampling strategy was employed. Coyne (1997, p.629) describes theoretical sampling as "*analysis driven purposeful sampling*" or "*analysis governed purposeful sampling*". It is reported as useful for refining ideas and/or developing emerging categories during the data collection and analysis process (Charmaz 2000; Patton 2002). Associated with grounded theory, this sampling technique is defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.45) as "*the process of data collection for generating theory*". Charmaz (2000) suggests it is helpful in assisting researchers to define the properties of their categories and the context in which they are relevant. Theoretical sampling was employed during the data collection stage. It helped modify the initial criteria for selecting the participants, as well as the interview questions

asked. The initial data generated from the interviews indicated that, compared to other participants, social work managers were unable to answer one of the research questions. An extreme or deviant case sampling strategy was therefore employed. Patton (2002) describes extreme or deviant case sampling as the selection of information-rich cases that are unusual or special due to "*outstanding successes or notable failures*" (p.231). He goes on to suggest, "*sometimes cases of dramatic failure offer powerful lessons*" (Patton 2002, p.232). The selection criteria were refined and modified to include 'social work employers' (not necessarily social work managers, as initially planned). This also resulted in modification of the interview questions (see 4.15 - The interview questions and Table 3). Table 3 presents the audit trail of the final sampling frame.

### Audit trail – sampling procedure



**Table 3 - Final sampling frame**



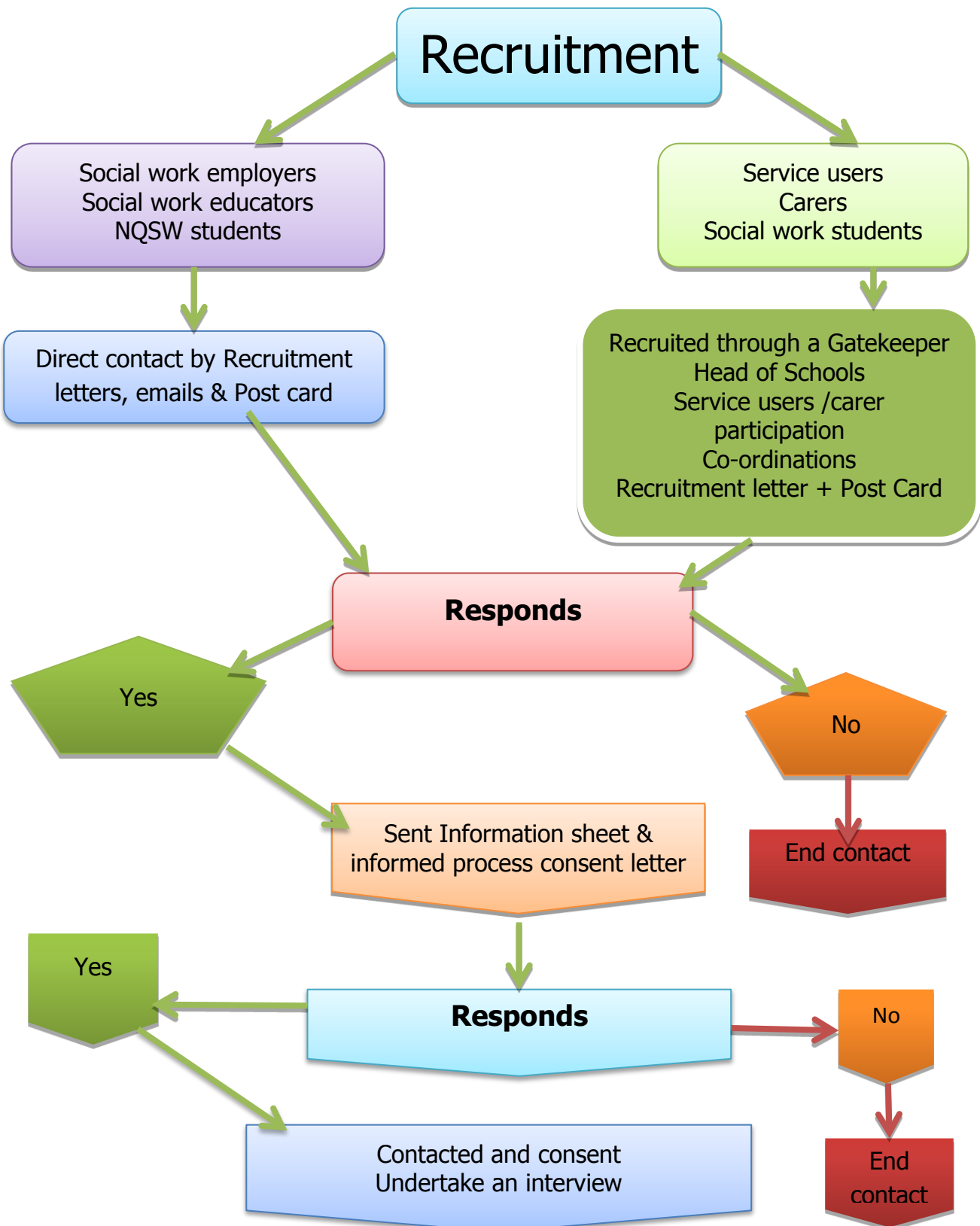
#### **4.9 The interview participants**

A total of 21 people took part in the individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This number consisted of five social work students, five social work educators, six social work employers, two carers and three service users. They were 14 women and 7 men, aged between 20 and 65 years; four of the participants were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and 17 were white (See Appendix 15 – Characteristics of the research participants). The inclusion criterion focused on those with lived experience of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments. Each participant was purposefully selected because of their unique characteristics. My reflections about the selection of participants, including the strengths and limitations of the sample size used, are provided under Chapter 8, 8.7.

#### **4.10 Recruitment strategy**

I recruited potential participants from outside of the institutions where I worked as a lecturer at the time. The recruitment strategies included making myself known to potential gatekeepers by word-of-mouth, through conference presentations, and by sending letters and emails to colleagues and acquaintances. Recruitment postcards were designed to raise interest in the study and enable people to contact me for further information (Appendix 4). The recruitment post card was initially aimed at service users, social work students, social work employers and social work educators due to the initial focus on the ASYE. The Social Work Taskforce did not include carers as assessors in its proposal for ASYE students' assessments. However, this was changed to allow the inclusion of carers in the sample. I discuss this in the Ethics Application (See Appendices 9 and 11). The post cards were given to potential participants at a number of social work conferences. Recruitment of

social work students, service users and carer assessors was undertaken by approaching Heads of Schools and Service User Participation Coordinators from three different HEI providers of social work education programmes. In contrast, social work educators and social work employers were recruited through direct contact, either by email, letter or telephone. I discuss in more detail how ethical issues were addressed, concerning the recruitment and selection of sample, in Chapter 4, 4.17 - 4.20. Table 4 presents the audit trail of the recruitment strategy used.



**Table 4 – Recruitment Strategy**

#### **4.11 Method of data collection**

This section discusses the method of data collection. It initially presents the method used. This is followed by a discussion of what informed the method and the processes adopted.

Within-method data source triangulation was used as a method of data collection in order for multiple voices and stakeholder perspectives to be heard. According to Patton (2002), within-method data source triangulation refers to the process where more than one different data source is used in the same research design, either for confirmation or completeness of the data. Data source triangulation was undertaken by means of interviews with different sample groups (social work employers, social work students, service users, carers and social work educators), and was used for completeness. Casey and Murphy (2009, p. 42) point out that “*completeness of data is concerned primarily with gathering multiple perspectives from a variety of sources so that as complete a picture as possible of phenomena can be built and the varied dimensions revealed*”. Data source triangulation was used to allow a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of stakeholders’ experiences of service user and carers’ involvement in social work students’ assessments.

#### **4.12 First stage: Informal conversational-style discussions and conference presentations**

The first stage of the data collection consisted of unstructured conversational-style discussions with each of the different stakeholders involved in social work

students' assessments. Separate meetings were scheduled with each of the groups, except the service users, carers and social work educators.

As part of the preparations for these informal conversations, participants' representatives were sent information detailing the area of research interest and the scope of the study, including procedure for data collection. In line with the philosophy underpinning the participatory world view, the duration of the informal discussions and interviews was negotiated with those who took part. Discussing the appropriate length of interviews, Robson (2002) suggests that anything under half an hour is unlikely to be valuable, while anything over an hour may be making unreasonable demands on busy participants. The duration of the informal conversations was set at no more than 45 minutes. Participants' views were sought on what they thought about the ASYE, what service users' and carers' feedback should consider at CPD level and whether there is a need for a national guideline for assessments against which service users and carers could make their assessments at the ASYE (CPD level). To ensure that participants' valuable contributions were not lost, they were asked to write their thoughts on post-it notes. I also took some notes to ensure that those who were unable to write were included.

The informal conversations were employed as a strategy to seek stakeholders' views on what (and what not) to include in the study, as well as providing the opportunity to recruit participants. Wider stakeholders' views were also sought through conference presentations (Anka 2011a, 2011b) and the University of Sussex doctoral students' workshops. The decision to seek wider stakeholders' views in this way was partly informed by notions of conceptual utilisation (Sandelowski 2004). It allowed those without personal experience of service user and carer involvements in social work student training to gain some awareness of what was occurring in this area. Sandelowski (2004) suggests that conceptual utilisation offers the "*target event*", a window through which to

view aspects of life that would otherwise have remained unknown. For individuals with personal experience of a target event, the purpose is to *"offer a mirror that allows them to look back on and reframe their experience"* (Sandelowski 2004, p.1373). For those who were familiar with existing practice, the rationale was to create an environment that enabled them to contribute to the discussion and my research.

Similarly, as a strategy for planning research, Braye and Preston-Shoot (2005, p.180) posit that conferences, workshops and seminars are a *"useful way of involving other stakeholders in devising recommendations, reflecting on and supplementing collected data"*. Through this exercise, would-be participants' views were also sought on the research topic in general and whether it was an appropriate area for research. I found the use of the informal discussions exercise both useful and enjoyable because of the learning opportunities it created. Feedback from conversations with the different stakeholder groups also indicates that those who participated found the experience valuable. Boeije (2010, p.63) suggests that *"detailed and rich information is mostly obtained in a conversation in which both partners genuinely enjoy participating and feel respected by the other person"*. The feedback from these discussions informed the development of an interview guide.

#### **4.13 Second stage: In-depth semi-structured interviews**

An interview guide was developed, following the consultations with the different stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments (see Chapter 4, 4.12). A total of 21 individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews were undertaken, audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. No interview lasted more than an hour; further considerations were made for a shorter interview time for service users and carers to ensure they were not unduly tired.

#### **4.14 The interview setting**

Most of the interviews took place at a location convenient to the research participants, such as their homes, place of work or library; one was conducted at a Costa coffee shop. Two of the interviews, with a service user and a carer, were conducted at their homes; the others were conducted on HEI premises. The interviews conducted with the social work managers/social workers and social work educators took place at their individual offices or a private room at their various organisations. Students' interviews were conducted in libraries and office premises, arranged through my personal networks. Appendix 14 - Pen portraits of the research participants - provides an account of where the interviews took place.

#### **4.15 The interview questions**

Participants were asked to share their perspectives on five main questions, and to answer them in an order that felt comfortable. The first question asked participants to describe their role and the position they held in social work and/or social work education. The subsequent questions asked were:

- What they thought about the proposed ASYE
- What should count as service users' feedback in the ASYE?
- What are the opportunities and challenges in implementing the ASYE assessment within the current political and economic climate?
- Whether they perceived a need for the development of a nationally recognised tool against which service users and carers could make their assessment judgements of students (Appendix 7)

I adopted a conversational-style approach and followed the participants' leads in the conversations. Probes were used when necessary for clarification and/or to allow further questions to be asked on new ideas or topics introduced by the research participants.

Design of the interview schedule was informed by the following:

- my theoretical influences
- the literature
- informal group discussions with the different stakeholder groups

For example, drawing from Bourdieu about the logic of practice, and using the ASYE as an example, the second interview question aimed to explore participants' perceptions about the ASYE in general. This is because the Newly Qualified Social Work (NQSW) programme of study was in existence at the time; it was designed to support newly qualified practitioners to consolidate learning after gaining their initial social work qualification. Also, from a developmental evaluation perspective, this question was asked to test whether those in the field were aware of this development, and whether they had thought about the involvement of service users and carers in the ASYE programme. The focus on the ASYE was explained in section Chapter 1, 1.5 – Background.

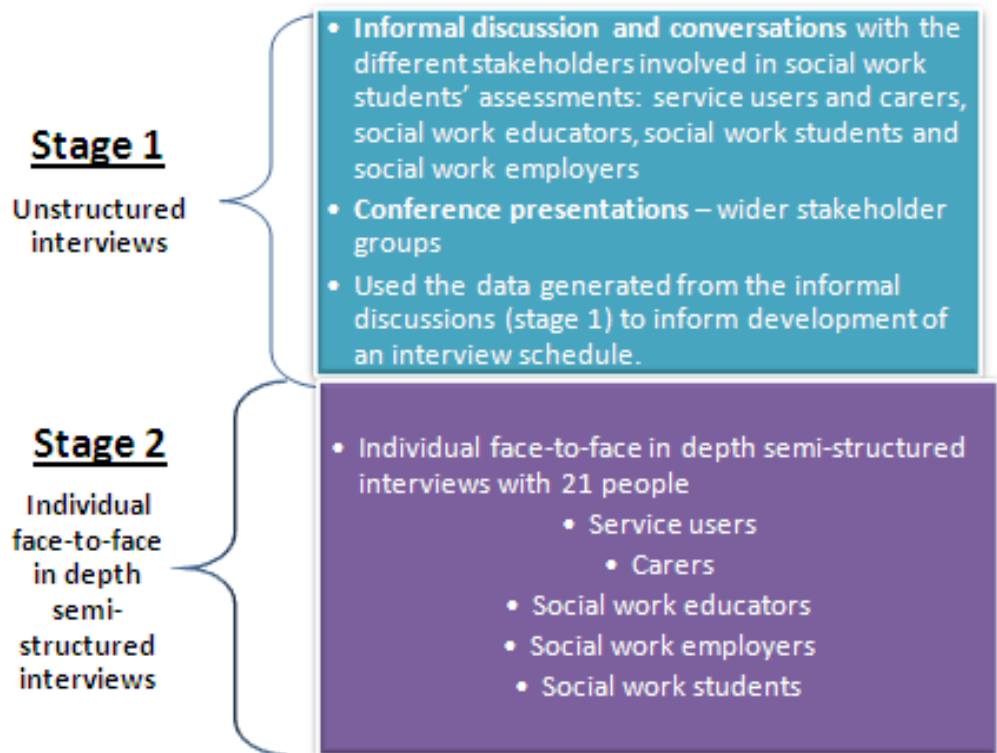
These questions guided the study up until the middle part of the research. The research questions were later modified to reflect the emerging data obtained from the interview schedule, as well as the rapid policy changes that were occurring at the time. The following questions were later added:

- What are the positions occupied by service users and carers in social work students' assessments?
- What is it that made it difficult for social work managers to conceptualise what service users' feedback should entail? (Appendix 8)



The first question was added because there were uncertainties about whether the ASYE would be implemented, as well as the role of service users and carers in ASYE assessments if it was implemented (see Chapter 1, 1.5 – Background). The final question was developed because the initial interviews identified that social work managers were unable to give a clear answer to the question of what should count as service user and carer feedback. From a developmental evaluation research perspective, this is significant because the ASYE assessment recommendation at the time stipulated that social work employers should jointly assess ASYE candidates with HEIs; service users' feedback was included in this recommendation (Social Work Task Force 2009). When the initial interviews were undertaken, the implementation date for the ASYE assessment was less than a year away (see Appendix 18, Research timeline). Therefore I expected senior social work managers at the time to have some ideas about what service users' and carers' feedback should look like. Table 5 presents an audit trail of the method of data-collection.

# Method of data collection



**Table 5 – Method of data collection**

## 4.16 Justification for the method used

In qualitative research, interviews is claimed to be the most effective research tool for exploring what people think and feel (Boeije 2010; Carter and Little 2007; Esterberg 2002; Patton 2002; Robson 2002). Robson (1993, p.228) defines an interview as being *"a kind of conversation, a conversation with a purpose"*. Boeije (2010, p.62) notes that interviews provide the opportunity *"to learn about social lives through the perspectives, experience and language of those living it"*. Citing Brenner (1985, p.3), Darlington and Scott (2002, p.49) contend that *"...the central value of the interview as a research procedure is that it allows both parties to explore the meaning of the questions and answers involved"*. The authors claim that using interviews as a method for the data collection process allows the opportunity to immediately check and clarify any misunderstandings with the research participants, unlike other data collection

methods. Although Coombes et al (2009) contests the extent to which interviews allow researchers to get straightforward access to participants' experiences, interviews are noted as powerful research instruments (Davies 2006; Fontana and Frey 2000).

Numerous types of interview are presented in the literature (Fontana and Frey 2000; Patton 2002; Roulston 2010; Sarantakos 2005). This includes unstructured, structured, and semi-structured interviews (Fontana and Frey 2000; Roulston 2010). Sarantakos (2005) identifies at least another 20 other types of interview in addition to these three. Others, like Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Roulston (2010), have also sought to discuss 'interviews' from a more paradigmatic perspective. The unstructured interview is described as the most open-ended approach to interviewing (Gray 1994; Patton 2002). Moyle (2002) suggests that the absence of a framework enables the researcher to maintain the focus on participants' perspectives. Premised on the role of surprise, the unstructured interview technique assumes that without the constraint of pre-determined interview questions, the scope of an inquiry can broaden (Roulston 2010). Patton (2002) argues that undertaking unstructured interviews does not necessarily mean disorganisation. Fielding (1994) offers some guidance by suggesting that researchers using unstructured interviews may wish to have *"a list of topics they want respondents to talk about, but are free to phrase the questions as they wish, ask them in any order that seems sensible at the time, and even join in by discussing what they think of the topic"* (p.5). In the study, Fielding's advice proved very helpful as, during the first informal discussions, some participants talked about their experiences of their involvement in social work education in general, rather than specific to students' assessments. Doody and Noonan (2013, p.30) observe that *"most participants are willing to provide information, but they require guidance about the amount of detail required"*.

Positioned between unstructured and structured interviews, is the semi-structured interview. This technique uses pre-determined open-ended interview questions but allows the researcher to use probes (Roulston 2010). The semi-structured interview is reported as more flexible because it allows interview questions to be set loosely. In addition, the order of questions asked may differ from participant to participant, depending on the process of probing used by the researcher. According to Patton (2002) this approach allows research participants to answer questions in their own terms. Fielding (1994) contends that among others, semi-structured interviews:

*"afford more latitude to researchers to 'talk around' the major questions, thus exploring more dimensions of the topic... it offers respondents more of a feeling that their particular perspective is being taken into account"* (p.4).

As well as informal unstructured interviews, the semi-structured interview was employed in this study. The study aimed to gain insights into how the research participants have experienced service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments. The two interview techniques suited this study's aims and objectives; in particular, the use of the semi-structured interview provided greater flexibility than the standardised interview technique. The method allowed me to change the wording and order of the interview questions. This also allowed for probing for more information, clarifications of answers and validation of meaning. What follows is a discussion of the ethical decision making processes used.

#### **4.17 Ethical considerations**

The issue of ethics was considered from the four binding ethical principles underpinning social research and a practitioner-researcher position, both as an 'insider' and an 'outsider'.

Robson (2002, p.66) suggests that ethics refer to "*general principles of what one ought to do*". Stevens and Manthorpe (2007, p.115) indicate ethics can be "*thought of as the study of good conduct and as the grounds for making judgements about what is good conduct*". The literature identifies four binding principles that are universally recognised as providing a sound base for ethical research conduct (Boeije 2010; Boulton 2009). These are beneficence, non-maleficence, respect for autonomy of persons, and justice (Boulton 2009). What follows is a discussion of how these principles informed my work.

#### **4.18 Beneficence and non-maleficence**

The ethical principles of beneficence and non-maleficence were utilised in order to minimise risk to those who took part in the study. Beneficence involves the obligation to maximise benefits or do good. Boulton (2009) posits that this principle aims to ensure research design and conduct are valid, and findings are trustworthy. The concept of non-maleficence entails avoiding or minimising harm. Pre-research measures were undertaken, including seeking ethical clearance from the University of Sussex (Appendix 11) and the institution (Appendix 10) where I worked at the time of writing, to ensure that potential ethical issues were brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee and permission was sought before collecting the data. Issues of risk and strategies for dealing with these were discussed with those who took part in the study.

Boeije (2010) draws attention to the need to consider how our research activities would affect those likely to encounter the implications of our findings. Drawing upon this, the question I asked at the initial stages of the study was *"what will it be like being a participant, telling my story of how I have experienced the involvements of service users and carers in students assessments and reading about it"*. In addressing these, the potential psychological impact of being interviewed and reading one's interview transcript was shared with the research participants. This was undertaken both verbally and in a written format through an informed process consent procedure, rather than a one-off informed consent procedure. Houghton et al (2010) contend that due to the emergent and unpredictable nature of qualitative research, informed process consent is more appropriate as it enables researchers to renegotiate consent. The authors highlight its benefits by suggesting the process *"makes it possible to negotiate and revise arrangements throughout the course of the research study. It also allows participants to play a collaborative role in the decisions regarding their ongoing participation"* (Houghton et al 2010, p.16).

All the research participants were informed about the potential impact of being interviewed and sharing their stories. I included in the informed process consent letter (Appendix 6), a statement indicating that I may take a critical view about participants' stories when analysing the interview data. This was not intended to be unduly critical. This decision was influenced by Warren's (1980) reflective account, following the reactions of his research participants who reported feeling betrayed after reading Warren's account of their stories. Furthermore, to ensure that participants were not distressed during the interviews, checks were made to establish that they were comfortable. Follow-up phone calls and emails were also carried out to ensure that research participants had not come to any harm after the interviews.

#### **4.19 Respect for persons (autonomy)**

Respect for persons means allowing the research participants to make their own choices and decisions with full awareness of risk and without coercion (Boeije (2010). This ethical principle was observed by seeking consent, and protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of those who took part in the study.

To ensure voluntary participation, at the recruitment stage, informed consent was initiated through formal written letters and conversations with potential participants. An information sheet detailing the purpose of the study, likely risks and benefits, and method of data collection, including information about participants' rights to withdraw from the study, was sent to Service User Participation Coordinators and Heads of Schools. They were also provided with a copy of my Ethics Approval (Appendices 10 and 13). The information sheet (Appendix 5) was accompanied by a recruitment post card (Appendix 4) and the informed process consent letter (Appendix 6), which provided more details about the study's purpose, including the procedure for observing confidentiality and anonymity. Heads of School and Service User Participation Coordinators were asked to give these to potential recruits interested in the study, asking them to contact me either for further clarification or to register their interest in taking part in the interviews.

Those who replied were directly contacted to allow them the opportunity to clarify any uncertainties or ask further questions about the research study, what their participation would entail and/or to withdraw from further involvement. Potential participants were given some time to consider their decision to participate in the study. Those who gave their consent were included in the

final sample of those who participated. Similarly, those with whom I made direct contact (social work employers and social work educators) who responded to the post card or email, and gave their consent to participate, were included in the study. The rights of those who refused participation were also respected.

Prior to conducting the interviews, verbal and written consent was sought from the research participants (Appendix 5 and 6) to ensure that those who took part were well informed and that participation was voluntary. As discussed in 4.18 and 19, informed process consent was used to allow revisiting of some of the ethical procedures, not envisaged at the start of the research, which arose during the course of the study.

#### ***4.20 Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity***

Embedded in the ethical principle of respect for autonomy is the issue of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity (Holloway and Wheeler 1995). Confidentiality and anonymity were addressed in relation to individual participants, as well as the setting or sites from which the participants were drawn. Pseudonyms were used in order to protect the identification of participants and sites. Member checking, the process of returning interview transcripts to participants, was used so that participants could check that interviews could not be traced back to them. It also allowed participants to check the accuracy of the interview recordings (Cutcliffe and Ramcharan 2002; Lincoln and Guba 1985). Although member checking offered the opportunity and full power for research participants to verify and validate what was said during the interviews, some requested changes to be made. Some of these related to issues such as correcting grammar and changes that had happened



in the participants' lives since the interviews. Participants' requests were respected and the necessary changes were made.

Confidentiality was observed within the Data Protection Act 1998. Participants were informed both verbally and in writing that although every effort would be made to ensure confidentiality, absolute confidentiality could not be guaranteed (Appendices 5 and 11). The research participants were informed that confidentiality could be broken when required by law, in matters of child protection, disclosed abuse by other professionals or in cases where participants express suicidal ideas or thoughts. They were informed that any decision to disclose confidential information would be discussed first with the individual participant and with my supervisors, before reporting it to the relevant authorities. Participants' personal details were kept separately from the main interview data; both were stored and protected by a secured computer password.

#### **4.21 Justice**

Boulton (2009, p.37) suggests that as an ethical principle, justice requires that *"like cases should be treated alike and that difference in the way that cases are treated should be justified by reference to relevant differences between them"*. During the course of this study, I experienced personal struggles with this ethical principle. Unlike the other research participants, the service user and carer educators/assessors who took part in the study were paid through "out of pocket" expenses. This decision was underpinned by my strong political and moral view that service users, like any other professionals, should be paid for their services. However, no such payments were made to the other research participants. Darlington and Scott (2002, p.25) note *"it is common to reimburse research participants for any out-of-pocket expense in the human services but*

*the notion of voluntary consent is sometimes thought to be diminished if undue enticement exists in the form of payment*". Additionally, following the interviews, I endeavoured to ensure that service user and carer participants were better protected than the other research participants. For example, I contacted each service user and carer participant after the interviews to check if they were all right; however, I only contacted the other research participants much later in the process. I have since reflected on whether I allowed the assumed vulnerability of service users in the professional discourse to frame my judgements.

#### ***4.22 Ethical consideration – from a practitioner-researcher position***

The issue of ethics was also considered from a practitioner-researcher position, both as an 'insider' and an 'outsider'. A number of authors have shared their experiences of researching their own practice, which I found useful (Darra 2008; Drake 2010; Mercer 2007). Mercer (2007) discussed the different power positions occupied by the 'insider-researcher' and its implications for research ethics. In contrast, Darra (2008) and Drake (2010) discussed the emotional struggles encountered as insider-researchers. In the study, my research participants were recruited from three institutions providing social work degree programmes and different social work practice sites. The sample group included service users, carers, social work students, social work employers and social work educators. The different participating groups presented their own challenges in terms of the various power relationships involved in working with them. I shared what Mercer (2007, p.4) referred to as the '*intimate*' insider-researcher relationship with the social work educators, social work employers and NQSWs who were known to me. In contrast, I had a somewhat 'less intimate' relationship with the service user and carer assessors, and the social work students because most were not known to me. However, I was concerned

that my powerful role as a social work lecturer might compromise participants' willingness to contribute. In addressing issues of power in relation to the involvement of service users in research, Beresford (2003) advocates for a more emancipatory approach in the imbalance of power. This, he argues, involves the acknowledgement of service users' knowledge and expertise. I felt Beresford's point applied to all the research participants. Drawing from Freire's (1972) concept of dialogue, my role as a lecturer and a researcher was shared with the research participants at the planning stage. The majority of those approached readily agreed to participate in the study.

#### ***4.23 Method of data analysis***

Data analysis was undertaken using voice-centred relational method developed in the field of developmental psychology and education by Gilligan and colleagues at Harvard University (Brown and Gilligan 1992; Gilligan 1982; Taylor et al 1995). The method seeks to give voice to those seldom heard or those who do not have a strong voice (Brown and Gilligan 1992; Taylor et al 1995). The voice-centred relational method is underpinned by relational ontology. It has its roots in clinical and literary approaches, interpretive and hermeneutic research traditions (Brown and Gilligan 1992; Gilligan 1982; Letvak 2003; Mauthner and Doucet 1998). It allows individuals' stories to be understood within their relationships with others in the broader social, political, cultural and structural context in which they live (Letvak 2003; Mauthner and Doucet 1998). The approach recognises the central role of the researcher in the co-production of knowledge.

The main tenet of the voice-centred relational method of data analysis consists of four different readings of the interview data (Brown and Gilligan 1992;

Gilligan 1982; Mauthner and Doucet 1998; Taylor et al 1995). Brown and Gilligan (1992) suggest this entails reading the data to identify, "(1) *Who is speaking*, (2) *In what body?* (3) *Telling what story about the relationship – from whose perspective or vantage point?* (4) *In what societal and cultural frameworks?*" (p.21). Building on Gilligan's (1982) work, Mauthner and Doucet (1998) describe how they used the method in their own research. The first stage of the data analysis consisted of reading and listening to the interview data to gain a perspective about the overall plots and story being told. At this stage researchers are encouraged to listen to metaphors, recurrent imageries, subplots or any contradictions in the narratives (Mauthner and Doucet 1998). Although this is similar to other methods of data analysis within the qualitative research traditions, the authors indicate that with the voice-centred relational approach a second reading is required. This second reading requires the researcher to record their personal reflections and reactions to the interviewee's story by focusing on their relationship with the speaker or text. This includes their thoughts, feelings and reactions to the interviewee's story. It is this second reading and recording of the researcher's personal responses to the interviewee's narrative that distinguishes the voice-centred relational method. Brown (1994) notes that this second reading assists the researcher *"to track her own feelings in response to what she hears – particularly those feelings that do not resonate with the speaker's experience"* (Brown 1994, p.392).

Stage two of the analysis process consists of reading and listening to the interview data to identify how the research participants experience, feel and speak about themselves through the use of 'I', 'we' or 'you' (Mauthner and Doucet 1998). Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) second stage of data analysis is similar to the method used in Taylor et al's (1995) research. Taylor and colleagues point out that listening to the 'I's allows the researchers to hear how the research participants speak about themselves, in relation to how they think and feel. According to Brown and Gilligan (1992) the first two readings of

the voice of the 'I' or 'self' brings the speaker and the listener into a responsive relationship. Letvak (2003) adds that listening to references to 'I', 'we' or 'me' helps the researcher identify how the research participant describes their identity, whilst references to 'you' or 'they' allows the identification of how each participant thinks others perceive him/her.

The third stage of analysis entails reading and listening to the interview data in order to gain a sense of how the research participants describe their relationships with others. Taylor et al (1995, p.31) suggest the researcher at this stage should listen to "*contrapuntal voices – different ways of voicing the relational world*". The final stage examines the environmental context within which the research participant is placed and how this impacts upon or affects them. Mauthner and Doucet (1998, p.132) explain that it involves "*placing people within cultural contexts and social structures*".

Although these four stages form the main tenet of the data analysis process, the method is flexible. Mauthner and Doucet (1998, p.126) suggest a number of researchers have adapted it to "*their individuality, their particular topics, their samples, the theoretical and academic environments and social and cultural contexts in which they work*". The authors make clear that although they were taught and guided by Gilligan, they adapted the method to suit the requirements of their study (Mauthner and Doucet 1998).

The voice-centred relational method was selected because it suited the purpose of the study. The method allowed the examination of how the research participants described their relationships with other stakeholders in social work student assessments. The method is supported by the philosophical underpinnings of the qualitative research tradition and is therefore consistent with this study's purpose and methodology. Further, the voice-centred relational

method has been used successfully both in the UK (Fairtlough et al 2013; Fairtlough 2007) and abroad, mostly in feminist and nursing research (Letvak 2003; Paliadelis 2005; Paliadelis and Cruickshank 2008). In the UK Fairtlough et al (2013) used voice-centred relational method to analyse their data about the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual students on social work programmes. Fairtlough (2007) also used the voice-centred relational method to analyse an evaluation of a new training course for practitioners working with parents. In the United States Letvak (2003) used the method to analyse in-depth interviews of 11 older staff nurses about their experiences in the workplace. Paliadelis (2005) used it to analyse interview data about the role of nursing managers in rural areas in Australia. Paliadelis and Cruickshank (2008) also used voice-centred relational methods in a feminist study which explored the working of nursing unit managers in Australia. Although not yet widely used in social work educational research, three colleagues who completed the professional doctorate programme at the University of Sussex successfully used voice-centred methods to analyse their research data (Finch 2010; Kwhali 2012; MacEwan 2006).

#### ***4.24 What I did: using the voice-centred relational method of data analysis***

Data collection and analysis were carried out simultaneously. In accordance with the main tenet of voice-centred relational method, following transcription of the interviews four different readings of each set of interview data were undertaken. The first stage of the data analysis consisted of reading and listening to each interview transcript in its entirety several times (Mauthner and Doucet 1998; Paliadelis and Cruickshank 2008). This helped me to gain some sense of the overall stories, plots, tensions, dilemmas and contractions within the stories. Drawing from the principles underpinning the voice-centred

relational method, the stories were considered as drama (Mauthner and Doucet 1998; Paliadelis and Cruickshank 2008).

Brown and Gilligan (1992) contend that the goal at this stage is to get a sense of what is happening, to listen to the story as it unfolds by focusing on "*the who, what, when, where and why of the narrative*" (p.27). Using Brown and Gilligan's ideas, I focused on the research participants' characteristics, roles, and reasons for participating in the field of service user and carer involvement in the assessment of social work students. Following each of the readings, my emotional responses and reactions to the research participants' stories were inserted on the interview transcripts using the comments tool on Microsoft Word. At the same time I also made journal entries noting the environmental context in which the interviews took place, for the purpose of examining issues of power and who had access to resources.

Following this, the second stage of analysis consisted of reading and listening to the interview transcripts, and noting how each research participant described their experiences, thoughts and feelings about the involvement of service users and carers in student assessments through the use of '*I*', '*we*' and '*you*'. This process was undertaken by using different coloured ink on Microsoft Word to highlight the different ways in which the research participants described their thoughts, feelings and experiences.

The third stage of the analytical process consisted of re-reading each interview transcript and listening to the audio recordings to identify how the research participants described themselves and their relationships with others involved in the assessment of students. At this stage I particularly focused on participants' narratives about tensions, dilemmas and power dynamics within these

relationships. I was interested to examine some of the difficult issues and tensions experienced in practice that are not usually reported in research. Again, different coloured ink was used to highlight participants' descriptions of the interpersonal relationships they had with the different stakeholders.

Following this, the fourth stage consisted of reading and listening to the context of how each of the research participants have experienced the service user and carer involvement in the assessments of social work students. This involved an examination of the social, political, cultural and structural context of service user and carer involvement in social work student assessments. This was undertaken by reviewing the interview transcript data using another different coloured ink to note how participants described their social background and political views about service user and carer involvement in students' assessments. Table 6 provides an audit trail of how the interview data was analysed using the voice-centred relational method.



Stage 1 Listening to plots	<p>Consisted of reading and listening to each interview transcript in its entirety several times to gain a sense of the overall story; plots tensions, dilemmas and contractions within the stories. I focused on participants' stories about the positioning of service users and carers in students' assessments.</p> <p>Coloured ink was used to highlight plots, tensions, dilemma and contractions within the stories. This was undertaken by using Microsoft Word.</p>
Stage 1 Second Reading – Personal reflections	<p>I reflected on my own emotional responses and reactions to participants' stories. This was undertaken by inserting comments about my responses in the interview transcripts using Microsoft Word. Journal entries about personal reactions were also made.</p>
Stage 2 Reading for the voice of 'I', 'we', and 'you'	<p>Read and listened to the interview data for references to the voice of 'I', 'we', 'you' to identify how participants thought and felt they have experienced the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessments.</p> <p>This was undertaken by going through the interview transcripts using different colour ink on Microsoft Word to highlight all references made to 'I', 'we' and 'you' in the data.</p>
Stage 3 Relationships	<p>Read and listened to the interview data to identify how the research participants described themselves and their relationships with others involved in assessments of students. I particularly focused on power dynamics, tensions, contradictions and dilemmas.</p> <p>This was undertaken by going through the interview data using different coloured ink on Microsoft Word to highlight how participants described their relationships with others.</p>
Stage 4 The context	<p>Read and listened to the interview data to identify how participants described the social, political, cultural and structural context of service user and carer involvement in students' assessments, particular to how they have experienced this.</p>

**Table 6 - Data Analysis process – using voice-centred relational method**

Data obtained from the four sampled groups were analysed separately as well as combined for common themes, in order to identify general themes and concepts. The four readings of each interview data, using the voice-centred

relational method of data analysis, led to four themes. The process of theme identification and development is now discussed.

#### ***4.25 The process of theme development***

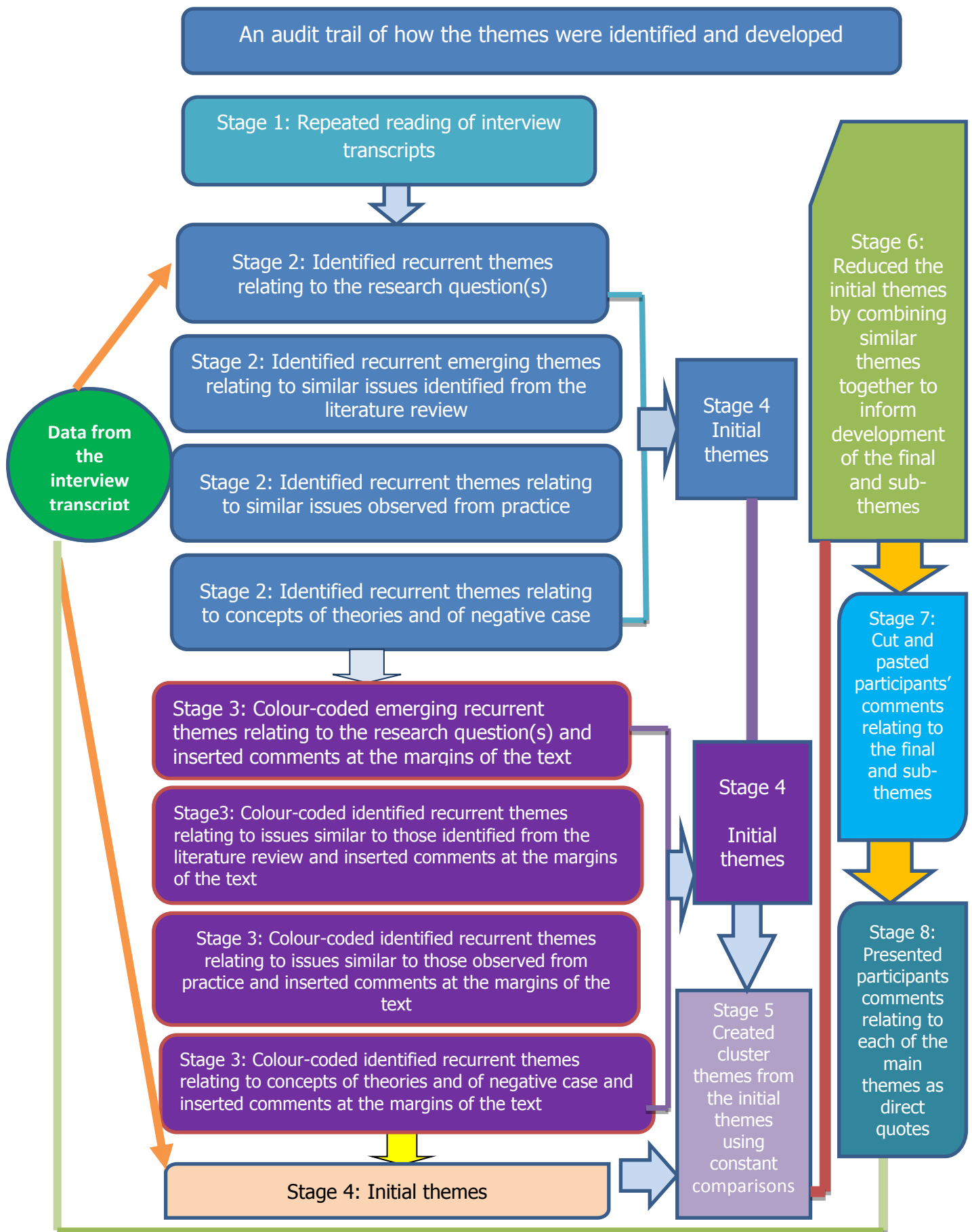
The scrutiny-based technique described by Ryan and Bernard (2003) was used in the study to identify themes. The authors suggest the technique entails combing through one's data to look for either one or a combination of the following:

- Repetitions
- Indigenous Typologies or Categories
- Metaphors and Analogies
- Transitions
- Similarities and Differences
- Linguistic Connectors
- Missing Data
- Theory-Related Material

In the study, the process of theme identification and development was undertaken by going through the interview transcript data for repeated concepts or recurrent expressions relating to the following four key areas: (1) the research question, (2) issues similar to those identified from the literature review, (3) observations from practice as an 'insider' researcher and (4) concepts of theories and of negative case. The process included identifying both salient expressions as well as missing information. Salient recurring expressions which addressed the research question, issues similar to those identified from the literature review, and practice as well as issues which fell within the theoretical framework, were colour-coded using highlighters on Microsoft Word. Those which fell outside the theoretical framework and the

research question were also colour-coded, using different coloured highlighter. Comments which provided some sort of explanation of what might be going on were inserted at the margins of the interview transcripts. I created cluster themes, which were later reduced by combining similar themes together in order to reduce the number of initial themes identified.

Cutting and sorting was then used as a processing technique for organising the interview data into thematic categories (Ryan and Bernard 2003). It was also used to identify supporting statements of expressions that related to the identified salient themes. Drawing from Ryan and Bernard (2003), quotes from the research participants' narratives supporting key themes were compiled with similar quotes. A compare and contrast approach was then used to identify similarities and differences between and among the different stakeholders' experiences. These were reorganised in the retelling of the narratives of how, as a collective, stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students have experienced their involvement with service users and carers in social work students' assessments. Comparisons were then made between individual participants' narratives and between groups. This approach allowed the examination of whether there were significant differences or similarities between the views of individuals as well as among different groups and what might have shaped these perceptions. Table 7 presents an audit trail of how the themes were developed. Appendix 19 presents an example of how the themes were developed.



## **4.26 Conclusion**

The chapter provided a discussion of the research methodology and methods used. The study is rooted in the qualitative research methodology. It also discussed the research design influences. These included: abductive and retroductive reasoning, and the principles underpinning developmental evaluation.

The study drew from the practitioner-researcher paradigm and constructivist, interpretivist and participatory research world view to justify the use of qualitative and narrative research methodology. The chapter also presented and discussed the sample strategy and the recruitment procedure used. Issues of ethics were considered from the four ethical binding principles underpinning social research and from the practitioner-researcher position both as an 'insider' and 'outsider'. The method of data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with 21 people. The interview data was analysed using the voice-centred relational method. The narrative themes derived from the interviews were identified using a scrutiny-based technique (Ryan and Bernard 2003). Chapter 5 provides the findings, which are presented as stories.

## Chapter 5: Stories

### 5. Introduction

The four readings of data from each interview, using the voice-centred relational method of data analysis (Gilligan 1982) and scrutiny-based techniques (Ryan and Bernard 2003), led to the identification and development of four themes. The themes derived from the research participants narratives are presented as *stories*. As mentioned in Chapter 4, 4.4, the terms *stories* is used in this study to mean the research participants' lived experience of service user and carer involvement in social work student assessments. The term *story* is used in this context with the acknowledgement that there is more than one reality and that an individual stakeholder's narrative account of their experiences of service users and carers' involvement in social work students' assessment is more than a sum of its parts. Participants' narratives are therefore re-storied as a unified whole. I have positioned myself as a storyteller who is telling a story about how stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students have experienced the involvement of service users and carers in these assessments as a collective.

Citing White (2000), Riessman and Speedy (2007, p. 430) agree that *the art of telling can server many purposes – to inform, embrace or reassess and retell*". The story of how stakeholders involved in the assessment of social work students have experienced service users and carers' involvement in these assessments are told under the following themes: "different ways of involvement", "assessment as the site of power", "complicated relationships" and "what should count as service user and carer feedback".

## ***5.1 Organisation of the stories***

The narratives are organised in a way that has sequential logic. This means that narratives that emerged from the interview data have been moved backwards or forwards in the retelling of the story around key emerging themes. Although this has the advantage of clarity, as well as bringing together the different narratives from the stakeholders, what has been lost is the original sequential order in which individual research participants told their stories. Under the key theme, “assessment as the site of power”, each stakeholder group’s narrative is presented separately to allow comparisons to be made between and among groups. The direct quotations presented here are used to represent the sentiments expressed in participants’ stories about particular issues or events. In most cases they reflect a substantial proportion of participants’ responses. In other instances they have been used to reflect a minority voice, a particular event, or pluralities in participants’ voices. The first theme is now presented.

## ***5.2 Different ways of involvement***

The research participants’ narratives revealed different ways in which service users and carers have been involved in social work students’ assessments. These included involvement by way of meeting approval of programme requirements, giving feedback at practice learning settings, providing feedback to students’ role-play, assessing students’ presentations, assessing students’ portfolios at the Practice Assessment Panel (PAP), interviewing the prospective chair for the PAP, and involvement with the reforms of social work education. Some of the service users and carers’ narratives suggested that they have acted as advocates by ensuring students get a fair assessment. Appendices 14 and 15 present a pen portrait and characteristics of the research participants.

In this excerpt, Jonathan, an MSc student, discussed the important role of service users in practice learning settings by means of giving feedback:

*"...Service users are crucial in assessing our development on placement and they are required to give us feedback on our progress in relation to placement".*

The interviews also indicated that service users and carers have been involved in different social work practice settings. For example, Jane, a team leader in child protection social work, indicated that service users and carers had been involved by giving feedback:

*"...one of the things that we introduced in the [team], was that the service user feedback was a regular part of the social work activity, regardless of whether they were students or advanced practitioners".*

The involvement of service users in social work students' assessments in palliative care settings was confirmed by Camilla:

*"We've just had a student who has just finished here and he got service user feedback. The service users had to fill in a form. He got glowing feedback, as did the student last year and I think they [service users] enjoyed filling in the forms saying how they felt".*  
(Camilla, team manager in a palliative care team)

The interviews revealed that organisations which failed to evidence service user and carer involvement in students' assessments were penalised. One social



work manager bitterly shared her experience of failing to win an award because her organisation did not provide evidence on how service users and carers had been involved in student assessments:

*"We went through [XX Award] ... and we were shortlisted for Best Provider of Practice Learning Opportunities. We didn't win but we came in the top 3. I knew we wouldn't win because we don't have service user involvement and I don't know what the service user involvement is in [M] (they won). I do plan to contact them to find out what they do because sometimes I think it's punitive".* (Natasha, social work manager)

As well as involvement in students' assessments in practice learning settings, the involvement of service users and carers in students' assessments, by means of giving feedback in the academy, was confirmed by the research participants:

*"...for the pre-qualifying students, that became part of their portfolio here, they have service user feedback as part of their collection of documents".* (James, social work educator)

In the following excerpt, Lucy, a social work educator, indicated that service users' involvement at her institution consists of providing formative feedback to students' role-play assessments:

*"...We involve service users in some formative assessments...The common way we do it is we set up role-play scenarios, that they enact and we film, and service users review them and we get a reaction from a service user perspective".* (Lucy, social work educator)

Service users' participation in students' assessment presentations was confirmed by Patrick, a service user:

*"At the beginning of the students' year we would do an introduction and tell them about the [project], we would get involved in presentations at different stages".*

In the following excerpts Julie and Charles describe some of the different roles they have played as carer assessors:

*"...at the PAP if a student looks like a fail we will also have a say in what we feel could be done differently and most of the time our voices are heard".* (Julie, carer)

*"...I've certainly been allowed to express my views in order to make sure that the student is dealt with fairly".* (Charles, carer)

As well as involvement in student assessments at grassroots level, participants' stories revealed that service users and carers had played an important role in shaping student assessments at more strategic levels. In the following, one of the participants described some of the different ways in which she had participated at the strategic level:

*"...I was involved in on the panel to recruit our new Practice Assessment Panel Chair".* (Julie, carer)

In this excerpt, Julie's narrative revealed that service users and carers have not only been involved at HEI level, they have also been involved in the reforms of social work education:

*"...we've been doing a lot of work on service user involvement in further education on the Reform Board". (Julie, carer)*

Whilst the above provide a positive view of the contributions of service users and carers to social work students' assessments, their involvement aroused strong feelings among the different stakeholder groups interviewed. Participants' descriptions about their relationships with others were explored through their use of 'I', 'we' and 'you'. These are presented under the theme, 'Assessment as the site of power'. Stakeholders' narratives are presented separately under this key theme.

### ***5.3 Assessment as the site of power: Service users and carers' narratives***

The narratives revealed complex power relations and struggles between service users, carers and social work academics. Participants' narratives indicated that although service users and carers are given a voice in social work students' assessments, they felt they had less influence than social work academics regarding assessment decisions. Some of the participants reported experiencing resistance from social work academics. The findings also indicated that the context within which some social work students' assessments take place is disabling for some groups of service users.

In this extract Julie describes her experience as a carer assessor at a PAP:

*"...if we're quiet, the chair will always say 'What do the service users think about that?' So our feedback is always there, even if we are not very forthcoming and don't know what to say".*

Julie's story indicates that carers are given a voice in students' assessments. However, as her story unfolded, she revealed different power relationships between social work academics and carers at formal PAP meetings:

*"...but what will happen is that at the PAP you will have two people looking at each portfolio and if it's a fail, they very often go to the academics to look at that... what is good is when they're [students' portfolios] looked at by the academics, their comments will be heard by the whole PAP".*

Julie's narrative suggested ambivalence about the power to fail students. Therefore I asked her why service users and/or carers would want social work academics to make the fail recommendation. The following is her response:

*"I think a lot of service users know what to say but they don't know how to say it...my feeling is that they [academics] would be able to express the underlying issues with a failed student better to the whole group. I think that's beneficial from my point of view that should happen".*

Julie identifies a deficit skill to deliver an assessment recommendation. Her comments draw attention to significant issues relating to relationship between knowledge, skills and power.

Charles, a carer, revealed that although carer involvement in students' assessments is accepted, some staff members had initially resisted this when it was first initiated:

*"Over the years, it's been five years now, and it has changed. At first there was a feeling that I can only express as being a 'cuckoo in the nest'. We weren't really a part of things. I think that's improved enormously and I think that's probably because of gradual changes in staff and evolution in the way the [institution] is run. Some people, in the early days, did used to resent our involvement but now, almost exclusively, that doesn't happen. I think we are definitely feeling valued by the [institution], certainly with regard to our involvement in assessments".*

Similar to Charles, Janet indicated that some staff members had resisted the idea of service users' involvement in students' assessments when implemented initially at the institution to which she was attached:

*"...we have had a certain amount of resistance from one or more members of staff, although the majority are very keen for us to be involved, and the people who are running [the project] are very keen because we are very keen to get in there, to get involved with it".*

Janet went on to reveal that whilst social work educators appear to have now embraced the idea, not all HEI employers are aware of, or sensitive to, this initiative:

*"...if you ask them to arrange for disabled parking the [person] at the gate will go back to them and say 'It's all taken' but won't*

*attempt to look for more spaces. It's the lower echelons that don't seem to see the importance of making it as easy as possible for us to get there". (Janet, service user)*

Despite the comments above, Janet expressed a willingness to continue to be involved in students' assessments:

*"We are pretty reliable, except for the fact that for some of us our conditions are such that we have no complete control over them, they tend to rule us simply because they can. We would rule them if we could, but various disabilities or impairments do take control".*

The willingness to continue participating in students' assessments was consistent with the other service users and carers interviewed.

Janet went on to reveal structural barriers to service user involvement in students' assessments:

*"I think we are going to be paid to do this, because we are experts being brought in, but I've just had an email recently from one of their administrators to say that it's just travel expenses that are to be paid".*

In addition to the issue relating to payment, Janet's story highlighted how the structure of HEI assessments, which requires service users to travel to the institutional settings, could be a potential barrier to service users' involvement:

*"...So far there have been no difficulties with the acceptance of the idea, we have been welcomed, but they may not realise the physical difficulties of getting into their office".*

Like Janet, Patrick's story suggests that although there is willingness by service users to participate in all areas of student assessments, this had not been fully achieved at the institution he was attached to:

*"We are working and putting pressure in various directions to enable us to be involved in the whole process. But this is the first year that we have been involved, it's been a big leap forward and has taken us a long time to get this far, our involvement basically had been at a fairly low level".* (Patrick, service user)

Patrick's use of 'we' suggested a personal struggle. He used 'we' in a collective sense, as if drawing strength from other service users in order to carry on:

*"...we have for some time thought that our participation should be more in that the students need to know what we are all about".*

Patrick's frustration about the slow progress came across very strongly through his emphasis on the words '*our participation should be more*'. I asked him if he would be able to challenge an assessment decision:

*"We wouldn't be able to challenge that, not in the [Project], I mean...I don't think we would be able to challenge it at service user level".* (Patrick, service user)

Using the ASYE as an example, I asked Janet whether she would be able to influence assessment decisions when working alongside social work employers as co-assessors. This was her response:

*"Well, I can't see that happening... we don't have the power... so if we take out the local employer here, that's [X Council]... I think we have one person here on the [project] that's part of [X Council] but she is with the Learning Difficulties team, she's on that sort of level, but you're then dealing with team leaders and managers... If we were asked to give an input, of course we would give it, but we wouldn't have the opportunity of having direct impact as such".*  
(Janet, service user)

Whilst the findings undoubtedly suggest that service users, and carers to some extent, do have a voice in social work students' assessments, there was a strong feeling among participants that they would not be able to change assessment decisions.

#### **5.4 Assessment as the site of power: Social work educators' narratives**

Social work educators' narratives revealed complex power dynamics, tensions, dilemmas, conflicts and ambivalent feelings towards service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments. The stories also shed some light on the positioning of service users and carers in the field.

In this extract Michael indicates that service users and carers have not been involved in post-qualifying (CPD) programmes at his institution:



*"My experience in terms of post qualifying programmes I have found that they [service users and carers] haven't been as involved and that could be for a number of reasons". (Michael, social work educator)*

James provides further insights about the positioning of service users and carers in social work students' assessments:

*"I think with all service user things it tends to be tagged on...You hear it all the time – oh, we better ask a service user – you hear it in meetings. You talk about the business and then someone will say 'Oh, what about the service users' and someone else will say 'We'd better ask them'. It's a bit of an afterthought". (James, social work educator)*

James questioned whether the involvement of service users and carers in students' assessments would change anything:

*"I feel it's easy to be cynical about this; you could see it as political correctness: 'We always use service users'. So what? If you didn't, would anything change? I have to say I don't think it would, because good, bad, indifferent students would always present good service user feedback".*

James' narrative highlights some tensions in involving service users and carers regarding their feedback:

*"...We've got a couple of service users who were diametrically opposed. I can't remember the details but we were showing a role-play film, the service users were there to view the film and they*

*talked to the students who made the film about their experience. The students got totally different views from the two service users, which really baffled them. One was very negative about the language used in the role play... The other service user had a completely different view on it... The service user who gave the negative feedback upset the students, because he wasn't particularly gentle with the way he gave the feedback".*

This was echoed by Victoria who reported a similar incident of service user feedback to students during an assessment at a different institution:

*"...a number of generalisations about races and cultures and things like that and it kind of gave the students the opportunity to discredit everything that she was saying because the manner in which it was delivered. ... it would have been easier or much more beneficial for the students if they could get to grips with her true message, rather than dismiss and discredit her because of the manner in which she delivered it". (Victoria, social work educator)*

I asked Victoria how best to address the issue raised, and she replied:

*"I don't want to start by 'training' service users, because you lose the essence of the genuine message, but they really need to learn about delivery, especially within a professional programme".*

James' story is used to explore some of the complexities, tensions and different power struggles between social work educators, service users and carer assessors:

*"We've got this sort of set of requirements that we are aware of about values, about standards, about boundaries. How do we expect service users just to come into our world and be free to express themselves, and if they did express themselves, what if you get racist service users, homophobic service users, sexist service users, service users that think people with disabilities should be exterminated? We don't vet them, do we?" (James, social work educator)*

This excerpt raises a number of pertinent questions and highlights some of the tensions, dilemmas and complexities involved with service user participation in social work student assessments, and the potential misuse of power. Returning to James' question on vetting, if service users and carers are vetted there is a danger of presenting a picture of practice that does not represent the wider general population of service users and carers that students would be engaging with following qualification. Yet by not vetting those who choose to be assessors or educators, we run the risk of involving those who might have views that are not congruent with social work practice values. Equally, not questioning or challenging homophobic or racist language could be argued as a misuse of power.

James provides further thoughts in this excerpt:

*"The other problem that I've found... we've used a group of service users from a local voluntary agency over several years. They became very comfortable coming in and after a while, you could hear that they began to talk like us. Some did courses here. One actually applied for a lecturer's job at one point. So it's as if there's a metamorphosis and this is because the messages they get – 'I've*

*been asked to do some work at the University, ooh look at me!’  
What does that say to them? Some of them make more of that than  
we intend”.*

James raised further pertinent questions in the context of service user and carer involvements in social work students’ assessments:

*“...in terms of assessment and I think what we’ve never really come  
to terms with as a profession, and certainly here, is the power  
dynamics in assessment and that runs through the whole process...  
We never really lay the ground rules out”.*

Peter, social work educator, described how service users have been involved in both the BA and MA Social Work programmes at his institution:

*“...I mean, I don’t know about your programme but certainly on my  
programme, the students have to get feedback from service users  
but that’s the limit”.*

Analysing the ‘I’ statement in Peter’s account, I was very struck by the strong emotions expressed and the indication that service users’ involvement in students’ assessments should only centre on providing feedback.

In the following, James expresses his thoughts about the involvement of service users in assessments:

*“...I think there is a role in the teaching, but I think in honesty in  
terms of admissions and assessment, it doesn’t work very well... I  
think most professionals would say that we have to have the final*

*say on assessments. But where do we pitch, what weight do we give to service users' opinions?"*

James' narrative draws attention to the fluidity of what defines a 'service user' or 'carer', since lawyers, lecturers and professors can be either a carer and/or service user.

What follows are the students' narratives about their relationships with service users and carers in assessments.

### ***5.5 Assessment as the site of power: Social work students' narratives***

In contrast to the social work educators' narratives, the students' narratives, including those of NQSWs, centred on the challenges of obtaining service user and carer feedback in certain areas of social work practice, and the implications for either passing or failing an assessment. What was interesting was that the NQSWs who participated felt that they were less susceptible to service users' involvement in their assessment as 'qualified' workers than when they were students at pre-qualifying level. Like the social work educators, the NQSWs expressed ambivalent feelings about service user and carer involvement in assessments. Narratives highlighted emotional difficulties and discomfort about obtaining service user and carer feedback. The students' narratives are presented separately from the NQSWs. In the following, the students described how they thought and felt about service users and carers' involvement in their assessments, revealing contrasting views and feelings. For example, Jonathan sounded very surprised when I asked about his experiences of service user and carer involvement in student assessments during his time at university:

*"They haven't been involved...In the lecturing process they have tried to be active but not in the actual assessments at university".*  
(Jonathan, MSc student)

Jonathan went on to indicate that service users and carers had been involved in his assessment at a practice learning setting. In this excerpt, he describes the manner in which service user feedback was sought, giving an insight into differential power relationships between service users and students:

*"...we the students are normally required to give them forms, to collect information from the service users".* (Jonathan, MSc student)

He indicated that most of the service users and carers are unable to complete the forms; he provided a way forward on how to address the issue:

*"I believe it's right to let a support worker help them, to give them the support they need to complete the form instead of leaving it with them, because most of them can't write".* (Jonathan, MSc student)

Another student, attending the same institution as Jonathan, confirmed that service users and carers had not been involved in what she described as 'university assignments':

*"Oh, should service users be involved in my assessment at uni? No, they haven't been involved. They were involved in the lessons but I didn't have to get feedback from them for my placement. Although I did on my last placement because my practice assessor arranged*

*that and I was like 'yeah, ok, go ahead' and that family was particularly happy with the work I'd done, so that was ok". (Mary, MSc student)*

Mary expressed her thoughts about service user feedback:

*"I am keen to hear service users' feedback because, at the end of the day, they will be the people that I'm working with, so I would want to know from them if I'm making any mistakes, if there's a better way to say things, how do they perceive me. Yes, I'd value their feedback more than probably the HEI and work". (Mary, MSc in Social Work student)*

In contrast to Mary, Jonathan indicated that he valued his practice assessor's feedback more than that of the service user:

*"...when I consider the service user's feedback and the practice assessor's contribution to my progress, I think that the assessor's one carries more weight".*

Having asked Jonathan to expand on why he felt this way, he responded:

*"The service users tend to write, since they know I am going to have a relationship with them it is quite difficult that they write negative comments on it. They think if they write a negative comment against you it is going to negatively affect them... we don't have the power anyway and it is their right".*

Jonathan's comments draw attention to the complex relationships between social work students and service users and carers in practice learning settings, and its likely impact on students' assessments.

In the following excerpt Naomi asks an important question about what is it that service users are being asked to assess in practice learning settings, stating:

*"Because if it's a service user group that is involved in assessing the work in terms of assessment, documentation, recording etc, or observation, that's one area, or if you are seeking to get feedback from the people on the caseload to feed into your assessment that's two different strands in my head". (Naomi, BA Student)*

The NQSWs' narratives are now presented.

I asked Summer, an NQSW, about her experiences and thoughts about service user and carer involvement in students' assessments:

*"...We used to get the feedback sheet things. I think it became a bit hard for me...I was going round saying, I've got to get that done because it's got to go in my portfolio".*

April describes her experience of receiving service user/carers feedback on a role-play, as a social work student, as follows:



*"I thought that their [service users/carers] feedback on the role-play was better because they were at the same level and had the same understanding as the lecturers". (April, NQSW)*

In contrast, this is what Summer thought about service user feedback:

*"...I think for me the feedback I took more seriously was the feedback I got from my on-site assessor and there are things in my mind that she said to me that I've never forgotten and have really impacted on my practice". (Summer, NQSW)*

Summer's narrative echoed Jonathan's earlier comments about valuing his practice assessor's feedback more than that of service users and carers.

In the following excerpt, April describes her experiences of seeking service user feedback during her NQSW training:

*"...people don't know what to write. With academic forms and the way the forms are written sometimes, they're not easy, not plain English, some of the boxes are hard to fill in and it's something they might not like us watching them write it out, and if you leave it with them and go back they can't find the form, so it's not easy".*

Both Jonathan and April's narratives draw attention to the fact that the way in which service user and carer feedback is obtained could inhibit or disenable some service users and carers in contributing to student assessments. The narratives highlight some of the structural relationships between service users, carers and powerful institutions; in this context, it is the institutions which

design the feedback forms and then impose these on the service users and carers who have to complete them.

April's comments highlight a potential implication for all social work students, including NQSWs:

*"...in a way, you'll only be asking the families that you know are able to complete a form, because you know if they're hostile they won't complete it anyway. As a social worker, if you've got a family who don't like you, you're not going to ask them for feedback, none of us are. It's like with references, you're not going to give someone's name if they hated you at work, are you?"*

April went on to highlight other potential implications for students' assessments in areas where service users and carers may have opposing views to that of the NQSW student about a particular aspect of service intervention. In her narrative she makes references to statistics to support what is deemed a better outcome for children from a social workers' perspective:

*"...I think there's a difference between what service users think can be provided and what social workers should do and what reality is. There's a big difference. So if you had a service user who was particularly passionate in a certain aspect, say, that children need to be placed in care if they don't get on with their parents and the reality is the local authority can't afford to do that, statistics show that's not always a good outcome for the child anyway, then you won't get a good feedback because they're looking at it from something that's not realistic, they're looking at it from their own personal experience".*

Like April, Summer discussed potential challenges and implications for involving service users and carers from child protection social work in student assessments. Her narrative centred on procedural fairness:

*"...I'm trying to think about the fairness of it all. If you've got someone working in a voluntary agency, it's not statutory, they are a social worker in that agency but in more of a helping role, the feedback from the service user is going to be far more positive, whereas working in a statutory agency where the threat is that you're going to remove someone's children, the feedback may not be so cordial and could that result in a student passing or failing? To me that's like there's vast difference in thinking, where is that student working? What is the client group? What is the work that they're doing? ... If you're working in a hospice and you're giving people support to access benefits, bereavement support, they're going to think you're wonderful".*

Summer continued by highlighting the field of mental health social work as one of the areas which might present challenges for students in practice, as far as obtaining service user feedback is concerned:

*"...You know, when I think back to the three children I've had to remove, one the mums had quite severe mental health problems. That's another thing, how do you get feedback from someone like that?"*

Presented with these challenges, I asked April, who worked in a child protection team, to summarise her views about seeking service user and carer feedback as an NQSW:

*"I didn't feel comfortable with highlighting that I was newly qualified [pause]. A student, yes, [pause] everyone is fine if you're a student, but with a newly qualified if they can't access a service they want, they might think it's me because I'm newly qualified and I don't have the experience to get what somebody else did". (April, NQSW)*

April's narrative highlights the different positions she occupied as a newly qualified social worker and as a student on an NQSW programme of study. She paused on a number of occasions when describing her discomfort regarding seeking service users' feedback as a newly qualified social worker, noting that she had felt more comfortable doing so as a student. Although she was undertaking the NQSW programme of study at the time, in her narrative she identified herself as a social worker rather than as a student. Her narrative reveals the complex nature of a NQSW's relationship with service users and carers, in the context of the requirements to seek service user and carer feedback during their programme of study. Importantly, it highlights some of the emotional difficulties and/or discomfort that some newly qualified social work students might experience when seeking such feedback.

Sharing April's views with Summer, and responding to a similar question about whether there is then a need for service user and carer feedback, Summer concluded:

*"...Service users are all-important because without them you wouldn't have a job.... I do value what they say and what they do".*

These findings suggest that although involving those with 'direct' experience of accessing social work services in students' assessments is undoubtedly valuable, it could also have significant implications for these assessments. What follows

are the social work employers' narratives about service user and carer involvement in students' assessments.

### **5.6 Assessment as the site of power: Social work employers' narratives**

The social work employers' narratives suggested that they appreciated the principles of service user and carer involvement in students' assessments. Some of the research participants gave 'good practice' examples of how this group had been involved in their particular settings. However, some questioned the rationale for involving service users and carers in students' assessments. Others raised important questions about the logistics of their involvement. All the participants were employers of NQSWs; three were acting as supervisors of NQSWs at the time of the interview.

Vanessa's narrative highlighted the importance of carer feedback in students' assessments:

*"I think carer feedback is very, very important. In some ways it has been neglected in the past. As a parent myself and a carer my views were not thought about or cared for and although we bring out all these statutory things saying carers must be listened to... we are very often closed in at looking at service user feedback. I think that has to be broadened". (Vanessa social work manager)*

Vanessa went on to elaborate on why the inclusion of the carer's voice in settings such as dementia care was important:

*"Particularly with our service users, they are very often people without the cognitive ability to give feedback on their own behalf".*

Margaret acknowledged the importance of service user feedback:

*"...I think service user feedback is very important. I think that maybe we [the employer] should be designing some kind of process, be it a form or something like this – a one-on-one – to try and ascertain that that social worker has treated the service user with dignity and respect and consideration and done what they are supposed to do in a nice, timely way".*

*...I suppose if they are saying something like, 'Oh my God, that person's awful. I wouldn't let them look after my cat never mind my mother!' then they do have something important to say".* (Margaret, social work manager)

Margaret's comment highlights the need to involve service users and carers in students' assessments. It also raises important questions and debates about what criteria should be used when assessing students.

Drawing from Margaret's earlier comments about why service users should be involved in social work students' assessments, and focusing on issues of power, I sought to establish whether service users and carers would be able to fail a student. I asked Camilla, a palliative care manager, about her views:

*"I don't think so, do you? I can't imagine they will. I mean the truth is, it's not that easy for a student to fail. I mean as a practice assessor you don't get that opportunity, it's quite hard to fail*

*student... I think it would be ever so hard for service users to be part of the process of passing or failing, it just wouldn't happen".*

Camilla's view was consistent with the views shared by the service user participants (see 5.3, Patrick and Janet's narratives). Camilla highlighted a potential implication for not using criteria for assessment:

*"I sort of understand how that 'pass' and 'fail' is done at the university, you can't just have people failing because the service user feels they're not going to make a good social worker, you can have feelings like that about someone but you can't act on that, it's not appropriate or professional, you've got to have criteria".*  
(Camilla, palliative care manager)

Conversely, Natasha questioned the rationale of involving service users and carers in students' assessments, saying:

*"We need to be clear about what we hope to gain from service users being involved in assessment and what part of assessment would they be involved in. I think we need to be really clear about what we are assessing, because assessment is not easy".* (Natasha, social work manager)

I asked Natasha about the thinking behind her comments:

*"... it [service user and carer involvements] may work more as a tool or aid for us to assess social workers with. I think to do it properly, we would have to be really specific about what it is they [service users/carers] are assessing people on... It would need to be specific and it would be better if you trained service users".*

She concluded:

*"Assessment is a skill and I think people take it for granted... it's a skill... in the same way you have someone who is a qualified professional who is not able to assess, they [service users and carers] would have to have training".*

Natasha's comment resonates with James' (social work educator – see 5.4) comments about the need for training.

Stakeholders' narratives suggest that relationships between service users, carers, and social work educators, employers and students are complex. The theme which follows explored this from all research participants' perspectives.

### **5.7 Complicated relationships with the 'other'**

The stories revealed that the social work relationship with service users and carers is co-dependent. Charles drew attention to the relationship between service users, carers and social workers, using this to make the case for involving carers as assessors in student assessments:

*"I would say carers are as important as a service user, because they are both so interlocked that you can't deal with either one without dealing with the other". (Charles, carer)*

Peter provides some insights into the relationship between service users and social work as a profession:



*"...it depends on your point of view, but to some extent their capital is what we create because, if you think about it, we give them status. They don't have status outside us and if there were no social workers, there would be no service users". (Peter, social work educator)*

Although Peter was referring to service users in general terms, rather than specific to service user assessors, his comments draw attention to the complexities of relations.

Peter elaborated by drawing attention to the different power positions occupied by service users, carers and social work educators in social work students' assessments:

*"The service users we work with are groups of people that become part of our system. The capital they've got is derived from ours, if you work it out. We pay them and if we didn't they wouldn't be able to do what they do... They're not separate from us. They wouldn't exist separately from us. In terms of social work we give them that status by giving them a voice". (Peter, social work educator)*

In the following excerpt, April, a NQSW student, draws from one of her cases to describe the relation between a carer, a service user and social workers, suggesting an implication for students' assessments:

*"I had a new case, when I got there the dad and the daughter were really hostile to me. It didn't look like they were going to let me in at first, he was saying 'You're a waste of time', I went straight to the daughter. I could see her Prom dress hanging up and I talked to her about her dress, her hair and make-up and the Prom in general .... I said 'What is it the*

*other social workers haven't done right?' .. So she started telling me about what they hadn't done... I don't think they would have passed me if they were assessing my portfolio!"*

Although April felt that she would not have passed her portfolio in this context, Ken's comment in these excerpts does suggest that for service users the ability to connect is important:

*"What concerns me is, obviously it's good for these professionals to have a good deal of academic ability, but I think that might cloud the way that they connect with people, and the important thing for any of these professionals when they are on a one-to-one with a service user is the connection that they make".*

He went on to add:

*"I mean, sometimes, even if you're dealing with a person with dementia, verbally the content may be very mixed up and chaotic and you may not be certain what they are saying, but I guess if you had a video, then you could see that interaction between the professional and the service user and usually, even if you are just watching a video, you can become aware of whether that individual has made that connection". (Ken, service user)*

James sums up what he believes is a complicated relationship between service users and social workers, and how this might impact on the relationships between service users as assessors in the academy:

*"I think it's complicated. Given the relationship between service users and social workers, it's not a straightforward consumer*

*relationship, is it? It's not like asking consumers that shop at Sainsbury's what they think of Sainsbury's. It's a complicated relationship that involves all kinds of dynamics: access to services, things like deprivation of liberty, so to put it as a straightforward 'include them in' would never work, I don't think".*

James' story reveals further dilemmas in this area of practice:

*"You can't make an equal process because we're in our comfort zone as professionals, aren't we?... We've got a background in the profession, and we're steeped in the institution, so we're very comfortable with that. For a service user, it can be a situation that's quite difficult to manage. All of a sudden they're given this so-called power and status".* (James, social work educator)

Although issues emerged, in what Bourdieu refers to as the *illusio* (a belief that the game should carry on) there was a real sense that the majority of stakeholders were in agreement that service users and carers should be involved in social work students' assessments. The following presents participants' views on what service users and carers should comment on in students' assessments at CPD level.

## **5.8 What should service user feedback look like?**

There was a consensus among the different stakeholders about a need to develop a national criterion against which service users and carers could make their assessment judgements of students. However, participants felt it was a complex area and were unsure about who should develop it. Participants justified the development of such criteria as a way of ensuring rigour in assessing fitness-to-practice. Some felt that service users and carers should

play an important role in developing it. This area is explored through three research participants' narratives:

*"we're talking about fitness-to-practice, we're talking about working sensitively... it's something that happens between all of us as negotiated... It is a problem and I don't think anybody knows the answer; otherwise we'd have done it, wouldn't we?"* (Charity, social work educator)

This was echoed by Michael, who argued strongly for the involvement of service users and carers in developing an assessment criterion:

*"...they [service users and carers] should be involved in deciding whether a social worker is fit to work with them, that should be the bottom line... They need to be involved throughout the process so they understand the process".* (Michael, social work educator)

Camilla concluded by stating:

*"I'm not particularly in favour of tick boxes and there are so many now, national criteria for this, assessment tools criteria for that. But there is a place for helpful criteria and maybe service users could be involved in drawing up the criteria. So I think, yes, you need some criteria to give people guidelines and tools by which to know what they're doing".* (Camilla, palliative care manager)

There were pluralities in participants' narratives regarding what service users and carers should assess students against. Although participants were asked to focus at CPD level, progressive difference in expectation at CPD level was

widely ignored. Of the 21 people interviewed, only three indicated that they would like to see different levels of expectation at CPD level. The four readings of each interview data, using the voice-centred relational methods of data analysis and the scrutiny-based technique, led to the development of three themes: 'effective communication skills,' 'professionalism' and 'feeling supported'. Interestingly, none of the social work managers interviewed during the initial stages provided specific answers to my question of what should count as service user and carer feedback evidence. Key themes that emerged from the interviews are now presented.

### **5.9 Effective communication skills**

The research participants framed their responses around the following abilities: to listen, show empathy and kindness. For example:

*"I would say communication, what could be improved, maybe some sort of measure over a period of time so that maybe if the feedback happened a few times during your ASYE that you could listen to what they were saying and improve". (Mary, MSc student)*

Qualities such as the ability to communicate were confirmed by others:

*"I would expect that someone should be able to communicate, to be able to listen, to show empathy". (Patrick, service user)*

*"...I would want service users to be able to talk about what their experience was of the intervention, what their experience was of*

*the social worker's ability to communicate and form that relationship with them". (Jane, team manager – child protection)*

Julie drew examples from her own engagement with social work students to indicate what qualities she would expect them to evidence during an assessment:

*"I mean actively listening, and being able to relate to service users, because you do get a lot of students who say 'Oh, that was fantastic – we get on really well' and they definitely have a regard for you and you can tell you get on really well with them but there's that level". (Julie, carer)*

In this excerpt, Charity drew on experience of involving a service user in one of her teaching sessions, to highlight some of the complexities in measuring qualities such as 'kindness':

*"...she came in once and a student said, of all the social workers you had, what was the quality that helped you the most?' She said 'Do you know what? The ones who were kind. Even when they were telling me really awful things, they were kind.' Then one of the other students said 'We should put that in our evaluations.' I said 'No! Everyone in here knows how to be kind, please!... we'll have to have it down as performance criteria and then we'll have to present evidence as to how we were kind. Please!'" (Charity, social work educator)*

### 5.10 Professionalism

The research participants identified qualities such as the ability to maintain professional boundaries, good time-keeping, reliability and honesty, mastery of practice and developing wisdom in practice as areas that students should be assessed on:

*"...there needs to be a boundary between professionalism and familiarisation and its learning that boundary and learning how to be professional but in a really friendly manner". (Julie, carer)*

The issue of maintaining professional boundaries was also commented on by Janet, a service user:

*"...it's so difficult because you want to treat people as if they are a friend, yet at the same time you need to maintain professional boundaries".*

In addition, a number of the research participants suggested students should be assessed on good time-keeping and ensuring that service users and carers were comfortable:

*"...then there's the practical qualities as well, like time-keeping, how they think about service users in terms of access and making sure that they're comfortable". (Julie, carer)*

Qualities such as reliability and honesty were also suggested as evidenced in this excerpt:

*"Do they seem like a reliable person? ...reliability is something that we all really value and if you know you can rely on someone, that builds your confidence in whether they can help you or not". (Ken, service user)*

Drawing on personal experience Ken continued to explain why this quality is important:

*"... I had a friend who had dementia... he waited several months for an appointment with a social worker. He was eventually given one that was weeks away and when the actual appointment arrived the social worker just never turned up, and nobody, either the social worker or the admin people, contacted his wife". (Ken, service user)*

In the following excerpt, Ken makes further suggestions about other qualities that he felt services users and carers should assess students against:

*"...honesty is very important ...no one is saying that everyone is perfect and if the professional doesn't know the answer to a particular question or there's an issue that they don't fully understand, there's nothing wrong with saying 'I don't know about that but I will go away and find out and let you know'".*

Charity, a social work educator, felt students should be assessed on research, mastery of practice and development of practice wisdom:



*"...their workplace ought to reflect that learning organisation quality, so it is about having things like: how do we bring that into our team meetings for example? Should we have supervision groups? Should we have peer supervision around family focus? How do they get the two-way feedback? It's about research, it's about the mastery of practice, about developing wisdom in practice, all those things".*

Charity offered something different from previous research: that is, the focus on qualities such *mastery of practice* and *developing wisdom in practice*.

### **5.11 Feeling supported**

Mostly the service user and carer participants suggested they would like to assess students on their abilities to support service users and carers during times of difficulty:

*"...the one who had the most effect on me was very encouraging and she would suggest things – 'Have you tried this? Have you tried that? – certainly not patronising in any way, but she knew what interested me so she would come up with ideas". (Julie, carer)*

Another research participant indicated that students should be assessed on qualities such as good administrative skills:

*"I would expect them to be good at administration in that they are reporting and doing a proper assessment of that individual and that*

*is down in writing. And that individual has a care plan whereby they know what can be done ahead for them". (Patrick, service user)*

The interview data at this point indicated that progressive difference in expectation from BA, MA, to CPD level had not been considered by the research participant(s). I put this to Julie, who said:

*"A lot of the qualities are already there, if they're passing, because I think they gain them very much early on, about what we feel are the good qualities of a student... it's not just having empathy, it's having structured empathy and being courteous when having service users around really". (Julie, carer)*

Julie clarified what she meant by '*structured empathy*' as not setting up meetings with service users and carers at 9am if getting up earlier for such meetings is going to be difficult for that individual, or not sending letters with the wrong font size to service users and carers with known visual impairments.

## **5.12 Conclusion**

The main aims of the study were to explore how service users and carers were positioned in relation to other stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students; and what participants felt service users and carers should comment on when assessing students at CPD level.

The narratives present contrasting ways in which the research participants have experienced their involvement with service users and carers in social work students' assessments. It also identifies a number of qualities that participants

felt service users and carers could comment on when assessing social work students in general, rather than specific to those at CPD level. These are:

- Professionalism, good time-keeping, reliability and honesty
- Effective communication skills, such as listening, empathy, and kindness
- Ability to support service users and carers
- Intelligence', 'structured empathy', mastery of practice and development of practice wisdom

The findings suggest there are interdependent relations between stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments. It indicates that service users and carers have been given a voice in social work students' assessments, and that their involvements have, to some extent, modified power relationships between stakeholders. Whilst this appears to be more visible within the academy and settings such as palliative care, it was less so in practice settings such as child protection social work. The findings revealed that tensions, conflicts, dilemmas and different power struggles were at play in students' assessments.

Although most of the research participants accepted the involvement of service users and carers in students' assessments, some of the professionals, including the students interviewed, queried the rationale for involving service users and carers in this way. The research participants, mostly social work employers, social work educators and students, suggested training should be provided to support service users and carers in their role as assessors. The data obtained from the service user and carer assessors all showed their willingness to contribute to social work students' assessments. Consistent across the data obtained from the service users and carer participants was a genuine concern to support and advocate for students.

The findings indicated that social work academics, including social work employers with responsibility for assessing students' practice, have the advantage of having learnt the 'rule of the game' of students' assessments. However, the findings suggest that while there are inevitable inherent power struggles between and among those involved, the engagement in social work students' assessments has nevertheless enabled the inclusion of the voice of service users and carers. A synthesis and theorisation of the findings is presented in Chapter 6; discussion of findings is provided in Chapter 7.

## Chapter 6: Synthesis and theorisation of findings

### 6. Introduction

This chapter draws on the theoretical insights of Foucault's (1972; 1980) notion of discourse, power/knowledge theory and governmentality; and Bourdieu's (1990) concepts of field, capital and habitus, discussed in Chapter 3, for understanding. It also uses Bourdieu's three-step approach in applying his concept methodologically to examine how the *field* of service user and carer involvements in social work students' assessments is structured. I begin with Foucault; this will be followed by Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus.

#### 6.1 Foucault's notion of discourse

Using the medical field and the patient's knowledge as an example, Foucault (1973, p.196) observes that:

*"for clinical experience to become possible as a form of knowledge, a reorganization of hospital field, a new definition of the status of the patient in society, and the establishment of certain relationship between public assistance and medical experience, between help and knowledge, become necessary".*

Foucault's point resonates with my study's findings. Participants' narratives presented under the theme "*Different ways of involvement*" (Chapter 5, 5.2 -

for example Jonathan, Jane, James and Charles' narratives) suggest that the policy requirement to involve service users and carers in social work students' assessments has been implemented. Service users and carers have been given a voice, resulting in a new status as educators, assessors and recruiters. Julie's story about her involvement in the PAP, and the selection of a PAP chair also presented under the same theme, are examples (see Chapter 5, 5.2).

Foucault's (1972) notion of discourse also provides a helpful lens when analysing the legitimisation of service users and carers' experiential knowledge in social work students' assessment. To use Charles' narrative, presented under the key theme *'Assessment as the site of power: Service users and carers' narratives'* (Chapter 5, 5.3), as an example: although Charles was a carer for five years before his involvement in social work students' assessments, Foucault (1972) would argue that it did not legitimise him to participate in social work students' assessments. This is because the enunciated functioning which called service users and carers into being had not taken place. The 'statements', systems of rules and practice which caused the subject to appear had not occurred (see Chapter 3, 3.1 - discussion of Foucault's notion of discourse). Foucault would argue that Charles' experiential knowledge, like that of other service users and carers, although recognised, had no legitimised meaning in social work students' assessments until it was mandated to do so. Foucault (1972, p.103) contends:

*"...the affirmation that ... species evolve does not constitute the same statement before and after Copernicus, before and after Darwin; it is not, for such simple formulations, that the meaning of the words has changed; what was the relation of these affirmations to other propositions, their conditions of use and reinvestment.... to which they can be referred."*

As mentioned in Chapter 1, 1.5, prior to 2002, the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessment was not an accreditation requirement. It became a policy requirement in 2002, before this, social work professional knowledge legitimised social work students' ways of knowing. Students' knowledge was therefore tested against social work professional knowledge. Foucault would argue that Charles' experiential knowledge as a carer only acquired legitimised meaning in social work students' assessments within discourse after it was called into being in 2002 (DoH 2002).

Janet's story provides further evidence to support the enunciation of service users and carers in social work students' assessments (presented under the key theme '*Assessment as the site of power: Service users and carers' narratives*' Chapter 5, 5.3). However, although this enunciation has taken place, as evidenced by Charles' narrative, the narratives also indicate that some voices are silenced. Ken's (service user) references to people affected by dementia presented under the key theme, '*Complicated relationship with the 'other'*' – Chapter 5, 5.7, and Jonathan and April's narratives (presented under Chapter 5, 5.5 - *Assessment as the site of power: Students' narratives*) indicate that some service users and carers are unable to complete feedback forms, either because they cannot write or they find the forms difficult to complete.

## **6.2 Foucault's power/knowledge theory**

Foucault (1980, p.52) suggests, "*it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power*". He argues that those who hold knowledge have power and therefore create the context and define 'truth' (Foucault 1980). Participants' narratives suggest

service users and carers are no longer viewed as passive recipients of social work services, but as active contributors to social work students' assessments. Julie, a carer, indicated that she had been involved in interviewing prospective chairs for a PAP as well as acting in an advisory role on the reform of social work education (see her narrative, presented under the key theme, *'Different ways of involvement'*, Chapter 5, 5.2). Likewise, Jonathan's (MSc student) suggestion that service users have played a crucial role in assessing students' development at practice learning settings (presented under the same theme, Chapter 5, 5.2) indicates that service users and carers command positions of power in determining students' suitability for entry to the social work profession. Furthermore, under the key theme *'What should service user feedback look like?'* – Chapter 5, 5.8, there was a consensus among the different stakeholders that service users and carers should be involved in assessing social work students' fitness to practice. For example, Michael a social work educator, pointed out that *'they [service users and carers] should be involved in deciding whether a social worker is fit to work with them ... They should be involved at all stages.'*

To borrow from McNay (1994, p.6), *"the other is no longer conceived as a shadowy, contestatory force on the margins of society, but as an effect of the power relations that permeate the social realm"*. Foucault would argue that, in order to challenge the dominant social work knowledge which prevailed in social work students' assessments prior to the introduction of the new degree (DoH 2002), service users and carers are now using their *'unique'* experiential knowledge, gained through existing relationships with social workers, as a new legitimate body of authoritative knowledge. Their *'unique'* experiential knowledge therefore legitimises them to participate in social work students' assessments. It also gives them the legitimate power to measure students' learning against the new body of knowledge.



Janet's query about payment, as seen in the excerpt "*I think we are going to be paid to do this, because we are experts being brought in,*" draws attention to Foucault's discussion about the relationship between power and knowledge (see Chapter 3, 3.1). Here, Janet referred to herself as an 'expert' and used this concept to query whether she would be paid for her contributions to students' assessments. Janet's expertise comes with power which is based on her 'experiential knowledge' and 'truth,' acquired through her subjective 'lived' experiences of accessing social work services. According to Scourfield (2009, p.3) the adoption of the term 'expert', in the context of *'experts by experience'*, can be understood as a self-conscious and deliberate attempt to confront the power of the professions and democratise 'expertise'.

Further, Julie's narrative about not knowing how to make a failed assessment recommendation to the PAP (see Chapter 5, 5.3, presented under the key theme *'Assessment as the site of power: Service users and carers' narratives'* resonates with Foucault's (1980) power and knowledge theory, providing a useful lens through which to analyse the relationships between power, knowledge and skill. In Julie's case, although her experiential knowledge as a carer has accorded her with the power to participate in social work students' assessments, she identifies a deficit in skills regarding how to deliver a failed assessment recommendation. Foucault (1980) holds the view that there is a *"triangle of power, rights and truth"* (p. 93). Julie's lack of skill in making an assessment recommendation is one such example. Other example includes Natasha (a social work manager), who questioned the abilities and skills of service users in students' assessments (see Chapter 5, 5.6 presented under the theme *'Assessment as the site of power: Social work employers' narratives'*. James (a social work educator) also suggested that *"most professionals would say that we have to have the final say on assessments"* (see Chapter 5, 5.4 –

presented under *Assessment as the site of power: Social work educators' narratives*). Each stakeholder group brings to the assessment different forms of expert knowledge, power and rights, based on their subjective truth.

The narratives also revealed that there are resistances and questioning about service user and carer involvement in students' assessments; their abilities and skills in undertaking such tasks were questioned. Charles' story, presented under key theme '*Assessment as the site of power: Service users and carers' narratives*' (Chapter 5, 5.3), indicated that he, like other service users, faced resistance from some social work academics when he initially began his involvement at the institution. Further resistance appears within the students' narratives. The NQSWs' narrative about the difficulties in obtaining feedback from practice settings, such as child protection, could be argued as one example (see Summer's narrative presented under Chapter 5.5 - *Assessment as the site of power: Students' narratives*).

Foucault (1980) points out that "*where there is power there is resistance*" (p.95). He viewed power as productive and argues that it is within power struggles and resistance that knowledge and practices get refined. For Foucault, this power struggle would be viewed as healthy. However, the NQSWs' resistance to service user and carers' involvement in their assessments raises questions about whether this activity has indeed led to a new regime of '*truth*,' or whether it has led to the reproduction of social work knowledge.

### 6.3 Foucault: governmentality

Participants' narratives confirmed that the inclusion of service users' feedback, as well as evidencing their inclusion in programmes, represent forms of governmentality: a disciplinary power, or an apparatus of correction, that ensures social work educators, service users and carers, students and social work practitioners self-regulate their behaviour (see Chapter 3, 3.1 – discussion of the panopticon and governmentality). For example, the findings suggest that this accounted for the high level of anxiety evidenced in Summer's narrative presented under the key theme *'Assessment as the site of power: Students' narratives* (Chapter 5, 5.5). She commented, "...we used to get the feedback sheet things. I think it became a bit for me... I was going round saying, 'I've got to get that done because it's got to go in my portfolio'". This indicates that as a form of governmentality, service user and carers' feedback was not only sought but included in the students' practice learning portfolios. This was confirmed by Jonathan's story (presented under the same theme - Chapter 5, 5.5) which suggested that students are required to seek service users and carers' feedback as part of their evidence of assessed practice. Further evidence was provided by James, the social work educator under the key theme *Different ways of involvement* (Chapter 5, 5.2). In his narrative he indicates that service user feedback formed part of pre-qualifying social work students' assessment requirements.

According to Foucault, those who occupy the central position in the panopticon are also subjected to observation (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983). Natasha's (social work manager) revelation (presented under key theme *'Different ways of involvement* - Chapter 5, 5.2) about failing to get an award because of the omission of service users and carers in her organisation's programme is a point in case. This suggests that institutions (regulators) use 'disciplinary power' to

require both students and practitioners to regulate their conduct. It also confirms that both employers and students are subjected to what Foucault referred to as governmentality. Bourdieu's conceptual framework is now used to contextualise the findings.

#### **6.4 Bourdieu's notions of field**

Bourdieu (1990) contends that the concept of field can be determined by a number of settings where social practice takes place. The narratives obtained from the different HEIs and practice settings provide examples of the various contexts in which service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments takes place.

Participants' narratives drew attention to two key constituent components in the field: the academy (HEI) and practice. Within these, different practices were reported. The narratives suggest that different HEIs had their own system and practice of how service users and carers have been involved in students' assessments. This was confirmed by Jonathan and Mary; both indicated that service users and carers had not been involved in assessments at their university but had done so at practice learning settings (see presented under the key theme *'Assessment as the site of power: Students' narratives'* (Chapter 5, 5.5). This contrasts with April and Summer's narratives, which suggest that service users and carers were involved in their assessments as students, both at the academy and practice learning settings (presented under the same theme, Chapter 5, 5.5).

In practice settings, Summer questioned the fairness of service user and carer involvement in students' assessments in teams such as child protection social

work. She also discusses the likelihood of a student being given more positive feedback in settings such as hospice and bereavement care to those working in child protection social work (see key theme *Assessment as the site of power: Students' narratives* (Chapter 5, 5.5). The likelihood of obtaining more positive service user feedback in settings such as palliative care was confirmed by Camilla (see Chapter 5, 5.6 presented under the key theme *'Assessment as the site of power: Social work employers' narratives'*). Her narrative indicates that service users in this setting enjoyed giving feedback to students.

Summer's concerns about the possibility of obtaining less positive feedback in child protection social work is shared by April, whose narrative highlights different expectations that service users and carers might have and the implications for students' assessments. April draws from research to support her arguments (see Chapter 5, 5.5 *Assessment as the site of power: Students' narratives*), stating:

*"So if you had a service user who was particularly passionate in a certain aspect, say, that children need to be placed in care if they don't get on with their parents and the reality is the local authority can't afford to do that, statistics show that's not always a good outcome for the child anyway".*

April's narrative highlights different power struggles over what Bourdieu (1990) refers to as symbolic power; in this case, the social worker's status and knowledge of what is perceived to be the best outcome for the child, as opposed to that of a service user or carer.

Vanessa's narrative (see Chapter 5, 5.6 *Assessment as the site of power: Social work employers' narratives*) also draws attention to the way in which practice settings, such as dementia care, could affect the requirements for service users' feedback in students' assessments. These examples confirm that different social work practice settings bring to the field of student assessments their own distinctive structures and power dynamics.

Bourdieu's (1990) concept of field also provides a useful lens through which to analyse structural relationships and distribution of resources within the field. The interview settings indicated those who were endowed with resources and those without. For example, although all the research participants were attached to institutions, most of the interviews with service users, carers and students (except the NQSWs) occurred either in their own homes or at a place arranged by me through my social networks (see Appendix 14 – Pen portraits of participants and Appendix 15, Characteristics of the research participants). This would suggest that access to resources are located with social work educators and employers, rather than with service users, carers and students.

### **6.5 Bourdieu's notions of capital**

The findings indicated that different stakeholders held different cultural capital which determined their entry to the field. Most notable, service users and carers' experiential knowledge, gained through accessing social work services, determined their entry to the field (see Chapter 5, 5.3 *Assessment as the site of power: Service users and carers' narratives* and Appendix 14 – Pen portraits of participants). Social work educators and social work employers' cultural capital was determined by their academic qualifications and professional training. This was particularly evidenced in James' narrative, where he appeared to find it difficult to believe that a service user could conceive of the idea to apply for an

academic post at the institution where he worked as a social work educator (see Chapter 5, 5.4, *Assessment as the site of power: Social work educators' narratives*).

Further, as discussed under Chapter 3 (3.4), cultural capital is valued in relation to the field. The value placed on capital could be worth more or less at different places and at different times. In the narratives derived from the interview data, Natasha (social work manager – Chapter 5, 5.2 *Different ways of involvement*) and James (social work educator – Chapter 5, 5.4, *Assessment as the site of power: Social work educators' narratives*), provide examples of the value placed on service users and carers' experiential knowledge (cultural capital) in the field of students' assessments. Natasha's narrative indicated that she failed to value the importance of service users and carers' cultural capital, which resulted in her agency failing to win an award (see Chapter 5, 5.2 *Different ways of involvement*). At the academy, James' narratives would suggest that the value of this capital is deemed less, as social work educators hold the authority regarding final assessment recommendations, rather than service users and carers (Chapter 5, 5.4, *'Assessment as the site of power: Social work educators' narratives*).

Further, Peter's comment about service users' capital provides further evidence that social work as a profession, in the context of students' assessment, holds the economic capital rather than the service users and carers, as seen in this excerpt: *"the capital they've got is derived from ours, if you work it out. We pay them and if we didn't they wouldn't be able to do what they do"* (see Chapter 5, 5.7, *Complicated relationships with the 'other'*).

The findings also indicated that symbolic capital, which consists of prestige positions, was accorded to social work educators rather than to service user

and carer assessors. This was evidenced in Julie's narrative where she referred a failed student's portfolio to a social work academic; her suggestion was that social work educators are the ones who would know how to present this better to the panel (see Chapter 5, 5.3 *Assessment as the site of power: Service users and carers' narratives*). This is seen also in the students' narratives. Jonathan and Summer indicated that they rated their practice educator's feedback higher than that of service users and carers (see Chapter 5, 5.5 *Assessment as the site of power: Students' narratives*).

## **6.6 Bourdieu's notion of habitus**

Bourdieu contends that the habitus is a "*system of structured, structuring dispositions*". There was a consensus among all the different stakeholders group, as evidenced under Chapter 5, 5.8 *'What should service user feedback look like?*, that service users and carers should be involved in the assessment of social work students' *habitus*. One example was provided by Mary who indicated that she would like a service user's feedback on how to improve her communication skills (see Chapter 5, 5.9 *Effective communication skills*). The involvement of service users and carers in assessing the pedagogic habitus of the social work student's communication skills were also confirmed by Jane, a team manager, child protection, and Patrick, a service user (all presented under Chapter 5, 5.9 *Effective communication skills*). Significantly in this area, although each of the different stakeholder groups agreed that service users and carers should be involved in assessing social work students' dispositions, there were differences in expectations of what this should entail. For example Julie (carer) and Ken (service user) suggested that students should be assessed on qualities such as good time-keeping, reliability and empathy. In contrast, Charity (social work educator) indicated, "*It's about research; it's about the mastery of practice, about developing wisdom in practice*".



Participants' narratives suggest that the process of involvement has enabled a transformation not only in service users and carers' habitus, but also students and social work educators' habitus. I have not included social work employers because the interview data does not support this. April's story indicates that she has acquired a pedagogic habitus during her time as an undergraduate student, shaped by the involvement of service users in a role-play assessment (see Chapter 5, 5.5 *Assessment as the site of power: Students' narratives*). Charles also indicates that he became involved in students' assessments due to caring for his daughter (see Chapter 5, 5.3 *Assessment as the site of power: Service users and carers' narratives*). Their narratives indicate that their various histories have shaped their involvement in the field. More importantly, it evidences that their habitus enabled them to act and participate in the *field*. Yet whilst the students' habitus had been transformed through service users and carers' involvement in their assessments, the interview data did not reveal whether it had changed how they practise.

Bourdieu indicates that "*when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted*" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.127). Bourdieu's statement is reflected in James' narrative (see Chapter 5, 5.4, *Assessment as the site of power: Social work educators' narratives*). He comments that social work educators are so steeped in the culture of HEI assessments that they fail to appreciate the difficulties their expectations may place on service user and carer educators who are not familiar with this culture. Reay et al (2009, p.1105) observe, "*when habitus encounters a field with which it is not familiar, the resulting disjunctures can generate not only change and transformation, but also disquiet, ambivalence, insecurity and uncertainty*". This suggests that we become unsure of what to do because we no longer have

the '*feel of the game*' (Bourdieu 1990). Julie described her experience at the PAP, where she and other service users referred a potential fail student's portfolio to an academic, who then looked at it and made the recommended decision to the PAP. Although Julie's habitus, acquired through her caring role and as a recipient of social work services, had enabled her to participate in student assessments, her story evidences a feeling of not knowing what to do. Her comment that the academics would know how best to present a failed recommendation to the PAP suggests a feeling of uncertainty (see Chapter 5, 5.3 *Assessment as the site of power: Service users and carers' narratives*). This also holds true for those service users and carers who were asked by students to provide written feedback in placement settings. For those not familiar with this task, or what Bourdieu refers to as the 'rules of the game', it will create uncertainties, as evidenced in Jonathan and April's (see Chapter 5, 5.5 *Assessment as the site of power: Students' narratives*) stories of service users not knowing what to write.

The view expressed by Margaret, suggesting service users and carers have an important role to play in students' assessments if they are saying: "*Oh my God, that person's awful. I wouldn't let them look after my cat never mind my mother!*", assumes service users and carers would know what a 'bad' social worker would look like, without referring to an assessment criterion (see Chapter 5, 5.6 *Assessment as the site of power: Social work employers' narratives*). Bourdieu (1990) suggests that the concept of *doxa* is unconscious; it has a taken-for-granted status. Here, it assumed that service users would know.

There now follows a discussion and analysis of the *field* of service user involvement in the assessments of social work students. I have used Bourdieu's three-step approach for applying his concept methodologically:

1. Analyse the position of the field and vis-à-vis the field of power

2. Map out the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate forms of specific authority, of which the field is the site
3. Analysis of the habitus of those involved in students' assessments (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, pp.104-105)

### **6.7 Analysis of the position of the field and the field of power**

Stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments include service users and carers, social work educators and social work employers. In the academy, service users and carers are viewed as 'expert' by virtue of their experiential knowledge. Their past and present experiences as recipients of social work services in effect constitute an 'entry requirement' for their participation in the field of social work students' assessments (see Appendix 14). For service users and carers, this is symbolic and valued in relation to the structure of the field. Beresford and Croft (2001, p.302) contend, *"the unique body of users' knowledge, based on first-hand experience, which these groups and movements have generated and prioritized, offers a crucial new perspective"*. Unlike social work educators, social work employers are positioned as future employers of social work students. In students' assessments they are concerned with fitness-for-purpose, whereas social work educators and HEIs are concerned with fitness-for-award (Taylor and Bogo 2013).

### **6.8 Examination of the different relations and positions occupied by those involved in students' assessments**

According to Bourdieu, it is *"the relations of force between players that defines the structure of the field...two individuals endowed with equivalent overall*

*capital can differ, in their position as well as in their stances*” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.99). To give one example, although service user organisations have argued for funding to be allocated directly to them, this has not happened (Branfield 2007; DoH 2013). Service user and carer assessors therefore depend on HEIs for payments for their involvements. In the field, social work employers are positioned as providers of practice-learning opportunities for those undertaking social work training. HEI providers of social work programmes depend on this relationship in order to meet the professional practice requirements of social work education. Social work employers are also positioned as educators and as co-assessors of students through the practice learning context. Social work students depend on social work employers in order to earn the economic and symbolic capital accorded to social workers on qualification, as evidenced by the NQSWs’ stories.

Similarly the student/service user relationship is complex. For example, students occupy two positions in their relations with service users and carers. In the academy, they are positioned as students whilst service users and carers are positioned as educators and assessors. However, in practice, or within the practice learning context, students are positioned as deliverers of social work services (see Jonathan’s narrative, Chapter 5, 5.2 *Different ways of involvement* and 5.5 *Assessment as the site of power: Students’ narratives*), whilst service users and carers are positioned as recipients of social work services and/or as co-assessors of students’ practice assessed work. The NQSWs’ position is also unique, as although they are positioned as qualified social workers, they also occupy another position as learners, and therefore depend on service users and carers’ feedback evidence.

## **6.9 Analysis of the habitus of those involved in students' assessments**

This section engages with the following question: what is the nature of the habitus (dispositions) of those involved in the assessment of social work students? What has shaped these dispositions?

Similar to the differences in positions and relations that characterise those involved in social work students' assessments, their dispositions are also different. As well as entering the field with their individual dispositions, each of the groups possesses a collective habitus shaped by their shared experiences. Starting with students, each student would enter social work education with a range of different life experiences (see Appendix 14 – Pen portraits of participants). In addition, their systems of disposition would be developed further through their encounters with the teaching received from both service users and carers and social work educators (see Chapter 5, 5.5 *Assessment as the site of power: Students' narratives*).

These encounters would be similar but not identical, since the programmes of studies delivered by HEIs offering social work degree programmes differ (see Chapter 5, 5.5 *Assessment as the site of power: Students' narratives* – Jonathan and Mary, April and Summer). This newly developed habitus not only shapes their thinking and practice, but also regulates their conduct, both in the academy and in practice-learning settings. Students therefore enter practice learning settings with a 'pedagogic habitus,' formed as a result of having social work educators, service users and carers as teachers and assessors. They would also be assessed against this newly acquired habitus not only by social

work educators, but by service users and carers. This habitus would be further strengthened by the practice learning experience.

Similarly, the habitus of service users and carers has been formed by their specialist experiential knowledge from accessing social work services. This favours them with cultural capital that matches the capital value of the field. Their knowledge, shaped by their homologous habitus, determines their position in the field (see Appendix 14 – Pen portraits of participants). By contrast the habitus of social work educators and social work employers is shaped through education, training and professional social work practice status. At a group level, they all have a habitus shaped through participating in students' assessments. In an interview with Wacquant, Bourdieu indicated that "*the field structures the habitus*" (Wacquant 1989, p.44). The habitus of service users and carers participating in the assessment of students is further shaped by their engagement with social work practitioners and social work educators – not as recipients of social work services, but as co-assessors and educators. This applies equally to social work employers and social work educators who develop their skills and knowledge in working with service users as co-educators and co-assessors of social work students.

The discussion thus far highlights the complex relationships between and among those involved in social work students' assessments. As a field, the involvement of service users in social work students' assessments exacts its own requirements and imposes its own restrictions. These include external and internal HEI assessment regulations and institutional-level systems and mechanisms for quality assurance controls (HEFCE 2011; QAA 2008). In addition there are different expected outcomes for qualifying students from the HCPC and The College of Social Work (HCPC 2012a; TCSW 2012). Other governmental expectations are seen in the White Paper, *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System*, which is aimed at HEIs in England (DBIS

2011). The White Paper stipulates that “*institutions must deliver a better student experience; improving teaching, assessment, feedback and preparation for the world of work*” (DBIS 2011, p.4). There now follows a critique of the professional doxa which mandated service user and carer involvement in social work education and the assessment of students.

### **6.10 A critique of the professional doxa which mandated service user and carers’ involvement in social work students’ assessments**

I discussed the legal and policy drivers for service user and carer involvement in social work education and the assessment of students in Chapter 1, 1.5. This section provides a critique of the professional doxa which mandated their involvement in social work education and the assessments of students. Bourdieu used the concept of the doxa to refer to a taken-for-granted, unquestioned rule, which is followed unconsciously by social actors within a given field (see Chapter 3, 3.3). He suggests doxa is “*an adherence to relations of order which, because they structure inseparably both the real world and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident*” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 471).

Service user and carers’ participation in social work education and students’ assessments is underpinned by a number of perspectives. Contemporary thinking which mandated service user and carer involvement in social work students’ assessments included the assumptions that involvement would:

- (1) enhance rights
- (2) raise standards in service delivery
- (3) change power relations

Proponents adopting the rights-based perspective for service user and carer involvement based their claims on strengthening democratic civil rights (Carey 2009; Croft and Beresford 1995; Beresford 2005; Braye 2000; Braye and Preston-Shoot 2005). The rights-based perspective is underpinned by notions of rights and obligations, empowerment and inclusion principles (Carey 2009; Croft and Beresford 1995; Beresford 2005; Braye and Preston-Shoot 2005). Constructing their argument from the context of personal struggles experienced by service users and carers and their exclusion from developing social work knowledge, the professional doxa assumed inclusion would give service users and carers a voice in social work education (Braye and Preston-Shoot 2005; Moriarty et al 2007). Braye (2000), for example, linked service user involvement to participatory rights and obligation on the government to promote social inclusion in this statement:

*"participatory rights and responsibilities of citizenship and participatory democracy, which aspires to put government in touch with the people, and promotes the social inclusion of those traditionally marginalised within the power structures of society" ( p 9).*

Such arguments contributed to the perception that inclusion would enhance rights. Within the rights-based perspective, the obligation for service user and carer involvement fell not only on government, but also on the social work profession and providers of social work education. Changes in policy and legislation were viewed as necessary. These became a governmental obligation to enable service users and carers to fulfil their political rights as citizens. Providers of social work education become duty-bound when the BA degree in social work was introduced in 2002. They were compelled by policy and



legislation to include service users and carers in social work students' education and assessments (DoH 2002). Funding was made available by the professional body, when the degree was implemented, to make service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments possible (GSCC 2002). The empowerment this offered made it possible for service users and carers to fulfil their citizenship rights in contributing to social work students' assessments (GSCC 2002). Weinstein et al (2010, p.105) add that, "*if professionals are 'empowering' service user users, this implies that the professionals are holding the power and 'giving' (some? all?) away to the users*". To give one example although this funding was made available, it was maintained and administered by the profession rather than by a service user organisation, thus allowing the profession to maintain its dominance. Yet nobody from the profession appears to question this arrangement. Bourdieu (1977, p.168) referred to *doxa* as "*the universe of the undiscussed*". As the study findings indicate, service users and carers depend on social work profession to enable them to contribute to social work students' assessments. Deer (2008, p.120) points out that the *doxa* is: "*pre-reflexive, shared but unquestioned opinions and perceptions mediated by relatively autonomous social microcosms (fields) which determine "natural" practice and attitudes*".

As well as being viewed as a vehicle to enhance rights, service user and carer involvement was viewed as mechanism to raise standards in service delivery. Molyneux and Irvine (2004, p. 294) concurred that service user and carer involvement stemmed "*from the desire to raise standards in service delivery*". Underpinned by the New Right's ideology of marketisation and consumerism, the underlying assumption was that involving consumers of social work service would change the behaviour of social work providers, including providers of social work education (Carey 2009; Matka et al 2010; Thomas 2002). In a SCIE resource for service user and carer involvement in social work education, Levin (2004, p.8) suggested at the time that "*the thrust of all the new arrangements*

*[service user and carer involvement] is that service users and carers get high quality social work services in terms of both processes and outcomes"* (p,8). The implicit assumption at the time was that through their participation in social work education and students' assessments, improvements in service delivery would be achieved. However, an earlier work by Carr (2007) suggested that although service user involvement appeared to be challenging the very fabric of institutions within which this participation was taking place, its impact on change was yet to be realised. In a review of how service users and carers have been involved in social work education at CPD level, Robinson and Webber (2012) found no evidence to support that involvement had improved the quality of life for those receiving social work supports. At the time of writing, Matka et al (2010, p. 2138) concurred that outcome-based assumptions which mandated service user and carer involvement have *"become accepted articles of faith"*, with little or no critical examination about its impact. Drawing from his observations from the Kabyle traditional culture as a *field*, Bourdieu (1977, p.165-166) noted that: *"in a determinate social formation, the stabler the objective structures and the more fully they reproduce themselves in agents' dispositions, the greater the extent of the field of doxa, of that which is taken for granted"*.

In addition to the aforementioned, the promotion of service user and carer involvement in students' assessments was seen as a means of balancing professional power relations between academics, social work professionals, social work students and service users and carers (Carr 2004; Croft and Beresford 1995; Beresford 2005; Beresford 2013). Traditionally, the most common way in which social workers met service users and carers was at the point of crisis, when they needed some sort of support, and social workers - viewed as 'experts' - defined and provided that support (Barnes and Cotterell 2012; Beresford and Branfield 2012; Carr 2004). Service user and carer involvement in the education, training and assessment of social work students was based on the assumption that it would facilitate a change in power

relations between professionals, academics and social work students (DoH 2002). Service user and carer involvement from this perspective was underpinned with the objective of addressing the unequal power relations between professionals and service users and carers.

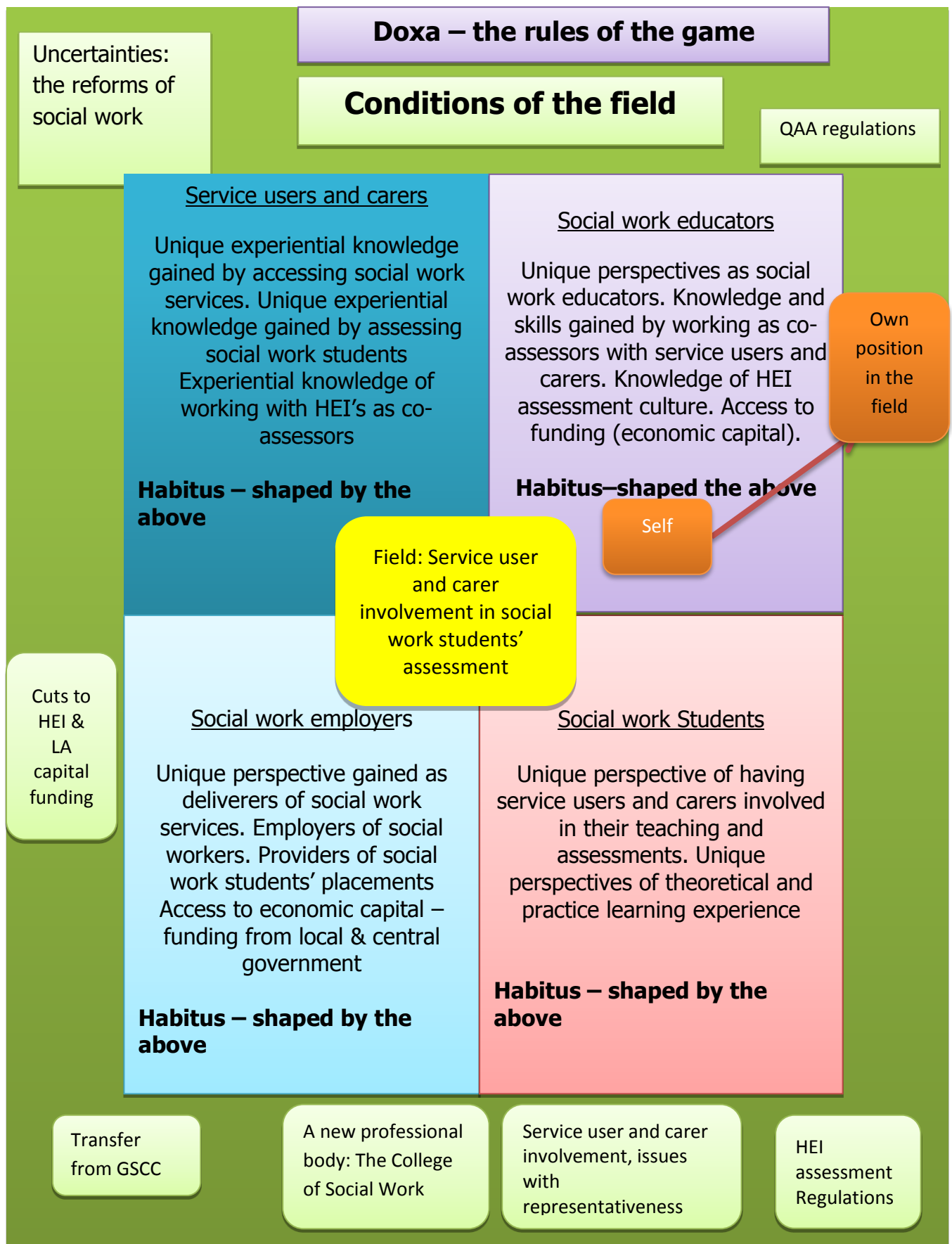
It was asserted that participation in the education, training and assessment of students would strengthen the roles and responsibilities of service users and carers, and thus lead to changes in the power relationship (DoH 2002). It was also assumed that the new relationship with service users and carers would not only ensure that they were given a voice, but that they would also have the opportunity to shape the conduct and practice of future social workers. Changing culture and practice by involving service users and carers came to be seen as the mechanism to effect this change. These were articulated through different models of service user and carer involvement (Arnstein 1969; Sweeney and Morgan 2009; Tew et al 2004; Webber and Robinson 2012; Wright et al 2006). The 'Whole System Approach' developed by Wright et al (2006), through their work with children and young people, is one such example. The authors asserted that different elements of participation could be brought together in a single framework, like a jigsaw puzzle, to effect organisational change (Wright et al 2006). The model consisted of changing the culture, practice and structure of organisations by taking a top-down approach, as well as implementing systems for monitoring and reviewing such processes. Key social work academics, including service user academics, took a lead from Wright et al's (2006) model and promoted service user and carer involvement as a means to effect change (Moriarty et al 2007). In a SCIE publication on promoting the participation of adult service users, including older people in developing social care, Moriarty et al (2007) draw from Wright et al's (2006) framework and concur that:

*"participation is more than developing a policy and implementing it. It is about ensuring that all members of an organisation are committed to participation and recognising that it will involve sharing power with service users"* (Moriarty et al 2007; p.11).

Yet at a more strategic level, whilst service user organisations such as Wiltshire and Swindon User Network – which provided training and guidance to enable service users and carers to participate in social work education, dating back to 1992 (Evans and Jones 2012) – the professional body failed to recognise the importance of such support (DoH 2002; GSCC 2002; Levin 2004). The GSCC failed to prescribe how service users and carers should be involved in social work students' assessments (GSCC 2002; Levin 2004). With very little insider-knowledge about HEI assessment regulations and culture, service users and carers were initiated to participate in social work students' assessments without any formal assessment guidance (DoH 2002; Levin 2004). Without such guidance, the professional doxa asserts that service users and carers would know what a pass or fail in a social work student's assignment would look like without providing them with any training in what Bourdieu would view as the '*rules of the game*'. Bourdieu viewed doxa as: *"the 'natural attitude' of the dominated groups, which is misrecognized as socially arbitrary"* (Myles 2004, p.94). Drawing from Bourdieu (1977), one could argue that the 'natural attitude' of the dominated group is that without such training service users and carers would know how to assess students.

Their new role as co-assessors in social work students' assessments has undoubtedly brought new influences in students' assessments, as evidenced by my literature review findings. However, consistent with other studies, my research findings suggest that the final assessment decision still rests with social work academics, rather than with service users and carers (Skoura-Kirk

2013). Carr (2007) observed that *"exclusionary structures, institutional practice and professional attitudes can affect the extent to which service users can influence change"*. In social work students' assessments, although service users and carers report that they have found the involvement experience rewarding, it appears more needs to be done (Sadd 2011; Skilton 2011; Skoura-Kirk 2013). What has transpired is that service users and carers have reported finding navigating through HEI assessment culture and structures difficult and frustrating (Skoura-Kirk et al 2013). Writing from an academic perspective, Stickley et al (2010) note that whilst the principles of service user involvement in students' assessment is desirable in theory, it is difficult to carry out in practice. The limited studies available in this area suggest that service users and carers have risen to the challenge and have made significant contributions to social work students' assessments as evidenced by the literature review findings. Table 8 illustrates how service user and carer involvement in the assessment of students is structured. Further reflect is about the professional doxa which mandated service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments are provided in Chapter 8, 8.9.

**Table 8: Constructing the object of the field**

*Ann Anka. Doctorate in Social Work thesis. Title: "Assessment as the site of power: An interrogation of the involvement of 'others' in the assessments of social work students". Supervisors: Professor Imogen Taylor and Dr Henglien Lisa Chen. University of Sussex. November 2013.*

The diagram is an attempt to portray relationships between and among the different stakeholders involved in the assessments of students. The external conditions at the time of writing (social, political and economic), discussed in Chapter 1, 1.5 (Background), have been included to illustrate the external forces that impacted on and shaped not only the *field* of service user and carer involvements in social work students but also this study. My own position as an insider-practitioner-researcher has been included to enable an analysis and critical reflection about the impact of self as a researcher in the *field*.

### **6.11 Conclusion**

The chapter drew from Foucault's concept of discourse, power/knowledge theory and governmentality and Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus to make sense of the empirical data. It also used Bourdieu's three-step approach in applying his concept methodologically in examining how the *field* of service user and carer involvements in social work students' assessments is structured including the professional doxa which mandated service user and carer involvement. The analysis revealed different power dynamics and relations between the different stakeholders involved in social work students' assessment.

The use of Foucault's concept of governmentality and the notion of discipline, which relates to Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and doxa, indicated that compliance with the policy requirement to include service users and carers in students' assessments (rules) was achieved through the self-regulation of individual and institutional conduct. Whereas from Bourdieu's framework, the narratives suggested compliance with social regulations was internalised through habitus and, to some extent, the concept of doxa. Using Foucault's notion of discourse also drew some attention to the silencing of those service users and carers who are unable to write. Similarly the use of Bourdieu's

concept of field drew attention to the relationship between those endowed with resources and those without. In what follows I locate the study's findings in the broader context of research studies on what is known about service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments.



## Chapter 7: Discussion

### ***7. Introduction***

The chapter presents a discussion of findings. It draws from the two literature reviews undertaken in the CAS and the study to locate the findings in the wider context of service user and carer involvement in students' assessments (see Chapter 1, 1.2: Rationale and personal journey and Appendix 1, for a summary of the CAS literature review).

### ***7.1 Discussion of findings***

The study supports the findings from others which have looked at the involvement of service users and carers in students' assessments. Consistent with previous studies, the narratives revealed that although service users and carers had been given a voice in students' assessments (Advocacy in Action et al 2006; Dearnley et al 2011; Debyser et al 2011; Duffy et al 2013; Gee et al 2009; Moss et al 2007; 2010; Muir and Laxton 2012; Skilton 2011; Skoura-Kirk et al 2013; Stacey et al 2012; Stickley et al 2010; 2011), final assessment decisions remained with social work academics (Chambers and Hickey 2012; Crisp et al 2006; Skilton 2011; Skoura-Kirk et al 2013). My study findings also indicate that service user and carer participants have faced resistance about their involvement in students' assessments. This resonates with previous studies looking at service user and carers' involvement in health and social care, undertaken by Hodge (2005), Carr (2007) and Chambers and Hickey (2012). Both Hodge (2005) and Carr (2007) used Foucault's (1990) theories of power/knowledge to contextualise their findings, concluding that service users and carers occupy less powerful positions than professionals. Stickley's (2006) study also shed some light on the dynamic power relations between mental

health service users and professionals. Although my sample size was very small, my findings suggest that this appears to be the case in both the academy and practice settings.

Further, my findings revealed contrasting ways in which the research participants had experienced their involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessments. My data indicated that tensions existed within these relationships. Although each of the research participants identified with the goal of service user and carer involvement, there were clear differences in participants' narratives, depending on the positions they occupied in the field. This was reflected in the interview data with service users and carers wanting to 'give something back', social work educators reporting tensions and contradictions about the involvement of service users and carers in student assessments, and students focusing on implications for their assessments. Consistent with previous studies which involved different stakeholder groups in students' assessments, differences in experience were visible between groups rather than within them (Gee et al 2009; Skilton 2011). For example, in Gee et al's (2009) study, carers felt that their involvements benefited students, whereas only students with no prior social work practice experience felt it benefited them. In contrast, staff members raised concerns about the practical arrangements of the assessments. Variations in how different stakeholders have experienced the involvements of service users and carers in students' assessments are also consistent with Skilton's (2011) study. Although Taylor et al's (2009) SCIE Knowledge Review findings identified that tensions and different expectations existed between carers and service users, my study findings suggested that service users and carers' narratives were in accordance with each other. Both centred on an obligation to 'give something back' or a willingness to contribute to students' assessments. The small sample size of two carers and three service users in my study could account for these differences. It is also worth noting that the experience reported by the service

users and carers who took part in my study may not represent the views of the wider population of service users and carers involved in social work students' assessments.

The study confirmed findings by Chambers and Hickey (2012) about barriers to service user involvement in health and social care. Like Chambers and Hickey's (2012) study, my findings identified a number of barriers to service users' involvement in student assessments. These included infrastructure issues, HEI assessment culture and issues with payment, also identified by Speed (2012). Further, whilst the literature in this area suggests a number of benefits in involving service users and carers in social work students' assessments (Advocacy in Action et al 2006; Felton and Stickley 2004; Frisby 2001; Skilton 2011; Speers 2008; Stickley et al 2010; 2011; Taylor et al 2009) the data derived from the empirical work in my study suggested that some students valued their practice educators and tutors' feedback more than that of service users and carers. This supports previous findings from an Australian study conducted by Morgan and Sanggaran (1997). Again although my sample size was small, it could be argued that the lack of appreciation for service users and carers feedback is not just located with those studying social work in England. In my study, tensions and dilemmas regarding involvement were also highlighted by social work educators, employers and social work students. In this area most of the research participants identified the issue of delivering effective feedback, and a perceived lack of expertise and skills by service users and carers, as areas of concern. Similar issues were identified by Edwards (2003), Muir and Laxton (2012) and Webster et al (2012).

Whilst conflicts are inevitable in any relationship, the heightened tensions and conflicts reported could account for the reported lack of skills and understanding of how HEI assessment systems work by those new to it. The

service users and carers who took part in my study expressed ambivalence about the power to fail students. The importance of training assessors in social work students' assessments has been raised by Bogo et al (2011; 2012) in their North American study; in the UK context, Muir and Laxton (2012), Skilton (2011), Skoura-Kirk et al (2013) and Webster et al (2012) all reported training provision and support for the service users and carers involved in giving feedback. These studies suggested that service users and carers developed confidence in delivering feedback following the training. Although the service users and carers who took part in my study did not specifically ask for training and support, this could be an area that HEIs and social work employers, interested in developing service user and carer involvement in students' assessments, could consider developing.

Regarding what should count as service user and carer feedback, there was a consensus among all the stakeholders that there is a need to frame a criterion against which service users and carers could make their assessments judgements of students. However, there was a reluctance to frame it. Further, my findings indicated dissonance between participants' views and the aims of the PCF, which focuses on progressive skills. Most of the research participants commented on issues such as professionalism, good time-keeping, reliability, honesty and effective communication skills, such as active listening and empathy. Whilst this is consistent with other studies that have previously examined what service users and carers look for when assessing students (Advocacy in Action et al 2006; Bailey 2005; Barnes 2002; Elliot et al 2005; Moss et al 2010; Speers 2008), progressive difference in expectations at CPD level was widely ignored by participants in my study. Bogo et al (2011; 2012) draws attention to the need to assess complex competencies in professional practice. The authors argue that *"professional practice in complex contemporary environments requires awareness of the ways in which problems are understood and framed, judgement is exercised, and decisions are made"*

(Bogo et al 2011, p.7). Therefore I was expecting participants' responses to be different from those of the expectations at BA and MA level. For example, Webber and Robinson (2012, p.1259) argue that "*the fact that students usually have at least three years' social work experience suggests that aspects of the involvement strategy will need to be different from that in qualifying social work education*". Of the 21 people interviewed in my study, only three showed an indication that they would like to see something different at CPD level. The expected qualities required at CPD level, suggested by the three research participants, included: *intelligence, structured empathy, research and mastery of practice and developing wisdom in practice*.

One explanation could be that the ASYE as a CPD programme of study was a new concept at the time of writing. This could account the reason why progressive differences in expectations between qualifying and post-qualifying level programmes were not acknowledged by the majority of research participants.

## **7.2 Conclusion**

This chapter presented and discussed the study findings within the broad literature relating to the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessments, drawing from the literature review undertaken in the CAS and the study. The study finding is consistent with previous research focusing on service user and carer involvements in the assessments of social work students. What was new was that, unlike previous studies, there were no reported differences in expectation or tensions between the service users and carers who took part in my study. Importantly, although previous studies identify the need for progressive differences in students' assessments at CPD level, this was not acknowledged by my research participants.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion – final thoughts

### **8. Introduction**

The thesis began with an interest in what stakeholders thought about the then newly proposed ASYE and what service users and carers should comment on when assessing ASYE candidate. The study focus changed to look at the positioning of service users and carers in relation to other stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students. What stakeholders felt service users and carers should comment on when assessing students at CPD level was maintained.

This concluding chapter provides a reflexive account of the research journey. It examines the impact of the research on my position in relation to service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments, as set out in the thesis. The chapter also examines the strengths and limitations of methodology, methods and strategies used. These are considered through the TAPUPAS framework espoused by Pawson et al (2004), and Sharland and Taylor (2006); the four-dimensional quality criteria for assessing applied and practice-based research proposed by Furlong and Oancea (2005), and the 'trustworthiness' criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The chapter also examines the outcomes and 'impacts' of the research on my personal learning from a practitioner-doctorate researcher perspective. It then goes on to make a numbers of recommendations in light of the study's findings. It concludes by discussing the dissemination process.

The study was shaped by my personal and professional experiences and philosophical beliefs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, 1.2, under Rationale: a personal journey, involving those with 'direct' experience of accessing social work services in students' assessments is important as it provides the means to gain knowledge about effective ways of engaging with them. As a lecturer practitioner, I was concerned that there was relatively little research available on service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments. This led me to carry out a pilot study as part of my doctorate assignment, where I looked at the involvement of service users and carers in the preparation for practice of social work students. I used qualitative research methods and was content to employ Husserlian phenomenology. I therefore drew on the Husserlian principle of 'bracketing'. Prior to living the experience of conducting the pilot study, I constructed that it would be easy to suspend my pre-existing knowledge about service user and carer involvement in social work students' education, to allow the research participants to tell me about the essences and meaning of service user and carer involvement in the preparation for practice of social work students.

As a constructivist, I did not anticipate that I would find applying the Husserlian principle of 'bracketing' difficult. Living through the experience of bracketing led me to the participatory world view (see Chapter 4, 4.4). Although I agree with Husserl that we learn through our encounters with others, the experience led me to conclude that firstly, it is not easy to suspend one's pre-existing knowledge about an experience. Secondly, there is value in drawing from one's experiential knowledge to inform one's practice. This reinforced my initial thinking that service users and carers do have a valuable contribution to make to social work students' assessments, as they bring first-hand experience about their 'lived' conditions to students' learning and assessments. I also wanted to go beyond Husserl's account of how we learn. Following the pilot study, I was particularly interested about learning through presentational, propositional and

practice knowledge, as proposed by Heron and Reason (1997). The pilot study helped me gain some knowledge about how other HEIs have involved service users and carers in social work students' assessments. However, this was not extensive. At the same time, practice experience led me to question the impact of structure and the motivation to participate in service user and carer involvement initiatives. The critical realist ontology offered the opportunity to critically appraise the motivation to participate from institutional and service users and carers' perspectives. The CAS literature review provided the opportunity to explore, from the literature and research, how other institutions have involved service users and carers in the assessments of students. This helped shaped my perceptions and theoretical constructs of the *field*. The empirical work allowed me to hear from the research participants their realities about their engagement with service users and carers in the field as co-assessors of social work students. It also offered the opportunity to learn from and bring together different voices and perspectives on how other stakeholders have experienced social work students' assessments with service users and carers. Further reflections about what my ontology means for my world view, personal learning and the contributions to knowledge are provided later on in this chapter under 8.4 and 8.10. There now follows a quality assessment of the methods employed.

### **8.1 Assessing research quality in qualitative research**

The very nature of qualitative research raises a number of questions about assessing its quality. However, there is considerable interest and debate in this area, evidenced by the large number of publications since the 1980s (Boaz and Ashby 2003; Furlong and Oancea 2005; Hammersley 2007; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Miles and Huberman 1994; Pawson et al 2004; Sandelowski 1986; Sharland and Taylor 2006). These debates tend to centre on how qualitative



research views the nature of social reality and how the social world should be investigated. Qualitative research is framed by different paradigms, values and theories. This has resulted in the publication of different frameworks for assessing quality. The traditional quality criteria (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Miles and Huberman 1994) mainly focus on methodological and scientific robustness, whilst the modern criteria (Furlong and Oancea 2005; Pawson et al 2004) tend to focus on research outcomes and impact. Drake and Heath (2011, p.101) contend that “*practitioner researchers engage with new knowledge at all stages of the project, from conceptualisation through methodology, methods and empirical work to the thesis*”. I now review the research journey as set out in the thesis by starting with the research question.

## **8.2 Review of the research question**

The research question was informed both by the CAS literature review, and developments and reforms in social work education at the time of writing. All stakeholders involved in the assessments of students were included in various discussions on how to frame the research question. However, I struggled to articulate the research question due to differences in stakeholder expectations and, as discussed in Chapter 1, 1.5 – Background, changes that were occurring in social work education at the time of writing. I wanted to construct a clear research question compatible with the research methodology, methods and the theoretical framework. This proved to be more difficult than anticipated. Drake and Heath (2011) observe that the practitioner-doctorate researcher operates between at least two activities systems: the workplace and the awarding institution. My consultation at the *field* (work place) left me in a state of confusion regarding how to formulate a research question that was compatible with the research methodology, method and theoretical framework. I discussed these concerns at a doctoral student weekend workshop, and received some help on how to move this forward (see Chapter 1, 1.4). A chance conversation

with my second supervisor provided further guidance and assurances on how to progress. It was much later in the research journey that I had a clear idea of what to focus on. Having a clear direction made the rest of the data collection process much easier. However, it meant that most of the initial interview data was no longer relevant. There are also clear ethical implications, as I felt that I had wasted some of the research participants' time and resources in not having a clear question at the beginning of the research.

### ***8.3. Review of the research methodology***

The study is situated in the qualitative research methodology, and draws on narrative research. The research method consisted of a literature review and individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews with service users, carers, social work students, social work educators and social work employers (see Chapter 4, 4.9).

The use of qualitative research methodology was shaped by my belief that truth is multiple, subjective and interpretive. Further, my interest throughout the research had centred on participants' lived experiences, meaning and relevance in context, rather than on extrapolating statistical findings to a wider population. These beliefs were shaped by my earlier research studies, undertaken in years one and two of the doctorate programme. I had planned, following the CAS, to use Straussian grounded theory and ethnographic methods, by attending and observing Skills for Care discussion meetings relating to the development of the ASYE. However, this was not possible as I was unable to gain access. This led me to the narrative research methods. I was drawn to the narrative approach because it offered the opportunity for individuals to tell their stories of how they have experienced their involvement with service users and carers in students' assessments. The narrative approach is also congruent with social work values and the voice-centred relational method of data analysis. For example, rather

than measuring participants' claims of knowledge against each other, it gave a voice to all those who took part in the study.

#### **8.4 *What my ontology means for my view of the world***

The broad aim of the study was to explore the lived experiences of stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students. My ontological and epistemological position as a qualitative researcher is underpinned by a belief in multiple truths. I therefore do not subscribe to the view that there exists one universal truth. I came to the study with insider knowledge and experience of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments as a lecturer. I wanted to draw not only from my practice knowledge and experience, but also to understand the experience from the perspectives of other stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments.

My ontological premise - that individuals involved in social work students' assessments form *'a part of'* other stakeholders involved in the assessments of students' assessments - resonated with the philosophical underpinnings of Husserl's phenomenological ontology and Heron and Reason's (1997) participative world view. Both ontological perspectives assert that we are part of a 'living whole' and that 'reality' is created through our encounters with others and/or with events. Drawing from the two world views allowed the opportunity to learn through direct contact with the research participants, their narratives, personal knowledge, social constructs and the meanings attached to their lived experiences. Such a lens helped not only to bring together the different stakeholders' narratives about their experiences, it also helped to illuminate the different power relations between and among them.

Although I was initially influenced by Husserl's assertions that we know through our encounters with others, as mentioned earlier on in this chapter and in Chapter 1, 1.2), I struggled with his notion of 'bracketing' during the pilot study. Following this, I came to the conclusion that my pre-existing knowledge about the topic was important. Whilst this offered the opportunity to use the philosophy underpinning Heideggerian phenomenology, as it acknowledges the importance of previous knowledge and presupposition (Dowling 2004), I felt that the participative expanded epistemology offered more, as it looked at four interdependent ways of knowing: experiential, presentational, propositional and practical (see Chapter 4, 4.7).

Participative ontology asserts that it is through our encounters with others that knowing occurs. Such a lens offered the opportunity to gain an understanding about the individual subjective experiences as well as the collective experiences of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments. It is equally important to understand the meaning given to such experiences, as I believe that meaning may vary, depending on the life world that has shaped the experience. For the research participants, it is likely that taking part in the research may also have changed the meaning they gave to their involvements in social work students' assessments. As well as my interest in lived experiences, it was important to understand whether presentational constructs within the discourse had any bearing on different stakeholder groups' perceptions about others and of themselves, and the expectations placed on these. Such thinking proved to be valuable, as highlighted by the study findings. The use of a participative world view also assisted in the representation of the research participants' narratives through the research process and through dissemination.

Heron and Reason (1997) also discuss propositional knowledge which relates to ideas, theories and concepts. As mentioned in Chapter 2, 2.2, I respect different forms of knowledge. I viewed the research participants' narratives about their experiences and perceptions about service user and carer

involvement in social work students' assessments as other forms of knowledge. The research participants came to the study with their own theories about how service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments is structured. Further, Heron and Reason (1997) place great emphasis on practice knowledge. The findings add to the body of knowledge on what is known about service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments.

In addition I drew from critical realist ontology (see Chapter 4, 4.7). My observations from practice suggested that external and internal politics, as well as the organisation of students' assessments itself, contributed to how those involved experience the *field*. Critical realism ontology resonated with this world view, as it recognises the importance of structure, mechanisms, and external and internal influences on what can and cannot be done. Critical realism assumes that structure and process create reality and produce events; it also contributes to how individuals and organisations behave. Realist ontology therefore encourages researchers to examine how subjective meaning and external structures influence behaviour. During the course of the study, such a lens was helpful as the findings revealed that whilst some service users and carers were motivated to do more in the way of participating, certain HEI assessment systems constrain this. The findings highlighted that those who were unable to write or complete the student assessment feedback forms provided by HEIs were excluded from participating in students' assessments. Although some service users and carers had the desire to contribute to students' assessments, issues with payments also constrained the motivation to participate.

## **8.5 Review of the research design**

In addition to the above, the research design was shaped by a number of factors. These include the CAS literature review (Chapter 1, 1.2), my theoretical influence (Chapter 3), conversations with the different stakeholder groups involved in the assessments of social work students, and the ongoing reforms of social work education at the time of writing (Chapter 1, 1.5).

The design was also influenced by abductive and retroductive reasoning (see Chapter 4, 4.5). Abductive and retroductive inferences were used to strengthen the use of prior theory. This enabled me to move between the theoretical frame and the data in order to observe data that fell outside the initial premise. To give one example, it was only after I analysed the interview data that I realised that my earlier construct of the field had ignored the important role played by the different settings in which social work practice takes place (see Chapter 3, 3.6). Similarly, the retroductive inference was used to examine the links between what was said, why it was said and what connected the two. This is compatible with Bourdieu's conceptual framework, as it allowed me to look for hidden mechanisms that structured the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessments (see Janet's story about payment, Chapter 5, 5.3).

The Developmental Evaluation espoused by Patton (2011) (see Chapter 4, 4.6) was used to explore developmental issues, leading to implementation of the ASYE assessment as well as the positioning of service users and carers in students' assessments. Developmental Evaluation was also incorporated in the design to enable assessment of the future 'impact' of service user and carer involvement in the ASYE assessment framework.

My two supervisors provided feedback, advice and guidance on how to take the study forward. The study was also peer-reviewed by a service user, four senior colleagues read drafts of the work for me. One had worked previously as a social work manager, the others each have PhDs in social work, one is an emeritus professor in social work and the other is a professor in social work. Tuckett (2005, p.39) cites Van der Heide (2001), who refers to peer review as a *"type of investigator triangulation"*. This operational technique supports the role played not only by the academic institution, but also my peers in shaping my identity as a practitioner-doctorate researcher (Drake and Heath 2011).

In addition, the research design sought to incorporate a number of measures to ensure research rigour. These include the use of data source triangulation selective, theoretical and deviate sampling strategy, multiple readings of the interview data, the use of a research diary, member checking, and theoretical triangulation. These operational techniques were used to facilitate credibility, dependability and transferability (see Table 9). Similarly, audio recording, verbatim transcription of the interview and member checking were used to ensure trustworthiness (see Table 9 and Chapter 4, 4.20). These operational techniques are now discussed.

## **8.6. Review of methods of data collection**

The main data collection method consisted of interviews (Chapter 4, 4.13). This was considered to be the most appropriate method to enable the elicitation of stakeholders' views and experiences about their involvements with service users and carers in social work students' assessments. Interviews are compatible with the narrative research approach. Data source triangulation was used to

enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. The data source triangulation consisted of informal conversations and face-to-face semi-structured individual interviews with the different stakeholders. This allowed multiple voices and perspectives to be heard. Data source triangulation was also used to facilitate constant comparison between the different groups' narratives. As well as serving to illuminate how each stakeholder group had experienced the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessment, it also provided a complete picture and a better understanding of their shared experiences as a collective. The importance placed on hearing from different stakeholder perspectives and voices allied with the principles underpinned by Gilligan's (1982) voice-centred relational methods and Foucault's notion of discourse. It is also in line with my ontological view that truth is multiple, subjective and interpretive, and that reality is 'lived'.

### ***8.7 Review of the sample frame***

As discussed in Chapter 4, 4.8, the sampling frame consisted of selective and theoretical sampling, heterogeneous and deviant case sampling. Utilisation of selective and theoretical sampling complemented the use of Bourdieu's concept of habitus, as it enabled analysis of the purposely selected different stakeholder groups' habitus (see Chapter 3, 3.5). This proved effective in shedding light on the structures and processes that located and positioned the research participants. Likewise, the use of deviant case sampling was helpful in challenging the assumption that social work managers would have insights about what service users and carers should comment on when assessing students (see Tables 2 and 3).

A key limitation of my study is that the sample size of service users and carers was small, in comparison to the social work educators, social work employers



and students. Although every effort was made to attract as many service users and carers as possible, through the three institutions approached, only a few people responded to participate in the individual face-to-face interviews. This means that valuable data from a wider group of service users and carers are not included. This should be read in context when evaluating the study's contribution to the *field*. Further, the sample consisted of mostly adults. In the context of service users and carers as assessors, this means that valuable contributions from young people who contribute to social work students' assessments are not included. This particular limitation provides the opportunity for further research to be undertaken to ascertain how young people have experienced their involvement in social work students' assessments. My experience from practice indicates that children and young people's involvement in social work students' assessments is similarly underdeveloped. The literature search provides further evidence to support the under representation of children and young peoples' contribution to social work students' assessments (See Table 2 and Chapter 2, 2.3).

Furthermore, although unplanned, most of the research participants either had, or have had, dual roles. The fluidity between the boundaries of who is a service user and/or a carer adds to this. Whilst this is theoretically important, as it affirms Bourdieu's notion of habitus, it is equally important to read its likely impact on the evidence presented in this paper. This is supported by Eraut (University of Sussex, 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 2009), who contends that in analysing what can be counted as evidence, one should consider the context in which the research participants answered questions and whether they could imagine any other context where they might have answered differently.

Overall, my sample size of 21 people is small. Therefore statistical generalisation cannot be made to other populations. However, variation-based

generalisation can be made. Smaling (2003) describes variation-based generalisation as the use of different sample groups for variation purpose. A potential advantage of the sample in this study is that it consisted of social work students, service users, carers, social work educators and social work employers. Although the sample is not representative in a statistical sense, it represented variation. The use of a selective sample, theoretical sample and deviant case study identified that the social work managers, in contrast to the other stakeholder groups, were unable to conceptualise what service users and carers should comment on when assessing students. The inclusion of social work employers in my sample addresses a gap in the literature, as most of the studies reviewed consisted of social work students, lecturers and service users and carers. Of the papers reviewed, only three included employers in their sample (Chambers and Hickey 2012, Dearnley et al 2011, Debyser et al 2011). Further, the small sample size of service users and carers is consistent with the majority of the papers reviewed.

### ***8.8 Review of method of data analysis***

The voice-centred relational method of data analysis was used firstly because it aligns well with the qualitative research tradition and the narrative approach. Secondly, it gave a voice to all the research participants. Thirdly, it considers the researcher's role as integral to what is being studied; and fourthly, it aligned with theoretical sampling, and the theoretical frameworks used.

The four readings (see Chapter 4.24 and Table 6) of each interview transcript enabled me to identify the different stories and layers of meaning about how the research participants have experienced the policy requirement for the involvement of service users and carers in social work student assessments.

The method supports the role of the researcher as integral in co-construction of the research participants' narratives. It is therefore congruent with participatory ontology and epistemology. A research diary was used to record the interview context; this included reflection about my immediate and later perceptions, and responses to participants' narratives (see Appendix 14 – Pen portraits of participants). This operational strategy was used to facilitate an audit trail of the context in which the interviews took place, and the personal relationship formed with the research participant. The research diary was also used to facilitate constant comparison of data as well as assisting personal reflection about my role, and influences on the data-gathering process (see Table 6).

I found it illuminating to read Gilligan (1982), Brown and Gilligan (1992) and Taylor et al's (1995) work, particularly their accounts and self-reflection regarding the development and use of the voice-centred relational method. It became the turning point for my research. I had been somewhat at a loss as to what to do with my data at this point. Brown and Gilligan (1992, p.18), for example, described their research team's feelings about either having to stay with their original research design at *"the risk of ignoring what [they] were seeing and feeling"*, or change their design and research question to see where the research journey took them. This resonated with my own work to the extent that I had to change my research question in the middle of the study in order to explore further what was emerging from the interview data.

I was drawn to Brown and Gilligan's (1992) honesty and personal reflections about the difficulties encountered, which I felt, at the time of writing, the general methodological literature failed to address. I enjoyed the data analysis stage; however, I found the readings a lengthy and tedious process.

## 8.9 Review of theoretical frameworks

Bourdieu and Foucault's theoretical framework were used for a number of reasons (see Chapter 3). They are both compatible with the voice-centred relational method of data analysis. Bourdieu (1980, p.70) describes habitus as durable ways of "*standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking*" (Bourdieu 1990, p.70). This allowed the analysis of how the research participants spoke about themselves and their relationships with others (see Table 6 and Chapter 4, 4.24). It also enabled the examination of how the interviewees describe the social, cultural and political contexts of their experiences with the involvement of service users and carers in students' assessments. Likewise, Foucault's (1972) notion of discourse (see Chapter 3, 3.1), encourages us to listen to marginalised discourse. Like Foucault, the voice-centred relational method encourages the researcher to listen for the way that people are silenced by disempowering dominant political discourses and how this silencing is resisted (Brown and Gilligan 1992; Fairtlough 2007). Foucault was also interested in how the subject is called into being and how they are spoken about.

The use of Bourdieu's (1980) notions of field, capital and habitus adds to the body of knowledge and understanding of the complex relationships between and among those involved in the assessment of social work students. Bourdieu's theories provide a different lens through which the positioning of service users and carers, and their relationships with those involved in social work students' assessments, can be examined and analysed. The use of Bourdieu's theories also adds to the body of knowledge in the field of social work students' assessments by identifying those with access to resources and those without. It provides some understanding of the structural relationships between HEI providers of social work education and service users and carers

involved in social work students' assessments (see Chapter 6, synthesis and theorisation of findings).

Utilisation of Bourdieu's concept of *doxa* was equally useful, it helped to illuminate the professional doxa which mandated service user and carer involvement in social work education and students' assessments. The professional doxa that mandated service user and carer involvement in social work education and assessment had centred on a number of assertions including the view that involvement would increase rights and inclusion, address imbalance of power between professionals, service users and carers and social work students and improve quality in service provision and delivery (See Chapter 6, 6.10). Whilst the study findings, and that from the two literature reviews, suggest that involvement has allowed service user and carer's voices to be heard in students' assessments, it does not appear to have addressed the imbalance of power between professionals, students and service users and carers, neither does it appear to support the assertion that it would lead to an improved quality in service provision. Social work as a profession still has the advantage of assessing students, they are more familiar with the 'rules of the game' than service users and carers. Similarly, the professional doxa that maintains service users and carers experiences continue to be dominated by the economic and symbolic capital held by social work professionals. What is clear is that despite the challenges and barriers encountered by service users and carers in the *field* as discussed in Chapter 2, 2.7, service users and carers have made significant contributions to the *field* of social work students' assessments.

Similarly, utilisation of Foucault's (1972) power/knowledge theory adds to the body of knowledge. The findings from my study highlighted NQSWs' resistance to the notion of service users and carers' involvement in their assessments.

Foucault's ideas also highlighted NQSW students' feelings of being less susceptible to assessment as 'qualified' workers than as students. The findings also showed that parents were distanced from contributing to child protection social work knowledge via their input into students' assessments

As stated in Chapter 1, 1.1, of the studies reviewed, only one explored theory. Although a statistical generalisation is not possible, theoretical generalisation of the study findings can be made. Yin (2009) refers to theoretical generalisation as "*analytical generalisation*" (p. 38). He suggests that *analytical generalisation* can be made in circumstances where "*a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study*" (Yin 2009, p 38). In my study, Bourdieu (1990) and Foucault's theoretical concepts were used, following the CAS, for explanation and understanding of how the different stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments have experienced the involvement of service users and carers in these assessments. The use of Bourdieu (1990) and Foucault's theoretical concepts therefore strengthens transferability of the study's findings to other social work education students' assessments where service users and carers are involved.

Table 9 presents an audit trail of the research strategies and operational techniques used within Guba and Lincoln's (1985) 'trustworthiness criteria'; Appendix 16 presents the quality assessment of the study within Pawson et al's (2004) TAPUPAS framework and, in Appendix 17, within Furlong and Oancea's (2005) frameworks.

Trustworthiness	Research strategy	Operational Technique
<b>Credibility:</b> <i>Confidence in the 'truth' of the findings</i>	The use of a research diary Audio recording of the interviews Verbatim transcription of the interviews	Deviant case sampling Selective and Theoretical sampling Member checking Data source triangulation Theoretical triangulation Audit trail
<b>Transferability:</b> <i>Showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts</i>	Literature review	Selective and Theoretical sampling Theoretical triangulation application of Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus and Foucault's notion of discourse and power/knowledge theory
<b>Dependability:</b> <i>Showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated</i>	Research diary Stakeholders' narratives Audio recording of the interviews Verbatim transcription	Data source triangulation Theoretical triangulation Peer review/reading of drafts by more senior colleagues Audit trail
<b>Conformability:</b> <i>A degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest</i>	The use of a research diary	Audit trail Reflexivity Data source triangulation

**Table 9 - Rigour criteria (Guba and Lincoln 1985)**

### ***8.10 Contributions to practice and personal learning***

The main objective of the study was to add to the body of knowledge on what is known about the involvement of service users and carers in social work students' assessments at CPD level. The study makes the following contributions to the field of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments:

- It adds to the body of research studies looking at service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments.
- It sheds some light on what stakeholders involved in social work practice and education thought about the ASYE in 2010 before its implementation in 2012.
- It contributes to knowledge on what participants feel service users and carers should comment on when assessing social work students at CPD level.
- It offers theoretical insight into the different power relations, struggles and power dynamic between stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments from Bourdieusian and Foucauldian perspectives.
- Feedback of the interim findings was provided to Skills for Care to support the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) assessment in 2011.

In line with the reforms of social work education, the study initially sought the views of research participants about what they thought about the ASYE and regarding what should count as service users and carers' feedback at the ASYE assessment. The ASYE was selected because it was a new concept and therefore provided the opportunity to learn from developmental issues. Feedback of interim findings was provided to Skills for Care in January 2011, for the SWRB (Appendix 3).



The study adds to what participants thought service users and carers should comment on when assessing students. These qualities are:

- Professionalism, good time-keeping, reliability and honesty
- Effective communication skills, such as listening, empathy, cheerfulness and kindness
- Ability to support service users and carers
- 'Intelligence', 'structured empathy', mastery of practice and development of practice wisdom

The aforementioned qualities could be used to develop a useful framework by which service users and carers could make their assessment judgements of social work students. At the time of writing there were no such national criteria in England. Through this research, I have been able to contribute to the development of ASYE assessment discussion on how service users and carers could be involved in students' assessments, through a network set up by Skills for Care London.

Furthermore, the study set out to examine how service users and carers were positioned in relation to other stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students. Leathwood (2005) suggests that assessment has a taken-for-granted status which no one appears to question. The process of the doctorate programme has enabled me to examine stakeholders' experiences of their involvement in the *field* of service user and carer participation in social work students' assessments. The study has contributed to the body of knowledge and understanding of stakeholders' attitudes towards service users and carers' involvement in social work students' assessments, in general and at CPD level (NQSWs' experiences). Application of Bourdieu and Foucault's conceptual frameworks helped to illuminate the different power dynamic and

power relations within the field and its potential implications for social work students' assessments at CPD level.

Bourdieu (1990) contends that when we encounter an unfamiliar environment our habitus transforms. The doctorate programme has enabled me to develop and refine my research knowledge and skills, as well as acquiring new knowledge and the exploration of different theoretical concepts and frameworks for understanding the social world. The research journey has also given me new insights into the *field* of service user and carer involvement in students' assessments, both in social work and allied professions.

I have developed in confidence personally, academically and professionally since starting the doctorate programme. My knowledge and skills in undertaking research have increased greatly. Through the doctorate programme and the research experience I have acquired increased cultural capital, needed to survive in an academic environment. Drake and Heath (2011) suggest that completing the doctorate programme puts the individual at the bottom of a new professional ladder. Although I am yet to complete, I have come to love and appreciate the use of different research methodologies and methods to investigate various issues (Anka 2009a; 2009; 2010). I am very proud of a co-authored article in a peer-reviewed journal (Poletti and Anka 2013). At the professional level, I have used my knowledge of research skills to support students in writing their dissertations, which I enjoy doing. Throughout my programme of study I have drawn from different research studies to inform my teaching and test my assumptions about practice. The exposure to different theoretical and conceptual frameworks has transformed my learning and practice. I have become more empathetic to students' issues, in particular to understanding the difficulties in balancing family and work pressures with studying, and have drawn from this to support them in my role as a tutor. Above all, the feedback that I have received during the programme of study

from my two supervisors, and the supervision relationship, has been inspiring; it has enabled me to emulate their skills when giving students feedback. Although developments in the aforementioned areas are unique to me, these are consistent with Burgess and Wellington (2010), Drake and Heath (2011) and Pratt et al's (2013) studies which looked at the impact of the doctoral research degree process on student-research-practitioners.

### ***8.11 Moving forward: recommendations and areas for further research***

Whilst tensions and conflicts are inevitable in any relationship, the study draws attention to specific problems that have arisen due to a lack of skills on the part of service users and carers on how to deliver feedback. This draws attention to the need for training and support for service user and carer assessors on how to participate effectively in students' assessment. This supports the Social Work Reform Board and The College of Social Work's requirements to provide training and support for service users and carers (TCSW 2012). In order to avoid losing the authentic voice and essence of what service users and carers bring to students' assessments, this training could be delivered by service user and carer assessors who have participated in students' assessments and have gained skills and confidence in this area. Service user organisations, such as Shaping Our Lives, could provide the strategic support needed to facilitate this. For example, this could be achieved by working in conjunction with social work educators in developing training programmes with service users and carers who wish to be involved in students' assessments.

In what Bourdieu refers to as *illusio*, which means a belief that the "game" we collectively play is worthwhile, social work as a profession also has a role in

supporting service user and carer organisations. This can be maintained by continuing to support them with the necessary funding and resources needed to provide such training programmes. I believe this would address some of the unequal power relations between social work professionals and service users and carers, as well as improve relationships with service user and carer organisations. This would reinforce the notion of valuing the cultural and social capital held by service users and carers and their organisations.

Similar to the training for service users and carers, such support should be extended to social work educators and practitioners on how to engage meaningfully with service users and carers in students' assessments. Further research could be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of such training programmes. This could provide further insights into how such partnership arrangements between service user and carer organisations and social work professions are working.

Further research is also needed into the infrastructure support within local authorities, and other social work employment settings, which facilitate effective involvement of service users and carers at CPD level assessments. The findings suggest that settings such as palliative care are more successful at engaging service users and carers in students' assessments than child protection social work. Such research would enable best practice to be shared. This is recommended because the ASYE programme makes social work employers the final assessors of social work students. Social work employers therefore have a responsibility to support the development of newly qualified staff members' skills and values in terms of how to meaningfully engage service users and carers in their assessments. This is particularly important in settings such as child protection social work, as the findings suggest a distancing of child protection service users from NQSWs, where their involvement in students' assessments is concerned. Although MacAlister et al (2012) do not make

specific references to service user and carer involvements in the newly proposed Frontline programme initiative, further research could explore how service users and carers have been involved in students' assessments at ASYE to inform the Frontline Training Scheme.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the literature retrieved after 2010 did not identify any studies that have looked at the involvement of young service users and carers in the assessments of social work students. Further research could explore how young people have been involved in students' assessments. Furthermore, the literature search identified that in comparison to allied health professions such as nursing, there were few publications relating to the involvement of service users and carers in social work education. I believe that editors of peer-reviewed social work journals have a responsibility to support the profession and those undertaking research by assisting them to disseminate new knowledge. A recommendation is made therefore for key social work journals to encourage publications of research studies looking at service user and carer involvement in social work education. Special editions on specific areas of involvement could be encouraged to enable practitioners to consider creative ways of involving service users and carers in *all aspects* of social work education.

### **8.12 Dissemination**

To fulfil one key objective - to add to the body of knowledge in this area of practice - I plan to disseminate the findings at three levels: local, national and international, through teaching and the development of programmes, conference presentations and publications.

Dissemination at local level will be achieved through teaching and programme innovations. The study findings will be used to inform my teaching in the institution where I work as a social work lecturer. It will also be used to inform the development of service user and carer involvement in students' assessment initiatives. Dissemination, both at national and international level, has already begun. I presented the initial findings at the World Social Work Conference in Stockholm in July 2012 and at the Joint Social Work Education Conference in Egham, UK in July 2013 (Anka 2012; 2013). I was awarded funding by the Social Work Education Research Students Award (SWERSA) in 2012. The SWERSA is provided by *Social Work Education: The International Journal*, in memory of Jo Campling; the award included a publication. This provides scope to disseminate the findings to a much wider national and international audience.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, I was inspired to research this area through my work with service user and carer educators and assessors with the aim of improving practice. It is hoped that the narratives of research participants will inspire others in the *field* to look at creative ways of supporting those involved in students' assessments.

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## Appendices

### ***Appendix 1 - CAS literature review TAPUPAS assessment***

Author	Title	'Transparency' Openness to scrutiny	'Accuracy' Grounding in events sources experiences	'Purposivity' Fitness of the method to purpose	'Utility' Fitness for use	'Propriety' Ethical and legal conduct	'Accessibility' Intelligible presentation	'Specificity' Adequate with respect to other, source- specific, standards
Advocacy in Action W., M Charles et al  (2006)	Assessing Fitness to Practice	The purpose of the work and the rationale are clearly stated	The study is based on experiential knowledge No references to the literature are made	Innovative - the authors developed criteria for assessment which could be adopted and used by other institutions	Describes a process of developing criteria for assessments Service user/carer groups interested in getting involved in the assessments of students might find the authors' experience useful	Considers the likely impact of their ways of working on students	Language used is accessible to social work educators, service user organisations interested in setting up a group to undertake student assessments	User knowledge describes experiential process of setting up a service user/carer group and subsequent involvement in the assessments of students at Nottingham and Birmingham

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					Social work educator looking for ideas on how to involve service users/carers in the assessments of students might also find the information useful			universities
Advocacy in Action with staff; students (2006)	Making it our Own Ball Game	The aim and objectives of the paper are clearly stated	Grounded in service users and carers' experiences of developing a criterion for assessing students	Describes the development of a criterion for assessments by service users and carers  Provides a clear criterion for assessing fitness to practice and work-based performance	Describes a process of setting up a service user agency and the agency's involvement in developing and assessments tool to assess fitness to practice. Service users	Evaluated criteria for assessment not only with their own members but also with other service user groups and organisations both in the UK and abroad	The language used is accessible to service users, carers and social work educators in the known to service user/carer involvement in social work education	User knowledge gained from experience of service users and reflections upon setting up the agency and the subsequent development of the assessment tool

					interested in setting up their own agency, including those interested in getting involved in students' assessments, will find it useful. HEIs looking for innovative ideas on how to involve service users and carers might also find it useful			
Anka, A., CAS (2010)	The involvement of service users and or carers in the assessments of students: A review of the literature	The aims and objectives of the paper are clearly stated	The purpose of the work is clearly stated. Uses systematic review methodology to research	The paper was guided by systematic review methodology. It adds to the limited literature on how service	The paper is underpinned by the ethos of service user/carers involvement in relation to inclusion and rights and	The paper draws from the lack of attention paid to ethical considerations in the papers	The language used will be accessible to social work educators or professional from related professions interested in	Research knowledge, uses a predetermined methodology

			<p>what is known about service user/carer involvement in the assessment of students. Could have benefited from looking at the differences in terms of what service user and carers look for when assessing students. Those looking for information on the involvement of children and young people in the assessment of social work students will</p>	<p>users and carers have been involved in the assessment of students. It offers something different by using Foucault's ideas of power/knowledge theory to examine how notions of 'expert by experience' are used to either include or exclude service users and carers' participation in students' assessments</p>	<p>therefore sought the views of service users and carers in framing the research questions. Bigger stakeholder views were sought at the 12th JSWEC</p>	<p>reviewed and therefore includes ethical consideration in the research proposal attached to the work</p>	<p>service user/carer involvement in the assessments of students</p> <p>Service user/carer participation organisations interested in looking at how service users and carers have been involved in the assessments of students might find it useful</p>	
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			be disappointed					
Bailey, D. (2005)	Using an action research approach to involving service users in the assessment of professional competence	The aim and objectives of the paper are stated	<p>The purpose of the paper and the methodology employed are clearly stated</p> <p>The study draws from the policy requirement to involve service user/carers in the assessments of students</p> <p>The study is underpinned by previous studies carried out in this area of practice</p>	<p>The study offers something different. The author indicates service users were offered training in giving feedback on assessing students</p> <p>HEIs looking for ideas on how to provide training to enable service users/carers to give feedback to students might find it useful</p>	<p>Provides clear criteria for assessments by which service users and could make their assessment judgements of students</p> <p>Those arguing for the case for the development of an assessment tool by which service users/carers could make their assessment judgements of students will find it used</p>	Although the author draws from other studies conducted in this area to make the case for the need to consider ethical issues, the paper doesn't state whether ethical approval was sought	The language used is accessible. Those involved in the education and training of health and social work related professions required to involve service users and carers in their programmes would find it useful	Practitioner knowledge – the study makes references to the policy requirements to involve service users and carers in the assessments of students; this would be familiar to health and social work-related programmes

					HEIs interested in developing a criteria for assessments in this area of practice may be able to adopt the criteria			
Cole, A., (1994)	'It was an Education'	The purpose of the paper is clearly stated	Provides a summary of comments made by user participants in the assessments of student. Comments are grounded in service users and carers' experiences relating to their involvement in the assessment of students	Service user groups interested in getting involved in the assessment of students might find the feedback from service user participants useful. Social work educators considering involving service users in the assessment of students might also find it useful	Ahead of its time – implemented service user/carers involvement under the Dip/SW programme. The lessons learnt from this earlier work offers HEIs some guidelines on what to and what not to do when implementing service	Does not state whether ethical approval was sought	The language used is straight-forward and accessible to both service users/carers and social work educators. However, social academics might find the style of presentation too simplistic	Practitioner/ service user knowledge – describes the process of service user/carers involvement in giving feedback to students

					user/carer involvement initiatives in the assessments of students.			
Crisp, B. R. et al (2006)	Not just social work academics	The aims and objectives of the paper are clearly stated	The paper draws on extensive literature on how persons other than academics have been involved in the assessment of students	The methodology employed is clearly stated. This is very useful and will benefit those interested in researching this area of social work education	The paper reviews the literature on how persons other than social work academics have being involved in the assessments of students. Will assist social work academics and researchers interested in this area of practice to gain some perspectives about what is happening across the	Issues of ethics are not clearly discussed	The language used is straight-forward, accessible to social work educators. Practitioners from other social work related professionals might find it useful	Research knowledge gathered systematically with predetermined design

					board			
Cuming, H. & Wilkins, J (2000)	Involving service users in the assessment of students in professional practice	The purpose of the paper and its objectives are clearly stated	The paper focused on the Dip/SW. It makes the case for service user involvement in social work education by drawing from legislation and other research studies. The methodology employed is clearly stated	The paper considered service user involvement in providing feedback at the end of students' practice learning experiences under the Dip/SW. It offers professionals interested in this area of work some guidelines on how to implement service user/carer involvement in the assessments of students. It provides some insights about what it was like at the beginning of	Provides guidelines for professionals interested in seeking service users' feedback in practice learning settings  The guideline does not include what counts as evidence of competence –could argue that it was a product of its time; most of the suggestions made appear to be professionals initiated rather than	The paper does not state how ethical clearance and approval were sought	Social work educators, including practice educators, might find the work useful	Practitioner knowledge

				service user involvement in social work education	service user initiated			
Edwards, C. (2003)	The involvement of service users in the assessment of Diploma in Social Work students on practice placement	The aims and objectives of the study are clearly stated	The author draws from a personal experience from undertaking a MA in social work and her work within a local authority training to make the case for the involvement of service users in the assessments of students' practice learning. The work also draws from previous research studies	<p>The method and strategies used are clearly stated</p> <p>Offers some insights into issues of power and the lack of power to influence assessment decisions by service user in the assessment process.</p>	<p>The study sought the views of service users through the lens of practice teachers</p> <p>Could have benefited by asking service users directly.</p> <p>Ahead of its time, offers some insights about how service user involvement took off at the beginning of the policy</p>	Doesn't state how ethical clearance was sought	The language used is accessible to social work educators, practice teachers and local authority training departments	Practitioner/ research knowledge

			conducted in this area to make the case for service user involvement in students' assessments.		initiative to involve service users and carers in the assessments of students.			
Elliot, T. et al (2005)	Practice Learning and Assessment on BSc (Hons) Social Work: 'Service user Conversations'	The aims and objectives of the work are clearly stated	The work is unpinned by previous research studies looking at service user/carer involvement in social work education. Draws from the policy and legislative requirements for service user/carer involvement	The authors share their experiences of how service users were involved to assess students fitness to practice by providing feedback on interpersonal skills and accuracy of recording  Focused on assessing 'What good social workers should be like'	Evaluation of process and outcomes of involving service users and carers in the assessments of students. Very innovative – assesses students' fitness to practice through conversation with a service user	The authors did not specify how they obtained ethical clearance. However, they do consider issues of confidentiality, issues of power and payments for service users/carers	Language used is accessible to social work educators and other related professions in the known of the policy requirements to involve service users and carers in the assessments of students.	Practitioner knowledge.
Ferguson, I. & Ager, G.	Integrated Assessment: Involvement	The aims and objectives of the paper are	The purpose of the paper is clearly	Discusses a process of students	Commentary on a pilot project.	Unclear how ethical clearance	Language used is accessible to	Practitioner knowledge

(2005)	of user and carer	clearly stated	stated. A notable limitation is that, although it appears to target academics as its audience , no references to the literature or previous research are made	seeking feedback from service users with whom they have worked with through a questionnaire based on a framework supplied by tutors. Provides good practice ideas about how to obtain service user/care feedback. Might be useful to educators looking at how to involve service users in the assessments of students' practice placement. However, concerned that tutors developed the framework for	Reported how feedback on the process of involving service user in the assessments of students was collected by means of semi-structured questionnaires from students and service users. The authors suggest their study could be replicated elsewhere. However, the criterion for assessed competence was unclear	sought.	social work educators in-the-know about service user involvement in the assessments of students	
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				assessments rather than service users.				
Frisby, R. (2001)	User involvement in mental health branch education: client review presentations	The aims and focus of the paper are clearly stated	Draws from the policy requirements and previous research studies to make the case for involving service users and carers in the assessment of student nurses' presentations  The work is grounded in the literature	Describes the process of involving service users in a formative assessment in the classroom. The author discusses the strengths and limitations of the assessments process, which educators in mental health nursing and other related professions interested in this area of practice might find useful	The process of service user involvement in the assessment of students' presentations are clearly stated. This could be adopted by other institutions looking for innovative ideas on how to involve service users in assessing students' presentations	The author doesn't state how ethical clearance was sought or met. However, he does consider the strengths and limitations of the presentation and its impact on students whose learning styles might not suit role-play	The language used is accessible to educators in both mental health nursing and other related professions.  Might also be accessible to service user groups – the lessons learnt could inform the involvement of service users in other programmes	Practitioner knowledge – the paper provides a commentary about the process of involving service users in the assessment of students' presentations
Gee, M. et al (2009)	The Caring Experience: Learning about	Aims and objectives of the study are clearly stated	The study attempts to draw from other	The purpose of the work was clearly stated with contextual	An innovative study, which looked at	Although there are The authors did not state	Accessible to social work educators and perhaps to	Practitioner knowledge



	Community Care through spending 24 hours with people who use service and family carers		literature and policy requirements to support the case for service user/carer involvement in the assessments of students. However, this is not substantive	information about the rationale for the project  What counted as evidence of competence of a pass or fail of students is unclear	carer involvement in the assessments of students. The authors described how students spent up to 24 hrs with a 'host' family in order to learn how caring responsibilities affected them. Very timely and has a lot to offer institutions looking for innovative ideas on how to involve carers in students' assessments	whether ethical approval was sought	some carers who might be involved – access for other carers who might be interested in this innovative project will be difficult	
Gosling,	'Service	The aims and	The paper is	The assessment	The article a	The authors	The language	Practitioner/

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J. et al (2005)	user-led modules'	objectives of the project are clearly stated	grounded in service users and carers' experiences. It is cited as a good exemplar. Social work educators and service users/carers group interesting in implementing service user/carers involvement initiatives in the assessments of students will find it useful	criteria used is innovative, however it is subjective	good exemplar because the module in question was developed and owned by service users and carers	did not state how ethical clearance was sought.	used is straight- forward, and will be accessible to anyone in the know of the requirements to involve service users and carers in the assessments of students	service user/carers knowledge. The study does not fit into any knowledge specific, it was complied by professionals and service users
Morgan, S. & Sangg- aran, R. (1997)	Client- centred approach to student nurse education in mental health practicum	The purpose of the study is clearly stated	The study makes the case for service user /carers involvement in assessing nurse student	The study explored the potential of service users giving feedback to students on BA Nursing mental health practice	Very innovative, ahead of its time – provides a clear criteria for assessment – which no	Approval for the research was sought from three sources: Queensland Regional Health Authority	The language used is accessible to practitioners and service user/carers. Service users/carers not familiar	Practitioner knowledge/ Research knowledge

	inquiry		practice competence by drawing from policy and other research. The methodology employed is clearly stated	students' performance in Australia. Although context-bound, the lessons learnt from this study will no doubt inform work in similar areas or practice-related professions.	doubt will benefit institutions looking how to implement service user/carer involvement in the assessments of students	research, Griffith University Research and Ethics Committee	with reading research might not find it accessible	
Moss, B. et al (2010)	Up-skilling the Skills Lab: Developing Leadership skills with service users and carers	Aims, objectives and purpose of the work are clearly stated	The authors make references to the policy requirements to involve service users and carers in social work education + other literature and previous work undertaken in this area to support the case for service	The purpose of the study is explained in some detail as a follow up reflection on a previous study where service users/carers have been involved developing students practice skills in a 'Skills Lab' Role-play	Innovative - Practitioners from other institutions looking for ideas on how to implement service user/carer involvement in developing practice skills of students in a safer environment could draw	Obtained ethical approval from Staffordshire University Research Ethics Committee	The language used will be accessible to social work educators and service user participants involved in social work education	Not source specific, could fit practitioner and service user knowledge. Could also fit research knowledge

			user/carer involvement		from the lessons learnt.			
Moss, B., R. et al (2007)	Skills Laboratories and the New Social Work Degree: One Small Step Towards Best Practice? Service Users and Carers' Perspectives	The authors are clear about the aim of the paper – this is clearly stated – also provides information about how the article was written	Experiential account of programme development issues. Makes references to the policy requirement to involve service users/carers in social work education + reference to the literature on learning theories however this is not substantive.  Reported the Skills lab module and its assessment was	Timely and fit for purpose – the lessons learnt can inform other institutions who are thinking of involving service users/carers in skills development and assessment of fitness to practice by service users and carers	Innovative - Practitioners from other institutions looking for ideas on how to implement service user/carer involvement in developing practice skills of students in a safer environment could draw from the sessions learnt from this study	Ethical issues are not stated	Language used is straight-forward and accessible	Not source specific, however it could fit both practitioner knowledge and/or service user knowledge

			underpinned by adult learning theories and learning style. However, the focus on role play as way of developing skills means some students would be at disadvantaged.					
Shennan, G. (1998)	Are we asking the experts? Practice teachers' use of client views in assessing student competence	The aims of the study are clearly stated including the rationale for undertaking the work	The author makes use of previous work to make the case for undertaking research in this area.  Practice assessors will be able to use the information to inform	The purpose of the study is explained. However, the author stated that the study was prompted by a <i>suspicion</i> that some practice teachers were seeking the views of their students' clients. Unsure whether	Ahead of its time, (Dip/SW) potentially very useful to inform how service users view could be incorporated in the assessments of social work students at practice	The author doesn't state how ethical clearance sought or whether participant were provided with information about consent + the right to participation etc.	The language used is accessible to practice teachers and those interested in social work education.	Although not specific it could fall into practitioner knowledge

			their practice	this <i>suspicion</i> was <i>a good or bad</i> thing	learning settings.  Still very useful as it argued for a systematic method for obtaining service users feedback			
Speer, J. (2008)	Service user involvement in the assessment of a practice competency in mental health nursing stakeholders' views and recommendations.	The aims and objectives of the paper are clearly stated, including the rationale for the study.	The author draws from previous work to make the case for the involvement of service users in the assessment of practice competence of nurse student's	The purpose of the study are clearly stated	The potential used of the study is clearly stated, it is timely and useful, in relation to looking at the practicalities of implementing service user involvement in students' assessments	Obtained ethical approval for the study.  Considered different power issues likely to impact the different sample groups – sought consent from participants  Considered the impact of involvement	Language used is accessible to service users and social work and related professionals familiar with service user/carer involvement in the assessments of students	Practitioner knowledge & research knowledge

						on service users who might be acutely ill		
Stickley, T. et al (forth coming)	Developing a service user designed tool for the assessment of student mental health nurses in practice: A collaborative process	The purpose and rationale for the study are clearly stated	Draws extensively from previous work and research both in the UK and abroad to support the work  The methodology employed is clearly stated	Acknowledges the importance of service user feedback. However, the findings suggest that rather than "assess" student nurses in practice, service users should have a role in reviewing students' practice	Used Likert scales for obtaining service user feedback. Provided a clear criteria for assessment of students which can be easily transferred to other professional related practice	Not stated – however had previously stated in an earlier study that ethical approval for the study had been sought (see Stickley et al 2010)	The language used is accessible to those in the familiar with of service user/carer involvement in professional practice.  Service users did raise concerns about the language used, which they felt was not accessible to service users/carers  Changes were made as a result.	Practitioner knowledge/ research knowledge
Stickley, T. et al (2010)	The practice assessment of student	The purpose of the study is clearly stated.	Draws from substantive literature to	Clearly identifies practice	Used Likert scale to obtain	Ethical approval for the study	Language used is accessible to	Fits no source-specific

	nurses by people who use mental health services	Reports on phase one of a participatory action research project.	inform the work. The methodology and strategies employed are clearly stated.	implications for involving service users/carers in the assessments of student - provides advice for institutions on how best to approach notions of service user/carer involvement in the assessment of students	feedback.  The lessons learnt from developing the assessment tool will no doubt benefit implementation of service user/carer involvement in students' assessment	was granted by a local NHS Research Ethics Committee and the Research & Development Department of an NHS trust. Other ethical issues were considered throughout the paper e.g used pseudonyms, considered potential impact for negative experiences for both students and service-users	those in the familiar with of service user/carer involvement in professional practice.	standard. However, could fit both practitioner, service user/carer and research knowledge
Taylor, I. et al	Carers as Partners (CaPs) in	The project's aims and objectives are	The broad aims and specific	Offers something unique and	SCIE Knowledge Review	Ethical clearance and	Language used is accessible to	Research knowledge gathered

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(2009)	social work education.	clearly stated	objectives including the scope of the study are clearly stated.	very different - The literature in this area is limited which makes this work very important. Offers useful information to social work and related professions interested in looking at how carers have been involved in social work education, and to novice researchers interested in conducting systematic reviews	adopts systematic Review methodology Only systematic review looking at Carer involvement in social work education.	approval was granted by University of Sussex  Other areas of ethics such as the rights of participants to withdraw, issues of consent, confidentiality data treatment are considered	social work educators and other related professionals familiar with the policy & legislative requirement to involve carers in social work/health education. Carer organisations considering getting involved in social work and other related professional education might find the review useful. Very accessible, can be located at the SCIE website making it easy for lay carers	systematically with predetermined design
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Author	Title	Date	Institution	Nature of involvement in Assessment	Type of evaluation Methodology	Criteria for assessment	Ethical Consideration	Learning points
Advocacy in Action W., M Charles et al	Assessing Fitness to Practice	2006	University of Nottingham & Birmingham	Development of a criterion for assessment Assessing Fitness to Practice	Description of a process Commentary	Assessed students' abilities to: work sensitively and anti-oppressively with service users and carers; hold non-possessive regard for diverse individuals and communities; communicate creatively and in different ways; relate to issues of confidentiality and disclosure; assess risk and balance it with opportunity; identify needs, aspirations, requirements and entitlements; prioritise and time manage; and work as both a team member and service employee.	Not stated	Service users rejected competence framework developed by professionals. Developed own framework for assessment

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Advocacy in Action with staff; students	Making it our Own Ball Game	2006	University of Nottingham	Developed of a criterion for assessment to assess:  Fitness to practice  Performance on work-based placement	Description of a process of setting up their agency and their involvement. Commentary	Assessment criteria: Do they (students) care about and respect us? Do they treat us as equal people? Do they listen to us? Do they look us in the eye? Are they frightening? Do they talk to us or to other people about us? Do they fear us? Can they get the job done? Are they honest with us and with themselves? Are they open to being challenged? Are they able to challenge others?	Not stated	Service user group included parents with children taken into care  Evaluated their criteria for assessment with other service user group organisations both in the UK & abroad
Bailey, D.	Using an action research approach to involving service users in the assessment of professional competence	2005	University of Birmingham	Giving feedback to professionals on MA in mental health training. Work-based portfolio	Qualitative Action research project. Data collected by means of focus group	Reflected on how user participation can be achieved. Barriers to involvement and factors which facilitate it together. Identify how they can personally support the involvement of people who use	Doesn't state whether ethical approval was sought	Service users were trained to provide feedback

						<p>services. Evidence of how they have evaluated developments in partnership with users. Ability to use a variety of outcome measures to promote user participation in care planning, assessment and recovery</p> <p>Ability to facilitate users' access to local community resources.</p>		
Cole, A.	'It was an Education'	1994	Anglia Polytechnic University	Feedback formative. Assessment of students presentations	Summary of comments made by user participants	Service users and students talking to each other. Unclear about criteria for assessment + what counted as evidence of competence	Does not state whether ethical approval was sought	One service user commented that they were unsure about grading
Crisp, B. R. et al	Not just social work academics	2006	Social work Education	Reviewed the literature on how persons other than social work academics assessed social work	Literature review Methodology	Reported different levels of involvement. Doesn't identify any specific criteria for assessment	N/A	Suggested a proper criteria is needed for assessment

				students				
Cuming, H., & Wilkins, J.	Involving service users in the assessment of students in professional practice	2000	University of Wales Institute Cardiff	Providing feedback at the end of practice learning (placement)	Developed guidance for professionals involving service users in providing feedback  Small scale qualitative research. Data collected by means of interviews with 29 service users	Did not state what counted as evidence of competence.  Criteria for assessment is not stated	Does not state how ethical issues were addressed	Cautioned about potential collusion between students and service users  *reported practitioners from Children's Services were not prepared to talk to the research team
Edwards, C.	The involvement of service users in the assessment of Diploma in Social Work students on practice placement	2003	Training & Development Services of an England Social and Caring Services department	Service user feedback – assessment of practice competence – student's portfolio	Qualitative research (MA Dissertation). Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews 8=n (Practice teachers)	-Communication skills -Professionalism -Time keeping -Ability to effectively dispense information -Effectiveness -Confidentiality	Doesn't state how ethical issues were considered.	The views of service users were sought through the lens of practice assessors. Service users felt powerless to influence change. Concluded service-user feedback should be an essential component of

								practice assessment
Elliot, T. et al	Practice Learning and Assessment on BSc (Hons) Social Work: 'Service user Conversations'	2005	University of Plymouth and Cornwall College	Fitness to practice Giving feedback on interpersonal skills and accuracy of recording	Evaluation of process and outcomes. Data was collected by means of questionnaire	'What a good social worker should be like' Active listening Accuracy of recording	Not stated	Criteria for assessment is subjective – what a good social worker should look like is unclear. Very unique – assessment consisted of conversations with service users & carers
Ferguson, I. & Ager, G.	Integrated Assessment: Involvement of user and carer	2005	Dundee University	Giving feedback – Presentations Practice placement	Commentary on a pilot project. Data was collected by means of semi-structured questionnaires with students and service users	Service users' Ideas/expectations of a good social worker. Unclear about what counted as evidence of competence	Unclear how ethical procedures were addressed	Provided good practice ideas about how to obtain service user/care feedback
Frisby, R.	User involvement in mental health branch education: client review presentations	2001	Kings College London	Giving feedback, students' presentations  * mental health nursing	Description and discussion of service users' involvement in formative assessment in the classroom.	Focused on clients' assessments, e.g. risk, mood, behaviour, thoughts, social, skills	Not stated	Role-play. Acknowledges role-play disadvantages some students. Considered

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								strengths and weaknesses of the process,
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Gee, M. et al	The Caring Experience: Learning about Community Care through spending 24 hours with people who use service and family carers	2009	University of Dundee	Carer involvement: giving feedback - presentations	Describes a process of setting up a service user/carers project	Criteria for assessment are unclear- students can choose areas that appear interesting to them but the host has say on this.	Does not indicate whether ethical approval was sought	Very innovative Students spent 24 hrs with the 'host'. Focused on carer involvement
Gosling J. et al	'Service user-led modules'	2005	Nottingham University	Giving feedback - presentations	Describes the process involving service users in students presentation	The students make a presentation to demonstrate emotional intelligence, something in their own life which resonates with what they have heard and learned about during the module and their intellectual understanding of power and anti-oppressive practice.	Does not indicate whether ethical clearance was obtained	Assessment is subjective. However the service user representation includes the following people who are homeless, are addicted to drugs, Romany people, travellers and asylum seekers, etc.
Morgan, S. & Sanggaran, R.	Client-centred approach to	1997	Griffith University – Gold Coast	Explored the potential of service users	Mixed-methods research - data was collected	Criteria for assessments The students:	Approval for the research was sought	An Australian study Explores how

	student nurse education in mental health practicum: an inquiry		(Australia)	giving feedback on students on BA Nursing mental health practice students' performance	by means of questionnaire with open ended and Likert scale response options  N=43 students & N=74 client participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-tend to choose the most appropriate time and place to talk.</li> <li>-introduce themselves warmly and explain their role clearly.</li> <li>-are able to gain my trust.</li> <li>-use words that I understand easily.</li> <li>-use body language (eyes, hands, facial expression) that I find comfortable and non-threatening.</li> <li>-are able to encourage me to talk without putting too much pressure on me.</li> <li>-do not impose their values or beliefs.</li> <li>-are sensitive to my feelings and concerns.</li> <li>-show genuineness and respect in their relationship with me.</li> <li>-encourage me to find my own answers to problems when that is</li> </ul>	from three sources: Queensland Regional Health Authority research, Griffith University Research and Ethic Committee	<p>the direct involvement of clients in providing feedback on student performance may influence the learning experience</p> <p>*indicated not all service users will want to be involved in the assessments of students</p> <p>*A large number of students raised concerns relating to the accuracy of clients' comments</p> <p>*used Likert scale to obtain feedback</p>
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						appropriate. -are able to help me to identify my personal limits and potentials.		
Moss, B., et al	Up-skilling the Skills Lab: Developing Leadership skills with service users and carers	2010	University of Staffordshire	Giving feedback – to 1 <sup>st</sup> year student  Assessed communication skills though role-play	Evaluated through end-of-year module. Completed by 71 out of 76 students + Qualitative research	The Barbara Yates's Test	Obtained ethical approval from Staffordshire University Research Ethics Committee	Included carers in the sample. What counts as evidence of competence was unclear. Criteria for assessment was subjective
Moss, B. R. et al	Skills Laboratories and the New Social Work Degree: One Small Step Towards Best Practice? Service Users and Carers' Perspectives	2007	Staffordshire University	Skills development Assessing fitness to practice, feedback	A Service user/carer group + practice teachers assessors describe the setting up a skills development lab to develop students' communication skills	Unclear about the criteria for assessment – indicates that this is agreed by the student and practice teacher/service user assessors. However, appears to focus on communication skills, including active listening and interviewing skills	Not stated	Innovative, discusses development of students' communication skills through Skills lab. Used role-play. Discusses theoretical influences – Kolb's ideas, learning styles * but role-play doesn't

								suit reflectors
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Shennan, G.	Are we asking the experts? Practice teachers' use of client views in assessing student competence	1998	A County Council Social Service Department	Explored the extent to which practice teachers are seeking the views of service users in the assessment of students who are placed with them or have done so	Data was collected by means of questionnaire Survey  N=106	Relationship skills. Anti- oppressive practice	Not stated	Suggested a need for a systematic criteria by which service users could make their assessment judgements
Speer, J.	Service user involvement in the assessment of a practice competency in mental health nursing, stakeholders' views and recommendations.	2008	For Mental Health Nursing (doesn't specify institution)	Explored the potential of involving service users in giving feedback - mental health nursing students	Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews. Consisted of a mixture of focus group and individual interviews  N=24, consisting of service users, students mentors and lectures.	Competence in making therapeutic relationship. Trust, ability to listen	Obtained ethical approval for the study. Considered different power issues likely to impact the different sample groups – sought consent from participants	Concerned about the reliability of service user feedback. Two service users raised concerns related to involvement of service users who were acutely unwell + impact and responsibility for this. *Pass or fail decision rests with mentor and not with service

								user/carers
Stickley, T. et al	The practice assessment of student nurses by people who use mental health services	2010	University of Nottingham	Giving feedback - mental health nurses' practice competence	Participatory Action Research project  Data was collected by means of focus groups and interviews with service users, qualified nursing staff, student nurses + the research team's diaries	Attitude Communication skills Personal awareness Knowledge and development	Ethical approval was granted by a local NHS Research Ethics Committee and Research & Development Department of the relevant NHS trust. Other ethical issues were considered throughout the paper, e.g. used pseudonyms, considered potential impact of negative experiences for both students and service-users	Used Likert scales to obtain feedback Striking similarities with Morgan, S. & Sanggaran, R. (1997) study
Stickley, T. et al	Developing a service-user designed tool for the assessment	Forth-comin-g. Accep- -ted	University of Nottingham *In collaboration with Making	Service users giving feedback - practice assessment of	Description. Phase one of a participatory action research project. Data	Assessment criteria: The student nurse: -showed a good awareness of how my treatment makes	Not stated – however had previously stated in an earlier study	Acknow- -ledged the importance of service user feedback.

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	of student mental health nurses in practice: A collaborative process	April 2010	Waves Reports upon the development of a service user designed tool for the assessment of student mental health nurses in practice.	mental health student nurses	was collected by means of focus group interviews	me feel -respected my individual needs for confidentiality -listened to me	that ethical approval for the study had been sought (See Stickley et al 2010)	However the findings suggest that rather than "assess" student nurses in practice, service users should have a role in reviewing students' practice Used Likert scale to obtain feedback. Only study to suggest changing service users' position in the assessments of students. Has implications for my review and final thesis
Taylor, I., et al	Carers as Partners (CaPs) in social work	2009	SCIE Knowledge Review	Reported different levels of carer involvement in	Systematic Review	Presented different studies – no specific criteria for assessment were	Ethical clearance was sought from	First Knowledge Review to look at carer

	education.			social work including the assessments of students		identified	University of Sussex	involvement in social work
Thomas, R.	Creative assessment: involving service users in student assessments in social work	2002	1999 Midland Regional Conference for Practice Teachers on 'Social Work at the Margins'-sponsored by CCETSW – Organised by the West Midland Regional Forum under the Chair of University of Central England	Feedback - Practice Placement	Conference workshop – used case scenarios to stimulate discussion and ideas on the potential of involving service users in students' practice placement assessment.	Unclear. However, linked criteria to the six Dip/SW core competences Suggested service user feedback could focus on the process of the delivery and outcomes of assessment	The workshop explored change in power relationships within the assessment process	Focused – Dip/SW Highlighted the need for proper criteria for assessment



## Appendix 2 – Quality Assessment of the Papers Reviewed: 2010 – 2013 (The Study)

Author	Title	'Transparency' Openness to scrutiny	'Accuracy' Grounding in events sources experiences,	'Purposivity' Fitness of the method to purpose)	'Utility' Fitness for use,	'Propriety' Ethical and legal conduct,	'Accessibility' (intelligible presentation)	'Specificity' Adequate with respect to other, source-specific, standards
Chambers & Hickey (2012).  England	Service user involvement in the design and delivery of education and training programmes leading to registration with the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC)	The aims and objectives of the study were clearly stated  Three main aims and four objectives were stated	The authors employed mixed methods. They theorised their findings  The study is also underpinned by an extensive literature review in service user involvement	The study explored the current involvement of service users in the design and delivery of pre-registration education and training programmes approved by the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC)  Although carers have been involved in both health and social care, this study only focused on service users	The study presented very good data on what is known about service user involvement  This included the benefits, barriers and facilitators of service user involvement	Ethical approval was sought	The study will be accessible to professionals and researchers looking at how service users have been involved in health and allied professions	Research knowledge

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Dearnley et al (2011)	Service users and carers: preparing to be involved in work-based practice assessment	Dearnley and colleagues reported on the views of the service users/carers who were involved in the development of a multi-professional assessment feedback form	<p>This is a qualitative study which comprised of the use of a focus group and simulated role play scenarios</p> <p>The role play took place before the focus groups</p> <p>The sample of N=27 consisted of students, practice, educators from a range of health and social care professions and service users/carers</p>	The study formed part of the Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS) Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), which was working towards a framework of inter-professional assessment of common competences in the health and social care professions	<p>The study reported on the outcomes of a shared workshop that involved service users and carers, practice assessors and students in the development of an inter-professional assessment tool</p> <p>The assessment tool is made available in paper, mobile and electronic formats</p>	<p>Written informed consent was obtained from those who took part</p> <p>However, the authors do not make clear whether formal ethical clearance was sought for them or not</p>	The paper will be accessible to professionals and service user/carers educators and/or assessors	Organisation and practitioner knowledge
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Debyser et al (2011)  Ghent University Belgium	Involvement of inpatient mental health clients in the practical training and assessment of mental health nursing students: Can it benefit clients and students?	<p>The study explored the feasibility of psychiatric client involvement in giving feedback to nursing students. Following this a practical model was developed.</p> <p>The research was focused on answering the following questions:</p> <p>*What conditions support the gathering of meaningful client feedback to enhance the student's learning process and clients' wellbeing?</p> <p>* Does the use of the practical model for client feedback lead</p>	The study is grounded in the qualitative research tradition. This comprised observations and semi-structured interviews with patients who took part in student assessments	The authors developed a practice model for the study. This was used to elicit information about patients' reactions to and experiences of the process of giving feedback to students	A practice model of service user and carer feedback form was developed	Ethical approval was sought	Accessible to those interested in or who understand service user/ carer involvement initiatives in health and social care	Practitioner, research knowledge
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		<p>to positive experiences, and if so, under what conditions?</p> <p>*To what extent is a client's feedback on the student's work performance, consistent with feedback from the mentor (nurse from the ward), the teacher and the student?</p>							
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Duffy et al (2013)  A University in Northern Ireland	Service User and Carer Involvement in Role-plays to Assess Readiness for Practice	Reported on the process and evaluation of service user/carer involvement in first year students' role play assessments from the perspectives of the service users, carers, students and tutors	<p>The methods used were clearly set out</p> <p>Employed a mixed methods approach that consisted of questionnaires and focus groups</p> <p>The sample comprised of staff who taught on the module (n=8) Students (n=50)</p> <p>A focus group discussion with service users (n=3), carers (n = 3)</p>	<p>The authors conducted pre and post assessment evaluation</p> <p>Duffy et al's study is a useful addition to the literature and research on service user/carer involvement in that it presents both pre and post evaluation outcomes of involvement in student assessments</p>	<p>Duffy and his colleagues make a case for service user/carer involvement by stating it allows students to engage with service users/carers on an emotional level. Practitioners looking for ways of developing students' emotional competence not only in teaching but in assessments will find this useful</p>	Does not make clear whether ethical approval was sought	The language used is accessible. HEI representative interested in service user/carer involvement in social work education and student assessments will find this useful, as would researchers looking at studies reporting on both processes and evaluation of service user/carer involvement in social work education initiatives	Practitioner research knowledge
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<p>Muir &amp; Laxton (2012)</p> <p>University of Leeds</p> <p>England</p>	<p>Experts by experience; the views of service user educators providing feedback on medical students' work-based assessments</p>	<p>The aims of the study were clearly stated.</p> <p>Two clear aims are suggested as follows:</p> <p>To address a gap in the literature by exploring a formative assessment process from the perspective of the service users involved</p> <p>To understand the experiences of service users providing feedback to students on formative, work-based assessments</p>	<p>The study is grounded in practitioner/ service user/carer knowledge.</p> <p>It looked at a multi-sourced, inter professional feedback form and used the findings to inform a revised feedback form from service users/carers' perspective</p>	<p>Provided interactive training workshops, written training material and 'buddy system' to support the service users/carer assessors involved in giving students' feedback</p>	<p>The findings went to inform a review of an assessment feedback forms. Through this process a revised version was developed</p> <p>This is made available online for other users</p>	<p>The authors reported the study formed part of an ethically approved Assessment &amp; Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS) research programme</p>	<p>The study identified limitations with an initial assessment feedback form where service users/carers as assessors were concerned.</p> <p>A more inclusive feedback form was developed to meet the needs of all involved in students' assessments, including service users/carers</p>	<p>Practitioner /service user/carer knowledge</p>
<p>Munro et al (2012)</p> <p>University of Glasgow</p>	<p>Patients assessing students' assignments; Making the patient experience real</p>	<p>The aims were clearly stated</p> <p>Reported on the involvement of patients and their carers in the assessment</p>	<p>The study is grounded in practitioner/ service user/carer knowledge</p> <p>It was not made clear whether this</p>	<p>This is innovative. Students were invited to research and produce an information leaflet for</p>	<p>Innovative – presents something different.</p> <p>Students were asked to research and</p>	<p>Considered the ethics of service user and carer involvement in student assessments.</p>	<p>The language used is accessible</p> <p>This is an innovative way of service user/carer involvement in student</p>	<p>Practitioner/ service use/ carers' knowledge – describes the process of service user/carer</p>

		of students	<p>is a research study or a report on processes of engagement</p> <p>The authors provided a good literature review of service user involvement in health and social care; Inquiry Based Learning and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)</p>	<p>newly diagnosed patients with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)</p> <p>The leaflets were then assessed and graded by an expert panel of patients and carers</p>	<p>design a leaflet for newly diagnosed patients which were then assessed by service users and carers</p> <p>This can be transferred to other areas of practice such as social work</p>	<p>However, it was unclear whether ethical approval for their study was sought</p>	<p>assessments. It is transferable to other health and social work settings</p>	<p>involvement in giving feedback to students</p>
Shaw (2012) England	Measuring up?’	The aims for writing the article were clearly stated	This article was written by a social work practitioner who was concerned about the lack of critical dialogue on service user/carer involvement in social work students’ assessments	Discusses different power relationships between social work students and service users in child protection social work, and raises important questions about their likely impact on student assessments	This non-peer-reviewed paper adds to the body of knowledge in this area by drawing attention to the inherent tensions in service user/carer involvement in settings such as such as child protection social work	The paper raises ethical questions about the uncritical dialogue around service user/carer involvement in social work student assessments	The language used will be accessible to health and social care professionals interested in service user/carer involvement in student assessments	Practitioner knowledge
Skoura-Kirk et al (2012)	Mark My Words! Service User	Reported on the process of involving	The authors present narrative excerpts from the	There are currently limited studies	The authors draw attention to the lack of	Authors do not make clear	The language used will be accessible to	Practitioner and service users/carers’

Canterbury Christ Church University England	and Carer Involvement in Social Work Academic Assessment	<p>service users/ carers as equal partners in social work students assessments</p> <p>The article is underpinned by a good literature review mainly focusing on the policy requirements for service user/carer involvement in social work</p>	experiences of service users who were involved in the assessments of students	<p>that have looked at the involvement of service users/ carers in academic assessments of social work students</p> <p>Practitioners looking for innovative ideas on how to involve service users/ carers in student assessments will find this useful</p>	<p>research in this area.</p> <p>They looked at issues of power and partnership and provide some good examples of how these were addressed.</p> <p>The service users who took part in the initiative share their thoughts and feelings about the process</p>	whether or not ethical approval was gained for the study	practitioners across both health and social care involved or interested in service user and carer involvement in student assessments. Service user/carer educators and assessors would also find it useful as this provides qualitative excerpts from the views of service users/carers who took part in the process	knowledge
Skilton (2011)  Kingston University  England	Involving Experts by Experience in Assessing Students' Readiness to Practise: The Value of Experiential Learning in Student Reflection and Preparation for Practice	The author reports on an evaluation of service user/carer involvement in student assessments by way of giving feedback to an assessed role play of first year students' readiness to practice	<p>Evaluation of service user/carer involvement in students' role-play assessments</p> <p>The evaluation comprised of two stages. The first part consisted of verbal feedback with students, consultation with service users/ carers and</p>	The paper reports on both processes and evaluation of a service user/carer involvement initiative	The article provides two examples of service user/carer involvement. This included providing feedback in an assessed role-play and an interview of service users by students	Does not make clear how ethical approval or issues of ethics were addressed	The language and style used will be accessible to social work educators and other allied professionals involved in service user/carer involvement initiatives	Practitioner/ Service user/ carer knowledge



		<p>It is unclear whether this was a formal research evaluation or an audit</p>	<p>discussion with the module tutor and a questionnaire with 39 students who took part in the role play activity</p> <p>The exercise was evaluated again. This time 90 students interviewed an expert by experience + 58 students (64%) completed a questionnaire.</p> <p>It is unclear whether this was linked to the role-play assessment or whether this was a different assessment activity</p>					
<p>Stacey et al (2012)</p> <p>University of Nottingham</p> <p>England</p>	<p>Service user involvement in the assessment of student nurses: A note of caution</p>	<p>The purpose of the study is stated as to raise a debate about meaningful involvement of service users/ carers in student mental health nurse</p>	<p>There was no mention of a method of research per se; rather it makes references to an earlier study conducted in 2010</p> <p>The authors provide an extensive literature</p>	<p>Stacey and colleagues raise an important question on whether service user/ carer involvement should be implemented</p>	<p>The authors draw from previous research on service user/carer involvement in the education and training of health and social care</p>	<p>The paper mentions earlier research in 2010. It does not explicitly state whether ethical approval was sought for</p>	<p>The study is accessible to educators/ practitioners and researchers who understand the requirements for service user/carer involvement in health and social care setting</p>	<p>Practitioner and research knowledge</p>

		assessments	review which researchers interested in this area would find helpful	without the required evidence-base.  They do not, however, provide any findings in this paper to support this	students undertaken by the University of Nottingham and use this to make the case for the importance of researching this area	this particular paper  It does examine issues of power in assessments		
Stickley et al (2011)  University of Nottingham  England	Developing a service user designed tool for the assessment of student mental health nurses in practice: A collaborative process	The purpose and rationale for the study are clearly stated	The authors draw extensively from previous work and research both in the UK and abroad to support the work  The methodologies employed are clearly stated	Acknowledges the importance of service user feedback. However, the findings suggest that rather than "assess" student nurses in practice, service users should have a role in reviewing students' practice	Used Likert scales for obtaining service user feedback  Provided a clear criteria for assessment of students which can be easily transferred to other professional related practice	Did not make clear whether ethical approval was sought.  However, stated in an earlier study that ethical approval for the study was sought (see Stickley et al 2010)	The language used is accessible to those who understand service user/carer involvement in professional practice  The service users/carers who took part raise concerns about the language used, which they felt was not accessible to service users/carers  Changes were made as a result	Practitioner knowledge/ research knowledge
Stickley et al (2010) University of	The practice assessment of student nurses by	The purpose of the study is clearly stated	Draws from substantive literature to inform the work	Clearly identifies practice implications for	Used Likert scale to obtain feedback	Ethical approval for the study was granted	Language used is accessible to those who understand	Fits no source specific standard. However,

Nottingham England	people who use mental health services	Reports on phase one of a participatory action research project	The methodology and strategies employed are clearly stated	involving service users/carers in the assessment of students - provides advice for institutions on how best to approach notions of service user/carer involvement in the assessment of students	The lessons learnt from developing the assessment tool will no doubt benefit implementation of service user/carer involvement in student assessments	by a local NHS Research Ethics Committee and the Research & Development Department of an NHS trust. Other ethical issues were considered throughout the paper. e.g. used pseudonyms, considered potential impact of negative experiences for both students and service users	service user/carer involvement in professional practice	could fit both practitioner, service user/carer and research knowledge
Reinders et al (2010)  VU Medical Centre in Amsterdam	Does patient feedback improve the consultation skills of general practice trainees? A controlled trial	The aims of the study were clearly stated	Quantitative research The authors carried out controlled trial in which two sub- cohorts of General Practitioner Trainees were allocated to an intervention	The study sets out to assess whether service user feedback in GP training led to better consultation skills than regular	Very few studies have looked at the effectiveness of service user involvement in student assessments. The use of pre and post service	Ethical issues and how these were addressed were not explicitly stated	Accessible to both health and social care practitioners looking for evidence base to support effective outcomes of service user involvement in training or the	Practitioner/ research knowledge

			group (n = 23) or a control group (n = 30), respectively	communication skills training and intervention	user involvement initiative is very limited. This therefore addresses a gap in the literature on outcomes and impact assessment of service user involvement initiatives		assessment of students	
Wallcraft et al (2012) England	The involvement of users and carers in social work education: a practice benchmarking study	The aim of the study was made clear – this is to find out how the involvement of service users/carers were progressing across the 83 HEIs in England offering social work degree programmes and to support the development of guidance for social work educators	Mixed Methods approach  This consisted of two literature reviews and two recent user-led studies; monitoring forms submitted by HEIs to the General Social Care Council (GSCC) in 2008/9 and interviews with 16 HEI programme managers/directors	This study is relevant for those interested in how service users and carers have been involved in social work degree programmes between 2008/09	The study is not supported by an extensive literature review.  However, it provides useful information on how service users/carers have been involved in social work degree programmes in 2008/09  HEI providers of social work programmes and research practitioners	The authors did not make clear whether ethical approval was sought	The language used is accessible, mostly to researchers and HEI representatives or those familiar with service user and carer involvement in health and social care	Research knowledge

					interested in this area will find it useful			
Webster et al (2012)  Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen	The development of service users in the provision of verbal feedback to student nurses in a clinical simulation environment	The aims of the study were clearly stated  It explored the experience of patients involved in student assessments	Qualitative research design; used a case study approach - focus group with a sample of n=18  The study is underpinned by a literature review which focused mainly on the benefits of feedback and not necessarily on service user feedback; neither did it look at previous literature on service user/ carer involvement	Innovative, reviewed the experience of the patient volunteers in their provision of feedback to students and used this to inform the development of training to support service users/carers in their role as student assessors	Provided feedback and training for service users/carers who were involved in student assessments	Sought ethical approval from the School of Nursing and Midwifery's School Ethics Review Panel; which is a sub-committee of the University's Research Ethics Sub-Committee	Accessible to those familiar with service user/carers involvement in health and social care	Practitioner and research knowledge

Author	Title	Involvement	Methodology	Ethics	Findings
Chambers & Hickey (2012)  England	Service user involvement in the design and delivery of education and training programmes leading to registration with the Health and Care Professions Council	<p>Researched how service users have been involved in programmes leading to registration with HCPC</p> <p>It was found that service users have been involved in the following:</p> <p>Various aspects of the design and delivery of education and training; programme planning, the development of teaching tools, materials, formative feedback, role-play in the classroom and module planning</p>	Employed mixed methods by using both qualitative and quantitative methods	Sought ethical approval	<p>Found service users have been involved in the following:</p> <p>Various aspects of the design and delivery of education and training; programme planning, the development of teaching tools/materials, formative feedback, role-play in the classroom and module planning.</p> <p>Benefits of involvement included the following:</p> <p>'students gain insight from service users'</p> <p>'challenges students' stereotypes and assumptions of service users'.</p> <p>Service user, 'provides an opportunity for service users to share experience and/or expertise' and ensures that 'service users feel valued'</p>

*Ann Anka. Doctorate in Social Work thesis. Title: "Assessment as the site of power: An interrogation of the involvement of 'others' in the assessments of social work students". Supervisors: Professor Imogen Taylor and Dr Hengliem Lisa Chen. University of Sussex. November 2013.*

<p>Dearnley et al (2012)</p> <p>England</p>	<p>Service users and carers: preparing to be involved in work-based practice assessment</p>	<p>Involvement of service users/carers in work-based practice assessment of health and social care students</p>	<p>Qualitative study; a focus group design with N=27. This consisted of students, practice educators and a service user and carers</p> <p>The authors reported that this study forms part of the Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS) Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), programme which at the time was in the process of developing a framework for inter-professional assessment tool of common competences in the health and social care professions</p>	<p>Sought informed consent from participants. However, it is unclear whether a formal ethical clearance was sought for the study</p>	<p>The findings was discussed under the themes of ethics, reliability and validity</p> <p>Ethics</p> <p>Stressed the need to gain informed consent from service users/carers involved in student assessments and the need to ensure that service users/carers are fully informed about the assessment purpose; where the information is going and how it will be used and stored. This was suggested due to the nature of some of the settings in which this particular study took place. This included anaesthetic rooms in hospitals.</p> <p>The issue of reliability and validity of service user/carer involvement in student assessments centred on whether students will receive an honest response from a service user/carer</p>
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<p>Debyser et al (2011)</p> <p><i>Flanders Belgium</i></p>	<p>Involvement of inpatient mental health clients in the practical training and assessment of mental health nursing students: Can it benefit clients and students?</p>	<p>By means of giving feedback</p> <p>Explored the feasibility of psychiatric client involvement in giving feedback to students</p>	<p>Qualitative explorative research design</p> <p>This consisted of observations and semi-structured interviews with seven clients, four students, two nurses and two teachers</p>	<p>Sought ethical approval</p>	<p>Students and teachers supported the idea but were initially uncertain and had doubts</p> <p>They were sceptical about the added value of service user involvement</p> <p>Service users felt their involvement was positive; felt they were being listened to and taken seriously</p>
<p>Duffy et al (2013)</p> <p><i>A University in North Ireland</i></p>	<p>Service User and Carer Involvement in Role-plays to Assess Readiness for Practice</p>	<p>Involvement in first year students' preparation for practice learning assessment</p> <p>This consisted of role-play</p> <p>Involvement by means of giving feedback</p>	<p>Employed a mixed methods approach</p> <p>This consisted of questionnaires and focus groups</p> <p>The sample consisted of staff who taught on the module (n=8)</p> <p>Students (n=50)</p> <p>A focus group discussion with service users (n=3), carers (n = 3)</p>	<p>Unclear on whether ethical approval was sought</p>	<p>Pre- assessment</p> <p>Indicated that notions of power are closely related to the discourse on service user involvement in social work education</p> <p><u>Post –assessments</u></p> <p>Staff and students were positive about involvements. However, some doubts were expressed. Two students raised concerns about the emotional impact on service users/carers. This was echoed by some of the staff</p>



					<p>members who took part in the study.</p> <p>Service users/carers felt that their involvement brought a different perspective to the exam.</p> <p>The post assessment provided staff and students with insight into the advantages of service user/carer involvement in student assessments. It also provided opportunities on how to further develop this area</p>
<p>Muir &amp; Laxton (2012)</p> <p>University of Leeds England</p>	<p>Experts by experience; the views of service user educators providing feedback on medical students' work-based assessments</p>	<p>Involvement by means of giving feedback on 3<sup>rd</sup> year medical student assessments</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> year medical students were given four assessment tools to complete – this was co assessed by service users, carers and tutors</p>	<p>Focus group interviews with service users and students</p> <p>Focused on evaluation of the assessment process from the service users perspectives</p>	<p>Sought ethical approval</p>	<p>Service user/carer educators brought different and valuable perspectives to formative feedback</p> <p>Training and peer support were provided for service user/carer assessors who reported they found the support very helpful</p>

Munro et al (2012)  University of Glasgow	Patients assessing students' assignments; Making the patient experience real	Involvements by means of giving feedback  Students were asked to design a leaflet for newly diagnosed patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) The leaflets were then assessed and grades awarded by an expert panel of patients and carers	52 students formally evaluated the experience of patient involvement in their assessments.  The authors reported on one student, 3 patients and three carers' experiences about their involvement in student assessments	Unclear on whether ethical approval was sought. However, the authors considered ethical issues in service user/carer involvement in student assessments	The student felt this approach to assessment "piled on the pressure" to get everything exactly right, with no room for mistakes  The patients and carers felt it was 'quite a task' but one that everybody treated seriously and professionally
Reinders et al (2010)  VU Medical Centre Amsterdam	Does patient feedback improve the consultation skills of general practice trainees? A controlled trial	Involvement of patients in GP trainee students' communication skills training. The authors suggest simulated patients videotaped students' consultation at baseline and after 3 months	Controlled trial in which two sub-cohorts of General Practice. Trainees were allocated to an intervention group (n = 23) or a control group (n = 30), respectively	The authors did not state whether or how ethical approval was sought or addressed in the study	Students' consultation skills in both groups improved significantly. Those involved in the patient feedback initiative did not improve consultation skills more than those who were involved in the regular communication skills training
Shaw (2012)  England	Measuring up?	Involvement in social work student assessments	This is not a research paper	Discussed the impacts and implications of involving service users in student assessments in settings such as Child Protection Social work	Shaw challenges social work educators to take a critical look at the involvement of service users/carers in settings like Child Protection social work. He looked at different powers at play and how this might impact on student assessments
Skilton (2011)	Involving Experts by Experience in	Involvement by means of giving feedback on an	Methodology consisted of the following:	Does not make clear whether ethical	Students valued service user/carer involvement in

Kingston University England	Assessing Students' Readiness to Practise: The Value of Experiential Learning in Student Reflection and Preparation for Practice	assessed role-play of first year social work students' fitness to practice assessment	<p><u>Stage 1</u></p> <p>Verbal feedback was initially obtained from the students who took part in the role play.</p> <p>This was followed up by a short questionnaire consisting of five short questions which 39 students (56%) returned</p> <p>Consultation with the service users and carers (experts by experience) who took part was undertaken both individually and through the Service User and Carer Steering Group. Feedback from module leaders was sought in face-to-face discussion.</p> <p><u>Stage 2</u></p> <p>90 students interviewed an expert by experience, and 58 students (64%) completed questionnaire</p>	approval was sought	<p>their assessments; felt it was much more real life than interviewing a colleague. Felt it was relevant to the main object of the module which focused on teaching effective communication skills.</p> <p>Service users/carers felt they enjoyed the experience and were impressed with the students. However, they felt they needed training.</p> <p>Module leader felt the session had gone well. Felt there were differences in expectations of students' knowledge base which affected the feedback given.</p>
Skoura-Kirk et al (2012)	Mark My Words! Service User and Carer Involvement in Social	Involvement of service users in academic assessment of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	The team comprised of three social work academics and four	Skoura-Kirk and colleagues did not make clear on	The authors concluded that the involvement of service users in student

Canterbury Christ Church University  England	Work Academic Assessment	Social work students.  Service users were involved in designing an assessment form, assessment of student group presentations and assessment of a written reflective essay	service users	whether or how ethical approval was gained for the study. However, they discussed issues of power and anti-discriminatory practice. They provide some good practice examples of how the power imbalance between academics and service users was addressed	assessments is best achieved in the context of collaborative working and relationships based on trust, with opportunities for team reflection and supported by training in academic assessment
Stacey et al 2012  University of Nottingham  England	Service user involvement in the assessment of student nurses: A note of caution	Stacey et al indicated they wanted to raise a debate about the involvement of service users/carers involvement in student assessments without the required evidence base  They made references to a pilot study undertaken in 2010 which tested the feasibility of service user involvement in the assessment of mental health student nurses.	The authors do not make clear in this paper what research methodology was employed. However, they make references to an earlier participatory action research project in 2010	Unclear on whether ethical approval was sought	They concluded that service users may have a role in student assessment; not necessarily as "assessors" but as "reviewers".  Suggest a note of caution in service user/carer involvement in student assessments
Stickley et al 2010  University of Nottingham	The practice assessment of student nurses by people who use mental health services	Involvement in the development and design of an assessment tool which focused upon the qualities they wished to	Participatory action research project. This focused on service user involvement in mental health nurse students in	Ethical approval was granted by a local NHS research ethics committee and a Research &	The finding suggests that the involvement of service users in student assessments is desirable in theory but is fraught with

England		see in mental health nurses	practice assessments	Development department of an NHS trust  They also sought informed consent for those who took part in the study	difficulties, especially with regard to concerns about increased workload and feelings of vulnerability amongst students.
Stickley et al (2011)  University of Nottingham  England	Developing a service user designed tool for the assessment of student mental health nurses in practice: A collaborative process	Involved in the design of an assessment tool to assess mental health student nurses in practice	Participatory action research project This study formed part of a previous study undertaken in 2010. This paper reported on the process of developing and piloting the assessment tool	The authors indicated that they sought ethical approval in another study conducted in 2010 –see above	The findings suggest there was a consensus among stakeholders that service user involvement in nursing students' assessments is beneficial to both students and service users. However, the authors concluded that rather than involving service users in student assessments, service users should have a role in reviewing student's practice.  The findings suggest that the manner in which service user feedback is sought requires further research.

Wallcraft et al (2012) England	The involvement of users and carers in social work education: a practice benchmarking study	<p>The study reviewed 83 HEIs in England on how service users/carers have been involved in social work degree programmes. This includes the following: recruitment, selection and teaching. The weakest area was assessment.</p> <p><u>PQ programmes</u></p> <p>The strongest areas of involvement included teaching, course design, quality assurance and development. Weaker areas were the recruitment and selection of candidates, formal assessment of practice competence and the assessment of written work</p>	<p>A mixed Methods research approach was used.</p> <p>This consisted of two literature reviews and two recent user led studies; monitoring forms submitted by HEIs to the General Social Care Council (GSCC) in 2008/9 and interviews with 16 HEI programme managers/directors</p>	Wallcraft et al also did not make clear whether ethical approval was sought	<p>The findings suggest that between 2008/09 the strongest area of service user/carer involvement in social work degree programmes includes the following: recruitment, selection and teaching. The weakest area was assessment.</p> <p><u>PQ programmes</u></p> <p>The strongest areas of involvement included teaching, course design, quality assurance and development. Weaker areas were the recruitment and selection of candidates, formal assessment of practice competence and the assessment of written work</p>
Webster et al (2012) Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland	The development of service users in the provision of verbal feedback to student nurses in a clinical simulation environment	Giving feedback to students in a simulated learning environment	A Case Study Approach and focus group interviews with patient volunteers who took part in the student assessments	The authors sought ethical approval from the School of Nursing and Midwifery's School Ethics Review Panel; which is a sub-committee of the University's Research Ethics	The findings suggest service users/carers who took part in the study felt that the training on how to give feedback was helpful as it gave them confidence in how to deliver both positive and negative feedback

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**Appendix 3- Summary of initial findings - ASYE (for Skills for Care)**

**Conceptualisation of the Assessed and Supported Year in  
Employment:  
What practitioners think about ASYE**

**Ann Anka  
Jan 2012**



## Conceptualisation of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment: What practitioners think about ASYE

### Abstract

**Background:** *There has been an increased recognition of the importance to support newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) in their first year in employment. This is further emphasised in the Social Work Task Force Final Report (2009) - the recommendation of the creation of an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) which, they argue "should be carried out jointly by employers and HEIs, with feedback from service users taken into account" (The Social Work Task Force 2009, p. 25).*

**Purpose:** *The paper draws upon current research being undertaken as part of a Doctorate in Social Work. It presents preliminary findings from a qualitative research study which explored stakeholders' views about the ASYE, what should count as service users' feedback evidence for a pass or fail; and what challenges and opportunities are faced by stakeholders in implementing the ASYE within the current economic climate.*

**Method:** *Semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with twenty people. The research participants consisted of social work students, service users and carers, social work educators and social work employers. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.*

**Findings:** *Participants felt that the ASYE is a 'good thing'. However, concerns were raised about the transferability of the ASYE programme, which was perceived as a 'North American model', to a UK model of social work practice. Participants felt that service user involvement at the ASYE level should be different to that at initial qualification level. In this area participants felt service users should be involved in changing organisational culture by providing two-way feedback to teams. Key challenges and opportunities identified in implementing the ASYE in 2012 included funding for programmes and service user involvement, and the legal implications for assessing fitness to practice when a candidate is deemed as failing.*

### Introduction

The Social Work Taskforce (2009, p. 25) recommended “an assessed and supported year in practice” as a final stage of becoming a social worker; which, they argue, “should be carried out jointly by employers and HEIs, with feedback from service users taken into account” (The Social Work Task Force 2009, p. 25). Three years later, as the Social Work Reforms Board (2011) prepares to implement the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) in 2012, this work is interested in and reports on stakeholders’ views about the ASYE and service user involvement.

The study forms part of a Doctoral research project, drawing on empirical data which is being undertaken to explore what service users, carers, social work students, social work employers and social educators think regarding the proposed ASYE. The study focused on participants’ views on what should count as service users feedback evidence at the ASYE assessment level; as well as what some of the potential challenges and opportunities faced by stakeholders in implementing the ASYE in 2012 were. The study originated from both professional and personal frustrations, that although the Social Work Taskforce had recommended service users feedback be taken into account in the ASYE assessment, the precise level of service user feedback remained unclear in the proposed Professional Capabilities Framework (Skills for Care Conference 2011; Social Work Reform Board 2011). In addition, subsequent conferences and publications appear to have relinquished the requirements for service user involvement in the ASYE assessment (Skills for Care Conference 2011). What follows is a discussion of the methodology used and presentation of findings.

## **Methodology**

The study is underpinned by the principles guiding Developmental Evaluation (Patton 2011). Pioneered by Patton (2011), Developmental Evaluation is portrayed as a new approach for programme evaluation. It is described as emergent, its emphasis on development, learning-by-doing and the use of data

for continuous programme improvement (Dozois et al 2010; Fagen et al 2011; Patton 2011). Developmental Evaluation is reported as appropriate for evaluating emerging initiatives or innovations where there are high levels of uncertainties (Dozois et al 2010; Patton 2011). As an evaluative tool, Patton (1994, p. 318) contends that it is *"useful in innovative settings where goals are emergent and changing rather than predetermined and fixed"*. The use of Developmental Evaluation in this study was influenced by current development in social work practice and social work education where the current landscape keeps shifting and changing.

The study is grounded in qualitative research methodology. Ethical clearance was obtained from University of Sussex and Havering College of Further and Higher Education. Data collection consisted of semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. This was undertaken with twenty people, drawn using selective and heterogeneous sampling procedures. The research participants consisted of service users and carers, social work students, social worker employers and social work educators. Data analysis involved the use of thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clark (2006). This entailed reading the interview data to identify and code themes, reviewing themes and refining key themes that emerged.

## Findings

The findings are discussed under three key themes, these are:

- What the research participants thought about the ASYE
- What participants thought should count as service users' feedback evidence for a pass at ASYE level

- What participants thought were some of the potential challenges and opportunities for implementing the ASYE during the current economic climate

### **What the research participants thought about the ASYE**

Almost all those who took part in the interview felt the ASYE was a '*good idea*'.

The following are a selection of comments made:

*I think that's a very good idea. It's very similar to the fact that doctors spend their first year on a probationary basis and, although they call themselves doctors, they can't go on to further training until they've done that first year. You are supervised and helped and it's not a thing of saying 'You're not good enough,' it's saying 'you've achieved this great qualification, now let's get you actually having experience what life is like on the ground*

(Service user)

*I think ASYE is a good idea, as this will help a newly qualified social worker to develop and enhance their knowledge in the job. It is a good idea because its work based rather than classroom based*

(Student)

*I think if it's mandatory, if it's clear, it'll work out, and with support systems then it will work* (Social work manager)

*Would be useful if emphasis is on support as opposed to assessment*

(Practice Educator)

Although research participants felt the ASYE was a good thing, some concerns were raised regarding issues of transferability, its appropriateness in meeting the needs of those candidates with previous social work experience, assessing fitness to practice, and issues relating to employment and termination. The comments below highlight some of the concerns raised:

*...The model they are borrowing which of course is based on is the North American model where social work students undertake their under-grad programme, then they undertake their internship, then return to do their Masters and only then are they qualified as social workers... The issue there of course is the cultural transferability because the American model tends to be psycho-therapeutic; it tends to be clinical in terms of actually implementing practice, whilst the UK system tends to be administrative in terms of its approach. So the model is fine in the context of where it came from, it's just whether it will work within the context of an administrative model*

(Social work educator)

In the following quote a social work manager questioned the appropriateness of the ASYE in supporting the learning of those with prior social work practice experience:

*...lot of people, seconded into social work practice, have had many years experience within the service before they go on training. So they already come with a lot of experience, so to use another year on top of 3 years to get a degree seems unfair... in some ways the person will be so well qualified and be able to run and do the job it's unlikely that the team will not treat them as an ordinary member of the team*

(Social work manager)

Another social work employer raised a concern about role clarity in assessing fitness to practice as highlighted in the following quote:

*Who would be the verifier and endorser to say they're fit for practice and what will their skills and knowledge consist of to say that that person is fit for practice? That's one of my concerns, and then would that be something the University do or something that we do as an employer?*

(Social work employer)

In the following quote, a social work educator expressed concern about the legal implication for passing an appeal:

*... [I] Am concerned about the logistics and legal issues around employment law i.e. passing an appeal*

(Social educator)

What participants thought should count as service users' feedback evidence for a pass or fail at ASYE assessment level

Almost all of those who took part agreed that service users should be involved in the ASYE assessment. However the findings indicated that social work managers were unable to give specific answers on what service user/carer feedback should entail. Furthermore, most of those interviewed indicated that service user and carer feedback at the ASYE level should be different to that of service user involvement for an initial social work qualification. The following is one of the suggestions made:

*We must not lose the focus and the work that service user and carers do at the moment, we mustn't lose that, and I think we should be working, into expanding that, and perhaps expanding it in different ways we haven't thought of.*

(Social work manager)

In the following quote, a social work educator provided examples of how service user and carer involvement in the ASYE assessment could be different from that of service user expectations at initial qualification level:

*... the workplace ought to reflect that learning organisation quality, so it is about having things like; how do we bring that into our team meetings for example? Should we have supervision groups? Should we have peer supervision around family focus? Perhaps we could involve foster carers in that and young people who have just left care, how do they get the two-way feedback? It's about research; it's about the mastery of practice, about developing wisdom in practice, all those things.*

(Social work educator)

In the following, the research participants gave different examples of how service users could be involved in the ASYE:

*There was another fantastic piece of work where the worker involved a young asylum seeker and his experiences about not being believed about his age and what services he should be getting. So it's not about what*

*we do in the BA, and even the MA, because our MA courses are qualifying courses, it is about fully qualified practitioners taking on the responsibility for change management and how they manage that in a learning organisation*

(Social work educator)

*I'd like some evidence of intelligent thought that they won't just take what they've been told as Gospel, they will test it and test it against their experience and our experience to see what a thoughtful conclusion is. Some evidence of intelligence would be nice and sensitivity, that's a big one*

(Service user)

*I would expect the social worker to be good at administration in that they are reporting and doing a proper assessment of that individual and that is down in writing. And that individual has a care plan whereby they know what can be done ahead for them so that they can see what's going to happen over the next 3 months or whatever, depending on the case*

(Service user)

### **What participants thought were some of the potential challenges and opportunities for implementing the ASYE during the current economic climate**

The different stakeholder groups identified potential challenges and opportunities pertaining to their specific group needs. Not surprisingly most of the challenges centred on issues with funding. The following are some of the comments made:

*...it comes down to a cost factor and managing, we have 20 social workers here but we have 600 cases. How do we prioritise? Do we say new social workers will only carry 5 or 10 cases at a time and they will be monitored on all those cases, or do you give them 50 cases, tell them to get on with it and keep your fingers crossed?*

(Social work manager)

## **Discussion**

Ann Anka. Doctorate in Social Work thesis. Title: "Assessment as the site of power: An interrogation of the involvement of 'others' in the assessments of social work students". Supervisors: Professor Imogen Taylor and Dr Hengliu Lisa Chen. University of Sussex. November 2013.

The preliminary findings supported the findings from others looking at the benefits of post-qualifying training (Carpenter et al 2010, 2011; Ayres et al 2010; Skills for Care 2011a; Brown et al 2008). Those interviewed agreed that an additional year in practice is necessary to support the transition from initial social work qualification to the real world. However, what was different was that unlike others, concerns were raised about appropriateness of the ASYE in meeting the needs of those candidates previously seconded by local authorities in social work programmes. In this area the findings indicated that ASYE does not serve this group well. Those interviewed felt that this group of candidates already have the necessary practice skills to work with service users, carers and other professionals before undertaking an initial social work qualification; therefore undertaking an additional year does not serve them well. Similar to this study, the evaluation of the Adult Services NQSW Framework by Skills for Care (2011a) indicated that some newly qualified social workers with longer experience in social work practice are reluctant to engage with NQSW programme. Although it is undeniable that the protected caseload and supervision embedded in the ASYE framework would support. Further studies in this area could look at how this particular group might be served well by other forms of post-qualifying social work programme initiatives. Other issues regarding assessing fitness to practice, issues relating to failing a candidate, and the legal implications for social work employers failing a candidate were also identified. Furthermore, similar to Carpenter et al's (2011) work, on the evaluation of the NQSW programme, although the research participants felt the ASYE was a good idea, some anxieties were raised on whether ASYE candidates would be supported as originally envisaged when it was configured. Other concerns centred on not making the ASYE mandatory. It was felt that employers interested in the ASYE would invest in their staff. This means that the ASYE as it was initially configured, as a way of improving the practice skills



of newly qualified social workers, would be only partially achieved as not all newly qualified social workers would benefit from it.

Equally important, on the question of the involvement of people who use services in the ASYE assessments, the study supported others who have found that the involvement of service users and carers is crucial in the training, education and assessment of social work students (Taylor et al 2009; Advocacy in Action with Staff 2006; Davis 2010). However, like other studies, although those interviewed felt that service users and carers should be involved, what differed was that participants indicated they would, understandably, like to see a difference in how this is undertaken. Further unlike other studies which identified the development of effective communication, empathy and kindness as what is important for service users and carers (Bailey 2005; Elliot et al 2005; Advocacy In Action with Staff, Students from the University 2006; Stickley, 2011; Moss et. al2010).

The study findings indicated that service user feedback could focus on assessing change in organisational culture; for example, developing an organisational culture which provides a two-way feedback to teams. In other areas, the ability to evidence intelligence and administrative skills, as well as the ability and skills to either challenge or test out service users' narratives were identified as areas that service users' feedback could focus on. Of significant importance, the study also found that currently different expectations of service user involvement in the teaching, learning and assessment of students exist. Whilst this is good, in that it does reflect the diversity of service users and carer issues and representation, in assessment this raises a number of concerns about procedural fairness in terms of equitability, reliability, accountability, transparency and consistency. Clarity is needed in this area, for example; within the Professional Capability Framework

of what service user feedback should entail in the ASYE assessment as a way of clarifying shared expectations.

Furthermore and of significant importance, among the stakeholder group who took part in this study, the findings indicated that unlike the other participants, social work managers found it particularly difficult to conceive what service user feedback should entail. There are implications for practice if the recommendation to involve service users as co-assessors is maintained. This is particularly important if the implementation of the ASYE assessment proceeds as planned this autumn. There are concerns that service users as co-assessors would become a tokenistic exercise if the infrastructures needed to support employers are not in place before implementation.

The importance of developing a strong partnership between HEIs, social work employers, service users and social workers as a means for raising the standards of the social work profession was raised in an audit of the post-qualifying social work award programmes by Ayres et al (2010). I believe that there is a strong need to continue to involve service users and carers as partners in the training and education of social workers. Further work is required in this area to support social work employers.

On the question of what constitutes the potential challenges and opportunities facing employers, HEIs, and service users and carers in implementing the ASYE this autumn, concerns centred, not surprisingly, on the current economic crisis and constraint in spending, cuts in HEI funding as well as restructuring of local authorities' social work. These findings echoed that of Carpenter et al's findings. Furthermore, like Carpenter et al's (2011) evaluation findings, issues around role clarity and role conflicts as a barrier to implementation were also raised.

## **Summary and conclusion**

Overall, whilst the research participants all showed an appreciation of the need for an additional supported year in practice, as a way of supporting the

transitional learning needs of those newly qualified, they questioned its purpose in supporting those seconded into social work education. That is its appropriateness in supporting the learning needs of those who enter social work programmes with years of social work practice experience. In this area further research could examine how this particular group is served by post-qualifying social work programmes.

Equally the value of involving people who use services in shaping not only the learning of future social workers but also in changing organisational culture was highlighted. Although the study found that there were challenges due to cuts in funding and spending constraints, there were also opportunities in looking at creative ways of doing things. The research participants felt that service user and carer involvement should not become a tokenistic exercise but should be reflected in all areas of the profession and practice. Various comments presented by the research participants are encouraging and should be incorporated in the development and implementations of the ASYE assessments.

### **Way forward**

- To maintain the involvement of service users and carers in the ASYE assessment
- To clarify the precise level of service user/carers feedback within the Professional Capability Framework for ASYE assessment
- To explore through research how post-qualifying programmes could better support those who enter social work with longer experience of social work experiences
- To consider making ASYE mandatory

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## Appendix 4 - Recruitment post cards



## **Appendix 5 - Information sheet**

### **Information Sheet**

#### **Project Title:**

**Service users as co-assessors: conceptualisation of the process of assessing the final stage of social work qualification.**

#### **Invitation to Participate**

The Social Work Taskforce recommended an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) as a final stage of becoming a social worker. The Taskforce recommended that the assessment of would-be social workers at this stage of social work qualification should include feedback from service users. I would like to know what you think about the proposed Assessed and Supported Year in Employment, what should count as service users' feedback, and what might be some of the potential challenges and opportunities in implementing the ASYE in this current economic and political climate.

#### **Who will take part?**

Participants will consist of service users, carers, social work employers, social work students and social work educators.

#### **Description of Procedures**

I will be conducting individual face-to-face interviews. The interviews will last for up to 50 minutes and will be conducted at my current place of work or at a location convenient to you.

#### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation will be voluntary. Individuals may choose to take part or to withdraw at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information provided will be destroyed and will not be included in the research.

### **Fees and Expenses**

No monetary payment will be made to participants. However a £20.00 payment will be made to each service user who participates in the research. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided for those agreeing to attend the interview at my place of work.

### **Risks and Inconveniences**

No risk to participants is envisaged – however, information about where to seek counselling support will be made available to people should they become distressed as a result of taking part in the research

### **Data treatment and Storage**

The interview data will be stored under a key-locked, secured safe. The information provided will be used for the following purposes: my final year Doctoral thesis, Conference presentations, teaching and publication.

### **Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to those participating in this research. However, you will be contributing to current debate in social work education, in particular to the assessment of students on the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality will be maintained by replacing people's names with codes to ensure that your identity is protected within the Data Protection Act 1998. In addition, the interview transcripts will be returned to you to check, in order to ensure that no one will be able to identify you through the answers provided.

Furthermore, whilst every effort will be made to keep confidential all of the information you provide, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. For



example, individuals from Havering College and University of Sussex Ethics Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) will have access to the study upon completion. I may also have to break confidentiality if you disclose that you have abused a child, have been abused by a professional person or that you want to commit suicide, to the relevant authorities. Should this happen, I will first discuss any decision to report this with yourself and my supervisor before reporting it to the relevant authorities.

### **Data Presentation**

It is likely that I might disagree with some of the things you say and may take a critical view when it comes to analysing the data or reporting the findings and would like your permission to do so.

### **What to do next**

If you are interested and or have any questions about the study, please call Ann Anka, the investigator, at (01708 455 011 ex 4016) or email: [aanka@haverling-college.ac.uk](mailto:aanka@haverling-college.ac.uk)

If you have any concerns about this research, or the manner in which I have conducted myself, then please contact the Havering College Ethics Board at 01708 455 011 or my supervisor Imogen Taylor (Supervisor) at the following address: [i.j.taylor@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:i.j.taylor@sussex.ac.uk),

Imogen Taylor (Supervisor)  
University of Sussex,  
Sussex House,  
Falmer,  
Brighton  
BN1 9RH

Thank you.

## ***Appendix 6 - Informed process consent letter***

### Informed Process Consent Letter

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a part-time doctoral student at the University of Sussex and I am conducting a small-scale research looking at:

*How service users, carers, social work employers, social work students and social work educators, view the process of assessment at the proposed Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.*

I will be conducting individual face-to-face interviews with social work students, social work employers, people who use services and social work educators. The interviews will be informal; although it is anticipated that the interviews will last for up to 50 minutes. Those who agree to take part will firstly be asked about how much time they could give for the interview. The interviews will take place at my current place of work or at a mutually agreed location convenient for you.

The information gathered will be used for following purposes: my final year doctoral thesis, conference presentations, teaching and publication.

It is important to note that I am part of the teaching staff (BA Social Work & Practice Education) at Havering College. However, Havering College have not

commissioned this research and have no ownership of any aspect of the work. The final report will be the property of University of Sussex.

Confidentiality will be respected at all times and no one will be named or identified in the research. Participation is voluntary and you may wish to withdraw from this research at any point prior to publication of the results. Should you decline to take part even during the interview, this will be respected and the audio recording of the interview transcript will be returned to you.

Service users will be paid a nominal sum for their participation; however no expenses will be paid to other stakeholders for their contributions to this research.

Your participation will be most appreciated. Please also see the accompanying Information Sheet which provides more detailed information about the research. If you are interested in taking part please contact me on 01708 455 011 ex 4016, Monday to Friday between 9am – 5pm or by email at [aanka@haverling-college.ac.uk](mailto:aanka@haverling-college.ac.uk)

If you have any concerns about this research, or the manner in which I have conducted myself, then please contact the Haverling College Ethics Board at 01708 455 011 or my supervisor Imogen Taylor (Supervisor) at the following address: [i.j.taylor@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:i.j.taylor@sussex.ac.uk),

Imogen Taylor (Supervisor)  
University of Sussex,  
Sussex House,  
Falmer,  
Brighton  
BN1 9RH

Thank you,



Yours faithfully

Ann Anka

### **Participation Consent Form**

To: Ann Anka

Phone: 01708 455 011 ex 4016

Email: ann.anka@ntlworld.com

I am interested in taking part. I understand my rights in relation to my participation in this research and agree to participate. I understand that I have a right to refuse to take part in this research at any time prior to publication of the research. I understand and agree for the information provided to be used in a final year doctoral research dissertation, conference presentations, teaching and publication.

I consent to the process of my personal information for the purpose of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Signature .....

Name

Date

I agree to protect the rights and confidentiality of contributors to my research within the guidance set in the Data Protection Act 1998.

Ann Anka

Signature

## ***Appendix 7 - Initial interview questions***

### **Initial Interview questions**

Questions for the interview – please feel free to start from any of the questions

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself, your background, role and current involvement in assessing social work students with service users and carers (with social work educators and social work employers)
- What are your thoughts about the proposed ASYE?
- What do you think should count as service users' feedback in the ASYE?
- What are the opportunities and challenges in implementing the ASYE assessment within the current political and economic climate?
- What are your thoughts, is there a need for the development of a nationally recognised tool against which service users could make their assessment judgements of students

## ***Appendix 8 – Modified interview questions***

### **Second interview questions (Modified- second stage)**

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself, your background, role and current involvement in assessing social work students with service users and carers (with social work educators and social work employers)
- What are your thoughts, what should service users and carers comment on when assessing social work students at post-qualifying level
- From your experience what position do you think are occupied by service users and carers in relation to others (e.g social work lecturers, practice educators, social work employers) involved in social work students' assessments?
- I will like your thoughts on this: I asked social work managers during the earlier part of the interviews about what service users and carers should comment on when assessing students but they were unable to give me any answers. What do you think made it difficult for social work managers to conceptualise what service users' feedback should entail?

## ***Appendix 9 - Ethics Proposal Havering College of Further and Higher Education***



### **ETHICS APPROVAL FORM.**

Student Name: **...Ann Anka.**

Supervisor: **Imogen Taylor** (University of Sussex)

Initial Ideas

The Social Work Task Force (2009), which was set up by the previous government to review social work and social work education, has proposed 'an assessed and supported year in practice', as a final stage for social work qualification. This is proposed to build on the initial three year degree to assist social workers to deepen their knowledge, skills and expertise in their first year in practice in order to meet a common high standard for a 'licence to practice' (Social Work Task Force 2009). The Task Force recommended that service users should jointly assess this 'assessed year in practice' with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and employers.

Linked to 'fitness to practice,' this assessed year in practice has significant implications, not only for those wanting to enter social work profession, but also for service users, employers and social work educators assessing potential candidates in practice in ensuring that unsuitable candidates do not enter the profession. I am interested in how service users, employers and HEIs would conceptualise their new role as co-assessors and whether there is a perceived need for a nationally recognised criteria by which service users and carers could make their assessments judgements of candidates. I am equally interested in what would count as evidence of competence for a pass or fail grade.



## Working Title

Employers and service users as co-assessors: conceptualisation of the process of assessing the final stage of social work qualification, what will service user be looking for?

## Research question/statement (Evaluation Question)

- The proposed research question driving the work will be framed as “How is the process of assessment at the final stage of social work qualification conceptualised by service users, employers and Higher Education Institutions?”

Potential sub questions might include the following:

- What do employers, HEIs and service users conceptualise as what count as evidence for a pass or fail candidate?
- Are there differences and/or similarities between the different stakeholders conceptualisation of what counts as evidence of competence for a pass or fail of a candidate?
- What are the consequences of these differences in how the different actors conceptualise what counts as evidence of competence?
- How do service users and employers conceptualise their new role as co-assessors of social workers in their final year of training
- How will assessment across different areas of social work practice look
- What is the perceived usefulness for a nationally recognised criterion for assessment by which service users could make their assessment judgement at the final stage of social work qualification?”

I have indicated that these might be potential sub questions because it is envisaged a focus group will be utilised as part of the data collection process to enable me to frame or reaffirm the research question – it is therefore

likely that the sub questions might change.

## **Methodology**

A qualitative methodology will be used to explore how different stakeholders conceptualise what would count as evidence of competence at this final stage of social work qualification, whether there is a perceived need for nationally recognised criteria for assessment of students and how this role will be conceptualised by the different stakeholders. I am drawn to ethnographic methodology. According to Robson (2002) ethnographical approach is typically exploratory and is well suited to the study of the unfamiliar, the new and the different.

I am also interested in exploring the potential of using Straussian Grounded Theory due to the lack of literature available. I am drawn to Straussian Grounded Theory because it pays attention to the broader environmental and contextual factors such as macro conditions that influence the phenomenon being studied (Cooney 2010). In addition Straussian Grounded Theory is useful for studying social structures, social processes and social interaction, or for studying situations where people have to adapt (Robson 2002; Cooney 2010). This is particularly useful for this work because I am especially interested in how service users, HEIs and employers would perceive their new role, as well as the processes and structures that will be implemented to enable this to happen.

### **Method of Data Collection**

A three-stage data collection method will be undertaken; this will involve semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Semi-structured interviews are proposed, as opposed to structured or unstructured interviews, to allow flexibility but also to focus on issues which are important in addressing the

research question.

The first stage will consist of focus group interviews participants and will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data collected at this stage will be included in the main study), this stage will be used to enable me to generate and reaffirm the research questions as well as subsequent interview questions needed for this work.

The second stage will consist of a pilot study with up to three participants. Data from the pilot study will not be included in the final study. However it will be used to enable me to test the research instrument and design. This will also assist me in verifying whether the research participants understand the questions and/or whether the questions need modification in order to improve the quality of the data collected.

The final stage will consist of face-to-face semi-structured individual interviews with each of the participants. Following the recommended duration of interviews within the grounded theory tradition it is envisaged that this interview will last for up to 50 mins. Although this is envisaged, participant will be firstly about what how much time they could give for the interviews. The interviews will be audio recorded to enable me to transcribe the data. It is envisaged that different participants will be used during the different stage of the data collection process.

In addition, I will be keeping a research diary and a journal throughout the study to enable me to reflect on the process and the research journey. At this stage I have not yet decided whether to include the data generated in my journal or diary into the final work.

### **Sampling strategy**

The purposeful sampling method will be used for the proposed study. Patton (2002) suggests that the purposeful sampling strategy involves the

deliberate selection of 'information-rich cases' that will give rise to data relevant to the specific purpose and aims of the research. The use of purposeful sampling is also supported by Creswell (1994, p. 148) who posits that "the idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select informants (or documents or visual materials) that will best answer the research question".

Service user participants and social work educators will be recruited from both Havering College and another HEI offering social work education to enable me to compare the two different data. Employers will be recruited by directly approaching them through contact with our partner agencies and Skills for Care.

In relation to sample size, Patton (2002) notes that there is no formal sample size in qualitative inquiry because sampling strategy in qualitative research does not seek to achieve statistical representation as in quantitative research. Rather, the sampling size in qualitative research is determined by the specific purpose of the research. It is envisaged that a sample of up to twenty participants will be drawn upon for the proposed work (up to six – focus group and 14 individual interviews). Maximum variation sampling strategy (Patton 2002) will be used to select a group of people with a wide variety of perspectives. Patton (2002, p. 235) posits that a key advantage of using maximum variation sampling strategy is that "any common patterns that emerge from great variations are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspect".

Utilising these ideas, the sampling will consist of service users who have been involved in the assessments of students, students who have had service users involved in their assessments and employers who will be involving service users as co-assessors of social workers and HEI representatives. The different sample groups will also be used for triangulation purposes to ensure trustworthiness and research credibility. I have included students as part of the sample group at this stage because I

believe it will be good to seek all stakeholders' views. However, I am concerned that seeking to find out how service users, HEIs and employers conceptualise their new role in the assessment process does not sit well with including students as part of the sample group. I will have to consider this further and perhaps include students as part of the focus group but not as part of the individual interview. At present I am not sure whether to include carers because the proposed assessed year in practice appears to have excluded carers from the assessment process. If I do use Straussian Grounded Theory there might be the opportunity to re-enter the field to obtain further information and therefore fulfil the obligations of the use of theoretical sampling method. Any changes will be further discussed with my supervisor that is should the policy change to include carers then I would like to include carers as part of the sample group.

## Ethical Issues:

Ethical guidelines will be observed as set out by the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care (DoH 2005), the British Association of Social Workers (BASW 2003) the General Social Care Council GSCC (2002a) Code of Practice and the Data Protection Act 1998. The guidelines used will also reflect any subsequent changes in policy during the course of the study. Potential participants will be provided with information about the nature of the study to enable them to make an informed decision on whether to participate or not. The information will seek to cover issues of consent, the right to participate and the right to withdraw, issues of payment, how information will be recorded, stored and analysed, dissemination of information and the potential of re-using the data, (for example presentation at Conferences) as well as the potential for publication. There are particular ethical concerns with using focus groups which relate to issues of power, autonomy and confidentiality. In addition I am aware of the disparate power positions occupied by the different participants and myself as a lecturer as well as an 'insider-researcher'. These issues will be discussed with potential participants prior to commencing with the study, and strategies would be put in place to ensure that participants are not disadvantaged. Although it is anticipated that none of the research participations will be at risk by taking part in this evaluation study, issues of risk will be considered and discussed them

## Proposal

The introduction of the degree in Social Work requires service users to be involved in the assessment of social work students (DoH 2002). Recently the Social Work Taskforce (2009) recommended '*an assessed and supported year in practice*' as a final stage of becoming a social worker which, "should be carried out jointly by employers and HEIs, with feedback

from service users taken into account” (The Social Work Task Force 2009 p 25).

The proposed *assessed and supported year in practice* is new; no policy as yet has been developed, neither has it been implemented. Hence the interest in this area in looking at how this new role is conceptualised and what would count as evidence of competence for a pass or fail grade. A recent contact with Skills for Care indicated that Skills for Care and the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) are currently beginning work on developing a framework, for the Social Work Reform Board which is tasked with delivering the recommendations by the Social Work Task Force to be considered for the assessment process of the assessed year in employment. I have since contacted Skills for Care about my interest in this area, with the view of an opportunity to be invited to observe the process of deliberation and am currently waiting to hear from them. If successful, I will make this part of the data collection process, following ethical clearance.

Of particular importance, I recently conducted a literature review on what is known about the involvement of service users and carers in the assessments of students. The review identified that although service users and carers are required by policy to undertake assessments for students, yet unlike practice educators and post-qualifying practice mentors who have clear guidelines and criteria for the assessment of competence (GSCC/Topss 2002), service users had no such criteria or guidance at both the degree and post-qualifying level to inform the assessment of social work students, which raised a number of concerns about procedural fairness in terms of equitability, reliability, accountability and transparency. I am therefore also interested in whether there is a perceived need for the development of a nationally recognised criterion for assessment by which service users could make their assessment judgements of students.

Date Presented to Ethics Committee.....15th Sept 10.....

## ***Appendix 10 - Ethics Approval Havering College***

Responds from Havering College Ethical Board

From: John Morris Tuesday - September 21, 2010 11:17 AM

To: Ann Anka

CC: Kirsty Dunne; Pat Brennan-Barrett

Subject: Research App

Good morning Ann,

The Research & Ethics Committee considered your two applications this morning. Here are the findings:-

Application - Ann Anka - Fully approved

Many thanks

John



*Appendix 11- Ethics Proposal University of Sussex: Application form for project which requires Ethical Review*



University of Sussex

***Application Form for Projects which Require Ethical Review***

***Who should complete this form?***

This application form is to be used by all staff and students whose project requires some form of ethical review.

***If you are not sure whether your project requires ethical review, complete the 5 question checklist on the research governance***

***Application Form for Projects which Require Ethical Review***

***Who should complete this form?***

This application form is to be used by all staff and students whose project requires some form of ethical review.

***If you are not sure whether your project requires ethical review,***

**SECTION A (All Projects):**

**A.1 Identifying Information**

<b>TITLE OF THE PROJECT:</b>	Service users as co-assessors: conceptualisation of the process of assessing the final stage of social work qualification.
<b>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI) / STUDENT RESEARCHER:</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Ann Anka
<b>Department:</b>	Department of Social Work and Social Care
<b>Student ID Number (if applicable)</b>	26818
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:aanka@havering-college.ac.uk">aanka@havering-college.ac.uk</a>
<b>Contact Address:</b>	27 Keswick Gardens, Redbridge, IG4 5NF
<b>Telephone no:</b>	0208 252 0389 (H) 01708 455 011 ex 4016

*Ann Anka. Doctorate in Social Work thesis. Title: "Assessment as the site of power: An interrogation of the involvement of 'others' in the assessments of social work students". Supervisors: Professor Imogen Taylor and Dr Hengliu Lisa Chen. University of Sussex. November 2013.*

<b>Status:</b>	PGR
<b>PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR'S DETAILS (STUDENT PROJECTS):</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Professor Imogen Taylor
<b>Department:</b>	Social Work and Social Care
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:I.J.Taylor@sussex.ac.uk">I.J.Taylor@sussex.ac.uk</a>
<b>Contact Address:</b>	University of Sussex, Sussex House, Brighton, BN1 9RH
<b>Telephone no:</b>	01273 872511
<b>A.2 Project Details</b>	
<b>Expected Start Date of Project:</b>	April 2011
<b>Expected Completion Date of Project:</b>	September 2012
<b>Funder(s):</b> (e.g. self-funded, University of Sussex, ESRC, AHRC, EU)	Self-funding
<b>Sponsor:</b> (The sponsor - as distinct from the funder - is the organisation that is responsible for the research study. Unless stated otherwise it will be assumed that the University of Sussex is the sponsor for the study.)	University of Sussex
<b>Will the project include collaborators from outside the University of Sussex?</b>	No
<p><b>About my Research Project.</b>  <b>Please provide a brief outline of your study in lay terms (plain English), with particular focus on the parts of your study which involve human participants. This should include a description of what you will be asking participants to do as part of your project and your methods for gathering information / data (e.g. interviews, focus groups etc.) Approximately 300 words.</b></p> <p>The Developmental Evaluation pioneered by Patton (2011) a model for evaluating new innovations/programmes will be used to explore the views of social work educators, social work employers, students and service users about the proposed Assessed and Supported Year in Employment as a final stage of social work qualification (The Social Work Taskforce 2009). The study will also explore how the different actors view the process of</p>	

assessment at this final stage of social work qualification in relation to what should count as service users' feedback for a pass or fail.

Purposive sampling procedure is proposed to inform the recruitment of up to 25 people drawn from my current place of work, a Higher Education provider of social work degree programme and other Institutions. Potential ethical conflicts that might arise due to my dual role as a lecturer and a researcher will be discussed with participants. Proposed recruitment strategies will include poster/postcard recruitment advertisements, conference presentations, word of mouth, letters and emails.

The proposed method of data collection includes interviews with focus groups constructed of individuals with knowledge and expertise about the involvement of service users in the assessments of students and individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews envisaged to last about an hour. The interviews will be conducted at my place of work or an off campus location mutually agreed by participants. The interviews with the focus group will be used as a preliminary method to generate data to inform the individual interviews schedule.

A pilot study consisting of two participants is proposed to test the ability and reliability of the research method employed. This includes the ability of the individual interview schedule in answering the research question accurately. Data collected in the pilot study will not be included in the main research.

Informed consent would be ensured by providing participants with both verbal and written information about the study, its purpose, procedures for data collection, data storage and any risks posed to them, to enable them to make an informed decision as to whether to participate or not. Participants will be fully informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time before and during the research. Confidentiality will be addressed by ensuring that personal details are not disclosed. Personal data will be held separately from the main interview data and kept in secured a key locked safe. Digital data will be protected by the use of a secured protected-computer password. A copy of an informed consent form (Appended) will be given to all participants prior to the interviews to remind them of their agreed conditions as well as my responsibilities as a researcher.

### **A.3 CHECKLIST - Is Your Project Low Risk?**

<b><i>If the following statements apply to your proposed research project, please cross inside the box:</i></b>	<b>TRUE</b>
My study does not involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent or in a dependent position (e.g. people under 18, people with learning difficulties, over-researched groups or	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participants will not be asked to take part in the study without their consent or knowledge at the time (e.g. covert observation of people	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

in non-public places), and no deception of any sort will be used.	
All the data gathered in this study will be anonymised and remain strictly confidential It will not be possible to link information back to an individual participant in any way.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The study will not induce psychological stress or anxiety, or produce humiliation or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in the everyday life of the participants.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No drugs, placebos or other substances (such as food substances or vitamins) will be administered as part of this study and no invasive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind will be used.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
My project will not involve working with any substances and / or equipment which may be considered hazardous.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No financial inducements (other than expenses) will be offered to participants.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

***If you have answered 'true' to all the above statements, the application will be processed through expedited review (see guidelines). [GO TO PART B.](#)***

***If you cannot answer 'true' to all the above statements, your application will normally be processed through full review (see guidelines). [GO TO PART C.](#)***

***If you cannot answer 'true' to all the above statements, but think your project is low risk, please make the case under A.4 below and complete PART B. More detailed guidelines are available on the research governance website.***

#### **A.4 Case for Project to be Considered Low Risk**

***ONLY to be used where one or more of the statements in Section A.3 checklist is not marked 'true'.***

***Please make your case below for why your project should be considered low risk and then complete SECTION B of the application form.***

***- UG and PGT students:*** please submit your form through the School review system (for review by Supervisor and SREO). If your Supervisor or SREO do not agree that your project is low risk, it will need to be reviewed by a C-REC under the full review process.

***- Staff and PGR students:*** please send your completed form to your School C-REC for expedited review.

I will be consulting with service user organisations involved in the assessment of social work students, preferably the assessment of Newly Qualified Social

Work (NQS) programme. Although not anticipating to interview people under the age of 18, it is likely that some service user group organisations may have young people aged 18 and under among its members. This may include young people in receipt of social work services who have had the opportunity to participate in the assessments of social work students or in the education of social work students as required by policy (DOH, 2002). Should this happen, those under the age of 18 will be considered because the requirements to involve people who use health and social care services also extends to them. It is important that young people's voices are heard, in respect of their expectations of what social work assessment should look like at this final stage of social work qualification. The rights of children to be involved in decisions that affect them are supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). This is also enshrined in the Children Act 1989, The Children Act 2004 and The (English) National Service Framework for Children and Young People (DOH, 2004).

The selection of participants under the age of 18 will therefore be informed by their ability and competence to consent. This will also be guided by the 'Gillick/Fraser principle', a legal case in which the principle that a child could be able to consent was established (*Gillick v. W. Norfolk & Wisbech AHA* [1985] AC112). In this case only 'Gillick competent' children under the age of 16-years old who have sufficient maturity to consent to participation will be considered for the study. Informed consent in this case will be managed by providing participants with verbal and written information about the purpose of study, method of data collect, their rights to participation and rights to withdraw. This information will be provided in child friendly language; thus in language that will be understood by those aged under the age of 18 (Appended). Participants will also be given the opportunity to ask questions about the research prior to the consenting to participation. Consent will be an on-going process and refusal to participate or continue with the research will be respected. I have considered the potential for seeking parental consent in addition to seeking the consent of those under the age of 18 however; the Gillick principle makes it clear that parental consent is not needed if the child can consent.

### Anonymity & Confidentiality

All participants' personal information will be anonymised in the interview data record and in the final publication. Personal details will be replaced with codes and

pseudonyms. However absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Ethical issues relating to what it means to replace one's name with a pseudonym or code (the emotional impact of losing one's identity in the study) will be discussed with participants prior to study. This will be undertaken both verbally and in written format through the informed consent process. Procedure for ensuring anonymity and confidentiality in the proposed study

are further discussed, in more details under Section C5.

## SECTION B (Application For Low Risk Projects)

**Please select appropriate box:**

☐ SCHOOL LEVEL REVIEW (UG & PGT STUDENTS)

or

☒ C-REC EXPEDITED REVIEW (STAFF & PGR STUDENTS)

**Staff or PGR Students - Please select the C-REC you are applying to:**

☐ Arts C-REC

☒ Social Sciences C-REC

☐ Informatics / Engineering & Design /

☐ Maths & Phys. Sciences C-REC  
Life Sciences and Psychology C-REC

**PLEASE NOTE:**

As stated previously, if you wish to apply to the **Brighton & Sussex Medical School (BSMS) ethics committee** you need to complete a **different form – available on the BSMS website.**

### B.1 Confidentiality and Anonymity

<b>Please answer YES, NO or NOT APPLICABLE (NA) to each of the following</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NA</b>
Questionnaires will be completed anonymously and returned indirectly			
Questionnaires and/or interview transcripts will only be identifiable by a unique identifier (e.g. code/pseudonym)			

Lists of identity numbers or pseudonyms linked to names and/or addresses will be stored securely and separately from the research data			
All place names and institutions which could lead to the identification of individuals or organisations will be changed			
All personal information gathered will be treated in strict confidence and will not be disclosed to any third parties.			
I confirm that my research records will be held in accordance with the data protection guidelines (see guidelines on research governance website).			
I confirm that I will not use the research data for any other purpose			
<b>If you answered NO to any of the above (or think more information could be useful to the reviewer) please explain here:</b>			

## B.2 Informed Consent and Recruitment of Participants

<b><i>Please answer YES, NO or NOT APPLICABLE (NA) to each of the following</i></b>	YES	NO	NA
All respondents will be given an Information Sheet and be given adequate time to read it before being asked to agree to participate			
All participants taking part in an interview, focus group, observation (or other activity which is not questionnaire based) will be asked to sign a consent form			
All participants completing a questionnaire will be informed on the Information Sheet that returning the completed questionnaire implies consent to participate			
All participants asked to provide personal data will have the following statement on the consent form or on the bottom of their questionnaire <i>'I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this</i>			

<i>research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998'</i>			
All respondents will be told that they can withdraw at any time, ask for their interview tape to be destroyed and/or their data removed from the project until it is no longer practical to do so			
<b>If you answered NO to any of the above (or think more information could be useful to the reviewer) please explain.</b>			
<b>B.3 Context</b>			
	<b>Y E S</b>	<b>N O</b>	
<b>Does the research involve any fieldwork – overseas or in the UK?</b> <i>See the UCEA/USHA Safety in Fieldwork in the UK and Overseas guidance for further advice about safety measures in fieldwork.</i> <b>If yes, where will the fieldwork take place?</b> <b>OVERSEAS FIELDWORK</b> <i>If you are intending to carry out research outside of the UK, you must complete the Overseas Travel Safety and Security Risk Assessment form available from Health &amp; Safety website, and attach to this form.</i>			
<b>Will any researchers be in a lone working situation? (The Health &amp; Safety Lone Working Policy provides further guidance.)</b> <b><i>If yes, briefly describe the location, time of day and duration of lone working. What precautionary measures will be taken to ensure safety of the researcher(s)?</i></b>			

<b>B.4 Any further concerns</b>	
<b>Do you have any concerns about your research project which have not been covered above?</b>	<b>YES NO</b>
<b><i>If yes, please explain</i></b>	

<b>B.5 Appendices and Supporting Documents</b>
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**NOTE:** SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE CUT AND PASTED INTO THE SPACE PROVIDED BELOW. THEY SHOULD **NOT** BE APPENDED AS SEPARATE DOCUMENTS

**Please tick which supporting documents are included in your application:**

All applications should normally include an **Information Sheet** (If you have different participant groups and different activities you will normally need more than one Information Sheet). If you are not providing an Information Sheet, please ensure you have outlined your reasons in Section B.2.

☐ All applications should normally include a **Consent Form**, unless it is a self-completion

questionnaire based study, or the reason for not requiring a Consent Form is outlined in Section B.2.

☐ **Recruitment materials** (e.g. poster, letter, recruitment email)

☐ **Letter/ email seeking permission from host/gatekeeper organisations** (e.g. school, company. If this is relevant to your study copies **must** be submitted with this application).

☐ **Questionnaire/ topic guide/ interview questions**

☐ **Fieldwork risk assessment (if applicable)**

☐ **Any other approvals or permissions that are relevant**  
(This list is not exhaustive but may help you to identify which supporting documents you may need to submit.)

**INSERT (CUT AND PASTE) YOUR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS HERE:**

#### **B.6 Declaration:**

- The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge

and belief, and I take full responsibility for it.

- I have read and understand the University's Research Governance Code of Practice.
- I have read the guidelines accompanying this application form and understand that failure to follow these and my approved protocol constitutes academic misconduct and can lead to severe penalties.
- I understand that I am responsible for monitoring the research at all times and recording any unexpected events
- If any serious adverse events arise in relation to the research, I understand that I am responsible for immediately stopping the research and alerting the C-REC Chair with 24 hours of the occurrence.
- I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date with and to comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.
- I understand that research records / data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future.
- I understand that I may not commence this research until I have been notified that the project has ethical approval
- **FOR STUDENT RESEARCHERS:** I understand my responsibilities to work within a set of safety, ethical and other guidelines as agreed in advance with my supervisor. I also understand that I must comply with the University's regulations and any other applicable code of ethics at all times.

**Signature of Principal Investigator / Student Researcher**

**Print Name:**

**Date:**

### **B.7 Approvals – School Level Review: Low Risk Projects**

#### **UG & PGT STUDENTS**

<b>Course Unit title or Department name</b>	
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***Supervisor Authorisation – UG & PGT Students***

**I have scrutinised this application and I understand my responsibilities as supervisor. I will ensure, to the best of my abilities, that the student researcher abides by the University's regulations and any other applicable code of ethics at all times.**

<b>Supervisor's name</b>	
<b>Supervisor's email address</b>	
<b>Supervisor's Signature</b>	
<b>Date of supervisor authorisation</b>	

***Second Reviewer – School Research Ethics Officer (SREO) Authorisation\****

**I have scrutinised this application and confirm that in my judgement the project is low risk and that the ethical issues have been adequately addressed.**

<b>SREO name</b>	
<b>SREO email address</b>	
<b>SREO Signature</b>	
<b>Date of SREO authorisation</b>	

**\*Note: In some Schools, the SREO may only mediate a percentage of projects rather than signing off each individual project.**

**B.8 Supervisor Authorisation - C-REC Review: Low Risk Projects  
PGR STUDENTS**

***Supervisor Authorisation - PGR Students***

**I have scrutinised this application and I understand my responsibilities as supervisor. I will ensure, to the best of my abilities, that the student researcher abides by the University's regulations and any other applicable code of ethics at all times.**

<b>Supervisor's name</b>	
<b>Supervisor's email address</b>	
<b>Supervisor's Signature</b>	

<b>Date of supervisor authorisation</b>	

**WHERE DO I SEND MY FORM?**  
**LOW RISK Projects**  
**UG and PGT Students:**

*Submit through School Ethical Review process (review by Supervisor and School Research Ethics Officer).*

**Staff and PGR Students:**

*Submit to your School C-REC for expedited review (email addresses below).*

C-REC	Email
Arts	c-recarts@sussex.ac.uk
Social Sciences	c-recss@sussex.ac.uk
Psychology and Life Sciences	c-recpsysci@sussex.ac.uk
Informatics, Engineering & Design, and Mathematics & Physical Sciences	c-reciem@sussex.ac.uk

**SECTION C (Application For Higher Risk Projects)**

<b><i>Please select appropriate box:</i></b> <b>SCHOOL LEVEL REVIEW (UG &amp; PGT STUDENTS)</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	
or <b>C-REC EXPEDITED REVIEW (STAFF &amp; PGR STUDENTS)</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Staff or PGR Students - Please select the C-REC you are applying</b>	<b>Arts C-REC</b> <input type="checkbox"/>

*Ann Anka. Doctorate in Social Work thesis. Title: "Assessment as the site of power: An interrogation of the involvement of 'others' in the assessments of social work students". Supervisors: Professor Imogen Taylor and Dr Hengliu Lisa Chen. University of Sussex. November 2013.*

<b>to:</b>	<p><b>Social Sciences C-REC</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>Informatics/Engineering &amp; Design /</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>Maths &amp; Phys. Sciences C-REC</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>Life Sciences and Psychology C-REC</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>PLEASE NOTE:</b> As stated previously, if you wish to apply to the <b>Brighton &amp; Sussex Medical School (BSMS) ethics committee</b> you need to complete a <b>different form – available on the BSMS website.</b></p>
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<b>C.1 Risk Checklist - Participants</b>		
	YES	NO
<p><b>Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable, or unable to give informed consent, or in a dependent position (e.g. children (under 18), people with learning difficulties, over-researched groups or people in care facilities, including prisons)? Please note:</b> Special considerations relate to research projects involving children and vulnerable people. Further guidance is available on the Research Governance website. <i>If yes, you will need to address this appropriately in Section C5 (below).</i></p>	X	
<p><b>If Criminal Records Bureau clearance is necessary for this project, have you undergone this?</b> Further guidance is available on the Research Governance website.</p>	X	
<p><b>Will participants be asked to take part in the study without their consent or knowledge at the time (this might, for example, be covert observation of people) or will deception of any sort be involved?</b> Please refer to the</p>		X

British Psychological Society Guidelines for further information. <i>If yes, you will need to address this appropriately in Section C5 (below).</i>		
<b>Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety, or produce humiliation, or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?</b> <i>If yes, you will need to address this appropriately in Section C5 (below)</i>		X
<b>Are alcoholic drinks, drugs, placebos or other substances (such as food substances or vitamins) to be administered to the study participants?</b> <i>If yes, you will need to address this appropriately in Section C5 (below)</i>		X
<b>Can you think of anything else that might be potentially harmful to participants in this research?</b> <i>If yes, you will need to address this appropriately in Section C5 (below)</i>		X
<b>C.2 Risk Checklist – Researcher(s) Safety and Wellbeing</b>		
	YES	NO
<b>Does the project involve working with any substances and / or equipment which may be considered hazardous?</b> <i>(Please refer to the University's Control of Hazardous Substances Policy.)</i> <b><i>If yes, complete the appropriate Health &amp; Safety Assessment Form including signature of approval by appropriate person in your School and attach to the end of this application (Section C.7).</i></b>		X
<b>Could the nature or subject of the research potentially have an emotionally disturbing impact on the researcher(s)?</b> <b><i>If yes, briefly describe what measures will be taken to help the researcher(s) to manage this.</i></b>		X
<b>Could the nature or subject of the research potentially expose the researcher(s) to threats of physical violence and / or verbal abuse?</b> <b><i>If yes, briefly describe what measures will be taken to mitigate this.</i></b>		X
<b>Does the research involve any fieldwork – overseas or</b>	X	

<p><b>in the UK?</b>  <i>See the UCEA/USHA Safety in Fieldwork in the UK and Overseas guidance for further advice about safety measures in fieldwork.</i></p> <p><b>If yes, where will the fieldwork take place?</b></p> <p>The interviews will take place within the UK, at my current place of work and an off campus location mutually agreed by participants also within the UK.</p> <p><b>OVERSEAS FIELDWORK</b>  <b><i>If you are intending to carry out research outside of the UK, you must complete the Overseas Travel Safety and Security Risk Assessment form available from Health &amp; Safety website, and attach to this form.</i></b></p>		
<p><b>Will any researchers be in a lone working situation?</b>          (The Health &amp; Safety Lone Working Policy provides further guidance.)</p> <p><b><i>If yes, briefly describe the location, time of day and duration of lone working. What precautionary measures will be taken to ensure safety of the researcher(s)?</i></b></p> <p>The interviews will be conducted at my current place of work or an off campus location mutually agreed by participants. The interviews will be conducted during the day and are envisaged to last approximately for 50 minutes. The safety both of the research participants and self will be monitored in relation to the environmental threats or change in local conditions as highlighted by Iphofen (2009). Participants and gatekeepers (for example service user coordinators) will be informed that I have been policed checked. They will be provided with a copy of my Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check as a measure to reassure them that I do not pose any threat to them. In relation to minimising risk to self, proposed strategies to ensure my personal safety will include notifying a trusted colleague of where I will be conducting off campus interviews; carrying a mobile phone with me at all times, as well as ensuring that interviews are conducted in public rooms in order to avoid the risk of being placed in a compromising situation or position. The interviews will be conducted during the day</p>	X	
<p><b>Can you think of anything else that might be potentially harmful to the researcher(s) in this research?</b>  <b><i>If yes, please explain here.</i></b></p>		X

### C.3 Data Collection and Analysis (Please provide full details)

**PARTICIPANTS** (How many people do you envisage will participate, who they are, and how will they be selected?)

The purposeful sampling method will be used for the proposed study. Patton (2002) suggests that the purposeful sampling strategy involves the deliberate selection of 'information-rich cases' that will give rise to data relevant to the specific purpose and aims of the research. In addition to using the purposive sampling procedure, maximum variation sampling strategy (Patton, 2002) will be used to select a group of people with a wide variety of perspectives. It is envisaged that a sample of up to twenty-five participants will be drawn upon for the proposed work. I am interested in selecting up to twenty people for the study however up to twenty-five are proposed as one of the strategies is to allow for those who later on change their mind to do so without affecting the proposed method of data collection.

The sample will consist of service users who have been involved in the assessments of students, students who have had service users involved in their assessments and social work employers who will be involving service users as co-assessors of would-be social workers and HEI representatives (social work educators). The different sample groups will also be used for triangulation purposes to ensure trustworthiness and research credibility.

The breakdown for the individual semi-structured interviews will consist of 4 social work educators, 4 social work employers, (preferably social work managers, if not then practice educators) and 4 service users. The remaining 8 will form one focus group made up of the different actors. This will be made up of two students, two service users, two social work employers and two social work educators.

Although this will be my ideal sample size, I am concern about the logistics of getting all the different actors together as one focus group. Should this became a problem, I would like to increase the focus group sample size by setting up four different focus group made up of 5 social work educators, 5 social work students, 5 social work employers and 5 service users. This means the overall sample size will increase from 20 to 32. This will also help to address ethical concerns around the different power positions held by the different groups, in particular to bringing them together as one big group.

Some of the participants will be recruited from my current place of work and from employers and service user group organisations associated with the college. I am aware that my role as researcher, a lecturer and a tutor may create some potential conflict and ethical tensions. In this case, participants will be reassured that their participation will not affect their working



relationship with the institution, neither with me in my role as a lecturer or a tutor. In addition to recruiting from my place of work, I would also like to recruit from outside my place of work, by approaching other service user group organisations, social work educators, students and social workers not associated with the my institution.

Potential participants will not be forced to take part in the study. Ethical considerations will be observed by providing potential recruits with information about the study to enable them to make autonomous informed decisions on whether or not to participant. Potential participants will also be provided with the opportunity to ask questions about the study. Participation will be on voluntary basis.

### **RECRUITMENT (How will participants be approached and recruited?)**

Proposed recruitment strategies includes making myself known to agencies and potential gatekeepers; by word of mouth, by sending letters and emails to organisations. Other strategies will include recruitment for volunteers through conference presentations and poster and postcard recruitment advertisements (Sample Appended).

Recruitment letters to potential participants will include a brief statement about the study, who will participate, the procedure for data collection, contact details to enable those interested to contact me. The recruitment letters will also be accompanied by a postcard

**METHOD** (What research method(s) do you plan to use; e.g. interview, questionnaire/self-completion questionnaire, field observation, audio/audio-visual recording?)

### **Research Method**

The "Developmental Evaluation" a method of evaluative research pioneered by Patton (2011) as effective for evaluating new emergent innovations or programmes implemented in response to change, in times of crisis, or in times of high levels of uncertainties is proposed for this work. As well as the current political and economic crisis, social work as a profession and social work education like most other public sector services are going through significant reforms which has initiated high levels of uncertainties about how the profession and training and education of social workers will look after the various reforms.

Patton (2011) posits that the Developmental Evaluation is compatible with both qualitative and quantitative research traditions and encourages researchers using Developmental Evaluation to consider the best research tradition appropriate for their work. In line with this thinking, the philosophies and method of research underpinning the qualitative research tradition is proposed to inform the work. The qualitative research method is proposed

because I am interested in people's views and their opinions about how the assessment process at the proposed final stage of social work qualification should look rather than in quantification and statistical analysis of the assessment process as associated with the quantitative research tradition.

### **Method of Data Collection**

This will involve interviews with focus groups made up of students, service users, social work educators and social work employers. This will be followed by in depth individual semi -structured interviews.

A three-stage data collection method is proposed. This will involve semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Semi-structured interviews are proposed, as opposed to structured or unstructured interviews, to allow flexibility, but also to focus on issues, which are important in addressing the research question.

The first stage will consist of interview data collected through focus group (this will consist of up to seven participants). This will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Focus group methodology is proposed to allow the observation of social dynamic and interactions between the participants. Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) suggest focus groups are particularly useful for exploratory research where little is known about the topic under investigation. As well as being in line with the principles underpinning Developmental Evaluation, the topic under investigation, the ASYE, is new. In addition a focus group is proposed because it supports an emphatic and open interaction with participants, as well as the stimulation of ideas among group members. This method will be used as a preliminary data collect method to inform the individual interviews. Data collected at this stage will be included in the main study for triangulation purposes.

Following the focus group interviews, a pilot study is proposed to test the credibility of the individual interview schedule and the research instrument. The next stage will consist of face-to-face semi-structured individual interviews. It is envisaged that this interview will last for up to an hour. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Different participants will be used during the different stages of the data collection process.

I will be keeping a research diary and a journal throughout the study to enable me to reflect on the process of the research journey. The data generated from the dairy will be used to inform the reflexivity chapter of the proposed study.

### **Data Analysis**

Two data analysis procedures are proposed at this stage, however only one will be used. This will consist of a Plan A, the use of NVivo computer data

analysis package to analyse the research data. However, if this is not possible then Plan B; this will consist of using traditional data analysis techniques, that is analysing the data manually using constant comparative data analysis techniques. These are proposed because although I would prefer using the NVivo computer package, I have had one training session and do not feel very competent in using it without further training at this stage, hence the Plan B proposal with which I am much confident.

### **Procedure for Plan A:**

Data analysis will start at the point of the focus group interviews; audio-recorded interview data will be transcribed verbatim. Data will be analysed using NVivo data analysis system. This data analysis system will be employed to enable the analysis of representation of the data by sorting, organising and searching for and comparing emerging themes, relationships, differences and similarities. The data generated at this stage will be used to inform the second stage data collection process which will consist of in depth individual semi-structured interviews. Interview data generated through the individual interviews will also be analysed using NVivo. This will also be subjected to sorting and identification of themes, relationships, differences and similarities.

### **Plan B - Data analysis using traditional techniques**

The use of constant comparative analysis, a method of analysing qualitative data where the information gathered is coded into emergent themes or codes is proposed. Data analysis will start with the interviews generated from the focus group, data generated from the focus group will be analysed at three different levels: intragroup level, intergroup level and at the individual level. The focus of the intragroup analysis will involve analysing the group discussions on particular subject, as well as analysing the subject itself. In this area I would like to look at group level interaction, such as levels of agreement, consensus and/or conflicts (Kidd and Parshall 2000).

The intergroup level analysis will focus on comparison of the group in particular to shared experiences on differences and the reasons for this. This is proposed because I am interested in using Bourdieu's (1990) notion of cultural capital to assess whether the different cultural capital held by the different groups will shape the group discussions of the topics under discussion. This is also proposed to assess whether there will be consensus among particular groups and how these differences will challenge implementation of the assessment process at the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.

The individual level will focus on looking at individual contributions thus by marking statements, identifying whether specific themes could be linked to

certain roles, identities and/or personal attributes. Whether those managing service user organisations will share the same views or perspectives on topics, for example whether social work managers and or HEI managers will share similar views or whether students will ally themselves with service users. Data generated at this stage will be used to inform the second stage data collection process. This will consist of individual in depth semi-structured interviews. This will also be used for triangulation purposes.

### **Analysis of the individual interviews data**

The interview data will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim data analysis will be on-going with the data collection process. Each data set will be analysed for identification of themes. In addition, due to the emergent nature of Developmental Evaluation, any emergent topic unrelated to the interview questions will also be noted by using different coding system to identify this. Emerging themes or any unrelated identified themes will be compared with the next interview data set to identify similarities and differences among the different sampling groups employed. This process will be undertaken with all the interviews set in order to obtain a complete and comprehensive picture on whether the different culture capital held by the different groups will shape their perspectives on what should count as service users' feedback at the proposed Assessed and Supported Year in Employment, as well as how the assessment process should look. This strategy is proposed to allow the examination or exploration of some of the challenges and opportunities faced by the different actors in implementing the assessment framework for this proposed final stage of social work qualification.

### **LOCATION (Where will the project be carried out e.g. public place, in researcher's office, in private office at organisation?)**

Various locations are proposed for the gathering of the research data, the main setting for the study will be at my current placement of work. However, opportunities will also be offered to conduct the interviews at an off campus location mutually agreed by the research participants. Interviews conducted on campus location will take place in a library room. My dual role as a lecturer and a researcher at the Institution will be explained to participants. Participants will be assured both verbally and in writing through the informed consent process that their refusal or agreements to participant will not affect their relationship or association with the college nor with me. The proposal for conducting the interview at an off campus location is adopted following a discussion with my supervisor to allow choice and autonomy for those who might not want, for one reason or the other, to attend the interviews at my place of work. It also offered to enables people who use services and busy practitioners, the opportunity to participate in the study, in a location that is convenient to them, rather than to me.

## C.4 Ethical Considerations (Please provide full details)

### INFORMED CONSENT

*Please describe the process you will use to ensure your participants are freely giving fully informed consent to participate. This will usually include the provision of an Information Sheet and will normally require a Consent Form unless it is a purely self-completion questionnaire based study or there is justification for not doing so (this must be clearly stated).*

*If you are **not** using an Information Sheet or seeking written consent, please provide an explanation for this.*

Proposed strategies for informed consent will include providing all potential participants with both verbal and written information about what their participation will entail. Information detailing the study's purpose, including procedure for method of data collection, data treatment, dissemination and data storage, as well as any risks to which participants might be exposed will be provided in an informed consent letter to all participants to enable them to make an informed decision on whether or not to participate in the proposed study. Potential participants will be fully informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time before or once participation has begun, also via the proposed informed consent letter.

This letter will also have information about how issues of confidentiality will be managed and maintained. The proposed informed consent letter will be accompanied by an Information Sheet which will provide further detailed information about the procedures proposed for the study, as well as a statement about my responsibilities as a researcher. A copy of the Informed consent letter and the Information Sheet (Appended) will be given to all participants prior to the interviews, not only to remind them of their agreed conditions and my responsibilities as a researcher, but also as proof that information has been given and consent has been taken (Iphofen 2009).

### RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL

*Participants should be able to withdraw from the research at any time. Participants should also be able to withdraw their data if it is linked to them and should be told when this will no longer be possible (e.g. once it has been included in the final report). Please describe the exact arrangements for withdrawal from participation and withdrawal of data depending on your study design.*

The right to withdraw will be discussed with potential participants both verbally and in written format prior to and throughout the study. Procedures for informed consent will ensure that participants are aware of their rights to

withdraw from the study. This will be stated prior to the interview process; participants will also be informed about my dual role as a researcher, lecturer and tutor on the social work degree programme and will be reassured that their rights to withdraw will be respected and will not affect either the working relationship with the Institution or with myself.

Participants will also be informed that the interview transcripts and/or audio-recorded interview data will be returned to them when they withdraw. For those taking part in the focus groups, it will be explained at the beginning that although they can withdraw at any time, it will not be possible to return the audio recorded tape because it will contain other participants' contributions. Participants will also be informed of their rights to withdraw after the interview process.

### **OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES**

*If you answered YES to anything in C1 you must specifically address this here. Please also consider whether there are other ethical issues you should be covering here. Please also make reference to the professional code of conduct you intend to follow in your research.*

### **C.5 Data Protection, Confidentiality, and Records Management**

	YES	NO
<p><b>Will you ensure that the processing of personal information related to the study will be in full compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA)? (Read the guidelines for further information about processing of personal information)</b></p> <p><i>If you are processing any personal information outside of the European Economic Area (EEA) you <b>must</b> explain how compliance with the DPA will be ensured.</i></p> <p>Personal information or personal data will be processed and protected within the Data Protection Act 1998. Personal details will be kept separately from the main interview data and stored in a key locked safe. Digital information will be protected by a secured computer password. No data will be sought from outside the EEA. Participants' personal data will not be disclosed to a third party unless required by law. Member checking, a procedure whereby interview transcripts are returned to participants for verification and clarification will be used to enable participants to check that descriptions of events do not make it possible for others to identify them.</p>	X	

<p>Due to the nature of the research, it is recognised that some agencies or organisations may want to be acknowledged for their contributions to the research. This will be shared with participants as it may be difficult for some members of that organisation not to be identified.</p> <p>It is further acknowledged that the use of focus groups will make it difficult to maintain absolute confidentiality - in this case every effort will be made to ensure that personal details are kept in confidences. Issues of confidentiality will be discussed with the group and a confidentiality agreement will be signed by the each person before the interview process.</p>		
<p><b>Will you take steps to ensure the confidentiality of personal information?</b> <i>Please provide details of anonymisation procedures and of physical and technical security measures here:</i></p> <p>Confidentiality will be observed by replacing participants' names and names of organisations with codes or pseudonyms. Personal data will be stored separately from the interview data. Data will be stored in a key locked safe; digital or electronic data will be secure safely by the use of a computer secured password only accessible to me.</p> <p>Confidentiality will be observed within the Data Protection Act 1998. This will be addressed in relation to individual participants as well as the setting or sites within which the proposed study will be conducted. With regards to individual participants, pseudonyms and codes will be used to ensure that participants' identities are protected. Member checking, the returning of interview transcript to participants for the clarification of the information provided during the interview will be used as a strategy to enable participants to check the interview transcripts to ensure that the information provided cannot be traced back to them. This will also be used to enable participants to check the accuracy of the interview recordings and discussion of findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Cutliffe and Ramcharan 2002).</p> <p>Whilst these steps are proposed, member checking presents other ethical challenges. Although it offers participants the full power to validate what has being said during the interview, participants can later on disagree with the researcher or change their minds about what has being previously said and therefore jeopardise the data collected or the focus of data interpretation. There is also the danger</p>	X	

that participants might feel embarrassed about what has been said when faced with the interview transcription.

Informed process consent, a procedure for ensuring that consent is an on- going process rather (Ramcharan and Cutcliffe 2001) than a one off event, is therefore proposed to deal with any unpredicted ethical concerns that may emerge after informed consent has been agreed. This is also proposed due to the emergent and unpredictable nature of Developmental Evaluation to deal with any unanticipated ethical problems that arise during the course of the study. This strategy is also proposed to enable participants and the researcher to revisit some of the ethical procedures envisaged at the start of the research, which might need further consideration during the course of the study. In this case, any issues arising will be discussed with my supervisor and negotiated with the research participants.

In a similar way, description of sites or the research setting, will ensure that organisations and agencies' identities are protected by using pseudonyms, unless agencies or organisations otherwise wish to be identified. Although every effort will be made to ensure that participants identities are not disclosed, participants will be made aware that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and that confidentiality may be broken when required by law or in matters of child protection, disclosed abused by other professionals or in cases where participants express suicidal ideas or thoughts. Should this happen, any decision to disclose confidential information will be firstly discussed with the individual participant and my supervisors before reporting it to the relevant authorities.

Further due to the emergent and exploratory nature of the proposed method that is the use of Developmental Evaluation, some service user organisations or employers may want to be identified and acknowledged by contributing to the research. The potential for identifying and acknowledging Service User Group Organisations wishing to be acknowledged for their contributions will be respected and shared with individual participants. In these circumstances, observing absolute confidentiality for individuals within such organisations may be difficult to achieve. These issues and or any concerns as they emerge will be shared with the research participants and my supervisor prior to and once the research is in process.



There are also particular concerns in ensuring confidentiality when using focus groups. Although information about the study, including a description of procedures provided to participants will enable them to make autonomous choice about participation, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed when using focus groups, as the identities of those involved cannot be absolutely protected. In this case, I will seek consensus among the group and ask that each person's identity and contributions to the discussions are respected within the confidentiality agreement.		
<b>Will all personal information related to this study be retained and shared in a form that is fully anonymised?</b> <i><b>NOTE:</b> If you tick 'no' you must ensure that these arrangements are detailed in the Information Sheet and that participant consent will be in place. If relevant, please outline arrangements here:</i>	X	
<b>Will the Principal Investigator take full responsibility during the study, for ensuring appropriate storage and security of information (including research data, consent forms and administrative records) and, where appropriate, will the necessary arrangements be made in order to process copyright material lawfully?</b>	X	
<b>Who will have access to personal information relating to this study?</b> <i>Please outline how any necessary wider disclosures of personal information (for instance to colleagues beyond the study team, translators, transcribers, auditors, or, in the case of disclosure of serious crimes, to the authorities) have been properly explained to study participants.)</i>  Personal information or personal data will be process and protected within the Data Protection Act 1998. Personal details will be kept separately from the main interview data and stored in a key locked safe. Digital information will be protected by a secured computer password. No data will be sought from outside the EEA. Participants' personal data will not be disclosed to a third party unless required by law. Member checking, a procedure whereby interview transcripts are returned to participants for verification and clarification will be used to enable participants to check that descriptions of events do not make it possible for others to identify them. Due to the nature of the research, it is recognised that some agencies or organisations may want to be acknowledged for their contributions to the research. This will be shared with participants, as it may be difficult for some members of that organisation not to be identified.		

It is further acknowledged that the use of focus groups will make it difficult to maintain absolute confidentiality - in this case, every effort will be made to ensure that personal details are kept in confidence. Issues of confidentiality will be discussed with the group and a confidentiality agreement will be signed by the each person before the interview process. I will have sole access to participant's personal information unless otherwise required by law. Potential participants will be informed before and during the study, both verbally and in written format that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed through the Informed Consent and Informed process consent procedures in the following cases circumstances:

Where participants disclosed they have abused a child or would like to abuse a child,  
they have being abused by a professional person or they want commit suicide or have committed serious crime.

Participants will be informed that the decision to report any of these incidents will be firstly discussed with them, my supervisor and the right authorities. In these cases, personal information will need to be shared within law with the right authorities. Please see Information Sheet (Appended).

#### **Data management responsibilities after the study.**

*State how long study information including research data, consent forms and administrative records will be retained, in what format(s) and where the information will be kept.*

Data management procedures will be followed within the UK Data Archive (UKDA) systems and procedures for protecting data. This will cover the procedure for the ethics of copyright; preservation formats; storage; security, back-up and reusing and sharing of data. Personal or sensitive data defined by the Data Protection Act 1998 will be stored separately from the rest of the interview data, consent form and the administrative records. Information will be kept in both digital and paper format. All paper information containing people's names and personal details will be kept in confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Information will be kept securely in a key locked safe as stated previously. The interview data will be kept in digital format and stored in a key locked safe. Electronic or digital data will be stored and protected by the use of a secured protected-computer password. Back up will be made of all the interview data transcripts. This will be made electronically and will be sorted separately from the recorded audiotapes and kept in a key locked safe.

Information about copyright issues will be provided both verbally and in written format via the informed consent agreement form given to all the research participants at the start of the study. Participants will be informed

that the final publication will be the property of University of Sussex. The audio recorded tapes will be destroyed after publication of the thesis and successful completion of the doctoral programme.

### Reusing data

The research data will be reused for teaching, conference presentations, publication, archiving and for data sharing purposes within the Research Ethics Framework (ESRC, 2009) guidelines. The guidelines within the framework suggests that (ESRC, 2009 p 19) "Researchers who collect the data initially should be aware that ESRC expects that others will also use it, so consent should be obtained on this basis and the original researcher must take into account of the long-term use and preservation of data".

The potential for reusing the data in relation to the above will be discussed with the research participants both verbally and in written format. Consent for reuse will be sought prior to the signing of the informed consent form and during the interview process. Participants will be assured confidentiality and anonymity by way of removing and replacing personal or sensitive information with pseudonyms and other anonymisation procedures. Information about the potential for reuse will be included in the informed consent letter (See Appended).

## C.6 Other Ethical Clearances and Permissions

	YES	NO
<p><b>Are any other ethical clearances or permissions required?</b></p> <p><i>If yes, please give further details including the name and address of the organisation. If other ethical approval has already been received please attach evidence of approval, otherwise you will need to supply it when ready.</i></p> <p>Application for ethical clearance within the Research Governance Framework for Social Care (2005) has being made at my current place of work,</p> <p>Havering College of Further and Higher Education The Ethics Committee Ardleigh Green Road Hornchurch Essex RM11 2LL</p> <p>Approval for the study was granted in September 2010 (See</p>	X	

Attached). However, I have since changed the research method following a discussion with my supervisor from the use of Strassurain Grounded Theory to Developmental Evaluation to reflect current developments in social work and social work education.

Apart from the proposed changes to use Developmental Evaluation, the proposed method of data collection and sampling procedures remains unchanged. I will be making another application to Havering College reflecting the changes and will inform my supervisor of the outcome of the re application.

ETHICS APPROVAL FORM - Havering College.

Student Name:...Ann Anka.....

Supervisor: Imogen Taylor (University of Sussex)

The Social Work Task Force (2009), which was set up by the previous government to review social work and social work education, has proposed 'an assessed and supported year in practice', as a final stage for social work qualification. This is proposed to build on the initial three year degree to assist social workers to deepen their knowledge, skills and expertise in their first year in practice in order to meet a common high standard for a 'licence to practice' (Social Work Task Force 2009). The Task Force recommended that service users should jointly assess this 'assessed year in practice' with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and employers. Linked to 'fitness to practice,' this assessed year in practice has significant implications, not only for those wanting to enter social work profession, but also for service users, employers and social work educators assessing potential candidates in practice in ensuring that unsuitable candidates do not enter the profession. I am interested in how service users, employers and HEIs would conceptualise their new role as co-assessors and whether there is a perceived need for a nationally recognised criteria by which service users and carers could make their assessments judgements of candidates. I am equally interested in what would count as evidence of competence for a pass or fail grade.

### **Initial Ideas**

#### **Working Title**

Employers and service users as co-assessors: conceptualisation of the process of assessing the final stage of social work qualification, what will service user be looking for?

<p>Research question/statement (Evaluation Question)</p> <p>The proposed research question driving the work will be framed as "How is the process of assessment at the final stage of social work qualification conceptualised by service users, employers and Higher Education Institutions?"</p> <p>Potential sub questions might include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do employers, HEIs and service users conceptualise as what count as evidence for a pass or fail candidate?</li> <li>• Are there differences and/or similarities between the different stakeholders' conceptualisation of what counts as evidence of competence for a pass or fail of a candidate?</li> <li>• What are the consequences of these differences in how the different actors conceptualise what counts as evidence of competence?</li> <li>• How do service users and employers conceptualise their new role as co-assessors of social workers in their final year of training</li> <li>• How will assessment across different areas of social work practice look</li> <li>• What is the perceived usefulness for a nationally recognised criterion for assessment by which service users could make their assessment judgement at the final stage of social work qualification?</li> </ul> <p>I have indicated that these might be potential sub questions because it is envisaged a focus group will be utilised as part of the data collection process to enable me to frame or reaffirm the research question – it is therefore likely that the sub questions might change.</p> <p>Methodology</p> <p>A qualitative methodology will be used to explore how different stakeholders conceptualise what would count as evidence of competence at this final stage of social work qualification, whether there is a perceived need for nationally recognised criteria for assessment of students and how this role will be conceptualised by the different stakeholders. I am drawn to ethnographic methodology. According to Robson (2002) ethnographical approach is typically exploratory and is well suited to the study of the unfamiliar, the new and the different. I am also interested in exploring the potential of</p>		
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using Straussian Grounded Theory due to the lack of literature available. I am drawn to Straussian Grounded Theory because it pays attention to the broader environmental and contextual factors such as macro conditions that influence the phenomenon being studied (Cooney 2010). In addition Straussian Grounded Theory is useful for studying social structures, social processes and social interaction, or for studying situations where people have to adapt (Robson 2002; Cooney 2010). This is particularly useful for this work because I am especially interested in how service users, HEIs and employers would perceive their new role, as well as the processes and structures that will be implemented to enable this to happen. Method of Data Collection. A three-stage data collection method will be undertaken; this will involve semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Semi-structured interviews are proposed, as opposed to structured or unstructured interviews, to allow flexibility but also to focus on issues which are important in addressing the research question. The first stage will consist of focus group interviews participants and will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data collected at this stage will be included in the main study), this stage will be used to enable me to generate and reaffirm the research questions as well as subsequent interview questions needed for this work. The second stage will consist of a pilot study with up to three participants. Data from the pilot study will not be included in the final study. However it will be used to enable me to test the research instrument and design. This will also assist me in verifying whether the research participants understand the questions and/or whether the questions need modification in order to improve the quality of the data collected.

The final stage will consist of face-to-face semi-structured individual interviews with each of the participants. Following the recommended duration of interviews within the grounded theory tradition it is envisaged that this interview will last for up to 50 minutes. Although this is envisaged, participant will be firstly about what how much time they could give for the interviews. The interviews will be audio recorded to enable me to transcribe the data. It is envisaged that different participants will be used during the different stage of the data collection process. In addition, I will be keeping a research diary and a journal throughout the study to enable me to reflect on the process and the research journey. At this stage I have not yet decided whether to include the data generated in my journal or diary into the final work. Sampling strategy. The

purposeful sampling method will be used for the proposed study. Patton (2002) suggests that the purposeful sampling strategy involves the deliberate selection of 'information-rich cases' that will give rise to data relevant to the specific purpose and aims of the research. The use of purposeful sampling is also supported by Creswell (1994, p. 148) who posits that "the idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select informants (or documents or visual materials) that will best answer the research question". Service user participants and social work educators will be recruited from both Havering College and another HEI offering social work education to enable me to compare the two different data. Employers will be recruited by directly approaching them through contact with our partner agencies and Skills for Care.

In relation to sample size, Patton (2002) notes that there is no formal sample size in qualitative inquiry because sampling strategy in qualitative research does not seek to achieve statistical representation as in quantitative research. Rather, the sampling size in qualitative research is determined by the specific purpose of the research. It is envisaged that a sample of up to twenty participants will be drawn upon for the proposed work (up to six – focus group and 14 individual interviews). Maximum variation sampling strategy (Patton 2002) will be used to select a group of people with a wide variety of perspectives. Patton (2002, p. 235) posits that a key advantage of using maximum variation sampling strategy is that "any common patterns that emerge from great variations are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspect". Utilising these ideas, the sampling will consist of service users who have been involved in the assessments of students, students who have had service users involved in their assessments and employers who will be involving service users as co-assessors of social workers and HEI representatives. The different sample groups will also be used for triangulation purposes to ensure trustworthiness and research credibility. I have included students as part of the sample group at this stage because I believe it will be good to seek all stakeholders' views. However, I am concerned that seeking to find out how service users, HEIs and employers conceptualise their new role in the assessment process does not sit well with including students as part of the sample group. I will have to consider this further and perhaps include students as part of the focus group but not as part of the individual interview.

At present I am not sure whether to include carers because the proposed assessed year in practice appears to have excluded carers from the assessment process. If I do use Straussian Grounded Theory there might be the opportunity to re-enter the field to obtain further information and therefore fulfil the obligations of the use of theoretical sampling method. Any changes will be further discussed with my supervisor that is should the policy change to include carers then I would like to include carers as part of the sample group.

#### Ethical Issues:

Ethical guidelines will be observed as set out by the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care (DoH 2005), the British Association of Social Workers (BASW 2003) the General Social Care Council GSCC (2002) Code of Practice and the Data Protection Act 1998. The guidelines used will also reflect any subsequent changes in policy during the course of the study. Potential participants will be provided with information about the nature of the study to enable them to make an informed decision on whether to participate or not. The information will seek to cover issues of consent, the right to participate and the right to withdraw, issues of payment, how information will be recorded, stored and analysed, dissemination of information and the potential of re-using the data, (for example presentation at Conferences) as well as the potential for publication.

There are particular ethical concerns with using focus groups which relate to issues of power, autonomy and confidentiality. In addition I am aware of the disparate power positions occupied by the different participants and myself as a lecturer as well as an 'insider-researcher'. These issues will be discussed with potential participants prior to commencing with the study, and strategies would be put in place to ensure that participants are not disadvantaged. Although it is anticipated that none of the research participations will be at risk by taking part in this evaluation study, issues of risk will be considered and discussed them

#### Proposal

The introduction of the degree in Social Work requires service users to be involved in the assessment of social work students (DoH 2002). Recently the Social Work Taskforce (2009) recommended 'an assessed and supported year in practice' as



a final stage of becoming a social worker which, "should be carried out jointly by employers and HEIs, with feedback from service users taken into account" (The Social Work Task Force 2009 p 25). The proposed assessed and supported year in practice is new; no policy as yet has been developed, neither has it been implemented. Hence the interest in this area in looking at how this new role is conceptualised and what would count as evidence of competence for a pass or fail grade.

A recent contact with Skills for Care indicated that Skills for Care and the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) are currently beginning work on developing a framework, for the Social Work Reform Board which is tasked with delivering the recommendations by the Social Work Task Force to be considered for the assessment process of the assessed year in employment. I have since contacted Skills for Care about my interest in this area, with the view of an opportunity to be invited to observe the process of deliberation and am currently waiting to hear from them. If successful, I will make this part of the data collection process, following ethical clearance. Of particular importance, I recently conducted a literature review on what is known about the involvement of service users and carers in the assessments of students.

The review identified that although service users and carers are required by policy to undertake assessments for students, yet unlike practice educators and post-qualifying practice mentors who have clear guidelines and criteria for the assessment of competence (GSCC/Topss 2002), service users had no such criteria or guidance at both the degree and post-qualifying level to inform the assessment of social work students, which raised a number of concerns about procedural fairness in terms of equitability, reliability, accountability and transparency. I am therefore also interested in whether there is a perceived need for the development of nationally recognised criteria for assessment by which service users could make their assessment judgements of students.

Date Presented to Ethics Committee.....15th Sept 10.....

Responds from Havering College Ethical Board  
From: John Morris Tuesday - September 21, 2010 11:17 AM  
To: Ann Anka  
CC: Kirsty Dunne; Pat Brennan-Barrett

Subject: Research App

Good morning Ann,  
The Research & Ethics Committee considered your two applications this morning. Here are the findings:-

Application - Ann Anka - Fully approved

Many thanks

John

### C.7 Appendices and Supporting Documents

**NOTE:** SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE CUT AND PASTED INTO THE SPACE PROVIDED BELOW. THEY SHOULD **NOT** BE APPENDED AS SEPARATE DOCUMENTS

**Please tick which supporting documents are included in your application:**

x All applications should normally include an **Information Sheet** (If you have different participant Groups and different activities you will normally need more than one Information Sheet). If you are not providing an Information Sheet, please ensure you have outlined your reasons in Section C.4.

x All applications should normally include a **Consent Form**, unless it is a self-completion questionnaire based study, or the reason for not requiring a Consent Form is outlined in Section C.4.

x **Recruitment materials** (e.g. poster, letter, recruitment email)

x **Letter/ email seeking permission from host/gatekeeper organisations** (e.g. school, company. If this is relevant to your study copies **must** be submitted with this application).

x **Questionnaire/ topic guide/ interview questions**

**Chemicals or other hazardous substances risk assessment from**

**H&S (if applicable)**

**Overseas risk assessment from H&S office (if applicable)**

**Any other approvals or permissions that are relevant**

*(This list is not exhaustive but may help you to identify which supporting documents you may need to submit.)*

***INSERT (CUT AND PASTE) YOUR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS HERE:***

Appendix 1

Information Sheet

**Project Title:**

Service users as co-assessors: conceptualisation of the process of assessing the final stage of social work qualification.

**Invitation to Participate**

You are invited to participate in a research study

**Who will participate?**

Participants will consist of service users, social work employers, social work students and social work educators.

**Purpose**

I am conducting a small scale qualitative research looking at what people think about the proposed Assessed and Supported Year in Employment; what should count as evidence of service users feedback for a pass or fail at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, how service users, social work employers and social work educators view their new role as co-assessors at this proposed final stage of social work qualification and what you think might be some of the challenges and opportunities faced by social work employers, service users and social work educators in implementing the assessment in this current political and economic climate.

**Description of Procedures**

This will consist of interviews with focus groups made up of students, service users, social work employers and social work educators and a follow-up individual in-depth semi-structured interview. The interviews will last for up to an hour. The interviews will be conducted at my current place of work or an off campus location mutually agreed by participants.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation will be voluntary. Individuals may choose to take part or to withdraw at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information provided will be destroyed and will not be included in the research.

### **Fees and Expenses**

No monetary payment will be made to participants however payment for expenses will be made to people who use services. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided for those agreeing to attend the interview at my place of work.

### **Risks and Inconveniences**

No risk to participants is envisaged – however information about where to seek counselling support will be made available to people should they become distressed as a result of sharing their stories during the research

### **Data treatment and Storage**

The interview data will be stored under a key locked secured safe. Names will be replaced with codes to ensure that your identity is protected within the Data Protection Act 1998.

The interview data will be used for my final year Doctoral thesis, Conference presentations, publication, and teaching and for re-sharing. Although the information will be reused for the purposes stated, every effort will be made to ensure that you are not identified in the final publication. Although these steps will be taken to ensure that your identity is protected due to the nature of the research, I am aware that some service user organisations and employers might wish to be acknowledged for contributing to this research. Should this happen, it is likely that the organisation you are affiliated to might wish to be acknowledged, which means total anonymity might be difficult to maintain.

### **Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to research participant for participating in this research. However, you will be contributing to current debate in social work education in particular to the assessment of students at the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality will be maintained by replacing people's names with codes. In addition, the interview transcripts of the individual interviews will be

returned to you to check, in order to ensure that no one will be able to identify you. For those who will be involved in the focus groups, maintaining absolute confidentiality will be difficult because other members of the group will know who you are. In this case, I ask that those who do take part respect each other's privacy and not discuss what has been discussed outside of the meeting.

Furthermore whilst every effort will be made to keep confidential all of the information you provide absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. For example, individuals from Havering College and University of Sussex Ethics Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) will have access to the study upon completion. I may also have to break confidentiality if you disclose that you have abused a child, have been abused by a professional person or that you want to commit suicide to the relevant authorities. Should this happen, I will first discuss any decision to report this with yourself and my supervisor before reporting it to the relevant authorities.

### **Data Presentation**

It is likely that I might disagree with what you say during the interview and may take a critical view when it comes to analysing the data or reporting the findings and would like your permission to do so.

What to do next If you are interested and or have any questions about the study, please call Ann Anka, the investigator, at (01708 455 011 ex 4016) or email: [aanka@haverling-college.ac.uk](mailto:aanka@haverling-college.ac.uk)

### **Information sheet for Young People**

I am doing a mini research project looking at what young people who have used, or are using social work services, think about what a good social worker should look like and how you might feel about working with teachers of social work students and social work employers in helping them to mark how well social work students have done.

I am also interested to hear about what you think might be helpful or a problem in working with teachers of social work and social work employers in working together to mark social work students about what good social workers should look like. With your permission, I will like to record what you say, so that I can remember what your views are. This will take about half an hour. You have a right to take part and a right to say no. You can also change your mind at any time, even if you have said yes and I will not put any pressure on you to continue, but

will stop. Please note that I will be recording what you think. If you decide not to take part, I will stop the recording and will respect your wishes.

## **Appendix 2**

### Research Participation - Consent Form

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a part-time doctoral student at the University of Sussex and I am conducting a small-scale 'Developmental Evaluation' research looking at How service users, social work employers, students and social work educators, view the process of assessment at the proposed Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.

A qualitative research approach will be used; this will consist of interviews with a focus group made up of social work students, employers, people who use services and social work educators. This will be followed by in-depth individual semi-structured interviews which will take place at my current place of work or an off campus location convenient to you. The interview will be informal; although it is anticipated that the interviews will last for up to an hour, those who agree to take part will firstly be asked about much time they could give for the interview.

It is important to note that I am part of the teaching staff (BA Social Work & Practice Education) at Havering College. However Havering College have not commissioned this research and have no ownership of any aspect of the work. The final report will be the property of University of Sussex.

Your decision to participate or not to will not affect your working relationship with the College or my relationship with you as lecturer and a tutor. Confidentiality will be respected at all times and no one will be named or identified in the study unless they wish to do so. Participation is voluntary; you may withdraw from this research at any point prior to publication of the results. Should you decline to take part even during the interview, this will be respected and the tape or interview transcript will be returned to you.

The information gathered will be used for my final doctoral thesis, conference presentations, teaching, publication and also for re sharing with other researchers who might share the same research interest.

Service users will be paid a nominal sum for their participation; however no expenses will be paid to other stakeholders for their contributions to this research.

Your participation will be most appreciated. Please also see the attached

Information Sheet, for further information about the research. If you are interested in taking part please complete the attached slip and return in the stamped addressed envelope provided or email me at [aanka@havering-college.ac.uk](mailto:aanka@havering-college.ac.uk). You can also contact me by phone Monday to Friday, between 9am – 5pm on 01708 455 011 ex 4016.

If you have any concerns about this research, or the manner in which I have conducted myself, then please contact the Havering College Ethics Board at 01708 455 011 or my supervisor Imogen Taylor (Supervisor) at the following address: [i.j.taylor@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:i.j.taylor@sussex.ac.uk),

Imogen Taylor (Supervisor)  
University of Sussex,  
Sussex House,  
Falmer,  
Brighton  
BN1 9RH

Thank you,

Yours faithfully  
Ann Anka

### **Participation Consent Form**

To: Ann Anka

Phone: 01708 455 011 ex 4016

Email: [aanka@havering-college.ac.uk](mailto:aanka@havering-college.ac.uk)

I am interested in taking part. I understand my rights in relation to my participation in this research and agree to participate. I understand that I have a right to refuse to take part in this research at any time prior to publication of the research. I understand and agree that information provided will be used for a doctoral thesis, conference presentations, teaching; publication and for data sharing purposes.

I consent to the process of my personal information for the purpose of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Signature .....

Name

Date

I agree to protect the rights and confidentiality of contributors to my research within the guidance set in the Data Protection Act 1998.

Ann Anka  
Signature  
Date

### **Appendix 3 - Recruitment Material**

Post Card - Front side

Interested in the proposed Assessed and Supported Year in Employment?  
Interested in the assessment of students at this final stage of social work qualification?  
Are you a social work employer?  
A social work student?  
A service user or  
A social work educator?  
Then come and contribute to this research

Reverse side

You are invited to participate in a small-scale qualitative research  
I would like to know what you think about the ASYE  
What should count as service users' evidence for a pass or fail?  
What are the challenges and opportunities in implementing the ASYE in this political and economic climate?  
If interested please call Ann Anka on 01708 455 011 ex 4016  
[aanka@havering-college.ac.uk](mailto:aanka@havering-college.ac.uk)

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.

### **Poster**

You are invited to participate in a research project  
Are you a service user, a social work student, social work employer or social work educator? Interested in current reforms or changes in social work education; interested in what a qualifying social worker should look like?  
Then come and contribute to this research!  
I am doing a small-scale qualitative research and would like to know what you think about what should count as service users evidence for a pass or fail at the proposed final stage of social work qualification the 'Assessed and Supported Year in Employment '  
I would also like to know your views about potential challenges and opportunities likely to face social work employers, service users and social work educators in implementing the ASYE in this current economic and political climate as well as working together as co-assessors of students at this final stage of social work qualification.



Expenses for participation will only be made to service users

If interested and for more information, please contact Ann Anka on 01708 455 011 ex 4016 or email at [aanka@havering-college.ac.uk](mailto:aanka@havering-college.ac.uk)

Thank you.

**Appendix 4 - Letter/email permission from host/gatekeeper organisation.**

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a part-time doctoral student at the University of Sussex and I am conducting a small-scale 'Developmental Evaluation' research looking at How Service users, Employers, Students and Social Work Educators view the process of assessment at the proposed Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

I would be grateful if I could talk with some of your members about their views of how the assessment of social workers at this proposed final stage of social work qualification should look. I am particularly interested to hear about what should count as evidence for a pass or fail at both undergraduate and post graduate level and what might be some of the challenges and opportunities likely to face service users in working with not only social work educators, but also with social work employers in assessing qualifying social work students in the current economic and political climate.

I will be using a qualitative research approach and will be conducting interviews through focus groups and in-depth individual semi-structured interviews, which would be audiotaped. The interview will be informal; participants would be asked about much time they could give for the interview; however it is envisaged that the interviews would last for about an hour. Confidentiality will be respected and no one will be named or identified unless otherwise wished by the organisation. Participation will be voluntary and the views of those who decide not to take part in the research will be respected.

Service users will be paid for a nominal sum for their participation. Your assistance will be most appreciated. If you are able to help me, can you please let me know by email [aanka@havering-college.ac.uk](mailto:aanka@havering-college.ac.uk) and will arrange for convenient time to contact you. You can also contact me by phone Monday to Friday, between 9am – 5pm on 01708 455 011 ex 4016.

Please also see the attached Information Sheet, this provides further information about the study and how the information generated will be stored and used.

Thank you in anticipation for your help.

Yours faithfully

Ann Anka

## **Appendix 5 - Developmental Evaluation Questions**

I am interested in using Developmental Evaluation to explore how the process of service user/carer involvement in the assessment of students at the proposed final stage of social work qualification would look; how the different stakeholders involved in the assessment of students would view their new role as co-assessors. What should count as service users' evidence for a pass or fail; What are the differences and/or similarities between what the different stakeholders think should count as evidence of competence for a pass or fail at both undergraduate and postgraduate level and what the consequences of these differences are in how the different actors view what should count as evidence of competence.

In line with the principles underpinning Developmental Evaluation, although the evaluation will adapt to how the program implementation unfolds, the proposed developmental evaluation question driving the work is currently framed, as "How is the process of assessment at the proposed final stage of social work qualification viewed by service users, students, employers and Higher Education Institutions?"

### **Potential sub questions (interview schedule)**

1. What do you think about the proposed Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) as a final stage of social work qualification?
  2. What do you think should count as service user feedback evidence for a pass or fail candidate at both undergraduate and postgraduate level?
  3. How will implementation of the ASYE change the way qualified social workers work with service users and carers?
  4. What are some of the challenges and opportunities faced by social work educators, social work employers and service users/carers in implementing the ASYE programme in this current political and climate?
  5. What are the some of the major challenges and opportunities faced by social work educators, social work employers and service users/carers in working together as co-assessors of social workers at this proposed final stage of social work.
- I am hoping to use the interview data generated from the focus group to

inform the individual interview schedule. I am also hoping that the literature review will help me to reaffirm the current questions presented.

### **Proposed Interview schedule for young people**

1. What qualities would you like to see in a good social worker?
2. What do you think should count as a pass or fail if you were marking a social workers assignment?
3. What problems or opportunities do you see in working with a teacher of social work students and social work employers in working together in marking social work students' assignments?

### **Appendix 6 - Outcomes and timescale (proposed)**

#### **Month Year Work to be undertaken**

March 2011 - Submit ethics proposal to the Ethics Committee  
 March - May 2011 Start writing ethics and methodology section. Undertake informal discussions with experts in the field. Complete focus group interview and transcribe interview data. Refine research question(s).  
 April 2011 Present preliminary findings of informal discussion and focus group interview at a  
    conference. Use conference feedback to refine research question.  
 Use  
    Conference to recruit research participants for the individual interviews.  
 June - July 2011 Start Literature Review  
 Sept 2011 Send draft of literature review to supervisor  
 Oct 2011 Undertake pilot study and arrange for supervision  
 Nov 2011 Evaluate research design  
 Dec 11 – Jan 12 Undertake interview & analysis  
 Feb 2012 Arrange for tutorial – use feedback to further develop work  
 March 2012 Start writing the finding section  
 April 2012 Write the discussion section  
 May - June 2012 Write reflexivity section & conclusion  
 July - Aug 2012 Supervision – re write  
 January 2012 Submit

### **Appendix 7 - Bibliography**

Acts of Parliament  
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- UNITED NATIONS (1989). United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. New York: United Nations

UK DATA ARCHIVE (UKDA) <a href="http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/">http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/</a>	
<b>C.8 Declaration:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief, and I take full responsibility for it.</li> <li>▪ I have read and understand the University's Research Governance Code of Practice.</li> <li>▪ I have read the guidelines accompanying this application form and understand that failure to follow these and my approved protocol constitutes academic misconduct and can lead to severe penalties.</li> <li>▪ I understand that I am responsible for monitoring the research at all times and recording any unexpected events</li> <li>▪ If any serious adverse events arise in relation to the research, I understand that I am responsible for immediately stopping the research and alerting the C-REC Chair with 24 hours of the occurrence.</li> <li>▪ I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date with and to comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.</li> <li>▪ I understand that research records / data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future.</li> <li>▪ I understand that I may not commence this research until I have been notified that the project has ethical approval</li> <li>▪ <b>FOR STUDENT RESEARCHERS:</b> I understand my responsibilities to work within a set of safety, ethical and other guidelines as agreed in advance with my supervisor. I also understand that I must comply with the University's regulations and any other applicable code of ethics at all times.</li> </ul>	
<b>Signature of Principal Investigator / Student Researcher</b> Ann Anka <b>Print Name:</b> Ann Anka <b>Date:</b> 16/03/11	
<b>C.9 HIGHER RISK STUDENT PROJECTS ONLY – SUPERVISOR'S AUTHORISATION</b>	
<b>To be completed by the supervisor for all student research – please tick</b>	
The student has the appropriate skills to undertake the research	
The student has read an appropriate professional code of ethical practice	

I understand my responsibilities as supervisor, and will ensure, to the best of my abilities, that the student researcher abides by the University's regulations and any other applicable code of ethics at all times.		
<b>Supervisor's name</b>		
<b>Supervisor's email address</b>		
<b>Supervisor's Signature</b>		
<b>Date of supervisor authorisation</b>		

**WHERE DO I SEND MY FORM?**

**LOW RISK Projects**  
**UG and PGT Students:**

*Submit through School Ethical Review process (review by Supervisor and School Research Ethics Officer).*

**Staff and PGR Students:**

*Submit to your School C-REC for expedited review (email addresses below).*

C-REC	Email
Arts	c-recarts@sussex.ac.uk
Social Sciences	c-recss@sussex.ac.uk
Psychology and Life Sciences	c-recpsysci@sussex.ac.uk
Informatics, Engineering & Design, and Mathematics & Physical Sciences	c-reciem@sussex.ac.uk

## ***Appendix 12 - Resubmission of ethics proposal***

### **Resubmitted Application for Ethical Review**

#### **Minor amendments/revisions**

(Social Sciences Cluster)

Please indicate here if your application form is a resubmitted version of an earlier application: ✓

List the changes you have made in response to the reviewers' comments. Please provide page references for each:

#### **1. Recruitment strategy for service users**

Recruitment for service users who have participated in the assessment of social work students will be undertaken by approaching Service User Participation Co-ordinators or Programme Managers from other Higher Education Providers of Social Work programmes.

Information detailing the purpose and procedure for the proposed study will be sent to Service User Participation Co-ordinators or Programme Managers for Service User Involvement initiatives. This will be accompanied by a recruitment post card to be given to potential recruits asking them to contact me if they are interested in taking part in the study and I will make contact with them accordingly. This will allow potential participants the opportunity to ask further questions for clarity about what the research study and their participation would entail. Potential participants will be given some time to consider this and it is only with their agreement and consent that they will be included in the study. Participants will also be informed about their right to withdraw at any time from the study. Participation will be voluntary and no one will be forced to take part in the study.

## **2. Recruitment strategy for all**

Recruitment post cards will be given to potential participants; these will be given out through conferences, colleagues at other HEIs and social work employers. Those who contact me expressing their interest in the study will be provided with detailed information through the 'Informed Consent Letter' and the accompanying 'Information Sheet' (both appended).

## **3. Focus groups including service users**

Reflecting on the feedback from the previous submission and in particular, to avoiding causing any distress or harm to service users and the other participants, I have decided not to include a focus group as part of the method for data collection. This decision has not been taken lightly. Although the use of a focus group was planned as the first stage for collecting preliminary data, the welfare of the research participants is of paramount importance. I will, therefore, not use the focus group as previously planned. In addition, the logistics of arranging the focus group within the limited time to complete the work has been taken into consideration.

Instead of utilising a focus group, I will be conducting individual face-to-face interviews with up to twenty people. These will consist of five service users, five students, five social work educators and five social work employers – no persons under the age of 18 will be included in the sample group.

Participants will be asked to comment on the following:

- What they think about the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE);
- What should count at service users' feedback evidence for a pass or fail on competence or capabilities;



- What they consider to be some of the potential challenges and opportunities in implementing the ASYE in this political and economic climate;
- Whether there is a need for a nationally recognised criterion for assessment by which service users could make their assessment/judgement.

#### **4. Data management, re-use, accessibility to others**

The data collected for the proposed study will be re-used for the following purposes:

- Final year thesis
- Teaching
- Conference Presentations
- Publication

Information about the re-use of data as stated above would be discussed with potential participants prior to them signing the Informed Consent Letter to enable them to make informed decisions and choices as to whether to participate in the study.

#### **5. Information sheets consent forms etc**

The Informed Consent Letter will be accompanied by the Information Sheet; this will provide more detailed information about the proposed study's purpose and procedure.

#### **Feedback about the Involvement of Young People (informed consent)**

I have reconsidered this point and have now decided not to involve young people or anyone under the age of 18 in this study.

#### **Information Sheet – Language used**

*Ann Anka. Doctorate in Social Work thesis. Title: "Assessment as the site of power: An interrogation of the involvement of 'others' in the assessments of social work students". Supervisors: Professor Imogen Taylor and Dr Hengliu Lisa Chen. University of Sussex. November 2013.*

This has been amended to make the content user-friendlier and also to reflect the feedback received from the previous submission. References made to the use of qualitative research have been removed. Please find attached the amended version of the Information Sheet (Appendix 2).

**Concerns about the researcher's relationship with participants who are service users, and its implications for confidentiality, anonymity and evoking psychological distress**

In order to maintain anonymity, recruitment will be undertaken anonymously through gatekeepers or other mediating staff from other HEIs. Participation will be voluntary; no telephone contact will be made to potential participants unless they express an interest to participate in the study by contacting me directly or through mediating staff and/or gatekeepers. Issues of confidentiality in relation to ensuring that personal details are not disclosed to a party unless otherwise required by law will be discussed with participants prior to participation. Every effort will be made to ensure that participants are not distressed during the interview process. If individuals become distressed, the interviews will be terminated – this will be discussed with participants prior to the interview process. Information about where to seek counselling support will be provided to ensure that participants who might need this support are not disadvantaged.

**1. Sampling procedure**

Theoretical sampling and homogenous sampling methods as opposed to purposive sampling procedure is now proposed for the study. This is firstly proposed to ensure that anonymity is maintained. Bourdieu's notions of habitus will be used to inform the selection of the research participants. This is proposed because I am interested in how individual and/or collective habitus, (participants' past histories) will structure or shape their views about the ASYE, on what should count as service user feedback evidence for a pass or fail, and as a means to explore the different power relationships among the different participants recommended to be involved in the ASYE assessment. I am also

anticipating that the use of homogenous sampling will enable me to study the different groups in more depth.

## **2. Focus groups**

Pls see responses to Reviewer Feedback, Question 3 above

## **3. Clarity around my role & potential conflicts of interest**

I work as a lecturer on a social work programme and had envisaged drawing some of the research participants from my current place of work. Ethical issues and concerns raised are around my role as a lecturer on the programme and its' impact on prospective participants' willingness to agree or refuse to participate. Furthermore, the different participating groups present their own challenges in terms of the different power relationships involved in working with them. For example, in relation to my position as an insider/researcher, there are potential ethical implications for drawing the research participants from the student group that I teach and assess. There are also ethical issues around interviewing colleagues (other lecturers), partner employers associated with my institution as well as interviewing the service user group with whom I work as co-assessors of students' work. I was concerned that students, partner agencies, service users and colleagues would feel obligated to participate due to my role. To address these potential conflicts, I had proposed to discuss my dual role as an insider/researcher with potential participants and to include this information in the Informed Consent Letter to enable participants to make informed decisions on whether to participate in the study. Having considered the concerns raised, potential participants will now be recruited from other HEIs, and social work employers not associated with my current place of work.

**Researcher's name: Ann Anka**

**Project title:** Service users as co-assessors: conceptualisation of the process of assessing the final stage of social work qualification.


*Ann Anka. Doctorate in Social Work thesis. Title: "Assessment as the site of power: An interrogation of the involvement of 'others' in the assessments of social work students". Supervisors: Professor Imogen Taylor and Dr Hengliu Lisa Chen. University of Sussex. November 2013.*

**Date previously submitted:** 20<sup>th</sup> March 11

**Signature:** Ann Anka

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> April 11

### **Appendix 13 - Ethics Approval – University of Sussex**

<b>Social Sciences Cluster-based Research Ethics Committee</b>	
<b>CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL</b>	
<b>Reference Number:</b>	1011/03/15
<b>School:</b>	ESW
<b>Title of Project</b>	Service users as co-assessors: conceptualisation of the process of assessing the final stage of social work qualification.
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Ann Anka
<b>Name of Supervisor: (for student projects)</b>	Prof I Taylor (Dr HL Chen)
<b>Expected Start Date:*</b>	4 May 2011
<p>*NB. If the <u>actual</u> project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures</p>	
<p><b>This project has been given ethical approval by the Social Sciences Cluster-based Research Ethics Committee (C-REC).</b>  <b><i>Please note the following requirements for approved submissions:</i></b>  <b>Amendments to research proposal</b>  Any changes or amendments to the approved proposal, which have ethical implications, must be submitted to the committee for authorisation prior to implementation.  <b>Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events</b>  Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.</p>	
<b>Authorised Signature</b>	
<b>Name of Authorised Signatory (C-REC Chair or nominated deputy)</b>	Dr Elaine Sharland

<b>Date of approval</b>	27 April 2011
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## ***Appendix 14 - Pen portraits of the research participants***

### **Service user and carer assessors**

#### **Julie (carer)**

Julie was the main carer for her 20-year-old son. She was actively involved as a carer educator and an assessor at a HEI provider of social work degree programmes at undergraduate (BA), masters (MA) and post-qualifying (PQ) levels and had been for over 10 years. She was also actively involved as a carer consultant at a national level. Julie said she became a carer educator and assessor due to her experience of accessing social care and educational services for her son. The interview took place at Julie's home, where she introduced me to her son. There were striking similarities between Julie and myself. Her son was the same age as my son. They were both studying the same subject at university. Julie felt obligated to give something back to social work, whereas I felt that it was her son's citizenship right to receive services. My encounter with Julie had a profound emotional effect on me. Her story centred on her involvement and experiences as a carer assessor in the assessment of social work students.

#### **Patrick (service user)**

Patrick is a service user who had previously worked as a social worker but left the profession due to ill health. He got involved with student assessments about seven years ago. He said he was recovering from a stroke and other complications and was doing voluntary work when he was invited to participate in assessing students' presentations. He indicated during the interview that he was asked to participate in the assessments due to his background in social work, rather than as a user of social work services. The interview took place in the library at the institution where he was involved as a service user educator

and assessor. I arranged the room through my inter-library student's account system. Like all the service user assessors who took part in the interviews, Patrick did not have an office or an access to a private interview room. He explained that although he wanted to contribute more to students' assessments, there had been some resistance from social work academics at his particular institution.

### **Charles (carer)**

Charles is a carer of his daughter, who has been diagnosed with a mental illness. Charles indicated that he got involved in students' assessment because of his experience as a carer accessing social work and mental health services. The interview took place at my previous place of work. Charles reported that his involvement in social work education as a carer educator and assessor started in 2003. His story centres on an obligation to give something back as well as a passion to ensure that students get a fair assessment. He revealed that although carers were given a voice in student assessments, there had been resistance from some members of staff when their involvement was initially implemented.

### **Janet (service user)**

Janet is a service user. She said that she got involved because of her disabilities and experience of accessing social work services. I interviewed Janet at her home. She lived with her two dogs and was very proud to introduce me to them. Janet explained that although she was willing to contribute to students' assessments, at times her disabilities made it difficult for her to travel to institutions to do this.



### **Ken (service user)**

Ken was involved as a service user educator and assessor at three different institutions when I met him. He had previously worked as a social worker but retired on health grounds. Ken reported he had a mental health breakdown when his case loads increased from 40 to 150. He stated he became involved in social work education due to his experience as a user of social work services. I interviewed Ken at a Costa Coffee bar on one busy summer day. It was noisy and there were lots of interruptions. Ken was very much in favour of service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments and had some good ideas about what service users and carers' feedback should focus on. He often drew on incidents that had happened to his friends to emphasise what qualities should be assessed.

### **Social Work Employers**

#### **Camilla (palliative care manager/social work academic)**

Camilla worked as a senior palliative care social worker, team leader and social work educator. Camilla has over 20 years' experience of working in palliative care and has greatly contributed to this area through a number of publications. The interview took place at her workplace. Camilla was in favour of service users and carers' involvement in social work students' assessments. She shared some good practice ideas on how service users and carers have been involved in social work students' assessment within the palliative care setting.

#### **Jane (team manager – child protection)**

Jane worked as team manager in a child protection social work. She had about 10 years' experience as a social worker. She is also a practice educator and had supervised a number of undergraduate social work students on placement. She

had a number of NQSW students in her team. I interviewed Jane at her office. Most of her answers related to the involvement of service users and carers in local authority quality control processes, rather than specific to students' assessments.

### **Margaret (social work manager – training)**

Margaret had over 27 years' experience in social work. She was in charge of training and development and had contributed greatly to the development and implementation of the NQSW and the ASYE training programme. She agreed that service users and carers had a role in students' assessments at both undergraduate and post-qualifying level. She felt that there is a need to develop some sort of a feedback form to guide service users and carers in their assessments of students. However, she felt that this should be developed by social workers rather than by service users and carers. I interviewed Margaret at her place of work on a sunny summer afternoon; the interview took place outside in the office garden.

### **Vanessa (acting social work manager)**

Vanessa worked as acting social work manager in an older persons' dementia care team. She has been working in the team for six years and was also a practice assessor. The interview took place at her office. She talked about the difficulties in obtaining service user feedback from the service user group. Vanessa described most of the service users as having advanced dementia. Drawing from her own experience as a mother and a carer for her parents, Vanessa argued strongly for the inclusion of carers' voice in social work students' assessments.

### **Carla (social work manager – young offending team)**

Carla was managing a team of different professionals who worked with young people in the criminal justice system. Carla didn't say how long she had been in practice. She was also a practice educator and worked with a group of social work professionals who were advising on the development of the ASYE programme. I interviewed Carla at her office. She was very concerned at the time that the ASYE had not been made mandatory. Carla failed to provide me with specific answers on how she has involved service users and carers in students' assessments. She was also unable to give specific answers on what service users and carers' feedback should look like at ASYE level. She was rather concerned about what support and training would be provided for social work managers who would be involved in supervising ASYE candidates.

### **Natasha (social work manager – training)**

Natasha had 20 years' practice experience. She worked as a training manager for a social work organisation supporting children and their families at the time of the interview. She was responsible for NQSWs, and involved in the development of both the NQSW and ASYE programmes. Natasha reported that she had been forced to consider service user and carer involvement in students' assessments after her agency failed to win an award, because they failed to evidence how service users and carers had been involved in students' assessments. Natasha questioned the rationale for service user and carer involvement in students' assessments.

## **Social work educators**

### **Michael (senior lecturer)**

Michael is a social work educator with over 20 years' experience, both as a practitioner social worker and a senior lecturer. He was previously involved in the development and implementation of the first post-qualifying award programmes in social work education. I interviewed Michael in a private room at his institution. Michael's story mainly centred on the reforms of social work education, and its likely impact on the involvement of service users and carers in social work education. Michael spoke at length about the dissonance between social workers and service users and carers.

### **James (senior lecturer)**

James is a social work educator with 10 years' teaching and assessment experience. James has worked with service users and carers as co-educators and assessors. I interviewed James in his office. He was feeling unwell but had come in to do a teaching session and was still happy to see me for the interview. James' narrative highlighted a number of tensions, conflicts and dilemmas in the area of service users and carers' involvement in students' assessments.

### **Peter (senior lecturer)**

Peter is a senior lecturer and programme director for an MSc in Social Work programme. I interviewed Peter at a private room he arranged for the meeting at the institution where he worked. Peter indicated that service users and carers have been involved in students' assessments by means of giving feedback.

### **Victoria (lecturer)**

Victoria worked as a lecturer and PQ mentor assessor. She has 27 years' experience as a social worker. Her specialist area of practice is in children and families. I interviewed Victoria at her home. I knew Victoria through my work as

a lecturer. She shared her experiences of working with service users as co-assessors and co-educators. Her narratives revealed some of the complexities and tensions in service users and carers' involvement. She argued strongly for training and support for service users and carers.

### **Charity (senior lecturer/coordinator of service users and carer involvement)**

Charity worked as a senior lecturer on a social work degree programme. Her specialist area of social work practice was children and families. I interviewed Charity in an office at her place of work. Charity drew from her experience of involving service users and carers in students' assessment to highlight some of the complexities in this area. She also agreed that there is a need to develop a national criteria by which service users and carers could make their assessment judgements. She based her arguments on assessing fitness for practice.

### **Social work student profiles**

#### **April (NQSW student)**

April qualified as a social worker in 2010 and worked in child protection. She was doing the NQSW programme when I interviewed her. The interview took place in her office. April explained that she valued service users and carers' input during her undergraduate years. She suggested her experience in obtaining service user feedback indicates that most service users and carers find it difficult to complete assessment feedback forms.

#### **Summer (NQSW student)**

Summer qualified as a social worker three years ago and was in the post of senior practitioner in child protection social work. She had 27 years' practice

experience as a social work assistant before undertaking the degree programme. She was doing the NQSW programme when I met her. The interview took place in her office. Summer questioned the fairness of service users and carers' involvement in students' assessment in settings such as child protection social work. She felt that due to the nature of the work, most service users and carers would be reluctant to give objective feedback.

### **Naomi (BA in Social Work student)**

Naomi had just completed her undergraduate social work degree when I met her. She was working in a hospital discharge team at the time of our interview. The interview took place at her place of work. Naomi said she found service users and carers' involvement in her undergraduate assessment valuable, but that at times that it felt 'tokenistic' because it was something that she felt needed to be done.

### **Jonathan (MSc student)**

Jonathan was in his second year of an MSc in Social Work programme and had just completed his first year of the practice learning programme when I met him. The interview took place in a local library room which I had arranged. Jonathan was surprised when I asked about his experiences of service users and carers' involvement in his assessment at university. He indicated that service users had not been involved in his assessments but had been involved in practice learning settings. He suggested that most service users and carers are unable to complete assessment feedback forms.

### **Mary (MSc in Social Work student)**

Mary had just completed an MSc in Social Work when I met her. Our interview took place in a private office that I arranged through a social contact. Mary was very surprised when I asked about how service users and carers had been involved in her assessment during her time at university. She explained service

users and carers had not been involved, but recalled she had been asked by her practice assessor to include service users' feedback in her practice learning portfolio.

### **Appendix 15: Characteristics of participants**

<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age range</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Time of participation</b>	<b>Stakeholder category</b>	<b>Recruitment Method</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>
12/5/11	Natasha	35 - 40	Black British	5 years	Social Work Manager Training	Responded to a post card	Interviewee's place of work Private office
12/5/11	Carla	35-40	Black British	5 years	Social work manager Young offenders Team	Responded to post card	Interviewee's place of work Private office
19/5/11	Margaret	45-50	White UK	5 years	Social work Manager – Training	Direct contact	Interviewee's place of work Private office
23/5/11	Vanessa	50-55	White UK	2 years	Acting social work manager	Direct contact	Interviewee's place of work Private office
31/5/11	Janet	55-60	White UK	5 years	Service user	Gate keeper Responded to post card	Interviewee's home
3/6/11	Patrick	60-65	White UK	7 years	Service user	Gatekeeper. Responded to post card	At a library arranged through my student inter-library card
15/6/11	Camilla	45-50	White UK	11 years	Team Manager Palliative care Team Social work educator	Direct contact	Interviewee's place of work Private office
23/6/11	Ken	55-60	White UK	8 years	Service user	Gatekeeper Responded to post card	Costa coffee bar
24/6/11	Julie	40-45	White UK	10 years	Carer	Gatekeeper. Responded to post card	Interviewee's home
13/7/11	Charity	45-50	White UK	9 years	Senior Lecturer (social work)/Service user/carer involvement coordinator	Direct contact	Interviewee's place of work Private office
13/9/11	Michael	45 - 50	Black British	8 years	Senior Lecturer in social work	Direct contact	Interviewee's place of work Private office
12/11/12	Victoria	50-55	White UK	8 years	Social work Lecturer	Direct contact	Interviewee's home
4/01/12	Peter	40- 50	White UK	9 years	Senior Lecturer in	Direct contact	Interviewee's place of work

*Ann Anka. Doctorate in Social Work thesis. Title: "Assessment as the site of power: An interrogation of the involvement of 'others' in the assessments of social work students". Supervisors: Professor Imogen Taylor and Dr Hengliu Lisa Chen. University of Sussex. November 2013.*



					social work		Private office
11/6/12	James	45 -50	White UK	10 years	Senior Lecturer in social work	Direct contact	Interviewee's place of work Private office
11/7/12	Charles	60-65	White UK	5 years	Carer	Through a Gatekeeper	Library arranged by me
20/7/12	Jonathan	20-25	Black British	2 years	MSc Social work student	Through a Gatekeeper	Library arranged by me
12/7/12	Naomi	20-25	White UK	3 years	BA Social Work student	Through a Gatekeeper	Interviewee's office
25/7/12	Mary	20-25	White UK	2 years	MSc Social Work Student	Gatekeeper Responded to a post card	Office arranged through my network
25/7/12	Jane	40 – 45	White UK	5 years	Social work manager – Child Protection	Direct contact	Interviewee's office
25/7/12	Summer	40-45	White UK	5 years	NQSW student	Direct contact	Interviewee's office
25/7/12	April	35 -40	White UK	5 years	NQSW student	Direct contact	Interviewee's office

**Appendix 16 - Quality assessment of the study – TAPUPAS framework - Pawson et al (2004)**

Author	Title	'Transparency' Openness to scrutiny	'Accuracy' Grounding in events, sources and experiences	'Purposivity' 'Fitness of the method to purpose	'Utility' Fitness for use	'Propriety' Ethical and legal conduct	'Accessibility' Intelligible presentation	Specificity  Adequate with respect to other source – specific standards
Anka, A. (2013) Submitted for DSW	Assessment as site of power: An interrogation of the involvement of 'others' in the assessments of social work students	The study examined the positioning of service users and carers in relation to other stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments. It also explored participants' views on what should count as service users and carers' feedback evidence at	Qualitative research methodology drawing from the narrative approach. The sample consisted of Service users: n=3 Carers: n=2 Social work educators=5 Social work employers: n=6 Social work students: n=5  Method of data collection consisted of individual semi-	The study sought the views of stakeholders involved in social work students' assessments on what service users and carers should comment on when assessing social work students at post-qualifying level.	A number of qualities are identified including: professionalis m, good time- keeping, reliability and honesty;  Effective communication skills, such as listening, empathy, cheerfulness and kindness Ability to support	Ethical clearance for the study was sought from Havering College and University of Sussex.	Practitioner doctorate research knowledge. Social work educators, social work employers, service user/carer organisations and allied professions interested in service user and carer involvement in students' assessments	Research knowledge, uses a predetermined methodology

*Ann Anka. Doctorate in Social Work thesis. Title: "Assessment as the site of power: An interrogation of the involvement of 'others' in the assessments of social work students". Supervisors: Professor Imogen Taylor and Dr Hengliem Lisa Chen. University of Sussex. November 2013.*

		post-qualifying level.	structured interviews. Data was analysed using the voice centred relational method		<p>service users and carers Intelligence', 'structured empathy'; mastery of practice and development of practice wisdom.</p> <p>These could be used as a criteria for assessing students</p> <p>The study adds to the body of knowledge on stakeholders' experiences about service user and carer involvement in social work student assessments.</p> <p>It initially sought stakeholders' views on what</p>		will find the study useful.	
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					they thought about the ASYE. Feedback from the interim findings was submitted to Skills for Care			
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**Appendix 17: Quality assessment of the study Furlong and Oancea (2005): four dimensions for assessing quality in applied practice-based research**

Dimensions of quality			
Epistemic: methodological and theoretical robustness	Technological	Capacity development and value for people	Economic
<p>The study is situated in the practitioner doctorate research paradigm.</p> <p>A qualitative research method, the narrative approach was used. Method of data collection consisted of individual semi-structured interviews n=21</p> <p>It draws from both Foucault's notion of discourse and power and knowledge theory and Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus. These are used to examine the dynamic power relationships between and among stakeholders involved in social work student assessments</p>	<p>The study initially sought stakeholders' views on what they thought about the ASYE.</p> <p>A preliminary finding from the study was presented to Skills for Care in January 2011. This was used to support the case for the development and implementation of the ASYE in England</p> <p>The study adds to the body of knowledge in this area by using Foucault's notion of discourse and power and knowledge theory and Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus for understanding the dynamic power relationship between stakeholders involved in social work student assessments</p>	<p>Stakeholder views were sought through conference presentations and informal discussions on how to frame the research question.</p> <p>The study adds to the body of knowledge about stakeholders experiences of service user and carer involvements in social work student assessments.</p> <p>It also provides insights into how service users and carers have been involved in student assessments in other allied professions.</p>	<p>The study sought stakeholders' views on what service users and carers should comment on when assessing social work students at post-qualifying level.</p> <p>A number of qualities identified included: Professionalism, good time-keeping, reliability and honesty;</p> <p>Effective communication skills, such as listening, empathy, cheerfulness and kindness Ability to support service users and carers Intelligence', 'structured empathy'; mastery of practice and development of practice wisdom. These could be used as a criteria for assessing students</p>
<i>Scientific robustness</i>			



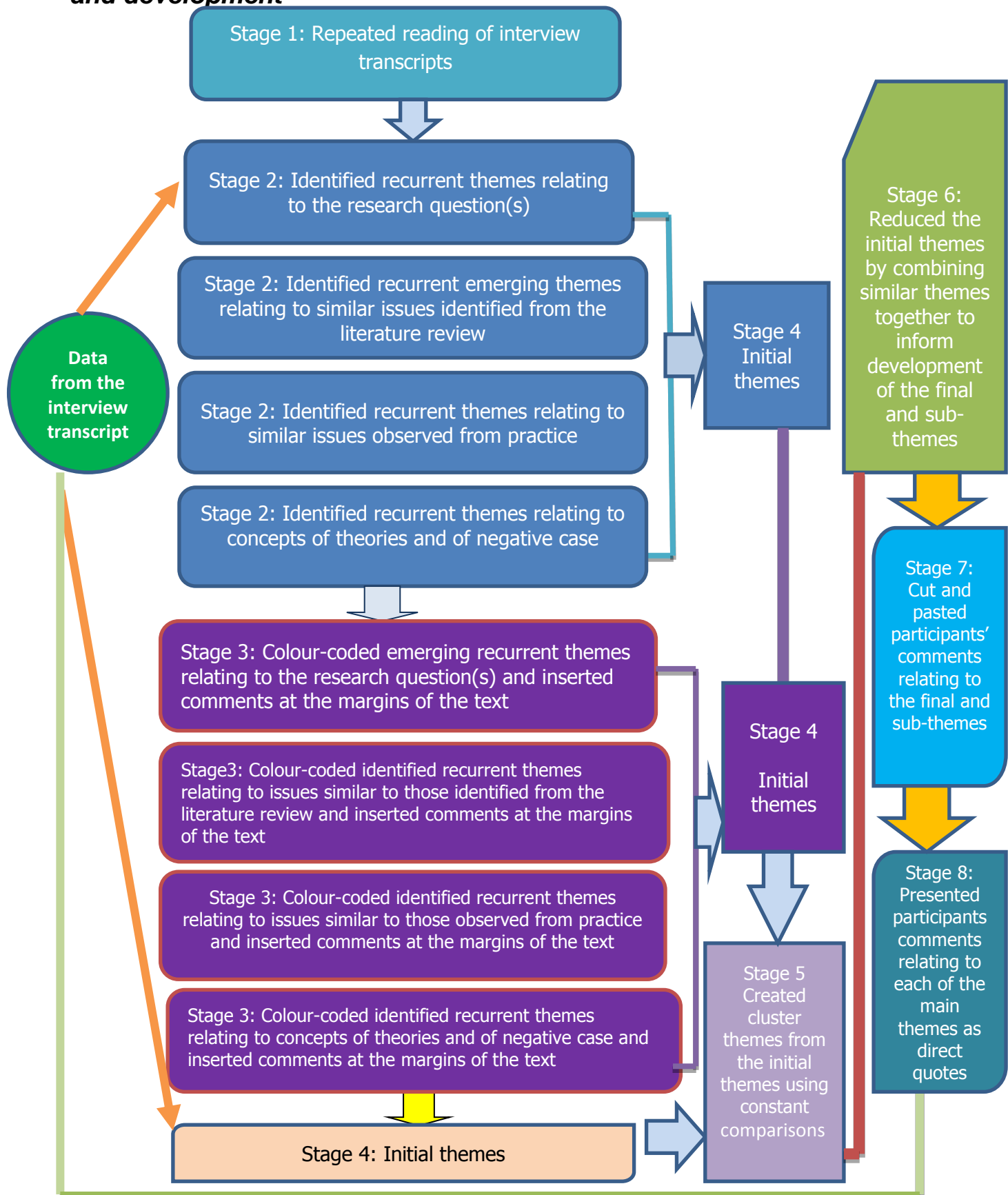
### ***Appendix 18: The research timeline***

Date	Activity
15 <sup>th</sup> September 2010	Submission of Ethics Proposal – Havering College of Further and Higher Education (Appendix 9)
21 <sup>st</sup> September 2010	Ethics Approval - Havering College of Further and Higher Education (Appendix 10)
21 <sup>st</sup> February 2011	Informal conversation with service users, carers and social work educators – reported on the CAS findings – used the opportunity to network and make myself known. Sought advice regarding what areas to focus the research on.
20 <sup>th</sup> March 2011	Submission of Ethics Proposal – University of Sussex (Appendix 11)
10 <sup>th</sup> April 2011	Conference Presentation – Social work educators – used the opportunity to network and make myself known + recruitment
10 <sup>th</sup> April 2011	Ethic Proposal Application (University of Sussex) was rejected for further work
14 <sup>th</sup> April 2011	Resubmission of Ethics Proposal (Appendix 12)
27 <sup>th</sup> April 2011	Ethics Approval (Appendix 13)
5 <sup>th</sup> May 2011	Sent recruitment letters and post cards to Gatekeepers – Service user Participation Coordinators and Head of Schools & social work educators  Recruitment post cards sent to social work employers
18 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	Presentation - University of Sussex Doctoral Student Workshop
22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2011	Conference Presentation – informal discussion and conversation with Service users and carers

6 <sup>th</sup> May 2011	Data collection started
January 2012	Summary of initial findings, on what participants thought about the ASYE and what should count as service user and carer feedback, was submitted to Skills for Care London (Appendix 3).
9 <sup>th</sup> July 2012	Presented emerging findings at the <i>International Social Work Social Development 2012: Action and impact Conference</i> ; Stockholm, Sweden
25 <sup>th</sup> July 2012	End of data collection



## Appendix 19: An example of the process of theme identification and development



## Stages 1 – 4: The process of theme identification and development

An example of identification and development of the initial themes:

Different ways of involvement	
Stage 1, 2 & 3	Stage 4
Example 1 - Excerpts from interview transcript	Initial list of themes
<p>INT It's the MA in Social Work and <i>I'll</i> be finished next year.</p> <p>AA Can you tell me how service users have been involved in your assessment up until now?</p> <p>INT During practice learning <i>they</i> asked service users to come in and give <i>their</i> experience of social work students on placement</p> <p>AA Ok but you talked about them coming in to talk to you, have they been involved in your assessment whilst at university?</p> <p>INT <i>They</i> have not been involved, but in the lecturing process <i>they</i> have tried to be active but not in the actual assessments at university.</p>	<p>During <b><i>practice learning</i></b> they asked service users to come in</p> <p><b><i>Placement</i></b> [Comments: service users involved in teaching but not in assessments]</p> <p>not in the actual <b><i>assessments at university</i></b> [Comments: different institutions doing different things?]</p> <p><b><i>They have not been involved</i></b>, but in the lecturing process [Comments: service users involved in teaching but not in assessments]</p>
<p><u>Example 2</u></p> <p>AA Can you tell me, what you think should count as service user feedback evidence as a pass or fail, again looking at this extra year.</p> <p>INT Service user feedback as a pass or fail? Service user feedback should always be used and at the moment <i>I</i> don't see how it's fitting in as being recognised as service user feedback. But <i>I</i> think it does get used if there're any issues of a fail, say, in the <b>PAP [Practice Assessment Panel]</b> because service user feedback counts if there is a chance of a fail, and <i>our</i> voices are heard in PAPs.</p>	<p><b><i>'PAP' [Practice Assessment Panel]</i></b> [Comments: an unexpected theme – falls outside recurrent themes identified from the literature review but it is a common practice at my own institution] [feedback]</p>
<p><u>Example 3</u></p> <p>AA The Social Work Task Force suggested that service</p>	<p>the students have to get <b><i>feedback</i></b> from service users</p>

users should be involved in the ASYE, can you tell me about how service users and carers have been involved in your programme?

INT Firstly *I* would say, although I fully support service user feedback, *I* think it needs to be put into context *I* mean, *I* don't know about your programme but certainly on my programme, the students have to **get feedback** from service users but that's the limit.

#### Example 4

AA The Social Work Task Force suggested that service users should be involved in the ASYE, can you tell me about how service users and carers have been involved in your programme?

INT But *we* were showing a **role play film**, the service users were there to view the film and *they* talked to the students

[Comments: service users are involved in students assessments]

the students have to get **feedback** from service users  
[Comments: service users are involved in students assessments]

**role play** film, the service users were there to view the film and **they talked**  
[Comments: service users are involved in students assessments **feedback** – in line with the literature]

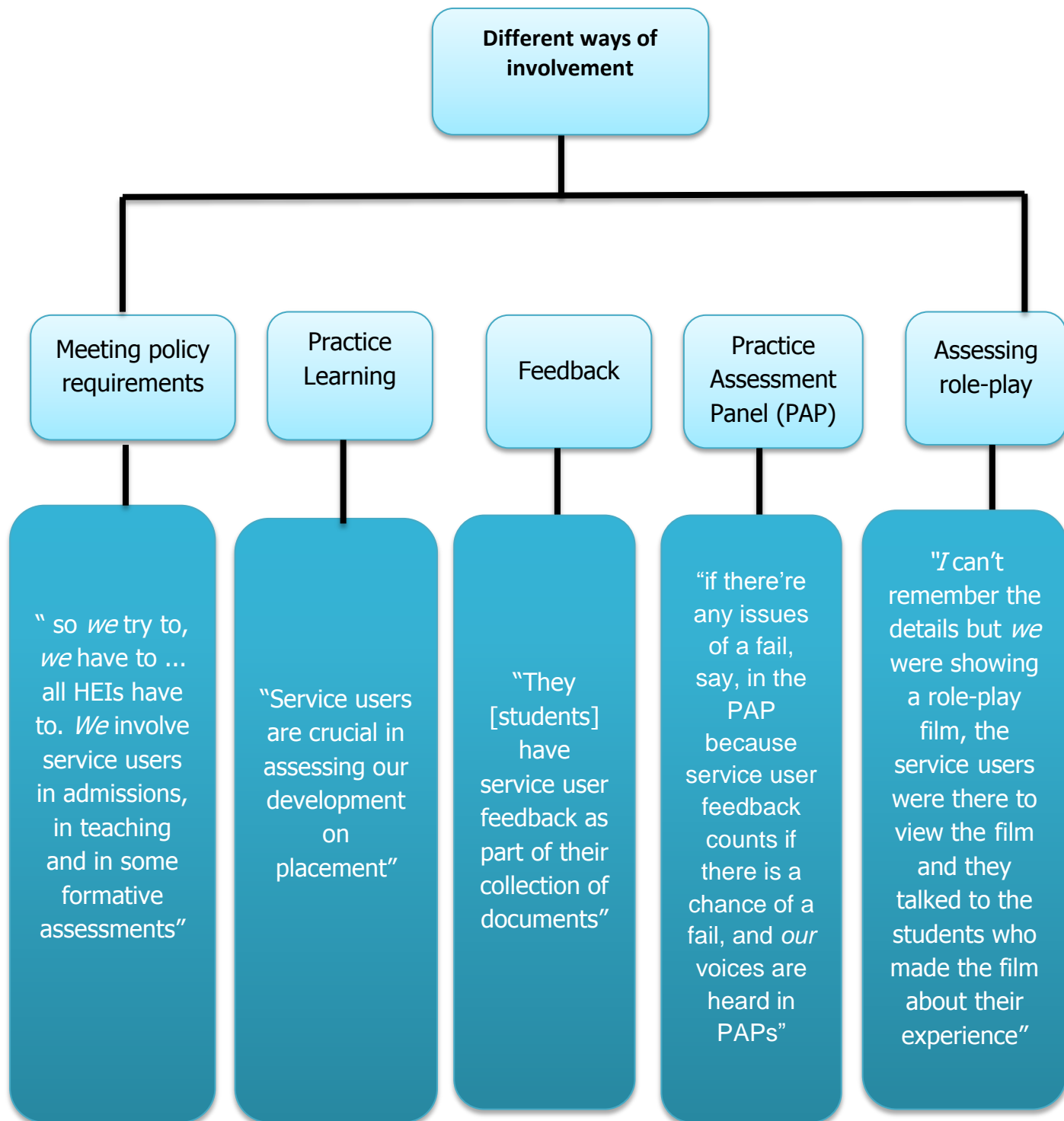
**Stage 5:**

Initial Themes	Cluster Themes
<p><i>During practice learning they asked service users to come in [meeting policy requirements]</i></p> <p><i>'Placement'[meeting policy requirements]</i></p> <p><i>'not in the actual' assessments at university [Comments: different institutions doing different things?]</i></p> <p>the students have to get <i>feedback</i> from service users [meeting policy requirements]</p> <p>But <i>we</i> were showing a <i>role play film</i>, the service</p>	<p><b><i>Practice learning</i></b></p> <p><b><i>placement</i></b></p> <p><b>Not in the actual <i>assessments at university</i> &amp; they haven't been involved</b></p> <p><b><i>Feedback</i></b></p> <p><b><i>role play film</i></b></p>

**Stage 6:**

Final theme	Sub-themes
Different ways of involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting policy requirements</li> <li>• Practice learning</li> <li>• Feedback</li> <li>• Practice Assessment Panel (PAP)</li> <li>• Role Play</li> </ul>

## Stage 7



**Example 2:**

<b>"How are service users and carers positioned in relation to other stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students?"</b>	
<b>Stage 1 – 3 An Example: Assessment as the site of power: service users and carers narratives: Excerpts from the interview data</b>	<b>Stage 4: Initial list of themes</b>
<p><b>Example 1</b></p> <p>AA: Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself and your experience of involvements</p> <p>INT: <b>I was asked to join</b> what was then the Project (now called XXX) which is a group of service users and carers, members of the faculty and representative of organisations in the MM area. The Project has progressed over the years and we have <b>been involved in presentations, in</b> research.</p> <p>AA Oh right, that's interesting.</p> <p>INT <b>We are working and putting pressure in various directions to enable us to be involved in the whole process.</b> But this is the first year that we have been involved, it's been a big leap forward and has taken us a long time to get this far</p>	<p><b><i>I was asked to join</i></b></p> <p><b><i>been involved in presentations</i></b> [Comments: service users play an important role in assessing students presentation – consistent with the literature]</p> <p><b><i>putting pressure in various directions to enable us to be involved in the whole process</i></b></p> <p>[Comments: why do service users have to put in pressure to be involved in the whole process? In what ways are they excluded? – what does the literature say?]</p>
<p><b>Example 2</b></p> <p>AA Please tell me more about your experience at the PAP</p> <p>INT At the PAP if a student [portfolio] looks like a fail <i>we</i> will also have a say in what <i>we</i> feel could be done differently and most of the time <i>our</i> voices are heard. But what will happen is that at the PAP <i>you</i> will have 2 people looking at each portfolio and <b>if it's a fail, they very often go to the academics to look at that.</b></p> <p>AA Really? That's interesting.</p>	<p><b><i>if it's a fail, they very often go to the academics to look at that</i></b> [Comments: service users are included in students' assessments but assessment decisions rests with social work academics – consistent with the literature]</p> <p><b><i>looked at by the academics their comments will be heard by the whole PAP</i></b></p>

<p>INT But what is good is when they're [portfolio] looked at by the academics <i>their</i> comments will be heard by the whole PAP and there are always 2 service users on the PAP. <b>Always.</b></p> <p>AA I'm interested in terms of 'it goes to the academic.' Why does it have to go to the academic?</p>	<p><b>Always</b> [Comments: final assessment recommendation rests with social work academic]</p>
<p><b>Example 3</b></p> <p>AA Tell me about your experience, do you think service users and carers would be able to change assessment decision at ASYE level?</p> <p>INT <b>We wouldn't be able to challenge that</b> [assessment decisions]</p>	<p><b>We wouldn't be able to challenge</b> [Comments: Yet service users and carers are key stakeholders in social work students assessments]</p>
<p><b>Example 4</b></p> <p>AA Tell me about your experience,</p> <p>INT <i>"I'm</i> thinking more of the mental health area which <i>I'm</i> most familiar with, <i>my</i> observations when chatting in groups has been the same, <b>that the opportunity is there but a lot of people lack the confidence to take advantage of that</b></p>	<p><b>the opportunity is there but a lot of people lack the confidence to take advantage of that</b> [Comments: service users have been given a voice in social work students assessment but some lacks confidence]</p>

### Stage 5:

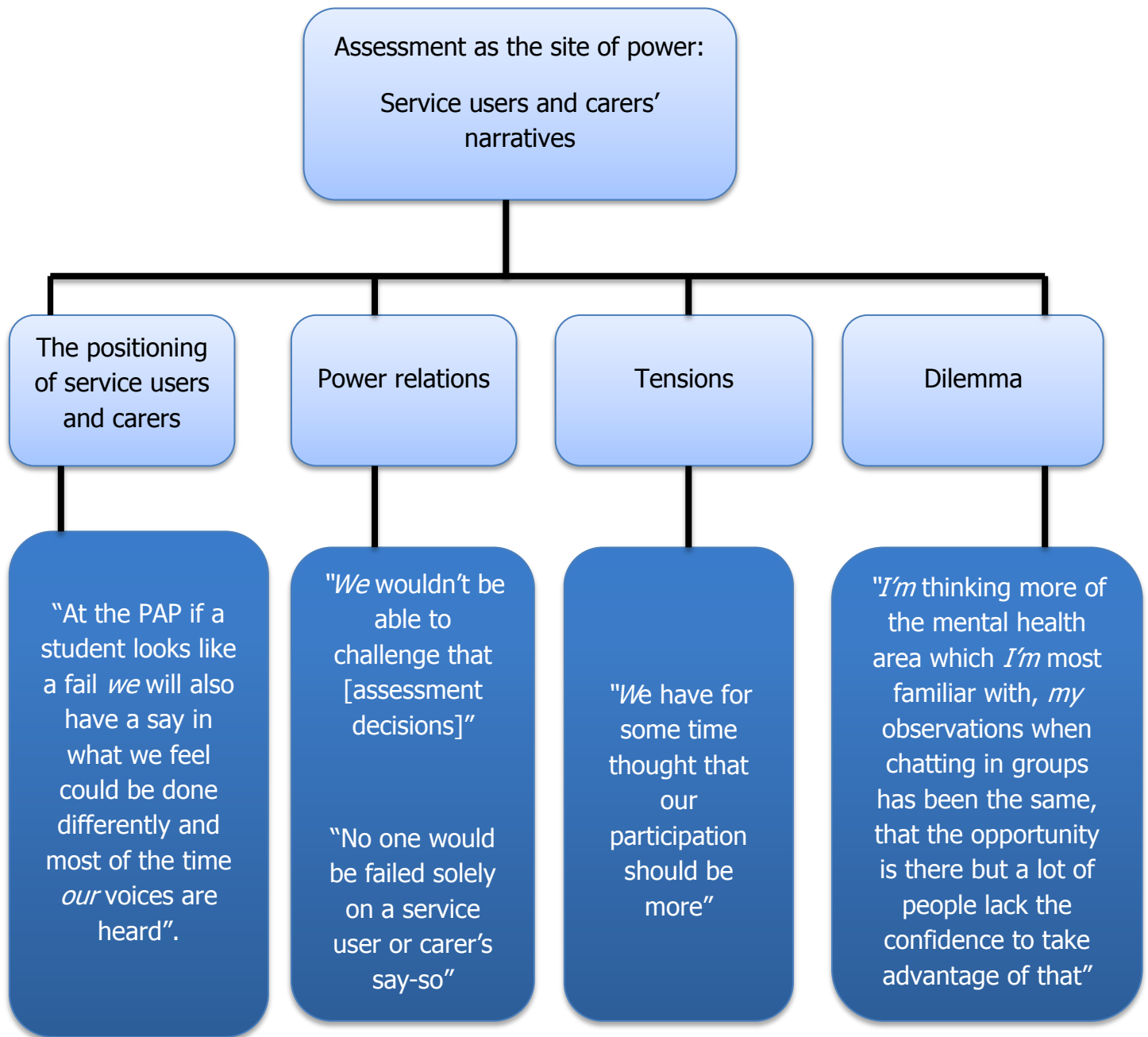
Initial themes	Combined themes
<p><i>I was asked to join</i></p> <p><i>been involved in presentations</i></p> <p><i>putting pressure in various directions to enable us to be involved in the whole process</i></p> <p><i>if it's a fail, they very often go to the academics to look at that</i></p> <p><i>looked at by the academics their comments will be heard by the whole PAP</i></p>	<p><u>Positioning</u>: Service user and carers have been given a voice</p> <p><u>Power</u> - Final assessment decisions rests with social work academics. Lack power to challenge or recommend a fail assessment</p> <p><u>Tensions</u> - Service users feel their participation</p>

<p><i>Always</i></p> <p><i>We wouldn't be able to challenge</i></p> <p><i>the opportunity is there but a lot of people lack the confidence to take advantage of that</i></p>	<p>should be more than what professionals think</p> <p><u>Dilemma</u>: Service users have been given a voice but lack confident to participate – this creates the dilemma whether to involve them in students' assessments</p>
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### Stage 6:

Final theme	Sub-themes
<p>Assessment as the site of power:</p> <p>Service users and carers narratives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The positioning of service users and carers</li> <li>• Power relations</li> <li>• Tensions</li> <li>• Dilemma</li> </ul>



**Stage 7:**

**Example 2:**

<b>"How are service users and carers positioned in relation to other stakeholders involved in the assessments of social work students?"</b>	
<b>Stages 1 – 3: An example: Assessment as the site of power: Social work educators narratives: Excerpts from the interview data</b>	<b>Stage 4: Initial list of themes</b>
<b><u>Example 1</u></b>  AA The Social Work Task Force suggested that service users should be involved in the ASYE, can you tell me about how service users and carers have been involved in your programme?  INT Firstly <i>I</i> would say, although <i>I</i> fully support service user feedback, <i>I</i> think it needs to be put into context <i>I</i> mean, <i>I</i> don't know about <i>your</i> programme but certainly on <i>my</i> programme, the students have to get feedback from service users but that's the limit.	<i><b>the students have to get feedback from service users</b></i> [Comments: service users are involved in students assessments]  <i><b>that's the limit</b></i> [involvement to an extent? defined by whom professionals]
<b><u>Example 2</u></b>  AA I'm looking at the ASYE level. We don't have a clear criteria, or do we have the professional capability framework but it doesn't specify what service users should comment on, what is your experience of service user and carer involvement in students assessments?  INT <i>I</i> think with all service user things it tends to be tagged on. <i>You</i> hear it all the time – oh <i>we</i> better ask a service user – <i>you</i> hear it in meetings. <i>You</i> talk about the business and then someone will say 'Oh what about the service users' and someone else will say 'We'd better ask them'. It's a bit of an afterthought	<i><b>it tends to be tagged on</b></i> [Comments: positioning - tokenistic?]
<b><u>Example 3</u></b>  AA What are your experience of service user and	<i><b>we never really address the power dynamic</b></i>  <i><b>So how do we manage that?</b></i>

<p>carer involvement in students' assessments? INT</p> <p><i>You</i> get service users who actually demand things of the prospective student based on <i>their</i> experience which are totally unrealistic. So how do <i>we</i> manage that? <i>We</i> don't. <i>We</i> just sweep it under the carpet. <b>So <i>we</i> never really address the power dynamic,</b> the status. Now, if <i>we</i> were honest with service users, <i>we</i> would say, '<b><i>You're not an equal partner in this, we'll listen to what you have to say,</i></b> consider it and then do what <i>we're</i> going to do anyway!'</p>	<p><b><i>We don't</i></b> [Comments: failing to address difficult issues within the relationship – misuse of power]</p> <p><b><i>'You're not an equal partner in this</i></b> we'll listen to what you have to say ...then do what we're going to do anyway!'</p>
<p><b><u>Example 4</u></b></p> <p>AA What is your experience of service user and carer involvement in students' assessments?</p> <p>INT</p> <p>...a number of generalisations about races and cultures and things like that and it kind of gave the students the opportunity to discredit everything that she was saying because the manner in which it was delivered. ..<i>I</i> was reflecting on yesterday coming home thinking <b><i>I don't want to start 'training' service users because you lose the essence of the genuine message, but they really need to learn about delivery"</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>because the manner in which it was delivered</i></b> [Comments: skills deficit in delivering assessment feedback]</p> <p><b><i>I don't want to start 'training' service users because you lose the essence of the genuine message</i></b> [Comments: the dangers of losing the authentic voice of service users through training]</p>

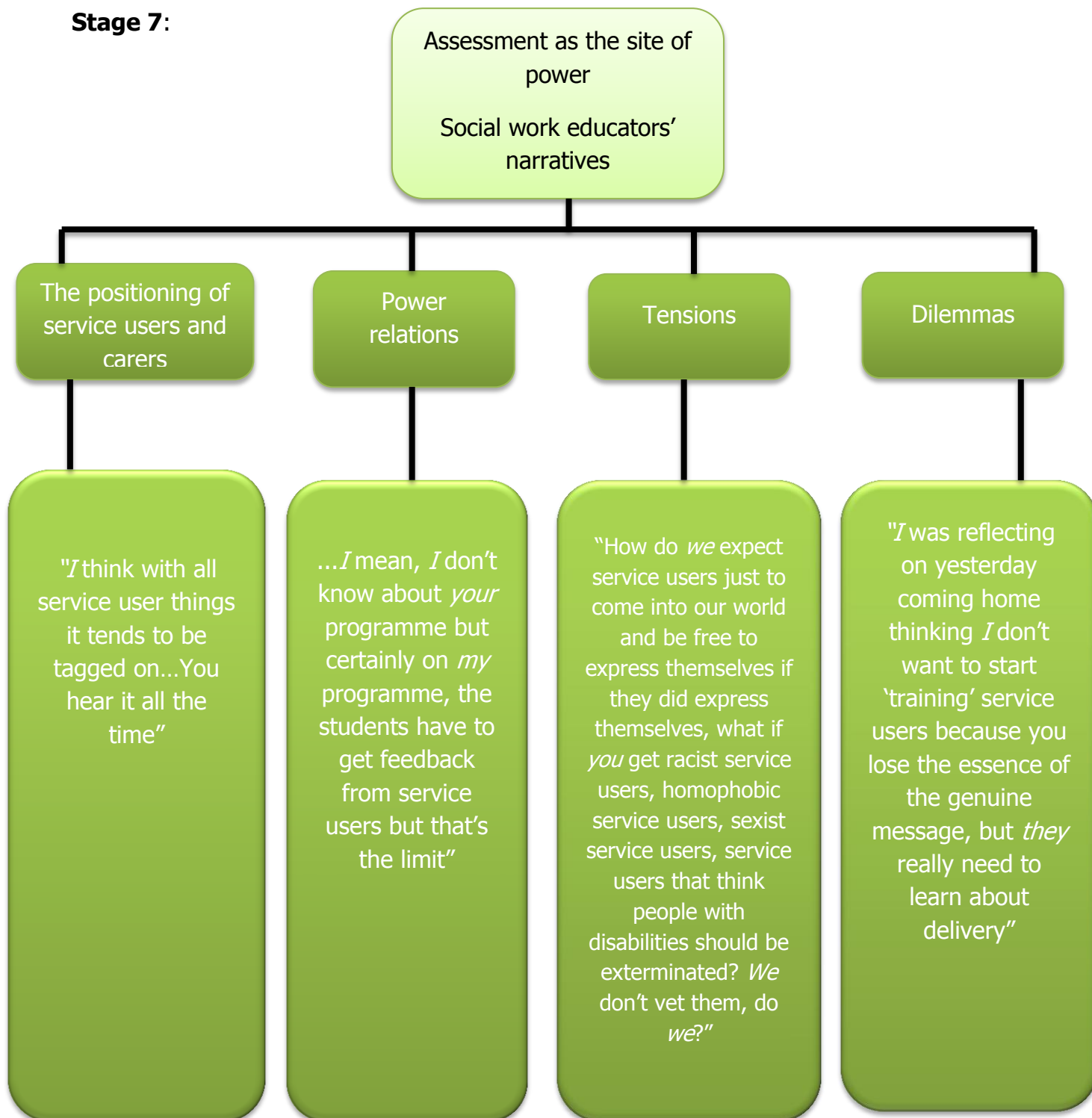
## Stage 5:

Initial themes	Combined themes
<p><i>the students have to get feedback from service users</i></p> <p><i>that's the limit</i></p> <p><i>it tends to be tagged on</i></p> <p><i>we never really address the power dynamic</i></p>	<p><u>Positioning</u>: Service user and carers have been given a voice</p> <p><u>Power</u> – Unequal partnership involvement and assessment decisions rest with professionals rather than with service users</p>

<p><i>So how do we manage that? We don't</i></p> <p><i>You're not an equal partner in this</i></p> <p>we'll listen to what you have to say ...then do what we're going to do anyway!</p> <p><i>because the manner in which it was delivered</i></p> <p><i>I don't want to start 'training' service users because you lose the essence of the genuine message</i></p>	<p>and carers</p> <p><u>Tensions</u> – lack of skills. Service users have been given a voice but they lack skills in giving feedback</p> <p><u>Dilemma</u>: Offer training at the risk of losing the authentic voice of service users and carers.</p>
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### Stage 6:

Final theme	Sub-themes
Assessment as the site of power: Social Work Educators narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The positioning of service users and carers</li> <li>• Power relations</li> <li>• Tensions</li> <li>• Dilemma</li> </ul>

**Stage 7:**

### Example 3

'Complicated relationship with others'	
Stage 1, 2 & 3	Stage 4
Example 1 - Excerpts from interview transcript	Initial list of themes
<p><b>Example 1</b></p> <p>AA Can you expand on the challenges and opportunities faced by social work educators, employers and service users in implementing this within the current economic and political climate?</p> <p>INT The current economic climate, yes, it all comes back to that really doesn't it? ..<i>I think we are going to be paid to do</i> this, because <i>we</i> are experts being brought in, but <i>I've</i> just had an email recently from one of <i>their</i> administrators to say <i>that it's just travel expenses that are to be paid</i></p>	<p><b><i>we are going to be paid</i></b> [Comments: uncertainty about whether they would be paid or not]</p> <p><b><i>we are experts</i></b> [Comments: justifying why service users should be paid for their involvement]</p> <p><b><i>it's just travel expenses that are to be paid</i></b> [Comment: not been paid for involvement but only for only for travel expenses]</p>
<p><b>Example 2</b></p> <p>AA So what you think about service user and carer involvement in social work students' assessments?</p> <p>INT</p> <p>The service users <i>we</i> work with are groups of people that become part of our system. The <i>capital they've got is derived from ours</i>, if you work it out. <i>We pay them and if we didn't they wouldn't be able to do what they do</i></p>	<p><b><i>capital they've got is derived from ours</i></b>, [Comments: economic dependency – social workers hold the economic capital that aids service user/carer involvement in students' assessments]</p> <p><b><i>We pay them</i></b> and if <i>we</i> didn't they wouldn't be able to do what <i>they</i> do [Comments: economic dependency – social workers hold the economic capital that aids service user/carer involvement in students' assessments]</p>

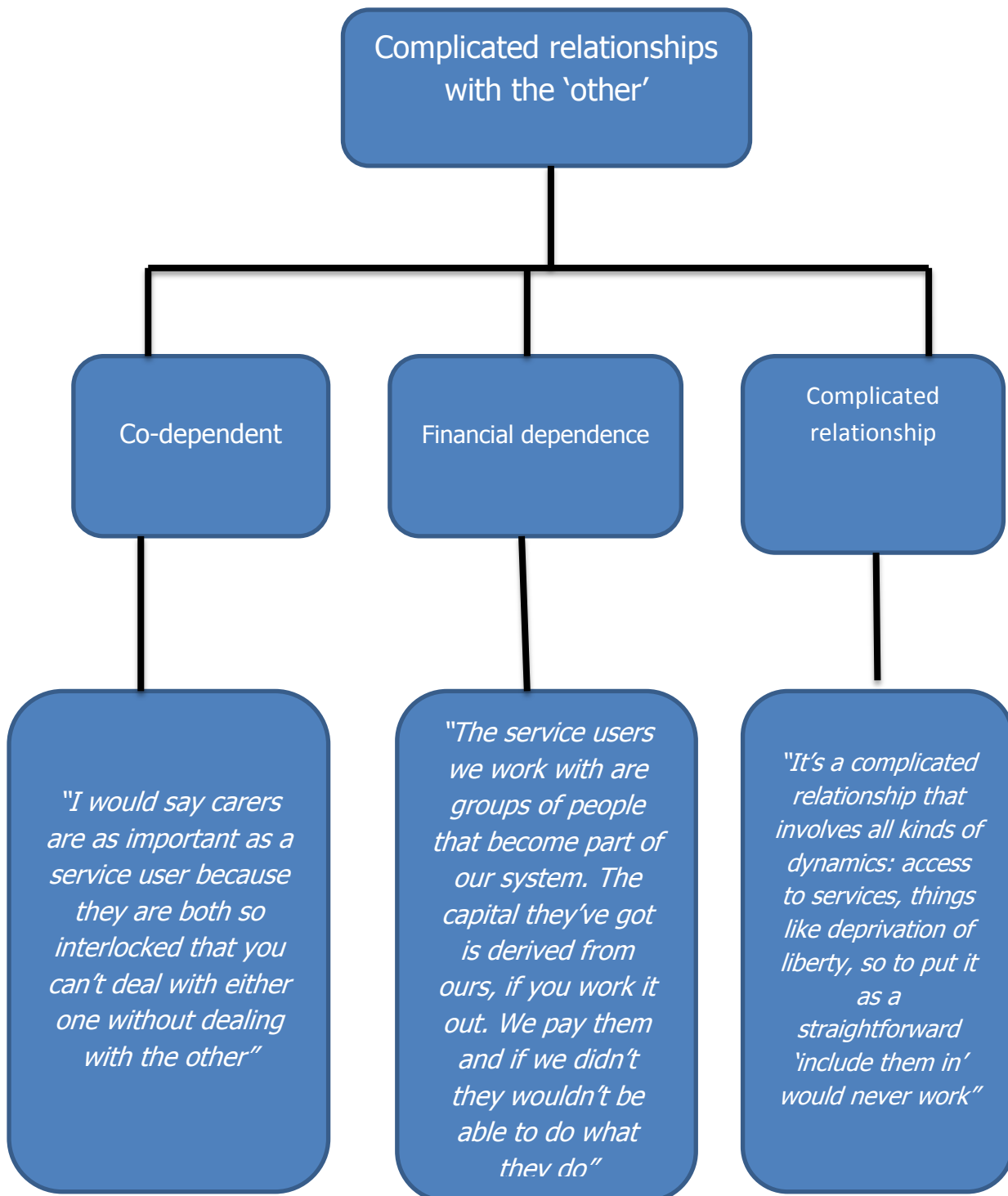
**Stage 5:**

Initial Themes	Cluster Themes
<p><i>we</i> are going to be paid</p> <p><i>we</i> are experts</p> <p>paid only travel expenses</p> <p>capital <i>they've</i> got is <b>derived from <i>ours</i></b>,</p> <p><b><i>We pay them</i></b> and if <i>we</i> didn't they wouldn't be able to do what <i>they</i> do</p>	<p><i>going to be paid</i></p> <p><b><i>We pay them</i></b></p> <p><b><i>we</i> are experts</b></p>

**Stage 6:**

Final theme	Sub-themes
<b>'Complicated relationship with others'</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-dependency</li> <li>• Financial dependence</li> <li>• Complicated relationship</li> </ul>

## Stage 7





**Example 4:**

<b>What should count as service user and carer feedback evidence?</b>	
<b>States 1, 2 &amp; 3 Example 1 – Excerpts from interview</b>	<b>Stage 4: Service user and carers' feedback: Example of initial themes</b>
<p>AA: So my question is what should service user's feedback look like?</p> <p>INT:</p> <p>What should it look like? <i>I think what's important to the service user's with the social workers is, it might look a bit minimal but things like, they want them to arrive on time because they're going to get frustrated if you're always half an hour late, so they need that kind of respect from them, they're punctual and on time. I think they want them to be honest with them, I think they want them to be as supportive as they can be but they want them to be clear about what they can and can't do, especially if it's a resource need for the service user</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>On time</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Late</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Punctual</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Honest</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>What they can and cannot do</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>to be as supportive</i></b></li> </ul> <p>[Comments: service users and carers have been involved at BA &amp; MA level – why are they looking for the same qualities at CPD level]</p>
<p><b>Example 2</b></p> <p>AA: That's great. So looking at all the things you've told me, if you are looking at some of the qualities what would you like to see in a social worker at this stage,</p> <p>INT <i>I'd like evidence of empathy, at least an attempt at understanding that life can be difficult in different ways, unexpected ways, really tiny things can make a tremendous difference to our lives, both good and bad. I'd like some evidence of intelligent thought that they</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>time-keeping</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>making sure that they're comfortable</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>empathy</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>tiny things can make a tremendous difference to our lives</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>intelligent</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>cheerfulness</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>won't just take what they've been told as Gospel,</i></b></li> </ul> <p>[Comments: service users and carers have been involved at BA &amp;</p>

<p>won't just take what they've been told as Gospel, they will test it and test it against their experience and our experience to see what a thoughtful conclusion is. Some evidence of intelligence would be nice and sensitivity, that's a big one. It would be nice if they were cheerful! then there's the practical qualities as well, like time-keeping, how <i>they</i> think about service users in terms of access and making sure that they're comfortable".</p>	<p>MA level – consistence with the literature but why are they looking for the same qualities at CPD level]</p>
<p><u>Example 3</u></p> <p>AA Tell me what qualities would you like to see someone at that level, ASYE what would you expect someone at that level to have?</p> <p>INT Right. <i>I</i> would expect that someone to be able to communicate, to be able to listen, to show empathy, to be good at administration in that <i>they</i> are reporting and doing a proper assessment of that individual and that is down in writing. And that individual has a care plan whereby <i>they</i> know what can be done ahead for them so that <i>they</i> can see what's going to happen over the next 3 months</p> <p>INT</p> <p>When <i>I</i> say communication, <i>I'm</i> not talking about communication of a level that <i>they</i> talk in the office, <i>I'm</i> talking about how <i>they</i> talk to the client so the client understand in basic English</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>to communicate</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>be able to listen</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>show empathy</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>to be good at administration</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>writing</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>talk</i></b></li> </ul> <p>[Comments: consistence across the different stakeholder groups – progression difference ignored?]</p>

**Stage 5:**

Initial themes	Combined themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>On time</i></li> <li>• <i>Late</i></li> <li>• <i>Punctual</i></li> <li>• <i>Honest</i></li> <li>• <i>What they can and cannot do</i></li> <li>• <i>to be as supportive</i></li> <li>• <i>time-keeping</i></li> <li>• <i>making sure that they're comfortable</i></li> <li>• <i>empathy</i></li> <li>• <i>tiny things can make a tremendous difference to our lives</i></li> <li>• <i>intelligent</i></li> <li>• <i>cheerfulness</i></li> <li>• <i>won't just take what they've been told as Gospel,</i></li> <li>• <i>to communicate</i></li> <li>• <i>be able to listen</i></li> <li>• <i>show empathy</i></li> <li>• <i>to be good at administration</i></li> <li>• <i>writing</i></li> <li>• <i>talk</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good time keeping</li> <li>• to show empathy</li> <li>• ability to communicate</li> <li>• form relationship</li> <li>• to listen</li> <li>• to be good at administration</li> <li>• reporting and doing a proper assessment</li> <li>• down in writing</li> </ul>

## Stage 6

Final themes	Sub themes
Effective Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to listen</li> <li>• Show empathy</li> <li>• Be able to talk</li> <li>• Record</li> </ul>
Professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Honesty</li> <li>• Good time-keeping</li> <li>• Reliability</li> <li>• Maintain professional boundaries</li> <li>• </li> </ul>
Feeling Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured empathy</li> <li>• Kindness</li> <li>• Be good at administration</li> </ul>

**Stage 7:**