

2023



The Experience of Practice Teaching in Ireland, September 2022 – May 2023

URI: <https://hdl.handle.net/10468/14826> CORA Cork Open Research Archive UCC

*Dr Niamh Murphy, Joanne Rose, Brenda Feeney, Dr Brian Melaugh, Eleanor Kelly,
Dr Erna O Connor, Jean Byrne-Cummins, Lyn Dorney, Paula Slavin, Dr Sinead Whiting*

Acknowledgements

The authors of this Report would like to thank the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth for funding the work of the NPTSWI.

We would like to thank Dr Niamh Murphy for collating, gathering and synthesizing the data contained in this report.

We would like to formally acknowledge and thank the practice teachers who responded to our survey and shared their experiences shedding light on the opportunities and barriers to practice teaching in social work that exists at this time in Ireland and in doing so ensuring that the voices of social work practice teachers are included in the national conversation around social work education and practice placements.

Ethics

This study received ethical approval from the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) at University College Cork.

Conflict Statement

The authors of this study have no conflicts of interest to declare in respect of this study.

URI

<https://hdl.handle.net/10468/14826> CORA Cork Open Research Archive UCC

DOI

<http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.12325.47840>



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Practice placement and practice teaching in Ireland: Context, criteria, experience and challenges</i>	5
<i>Methodology</i>	12
Purpose of the research	12
The survey sample	13
Research design	14
Data analysis	16
Ethical considerations	16
Study limitations.....	17
<i>Survey findings: Practice teacher experiences</i>	18
Background information	18
The experience of practice teaching in Ireland	26
Focus on most recent placement	38
<i>Discussion, conclusions and recommendations</i>	53
Enablers for practice teaching: Intrinsic motivation and a recognition of the importance and value of supervising placements	53
Barrier to practice teaching: The reoccurring time and workload issues.....	55
Conclusions	56
Recommendations	58
<i>Bibliography</i>	59
<i>Appendix one: The National Practice Teacher Questionnaire 2022-2023</i>	62

Introduction

Social work practice is a core feature of social work education, providing formative learning opportunities for students (Cleak *et al.*, 2022). The practice element of education is pivotal to the development of future social workers as it provides the space where theory and practice intersect (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2015). As such, it gives students the opportunity to apply the theory that they learn in the lecture theatre to social work practice and learn by ‘doing’ (Chui, 2009). Additionally, this experiential learning affords them the opportunity to develop their role-based competencies, to practice the skills essential for social work, and to work directly with individuals or families in a supervised capacity. As Flanagan and Wilson (2018, p. 566) state, placement-based learning has ‘a direct impact on [students] future functioning as professional social workers, and so it is essential that the learning environment is a positive one where students can gain as much as possible’. Consequently, the ‘universally acknowledged’ central role of social work practice in the education of future social workers cannot be overstated (Domakin, 2015, p. 399; Roulston *et al.*, 2023). Those tasked with supervising this crucial element of social work education – social work practice teachers – have a fundamental role in the development of competent and ethical social work practitioners who meet the standards of proficiency required for CORU registration.

The number of social work graduates is currently below that required to fill the increasing number of social work roles across the country (TUSLA, 2021a). Overall, there is a serious shortage of social workers in the Irish context and those working within this profession find that they have very heavy caseloads, often leading to burnout and high turnover (O'Meara and Kelleher, 2022). Consequently, the sourcing of social work placements is an increasingly difficult task. This is impacted by issues associated with commitments from employers to provide placements (O'Meara and Kelleher, 2022) and the difficulties associated with attracting social workers to supervise students on practice placements (Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs, 2019). As such, the current study sought to examine the experience of practice teachers supervising students in the academic year from September 2022 to May 2023 to provide the National Practice Teaching in Social Work Initiative (NPTSWI) with an understanding of the enablers and barriers to undertaking the social work practice

teacher role. This was accomplished through a national survey with practice teachers working with the six universities offering social work education: Atlantic Technological University, Maynooth University; Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin and University of Galway. Ethical approval for this survey research was provided by the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) in University College Cork.

The report will firstly discuss the Irish social work placement and practice teaching context in more detail, outlining the scope and criteria for practice teaching, as well as a short discussion on the practice teaching experience and challenges within the role. Subsequently, the methodology will be discussed. The chapter following that will present the findings of the survey and the final chapter will involve a discussion of the findings, some conclusions and recommendations.

Practice placement and practice teaching in Ireland: Context, criteria, experience and challenges

Practice placement has been described as the ‘signature pedagogy’ of social work education (Council on Social Work Education, 2022, p. 20). Signature pedagogies ‘are elements of instruction and socialization that teach future practitioners the fundamental dimensions of professional work in their discipline: to think, to perform, and to act intentionally, ethically, and with integrity’ (Council on Social Work Education, 2022, p. 20). As such, practice placements constitute a significant proportion of social work education and are key to students’ experiential learning of the competencies of social work.

Practice teaching takes place within the regulatory framework set out in various CORU policy documents, including the Social Workers Registration Board *Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers* and *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*. These documents outline social work education programme requirements including the practice element of this education, as well as the standards of proficiency that individuals must attain to be considered competent for professional practice. The statutory regulation system was put in place in order to ‘protect, guide and inform the public by ensuring that health and social care professionals are properly regulated and qualified for the job whether they work in the public or private sectors or are self-employed’ (Social Workers Registration Board, 2019b, p. 4). Thus, the role of the practice teacher is core to the development of social work students into social workers who are fit for practice and meet the proficiency standards required for Individuals to *enter* the register. These standards fall under five domains:

1. Professional autonomy and accountability
2. Communication, collaborative practice and teamworking
3. Safety and quality
4. Professional development
5. Professional knowledge and skills

It is the role of practice teachers to both develop and assess a student’s understanding and level of proficiency under these five domains. Their role in development of the proficiencies includes the provision of regular supervision, modelling or demonstrating social work practice, the allocation and supervision of developmentally appropriate practice work, provision of collaborative work opportunities for the student, and the provision of regular feedback (Univeristy College Cork, 2022).

Students undertake a number of placements throughout their social work education, one of which must be in a statutory setting in line with CORU requirements (School of Applied Social Studies, 2022). The criteria for practice placements, which can be found in table one, are set out in the Social Workers Registration Board (2019a) *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*, under Criteria 2.

Table 1: Criteria 2 – Practice Placements

2.1	Practice placements must be integral to the programme.
2.2	The programme must ensure that each student completes 1000 hours of placement, 350 hours of which must be in one block and full time.
2.3	The number, duration and range of practice placements, and their position within the programme must reflect current practice and demands of the profession. They must be appropriate to facilitate translation of theory into practice and the achievement of the standards of proficiency.
2.4	The education provider will have a set of requirements for the selection of practice placements to ensure quality learning experiences for students that reflect the normal context and environment of practice. The education provider will work in partnership with the practice placement provider and have written agreements in place that clearly set out the responsibilities of all parties in ensuring that the placement supports the achievement of the standards of proficiency.
2.5	The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring the quality of all practice placements. Students, the practice education team, placement providers and all relevant stakeholders –

	including service users where appropriate - must have a role in this review process including mechanisms for obtaining regular feedback.
2.6	Clear communication and governance structures should be in place to facilitate ongoing communication between the placement and education providers.
2.7	Student allocation to practice placements is based on the need to integrate theory and practice and to facilitate the student's progressive development of the standards of proficiency.
2.8	Practice placement attendance requirements are explicit and detailed mechanisms and processes are in place to manage absence/non-attendance.
2.9	Pre-placement requirements – including academic, legal, occupational health and other requirements, and procedures for non-compliance with these requirements, are clear.
2.10	While on placement, appropriate support, guidance and supervision is maintained with the student by the practice education team.
2.11	There must be a clear and explicit process in place for students to raise concerns in relation to their practice education and access appropriate supports.
2.12	The student code of conduct - and processes for dealing with breaches of that code whilst on placement - is in place.
2.13	The profile and roles of the practice education team must be described. Practice educators must also be registered with the appropriate registration board.
2.14	Students, practice placement providers and practice education teams will be fully prepared and informed of the expectations of the practice placement, including the education/ training provider's student fitness-to-practise requirements.
2.15	Supervision policies include guidelines on how students progressively achieve independence in practice.
2.16	Guidelines/procedures and supports are available for practice educators in managing students, including students who are in difficulty, throughout the placement.
2.17	Practice educators should have a minimum of two years post qualification experience; engaged in the practice of the profession.

2.18	The education provider must make regular support and training available to the practice education team to develop their practice education skills.
2.19	All stakeholders must be informed about practice education assessments, their link to the standards of proficiency and the marking criteria used. The practice education team must have access to assessment tools and be trained in completing these assessments and providing feedback during the placement.
2.20	Mechanisms for the return of placement assessments to the education provider must be in place.

Source: (Social Workers Registration Board, 2019a, pp. 8-9)

Social work education providers are required to meet these criteria in the delivery of the practice placement element of their programmes. Overall, students are required to spend at least 1,000 hours in practice placement, 350 hours of which must be in one block working full-time (Social Workers Registration Board, 2019a). Practice education takes place in a wide range of social work settings, reflecting the scope of social work practice, including adult mental health, CAMHS, child protection, hospital-based, homeless, addiction, asylum-seeker and refugee, adult safeguarding, probation, disability, adoption, retrospective disclosures, foster care and family support (School of Applied Social Studies, 2022). During their placement, students will observe and take part in professional interactions in a range of social work settings. Practice teachers are qualified professionals, usually working within the service where the student they are supervising is undertaking their placement. In Ireland, as outlined in the CORU criteria for placement, practice teachers must be registered with the appropriate registration board and have a minimum of two years post qualification experience in which they are engaged in the practice of the profession, in order to be eligible for this role.

The practice teaching role involves supervising and mentoring social work students to provide them with the opportunity for active engagement in practice to develop the social work practice skills required to work in the profession; to develop their professional identity, self-reflection, and critical thinking skills; and to cultivate an ethical approach to practice (Council on Social Work Education, 2022; Wilson and Flanagan, 2019). This practice experience involves applying the theory they learn in the class-based setting to their social work practice in a real-world setting – to ‘learn by doing’ (Flanagan and Wilson, 2018, p. 565) - under the

guidance and supervision of a qualified practitioner (Cleak *et al.*, 2022). During the placement process students should be exposed to a variety of learning experiences, which can include opportunities for observation, reflection, structured and informal supervision, supported learning, planned working, monitoring, guiding, feedback and assignments (Flanagan and Wilson, 2018). Practice teachers have a gatekeeping role for maintaining standards in the profession of social work (Roulston *et al.*, 2023; MacDermott and Harkin-MacDermott, 2021). As MacDermott and Harkin-McDermott describe:

Practice teachers must use their knowledge and professional judgement to assess if the student is competent and most importantly that their practice is safe and they will 'do no harm' to future service users and families (2021, p. 359).

Additionally, practice teachers in Ireland are expected to ensure *they* are adequately prepared for the placement (for example, through reading university handbooks, ensuring they are familiar with the Social Work Registration Board's (2019) Standards of Proficiency for Social Work, and preparing the practical office-based elements of the students arrival such as IT and desk space); preparing and implementing an induction plan; and writing reports to assess the student's practice (School of Applied Social Studies, 2022).

Placement allows students an experiential opportunity to develop the values, ethics and principles that underpin social work practice. Through their practice placement experiences, the need for reflection during the placement process, as well as the time afforded to them for discussing their feelings and values of practice, students begin to develop their professional identity as social workers, which the quality of their placement experience can significantly impact (Kuusisto *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the practice placement is integral to the development of a student social worker's professional identity (Cleak *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, the practice teacher plays an important role in guiding their professional identity to be in line with social work values and norms. For example, through the provision of an informal reflective space for discussions of identity between the student and their peers, and through the establishment of a reciprocal relationship between the practice teacher and student (Wheeler, 2017). In Ireland, the typical unit of a practice placement is made up of the practice teacher and the student, with a university-based practice tutor acting as the liaison

between them and the university (Flanagan and Wilson, 2018). As the practice teacher has such an important role, it is crucial that they are equipped to provide a quality placement for students. McLaughlin *et al* (2015), in assessing the work of other researchers, identified the following as the conditions for a quality placement: planning and preparation for a student's arrival, planned induction, effective support, regular supervision, a skilled assessor, and a commitment to the relevant regulatory body codes of practice. Wilson and Flanagan (2019) found that from the students' perspective, the most highly valued tools for a quality placement were working with cases, observing, co-working and increased responsibility and/or independent work. Other tools regarded as important include opportunities to critique one's own work and informal supervision. More recent research undertaken by Tusla (2021b) had similar findings and showed that the students that undertook placements with the agency between January and May 2021 had very high levels of satisfaction with the placement process, despite the fact that this particular cohort were impacted by Covid-19 restrictions which resulted in some remote work. Overall, these students were very positive about their weekly supervision and viewed the practice teacher as someone who could have a very big impact on their experience of the placement. Similar to the Wilson and Flanagan research, the Tusla study found that face to face work with clients was the most enjoyable aspect of the role for students (2021b).

Whilst the benefits of practice teaching for social work students is clear, what appears to be discussed less is its benefit to the practice teachers themselves. In reviewing literature on practice teachers ('field supervisors'), Baum (2007, p. 1107) concurs that becoming a practice teacher and supervising students constitutes a new 'developmental stage' for social workers, where they experienced both personal and professional learning, including learning around their strengths and weaknesses as social workers. Research by Tusla (TUSLA, 2021a) which comprised a study of practice teachers active within the agency between September 2020 and May 2021 illustrated some of the benefits for Irish practice teachers in undertaking the role. These benefits were focused around their own learning as the practice teacher experience presented them with opportunities for reflective practice and the need to justify why and how the agency intervenes the way that it does, which allowed them to interrogate and scrutinise their own practice more closely. Additionally, they reported that the process enabled them to develop their own skills in a range of areas such as mentoring, supervision,

case management and prioritisation of cases within a busy and demanding environment (TUSLA, 2021a). Finally, the practice teachers in the Tusla study spoke about the benefit of student supervision for the whole team as having a student on placement was seen as energising the team.

Despite the benefits of practice teaching for students, practice teachers, social work employing agencies and social work in general, there are still a number of challenges faced within the field of practice placement. O'Meara and Kelleher (2022) described how the participants in their scoping exercise for the Irish Association of Social Workers frequently highlighted the issues of a national shortage of practice placements, despite the fact that placements are core part of training people to become ethical and competent social workers. Thus, they argued that the dearth of placements is 'creating a bottleneck in the "supply chain" of newly qualified social workers, where one of the arguments against increasing the number of college places is the lack of sufficient placement options each year' (O'Meara and Kelleher, 2022, p. 17). Despite the dearth of placements, there is resistance towards non-traditional approaches to the practice element of social work education. However, increased creativity and innovation around the sourcing of placements could open up opportunities for placements outside of the traditional settings. Short *et al* (2022, p. 1) argue that 'creativity and innovation guided by well-articulated educational principles, learning outcomes, and pedagogical practices, promote the construction of quality placements that transcend potential risks'. Additional challenges facing practice placement provision include time constraints and a lack of recognition of and adjustment for the additional workload by employers (Domakin, 2015). As such, social work practice teachers can face competing demands between their own practice responsibilities and those additional demands that come with supervising a student. The findings and discussion sections will take up this issue in more detail as similar challenges were found in the current study.

Methodology

Purpose of the research

This quantitative study utilised an online questionnaire as the tool for collecting data on the experience of practice teaching in Ireland between September 2022 and May 2023. The purpose of the research was to examine feedback from CORU registered practice teachers on their experience of practice teaching in Ireland using a cross sectional survey design. Due to a crisis in sourcing social work placements, members of the NPTSWI were seeking to garner an in-depth understanding of the experience of practice teaching. The initiative wishes to understand any opportunities to improve the experience for practice teachers in ways that might attract more social workers to supervise students, as well as understanding issues that may be acting as a barrier for further social workers taking on the practice teaching role. As such, the **research question**, which the questionnaire sought to answer, was:

How do social workers describe the experience of working as a practice teacher in Ireland?

The survey involved gathering data around the opportunities and barriers for practice teaching. To this end, the study makes a valuable contribution to the development of practice teaching and education in workplace settings, as well as helping to understand what attracts people towards, or keeps them away from practice teaching.

The study was carried out after ethical approval was granted from the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) in University College Cork. The following sub-sections will provide details on the survey sample, the design of the research tool, data analysis and some study limitations.

The survey sample

The aim of this research was to examine the experience of practice teaching among practice teachers active in a defined time period in all six of the HEIs offering social work. A major advantage of this research being undertaken by the NPTSWI is the fact that all six HEIs are involved with the network which gave access to all practice teachers active in Ireland for the current academic year. As such, the approach taken to the research was to invite the full research population, rather than a sample, to take part in the research; in other words, all practice teachers active between September 2022 and May 2023. This was straightforward to do as the practice co-ordinators have easily accessible records of all the practice teachers who supervised students at the specified time, as well as their email addresses.

This approach to the research was taken in order to maximise the number of responses during the two week-time frame in which people could respond to the survey. As the research had a tight deadline, it was important to encourage people to reply within this time period as it was not possible to extend the deadline beyond this. An initial email invitation was sent to all practice teachers, followed by a reminder email the following week. In total 510 practice teachers were sent the survey. A total of 107 responded, giving us a response rate of 21 per cent. Although the response rate appears to be on the lower-side, it is important to remember that this response rate is calculated from a survey that was administered to *every* member of the survey population and not just a sample. Thus, it constitutes responses from 21 per cent of all practice teachers who were active in the academic year 2022-2023. Additionally, an earlier survey, also using Microsoft Forms, carried out by the NPTSWI had a similar response rate. Thus, this response rate does not appear unusual for this particular survey population and is likely related to the many demands already on their time as they work in an area with a very high workload (O'Meara and Kelleher, 2022).

Table 2: Total invitations sent to practice teachers to participate in the survey by university

University	Total survey invitations sent
Atlantic Technological University	36
Maynooth University	74
Trinity College Dublin	120
University College Dublin	96
University College Cork	125
University of Galway	59
Total	510

Research design

This research used a cross-sectional survey design to collect data from social work practice teachers. This kind of survey involves collecting self-reported data from participants at a specific point in time. Bryman defines cross-sectional design as entailing ‘the collection of data on *more than one case* (usually quite a lot more than one) and at a *single point in time* in order to collect a body of *quantitative or quantifiable data* in connection with two or more variables (Usually many more than two), which are then examined to detect *patterns of association*’ (Bryman, 2012, p. 58, Italics in original). This survey design suits this particular research as we are interested in the ways that social workers describe their experience of practice teaching presently.

The research tool comprised a questionnaire which was administered online using Microsoft Forms. There are a number of advantages and disadvantages in using online surveys as a research tool. The benefits include the cost effectiveness, the ability to quickly reach a large number of respondents, the ease of maintaining anonymity and the speed of data collection. Some disadvantages include the possibility of responses bias, technical issues, and an inability to clarify questions for respondents (Van Selm and Jankowski, 2006). For the purposes of this research, the benefits were seen to outweigh any potential disadvantages. This study was undertaken with practice teachers across the country as the six HEIs offering social work education are located in a number of counties: Dublin, Kildare, Galway, Cork and Sligo. They

were all professionals who would have experience of using the internet, thus the possibility of missing out on respondents due to a lack of internet access was not a concern. Additionally, the timeframe for undertaking this research was tight and responses were required within two weeks after the initial survey invitation was sent, which would only be possible using online research tools. Maintaining anonymity was important for this research so that the practice teachers would feel comfortable sharing their honest opinions around their experience of practice teaching without any worries of this impacting their relationship with the university or placement co-ordinators. The mitigations to address the possibility of response bias are outlined in the limitations section. Overall, online survey research was the best tool for this study considering the budget, timeframe, survey population, location of respondents and need for anonymity.

The questionnaire covered a number of areas related to the experience of practice teaching in Ireland which were identified through literature and input from the practice co-ordinators in the six HEIs undertaking social work research in Ireland (See appendix one for full questionnaire). The questionnaire consisted mainly of closed questions, but included sections for open-ended questions too. This approach was taken as it was felt that some open-ended questions would allow the respondents to elaborate on their responses and provide more detail around their experiences of practice teaching, giving their voice more presence in the research.

An information note on the research was included in the email invitation and at the beginning of the online survey. These information notes outlined the anonymous and voluntary nature of the research, as well as their right to withdraw up to the point of data submission. Consent was sought from all participants through ticking a box stating whether they did or did not consent. If any had clicked 'do not consent' the survey would have ended there and they would be directed away from the page. However, everyone consented to participate after reading the information note.

Data analysis

The closed question responses were analysed using SPSS. The data was easily downloaded from Microsoft Forms to Excel, from where it was uploaded to SPSS for analysis. The data was thoroughly checked and recoded where necessary due to most of the Likert scale responses getting mixed up in the data transfer process. Once the data file was fully set up in SPSS, all data was checked against the data saved in Microsoft Forms to ensure it had been transferred and coded correctly.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used through the data analysis process. The descriptive statistics helped to understand the characteristics of the research population. Whereas, the inferential statistics were used to identify relationships between the variables

The open-ended questions were analysed manually to identify the most frequent responses. A selection of the quotes was then compiled for each of the questions.

Ethical considerations

There were no significant ethical considerations identified for this study. The practice teachers who were invited to participate in the research have a working relationship with the practice co-ordinators who sent them the invitation to participate. There was the possibility that the respondents could be critical of their experience working with the universities, thus anonymity was essential so that they felt free to be honest in their responses. Likewise, it was important to the practice co-ordinators that the research in no way impact their relationship with these practice teachers. As such, the use of the online survey ensured that the responses were completely anonymous. Respondents were not asked for their names at any time throughout the process. As such, the researcher and practice co-ordinator had no way of knowing if a person had replied to the survey or not.

Study limitations

This research utilises a cross-sectional design in its approach to gathering the data. Cross-sectional research is often criticised through a comparison with longitudinal design which is viewed as offering advantages such as its ability to shed light on causal connections (Spector, 2019). However, for the purposes of this study the cross-sectional design works well as our aim was to examine the experience of practice teachers at a given point in time, i.e., the current academic year, and with reference to one particular student placement experience. As such, using a cross sectional design meets the needs of the current study and provides a useful means to collect the required data to address the research question.

As with all survey research, particularly that undertaken through internet questionnaires, there was the potential for non-response bias to impact the data collected through the fieldwork. Non-response bias occurs when a particular proportion of the research sample decide not to respond to the survey or drop out before it is completed, and are systematically different from those who decide to participate (Prince *et al.*, 2012). This can be a significant concern for internet surveys as a lack of direct contact between the researcher and potential respondents may lead to higher levels of non-response. To mitigate this risk, follow-up, reminder emails were sent to potential survey participants in order to try and improve the response rate. Likewise, the homogeneity of the research population acts as a mitigating factor as there are likely less differences between responders and non-responders. Although comparing the characteristics of responders and non-responders can help in estimating the significance of non-response bias, this was not possible for this study as responses were anonymous so there was no way to know who had or had not responded.

Survey findings: Practice teacher experiences

This section of the report will outline the findings of the online questionnaire sent to practice teachers active between September 2022 and May 2023. It will present data from both the closed and open-ended questions. The closed question data will be presented through a mixture of tables and charts, whereas the open-ended questions will be presented through a selection of quotes from the respondents. The open-ended questions were not thematically analysed as stand-alone qualitative data. Rather, they were intended to provide detail to the closed questions and to give the respondents an opportunity to present their opinions on specific issues. Most of the closed questions were answered by all respondents. However, in a few instances there were a very small number of missing responses. For the sake of the analysis, the missing responses were excluded from the analysis but it is possible to see which questions they were in as the total should be $N=107$, as was the case for the majority of questions. The most missing responses from any one questions was four (where $N=103$).

Background information

The first section of the survey asked respondents about background information, which will be outlined in the following tables and charts.

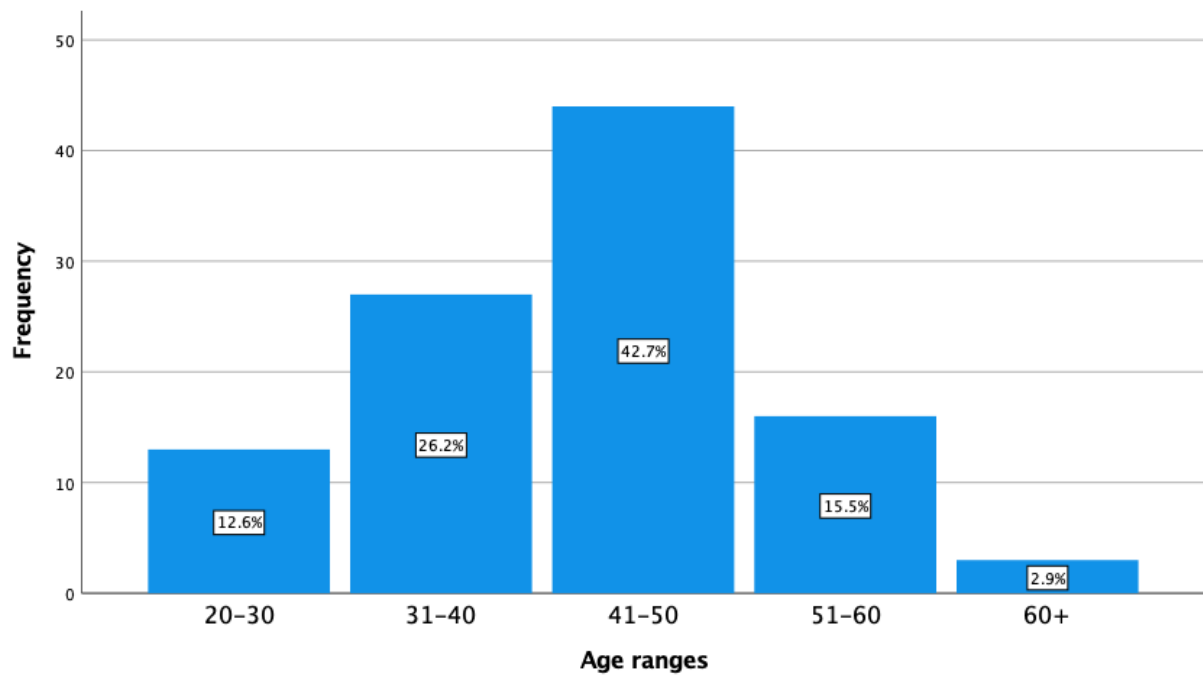
Table 3: Gender of participants

Gender	Number	%
Woman	84	78.5
Man	21	19.6
Non-binary	0	0
Prefer not to say	2	1.9
Total (N)	107	100

As would be expected for a survey in a female dominated profession, the vast majority of respondents were female at 78.5 per cent compared to 19.6 per cent for males. The gender distribution of female to male amongst the survey participants is similar to proportions within

the field of social work (BASW NI/IASW/Northern Ireland Social Care Council/Coru, 2020). No respondents described themselves as non-binary and just 1.9 per cent preferred not to answer the question on gender.

Chart 1: Age ranges of survey respondents



N=103

Chart one illustrates the age ranges of the research participants. The youngest participant was 27 and the oldest was 65. The average age was 42. Of all the respondents who stated their age (*N=103*), 12.6 per cent fell into the 20-30 category (*N=13*); 26.2 per cent were aged between 31 and 40 (*N=27*); 42.7 per cent were aged between 41 and 50 (*N=44*); 15.5 per cent were aged 51-60 (*N=16*); and 2.9 per cent were aged over 60 (*N=3*).

Table 4: What type of agency do you work in?

Agency type	Number	%
HSE	46	44.2
Tusla	34	32.7
Disability	6	5.8
Probation	6	5.8
Non-statutory agency	3	2.9
Other	9	8.7
Total	104	100

Table four presents data around the type of agency the respondents were employed in. A total of 104 people answered this question. Of those, the biggest proportion worked for the HSE (44.2%), followed by Tusla (32.7%). Together, these two agencies constituted 76.9 per cent of all the respondents. Those that chose 'other' are the next highest proportion (8.7%), followed by disability (non-HSE) and probation (both 5.8%). Finally, the smallest proportion stated that they worked for a non-statutory agency (2.9%). The respondents who worked in the HSE and Tusla were asked what sections they worked in within these organisations. Within the HSE, the highest number of respondents stated that they worked in a medical setting ($N=14$) or in Adult Mental Health ($N=13$). A total of seven respondents stated that they worked in CAMHS, with the same number working in disability (within the HSE). A total of nine stated that they worked either in safeguarding, primary care, or 'other' section. Within TUSLA, most respondents worked either in Children in Care ($N=13$) or Child Protection and Welfare ($N=12$). A smaller number ($N=9$) worked across the remaining sections: Adoption, Foster Care, Intake and Assessment, PPFs and 'other'.

Table 5: How long have you worked as a social worker for?

Length of time	Number	%
2-3 years	9	8.6
4-5 years	20	19.0
6-7 years	10	9.5
8-9 years	13	12.4
10 or more	53	50.5
Total	105	100

The majority (50.5%) of practice teachers who responded to the survey have been social workers for ten years or more, as is illustrated in table five. Those who have been social workers for 2-3 years constitute the lowest proportion of respondents (8.6%), followed by 6-7 years (9.5%), 8-9 years (12.4%) and 4-5 years (19%).

Table 6: How many students have you supervised as a practice teacher to date?

	Number	%
First time practice teacher	26	24.3
2-3	40	37.4
4-5	14	13.1
6-7	6	5.6
8-9	10	9.3
10+	11	10.3
Total	107	100

Out of the 107 respondents to the survey, the highest proportion (37.4%) stated that they have supervised 2-3 students on placement over their career. The second highest proportion constituted first time practice teachers (24.3%), followed by 13.1 per cent who had supervised 4-5 students, 10.3 per cent who had supervised over ten, and finally 5.6 per cent who had supervised 6-7.

As would be expected, there is a correlation (<.001 Pearson correlation) between the length of time that a person has been a social worker and the number of students that they have supervised. However, the highest proportion of first-time practice teachers have been a social worker for four to five years, which indicates that many social workers are taking on students for the first time after they have gained a few years of experience in the work place themselves. Overall, the survey indicates that the students who are going out on placement are benefiting from supervision by very experienced social workers as the majority of respondents have been working as social workers for 10 years and over. Similarly, the highest proportion of first-time practice teachers have been social workers for 4-5 years, again indicating at the experience level that students are benefiting from their practice teachers.

Table 7: Practice teacher training to date

Training	% Yes (N)	% No (N)	% Total (N)
Preparation for practice teaching (before the placement)	85.0 (91)	15.0 (16)	100 (107)
Practice teacher training during the course of a placement	55.1 (59)	44.9 (48)	100 (107)
Practice teacher CPD provided by the university	56.1 (60)	43.9 (47)	100 (107)
Practice teacher CPD provided by any other organisation (non-university)	13.1 (14)	86.9 (93)	100 (107)
Level 9 postgraduate qualification in practice teaching	8.4 (9)	91.6 (98)	100 (107)
No practice teacher training to date	0.9 (1)	99.1 (106)	100 (107)

When asked about the training that they have undertaken since becoming a practice teacher, almost all of the survey participants (99.1%) stated that they have undertaken some practice teacher training to date, with just one participant (0.9%) stating that they have not completed any practice teacher training. The respondents were asked to answer 'yes' or 'no' for all the training options available. The vast majority (85%) answered 'yes' that they completed a preparation for practice teaching course before starting to work as a practice teacher, whilst

55.1 per cent answered ‘yes’ to completing practice teacher training during the course of a placement. In total, 43.9 per cent of the respondents answered ‘yes’ to having completed continuous professional development (CPD) provided by the university, whilst 13.1 per cent answered ‘yes’ to the question of whether they have undertaken CPD provided by any other organisation (non- university). Out of the 107 respondents, nine (8.4%) stated that they have completed a level 9 postgraduate qualification in practice teaching.

Chart 2: Motivations to engage in practice teaching

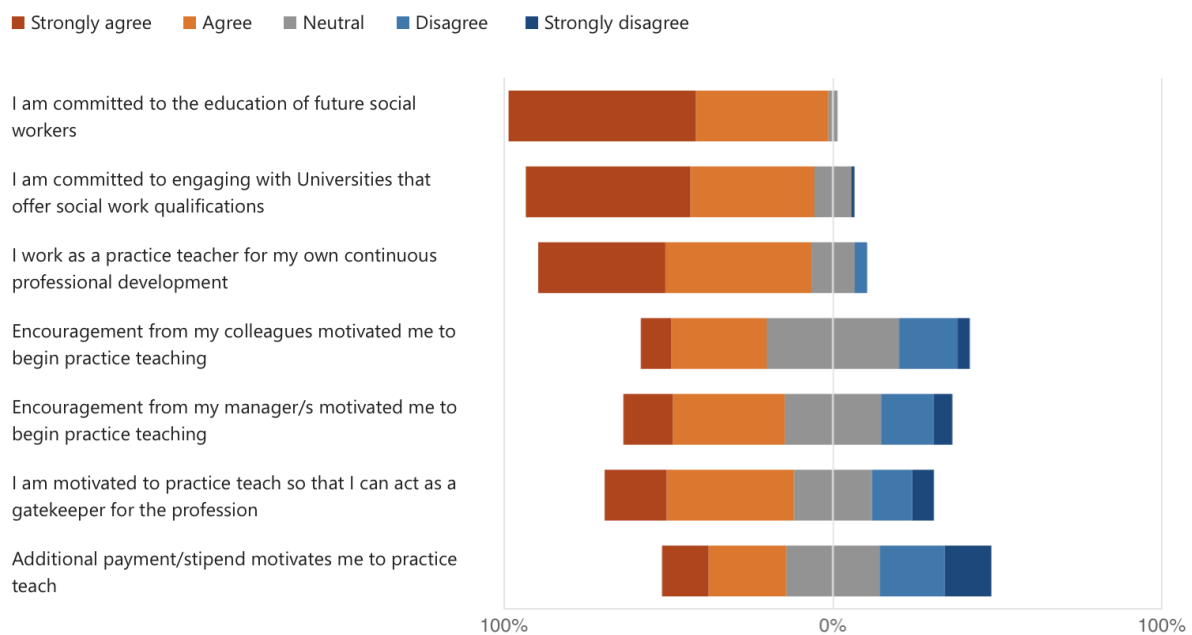


Chart 2 visually displays the data for a number of questions the respondents were asked around their motivations to engage in practice teaching. The chart illustrates how the respondents are more motivated by a commitment to the education of future social workers and a commitment to engaging with universities, than they are motivated by colleagues and/or managers, or by the additional stipend. As the chart does not include numerical data¹, this is outlined in table eight.

¹ These histograms are produced in Microsoft Forms and do not have the option to insert value labels. SPSS does not have a function to create similar histograms. Thus, both the charts and tables are included as the histograms provide an interesting visual representation of the data, whilst the tables present the values.

Table 8: Motivations to engage in practice teaching

	Strongly agree % (N)	Agree % (N)	Neutral % (N)	Disagree % (N)	Strongly disagree % (N)	Total % (N)
I am committed to the education of future social workers	57.0 (N=61)	40.2 (N=43)	2.8 (N=3)	0 (N=0)	0 (N=0)	100 (N=107)
I am committed to engaging with universities that offer social work qualifications	50.5 (N=54)	37.4 (N=40)	11.2 (N=12)	0 (N=0)	0.9 (N=1)	100 (N=100)
I work as a practice teacher for my own continuous professional development	39.3 (N=42)	43.9 (N=47)	13.1 (N=14)	3.7 (N=4)	0 (N=0)	100 (N=107)
Encouragement from my colleagues motivated me to begin practice teaching	9.3 (N=10)	29.0 (N=31)	40.2 (N=43)	17.8 (N=19)	3.7 (N=4)	100 (N=107)
Encouragement from my manager/s motivated me to begin practice teaching	15.9 (N=17)	33.6 (N=36)	29.0 (N=31)	15.9 (N=17)	5.6 (N=6)	100 (N=107)
I am motivated to practice teach so that I can act as a gatekeeper for the profession	19.6 (N=21)	38.3 (N=41)	23.4 (N=25)	12.1 (N=13)	6.5 (N=7)	100 (N=107)
Additional payment/stipend motivates me to practice teach	15.0 (N=16)	23.4 (N=25)	28.0 (N=30)	19.6 (N=21)	14.0 (N=15)	100 (N=107)

The data illustrates how the highest proportion (97.2%) of respondents strongly agree or agree that they are committed to the development of future social workers. Additionally, a very high proportion (87.9%) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they are committed to engaging with universities that offer social work qualifications. The next highest proportion (83.2%) stated that they strongly agree or agree with the statement around working as a practice teacher for their own continuous professional development. When asked if they are motivated to practice teach in order to act as a gatekeeper for the profession, 57.9 per cent stated that they either strongly agree or agree with this statement. The proportions that either strongly agreed or agreed were smaller for the other statements, with 49.5 per cent agreeing that encouragement from their manager motivated them to begin practice teaching; and equal proportions (38.3%) agreeing with the statements that

encouragement from colleagues motivated them to begin practice teaching and that additional stipend/payment motivates them to practice teach.

Quotes 1: Selection of motivators and demotivators for engaging in practice teaching



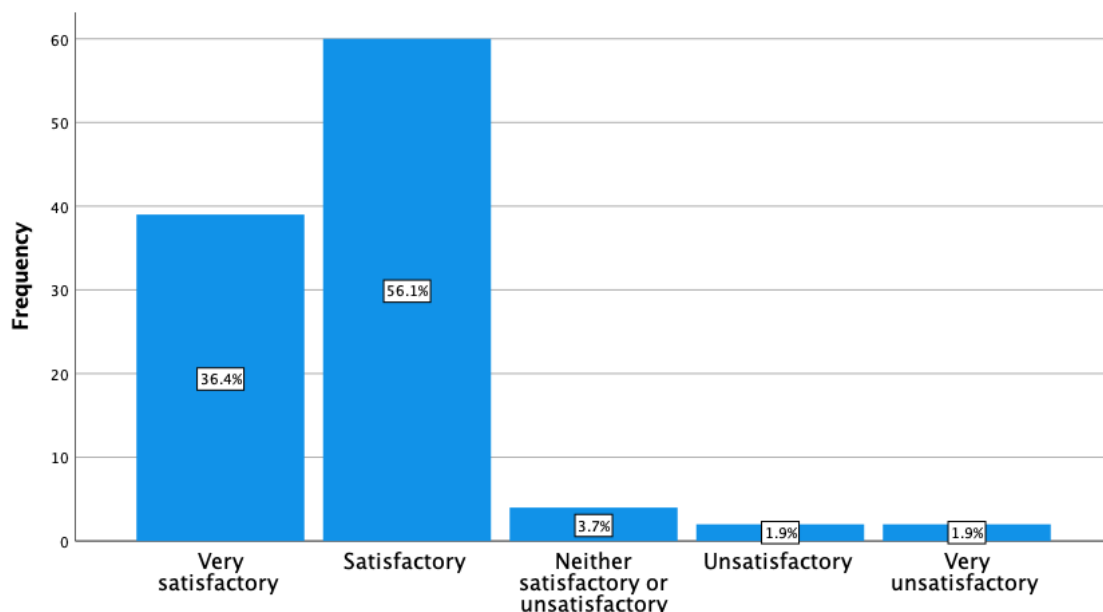
The respondents were asked the open-ended question: 'If there is anything that motivates or demotivates you to engage in practice teaching, which was not mentioned in the previous

question, please outline’. There were a variety of responses, some of which are outlined above, but a number focused on being motivated to practice teach due to a desire to ‘give back’ due to their own positive experiences with a particular practice teacher when they were a student; as well as a desire to provide opportunities for students; and to provide learning opportunities for themselves as social workers. Additionally, some mentioned that they enjoy the process of seeing students ‘grow’ on placement. The demotivators were focused around the workload associated with taking a student and concerns around how this would impact an already high workload; and the very low payment received for all the additional work. Whilst a small few wondered about whether the academic ability of students had decreased in recent times as they found it demotivating to work with students who they felt needed a lot of additional support.

The experience of practice teaching in Ireland

Having examined the background information provided by the survey respondents, this section of the results will discuss responses related to the participants’ *experience* of practice teaching in Ireland.

Chart 3: How would you rate your experience of practice teaching overall?



N=107

The vast majority of respondents (92.5%) stated that their experience of practice teaching was either very satisfactory or satisfactory. Just 3.7 per cent stated that it was neither satisfactory or unsatisfactory, whilst 3.8 per cent rated it as unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory. This illustrates how for the vast majority of social workers who supervised a student on placement during the academic year 2022-2023, the experience of practice teaching was a positive one.

Table 9: Type of agency by level of satisfaction with practice teaching

Agency		Very Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Neither satisfactory or unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory	Total
HSE	No.	17	22	4	1	2	46
	%	37.0%	47.8%	8.7%	2.2%	4.3%	100%
Tusla	No.	16	17	0	1	0	34
	%	47.1%	50.0%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	100%
Disability	No.	1	5	0	0	0	6
	%	16.7%	83.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Non-statutory agency	No.	2	4	0	0	0	6
	%	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Probation	No.	1	2	0	0	0	3
	%	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Other	No.	2	7	0	0	0	9
	%	22.2%	77.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Total	No.	39	57	4	2	2	104
	%	37.5%	54.8%	3.8%	1.9%	1.9%	100%

It is worth noting, as table nine illustrates, workers in the HSE were the least likely to rate their experience as very satisfactory or satisfactory (84.8%; N=39) with 8.7 per cent (N=4) of HSE social workers rating it as neither satisfactory or unsatisfactory; 2.2 per cent (N=1) rating

it as unsatisfactory; and 4.3 per cent ($N=2$) rating it as very unsatisfactory. All the other agency types had between 97.1% and 100% of respondents state that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their experience of practice teaching. The agency with the highest proportion of respondents who stated that their experience was 'very satisfactory' was Tusla at 47.1 per cent ($N=16$).

The respondents were asked to provide some reasons for their answer around satisfaction levels in an open-ended question. The reason for unsatisfactory responses focused around issues associated with having a challenging student and issues with the increase in workload when supervising a student. On the flip-side, having a student who was deemed competent and did not take up as much time to supervise, positively impacted their experience of practice teaching, as did having a student who they felt was motivated and eager to learn. The perceived level of support from the university could impact the overall experience too with some stating that they did not feel they got enough support from the university (or tutor), whilst others stating that they had a positive experience because they did receive support from the university. Like with the previous question around motivations for practice teaching, seeing a student progress and grow was mentioned by a number of respondents as something that impacted their satisfaction with the experience of practice teaching. A selection of the open-ended responses are outlined below.

Quotes 2: Give some reasons for your response to the question of how you would rate your experience of practice teaching

I enjoyed the experience of having a student however it is difficult when working in a very busy and at times very stressful environment. The biggest challenge for me is trying to fit a student into a very busy workload. An extra stress is all the paperwork that goes with having a student and finding the time for same.

Challenging but feel i have grown

I have enjoyed the role however I find that the placements are requiring an increased demands on Practice teachers in recent years

*Enthusiastic student is very rewarding, when see student progressing
Keeps me updated on what is happening within social work academia*

The "good" students make it worthwhile; those who show an interest in this area of social work and where it's clear they want to do well and learn. It satisfies me to know at the end of a good placement that I have helped to educate a keen student who will be an asset to social work in the future.

Those who don't fit into the above category make practice teaching very tedious and frustrating!

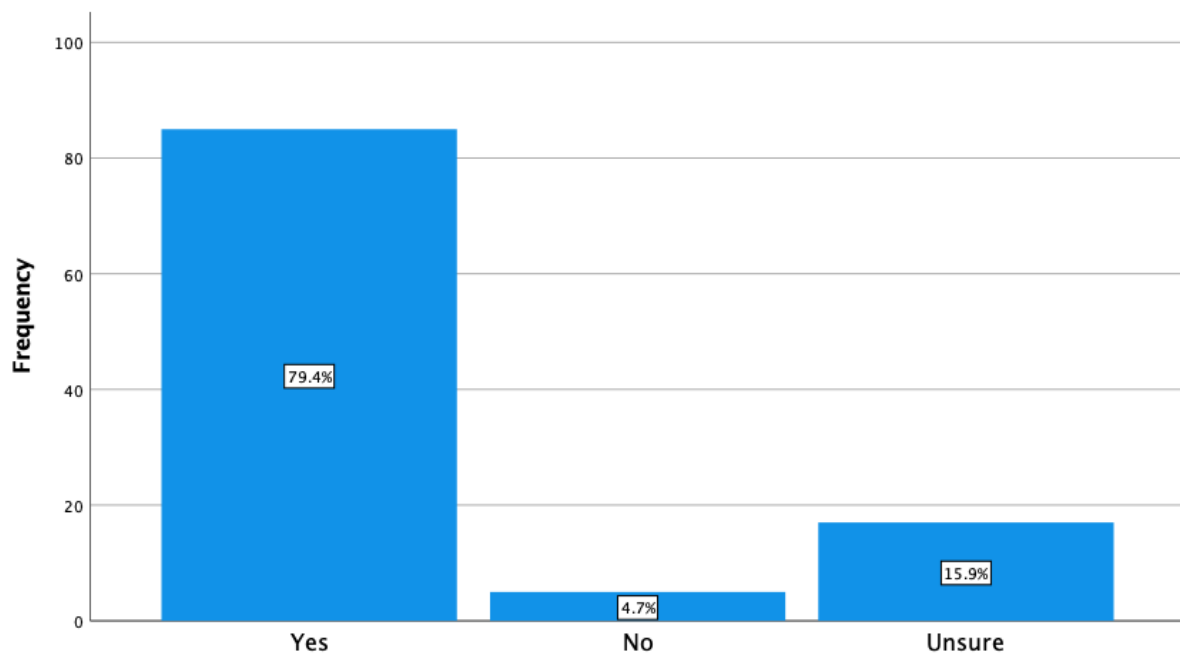
*Good engagement from colleges.
Supports in place if issues with placement.*

I have facilitated placements from UCD and TCD, they ask for different things and I would be more inclined to go with the university that asks less of me

I take great pride in supporting the development and practice of student social workers and providing real life working experience.

I enjoy practice teaching but I think some of the expectations on practice teachers are very high in terms of work load and it lacks consistency depending on the university and Practice Tutor.

Chart 4: Would you recommend practice teaching to a colleague



N=107

Despite the very high proportion of respondents who stated that they would rate their experience of practice teaching as either very satisfactory or satisfactory, a smaller proportion were willing to recommend practice teaching to a colleague. However, a majority still answered yes to this question at 79.4 per cent, with just 4.7 per cent stating that they would not recommend practice teaching and 15.9 per cent stating that they were unsure. It was mainly those who rated their experience as very unsatisfactory or unsatisfactory who stated that they would not recommend practice teaching ($N=4$) and those who rated their experience as 'satisfactory' who were unsure about whether they would recommend practice teaching to a colleague ($N=14$). The respondents were also asked to provide some reasons for their answer in an open-ended question. The responses to whether they would recommend practice teaching to a colleague were often related to context. For example, whether the colleague's team was supportive, whether they would have time for the role, or whether they felt that the colleague could deal with conflicts and difficult conversations that can arise during the course of the placement. Others stated that they would recommend it as they feel that it is an important role for social workers to take on, and as it can be both rewarding and an opportunity to improve your own skills as a social worker.

Quotes 3: Please provide some reasons why you would or would not recommend practice teaching to a colleague

I think it is an ethical responsibility of qualified social workers to provide a high quality of placement experiences to upskill social work students and ensure high standards of practice are maintained

It is a great experience for our own professional development and remind ourselves of key practices such as reflection

I think it depends on if you will be supported by your team and the university

I would recommend taking a student for your own learning, to 'bring you back' to the values and ethics of our profession. There is a lot of time and effort involved in the one to one time with the student and the written work, but I felt it was worth it

I would discourage someone if they have an extremely busy caseload as a vast amount of time is needed for a student

It is important that experienced practitioners help guide the future of social work practice and help students to learn what is needed for practice

I feel having a student on placement has been personally empowering and rewarding and it has encouraged me to support other colleagues to take a student for the first time

It would support their professional development. The extra few quid and you get to engage in the learning and development of new Social Workers

I would recommend it as it was enjoyable and it made me take a step back and think more about certain parts of the job that I have become used to. It reminded me to keep putting myself in other people's shoes, whether that be clients or professionals

I would recommend everyone take a student at least once but it is very time-consuming so when work is busy it is tough.

Good experience to develop as a professional

It is a very rewarding piece of work and really adds to your own learning and reflection

The respondents were asked the two open ended questions: 'what do you like *most* about practice teaching?' and 'what do you like *least* about practice teaching. For the first question, many of the responses stated that the practice teachers enjoyed seeing their students 'grow', 'progress' and 'develop' as social workers. Many enjoyed the teaching element, in terms of teaching the student and being able to share their social work knowledge, but they also enjoyed the learning that they gained through the process, either through reflecting on or questioning their own practice, or through having to keep abreast of developments within social work.

When answering the second question around what they liked least about practice teaching answers centred around issues of time for the extra workload in terms of getting other required work done and the extra work that was involved with supervising a student, as well as the fear that the student might not be as competent as you would like (and thus require closer supervision). The paperwork involved with supervising a student was by far the most prominent within the responses to this question and was described as time consuming, voluminous, daunting and tedious. Having to deal with issues when something goes wrong and trying to access support for a student were also mentioned as something people did not enjoy. Finally, finding time for supervision with the student was also mentioned a number of times as an aspect they enjoyed least about practice teaching.

Quotes 4: What do you enjoy most about practice teaching?

I enjoy teaching and learning and I get to give back something to my profession. Students can teach me lots also

Facilitating joining theory to practice

Meeting students and learning from them.

Seeing how a student grows in experience and confidence as well as having the opportunity to stand back and reflect on your own practice.

Meeting the students, learning about them individually. I enjoy seeing the student progress in their placement and gain confidence

Watching the student gain confidence over the placement. I also enjoyed realising how much I actually do know, it was a good confidence boost for me too

Seeing the student grow their skills and confidence

Being challenged to think differently about cases and to explain the actions I was taking. Loads of reflective practice

It is hugely satisfying to see a student grow and develop over the course of the placement

I enjoy teaching students and working to support them through their placement. Practice teaching and planning for a student is helpful as it encourages reflection on practice and can sometime give a different perspective on existing case work. .

I enjoy the diverse conversations and energy that students bring. I think students are a lovely presence in the workplace and encourage questions regarding why we do things in the way we do, enables space to reflect upon your own practice

I enjoy supporting students to link theory to practice and bringing their college learning to cases, and seeing students become more confident in their practice.

Supporting a person in their learning journey

Quotes 5: What do you enjoy *least* about practice teaching?

The heavy workload on occasion , along with low remuneration. The stipend is too low.i have found practice teaching has become more professional and should be paid as such

The volume of reports, observations, direct service user feedback and having to submit my report to the Practice Tutor for 'correction'. I found this unusual especially as the tutor is no more qualified than myself

Finding the balance between being available for the student, outlining their work for the placement and managing my own busy caseload

Paperwork!

The time constraints

Little financial reward

Having to write the reports - mainly due to time constraints. I also felt like the amount supervision required was quite high. Although i did generally enjoy providing supervision

Trying to balance my time between my own caseload and overseeing the work of the student. The weekly supervision and amount of writing involved was also very time-consuming

The paperwork

Depending on the student, it can be very time consuming. Also, the weekly supervision is unrealistic and not reflective of supervision in practice. Informal supervision will usually happen more organically throughout the placement

The volume of paperwork relating to CORU

Time-conflict with responsibilities of current role

Where placement fails

Difficult students with regard to level of knowledge, ability or confidence. Students that do not express an interest in the sector of which they have been provided a placement

The respondents were asked which NPTSWI resources they have used in the past in order to gather some information for the NPTSWI on the reach of their initiative. The results of this question are outlined in table ten.

Table 10: What NPTSWI resources have you used in the past?

Resource	Yes % (No.)	No % (No.)	Total % (No.)
Website for practice teaching information and resources	44.9 (N=48)	55.1 (N=59)	100 (N=107)
Online CPD events with the IASW	20.6 (N=22)	79.4 (N=85)	100 (N=107)
Attendance at the Educating Together Practice Teaching Conference March 2023	9.3 (N=10)	90.7 (N=97)	100 (N=107)
Other	0.9 (N=1)	99.1 (N=106)	100 (N=107)
I have not used any NPTSWI resources to date	48.6 (N=52)	51.4 (N=55)	100 (N=107)

The most frequently used resources is the website as 44.9 per cent of respondents stated that they have used this resource. A total of 20.6 per cent have attended online CPD events with the IASW and 9.3 per cent had attended the NPTSWI practice teaching conference in March 2023. Just under 50 per cent of the respondents (48.6%) stated that they have not used any NPTSWI resources to date.

Table 11: How likely are you to use NPTSWI resources in the future?

Likelihood	Number	%
Very likely	33	31.1
Somewhat likely	39	36.8
Undecided	24	22.6
Somewhat unlikely	9	8.5
Very unlikely	1	0.9
Total	106	100

As well as asking the research participants about the NPTSWI resources that they have used in the past, the survey included a question around their likelihood to use the resources of the NPTSWI in the future. A majority of respondents (67.9%) stated that they are very likely or somewhat likely to use NPTSWI resources in the future; 22.6 per cent were undecided; and 9.4 per cent were somewhat or very unlikely to use these resources. When asked to provide more detail around their reasons for their answer around the likelihood that they would use NPTSWI resources in the future, quite a few of the respondents stated that they were not aware of or had forgotten about these resources:

I am not sure where to find the resources;

I wasn't previously aware of the NPTSWI resources, but now I know that they are available I will use them;

I was not aware of this resource;

Was unaware of existence so will definitely look to see if useful for me.

A small number stated that they have time constraints that prevent them using these types of resources:

I don't have the time in general unfortunately;

lack of time.

Some of the respondents who stated that they are unlikely to use these resources in the future stated that they gave this answer as they are unlikely to work as a practice teacher and supervise students again:

It is doubtful I will take more students;

I do not anticipate I will be taking any more SW student

Finally, most of the respondents who stated that they had used these resources in the past said that they found them very useful:

It's great to have resources all in one place and easy to find;

Am always happy to learn myself about my profession, so they are a useful reference and for own learning;

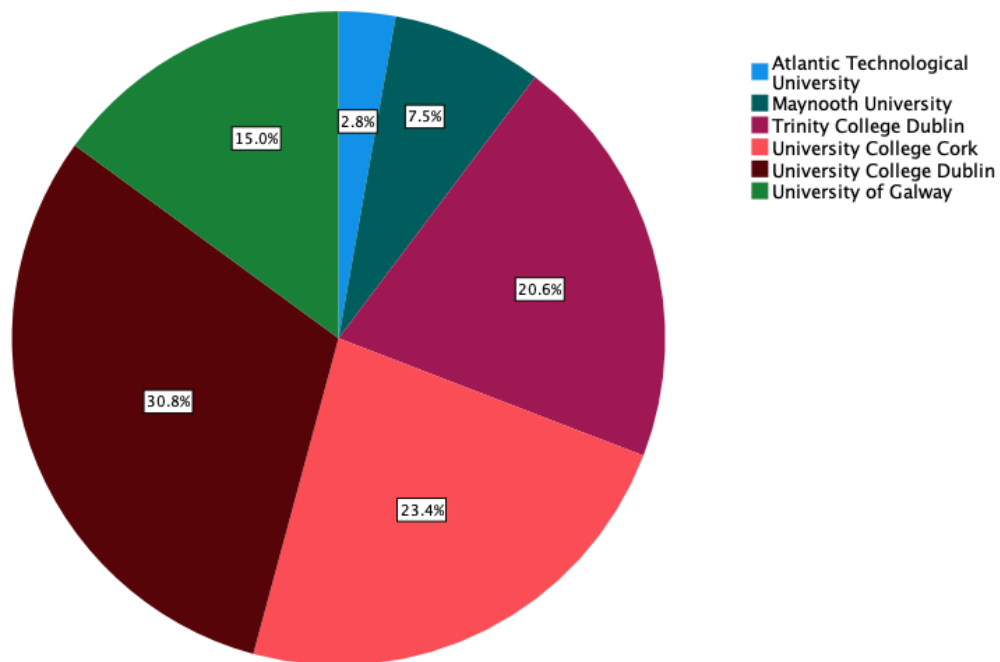
Any resources that would support my development for future Practice Teaching would be helpful and I would be happy to use them;

I will definitely use it more if it's updated with new content and resources, regularly.

Focus on most recent placement

This section of the report will focus on the data provided for the questions asked around the practice teachers' most recent placement.

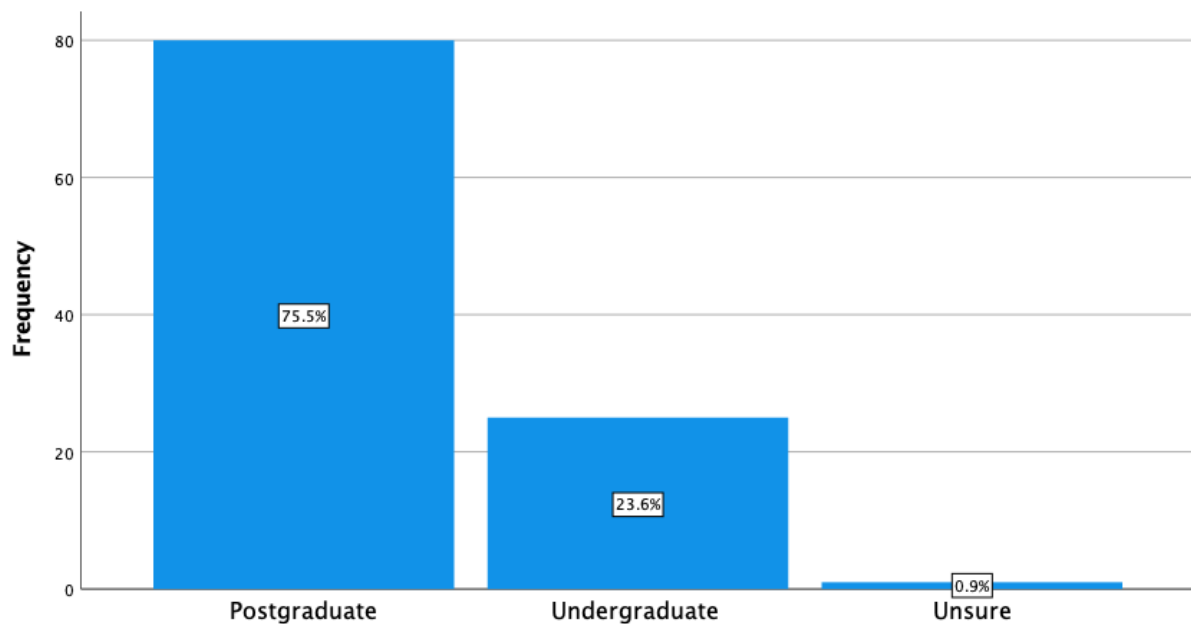
Chart 5: What university was the most recent student that you supervised attending?



N=107

The largest proportion of respondents supervised students attending University College Dublin (30.8%); followed by University College Cork (23.4%); Trinity College Dublin (20.6%); University of Galway (15%); Maynooth University (7.5%); and finally Atlantic Technological University (2.8%).

Chart 6: Was your student on an undergraduate or postgraduate programme?

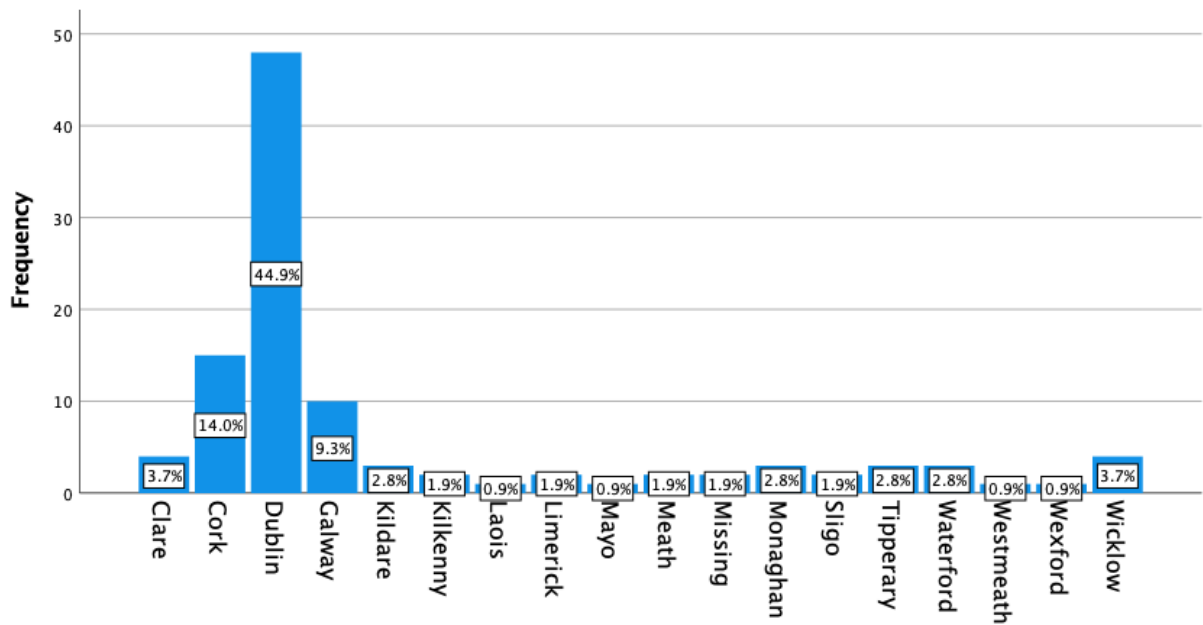


N=106

Chart six illustrates the data from the question addressing whether the placement students were on an undergraduate or postgraduate programme. The vast majority (75.5%) were postgraduate students, with a much smaller proportion (23.6%) being undergraduate students. In just one case the practice teacher was unsure whether the student was at under- or postgraduate level (0.9%).

Chart seven shows that although the highest proportion of placements by far took place in Dublin at 44.9 per cent (as would be expected based on population and locations of the universities); there was a good distribution of respondents across the country. After Dublin, Cork (14%), Galway (9.3%), Clare (3.7%) and Wicklow (3.7%) are the next highest proportions. The rest of the counties had small proportions ranging from 2.8 to 0.9 per cent.

Chart 7: What County is the organisation based in where you last worked as a practice teacher?



N=107

Chart 8: Please rate how supported you felt by the following stakeholders in undertaking your duties as a practice teacher (for your most recent placement)

■ Very supported
 ■ Somewhat supported
 ■ Neither supported nor unsupported
 ■ Somewhat unsupported
 ■ Very unsupported

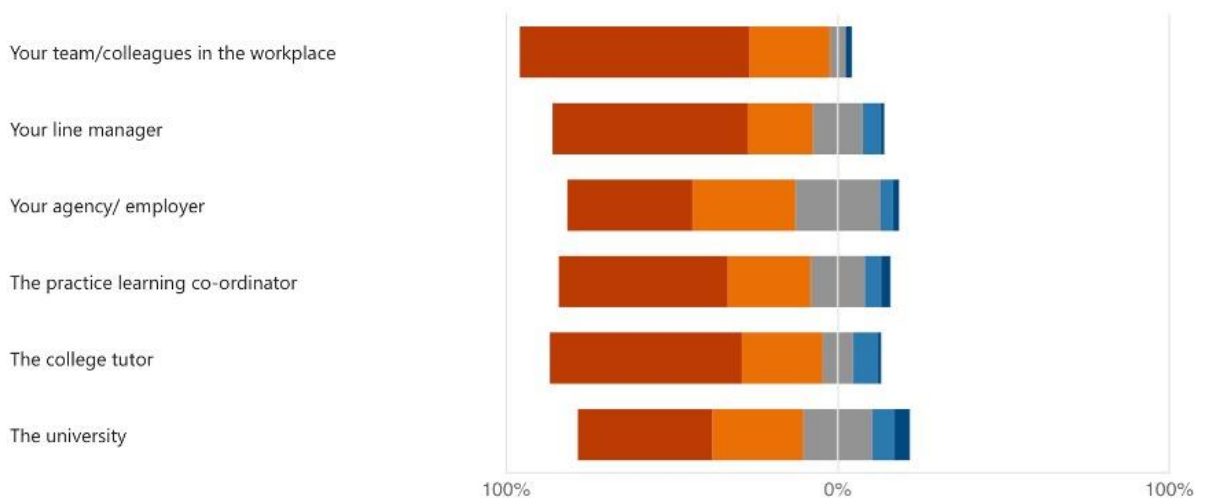
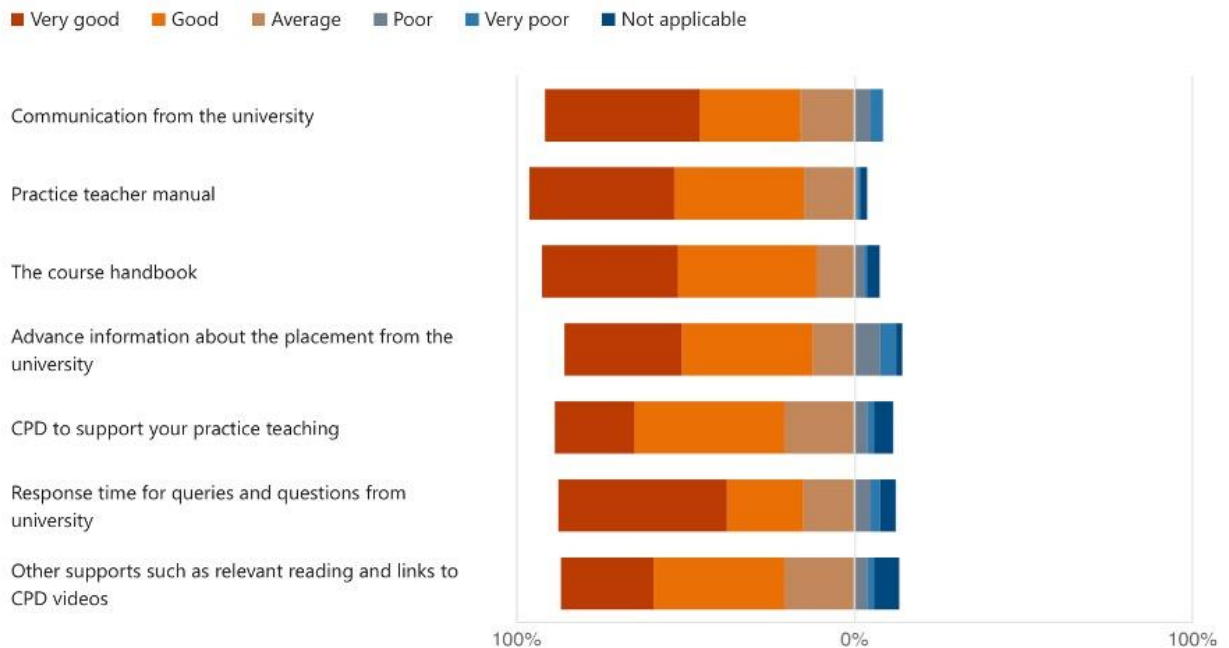


Table 12: Please rate how supported you felt by the following stakeholders in undertaking your duties as a practice teacher (for your most recent placement)

	Very Supported	Somewhat supported	Neither supported nor unsupported	Somewhat unsupported	Very unsupported	Total
	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)
Team/colleagues	69.2 (N=74)	24.3 (N=26)	4.7 (N=5)	0 (N=0)	1.9 (N=2)	100 (N=107)
Line manager	58.9 (N=63)	19.6 (N=21)	15.0 (N=16)	5.6 (N=6)	0.9 (N=1)	100 (N=107)
Agency/employer	37.7 (N=40)	31.1 (N=33)	25.5 (N=27)	3.8 (N=4)	1.9 (N=2)	100 (N=106)
Practice learning co-ordinator	51.0 (N=53)	25.0 (N=26)	16.3 (N=17)	4.8 (N=5)	2.9 (N=3)	100 (N=104)
College tutor	57.9 (N=62)	24.3 (N=26)	9.3 (N=10)	7.5 (N=8)	0.9 (N=1)	100 (N=107)
The university	40.6 (N=43)	27.4 (N=29)	20.8 (N=22)	6.6 (N=7)	4.7 (N=5)	100 (N=106)

Chart eight presents the data from table 12 in a visual format. From it you can see that practice teachers felt most supported by their team or colleagues in work, followed by the college tutor, their line manager, the practice learning co-ordinator, their agency/employer and finally the university. Although the university was the most frequently chosen option of 'very unsupported' and 'somewhat unsupported' (6.6 per cent and 4.7 per cent), the proportions that felt unsupported overall were a lot smaller than the vast majority that felt supported by the various stakeholders. The respondents were asked in an open-ended question if there was anyone else who had supported them in their role as a practice teacher. The responses to this question varied. However, one response that was mentioned multiple times was the support received from other practice teachers where possible.

Chart 9: How would you rate the following?



The survey respondents were asked to rate a number of items on a scale from very good to very poor (Chart 9 and table 13). As the survey involved practice teachers working with six different universities, a not applicable option was included in this question as the items may not have been relevant for every university. Overall, the vast majority of respondents chose either very good or good to rate all of the items. This was highest for the practice teacher manual and the course handbook both at 81.3 per cent, and lowest for CPD to support their practice teaching (67.9%) and 'Other' supports (66%). For those that rated the items as poor or very poor, the highest proportion was for advance information from the university about the placement (12.2%) and communication from the university (8.4%), and the lowest proportion was for the practice teaching manual (1.8%) and the course handbook (3.7%). It is interesting to note that although communication from the university was rated as very poor or poor by a larger proportion of respondents than most other items, it was the second highest item rated as very good (45.8%), possibly indicating differences in approach of the various universities. However, the numbers are too small to make any definitive conclusions around this.

Table 13: How would you rate the following?

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Not applicable	Total
	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)
Communication from the university	45.8 (N=49)	29.9 (N=32)	15.9 (N=17)	4.7 (N=5)	3.7 (N=4)	0 (N=0)	100 (N=107)
Practice teacher manual	43.0 (N=46)	38.3 (N=41)	15.0 (N=16)	0.9 (N=1)	0.9 (N=1)	1.9 (N=2)	100 (N=107)
The course handbook	40.2 (N=43)	41.1 (N=44)	11.2 (N=12)	2.8 (N=3)	0.9 (N=1)	3.7 (N=4)	100 (N=107)
Advance information from the university about the placement	34.9 (N=37)	38.7 (N=41)	12.3 (N=13)	7.5 (N=8)	4.7 (N=5)	1.9 (N=2)	100 (N=106)
CPD to support your practice teaching	23.6 (N=25)	44.3 (N=47)	20.8 (N=22)	3.8 (N=4)	1.9 (N=2)	5.7 (N=6)	100 (N=106)
Response times for queries and questions from university	50.5 (N=54)	22.4 (N=24)	15.0 (N=16)	4.7 (N=5)	2.8 (N=3)	4.7 (N=5)	100 (N=107)
Other supports such as relevant reading and links to CPD videos	27.4 (N=29)	38.7 (N=41)	20.8 (N=22)	3.8 (N=4)	1.9 (N=2)	7.5 (N=8)	100 (N=106)

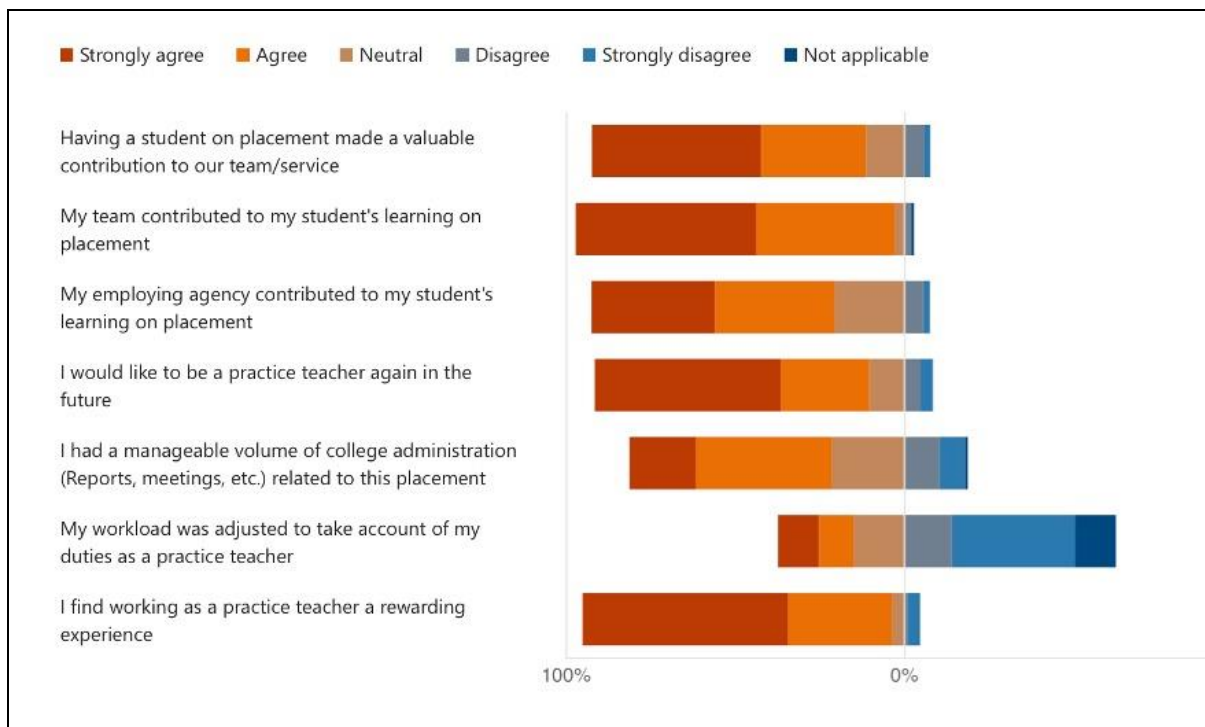
The respondents were asked in an open-ended question if there were any additional areas of support from the university that would be useful to them as a practice teacher? The most common responses focused on supports that they felt could strengthen the students' skills before the placement or to indicate to the practice teacher the students' areas of weakness before the placement commenced, as well as suggestions around additional supports for practice teachers for completing the written requirements of placement supervision. A number of respondents suggested that the handbooks be condensed, if possible, whilst others suggested that access to

the college library would be useful so that they could access up to date academic literature. A selection of the responses are included below.

Quote 6: Are there any additional areas of support from the university that would be useful to you as a practice teacher?



Chart 10: Level of agreement with the following statements



The survey respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with a number of statements designed to explore their feelings around the practice teaching experience. Chart 10 illustrates how the level of agreement shifts dramatically towards the disagreement end for the statements around workload².

² The number of people who chose 'not applicable' for the statement 'My workload was adjusted to take account of my duties as a practice teacher' seems unusually high ($N=13$), as this statement is applicable to *all* respondents. Having re-examined the format of the survey, it is possible that some respondents accidentally chose 'not applicable' when they meant to choose 'strongly disagree' as the headings for the statements are not visible when the respondent scrolls down to the bottom of this question. I checked the possibility of this through examining the response for this question chosen by a respondent who suggested an adjustment of workload in another section of the survey and found that despite this, they had clicked 'not applicable' for their answer here. This issue should be taken as a cautionary note for others when choosing the Likert option if using Microsoft Forms for your survey. It is probably best to avoid any options, i.e. not applicable, that are outside of the Likert scale itself.

Table 14: Level of agreement with the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)
Having a student on placement made a valuable contribution to our team/service	50.0 (N=53)	31.1 (N=33)	11.3 (N=12)	5.7 (N=6)	1.9 (N=2)	100 (N=106)
My team contributed to my student's learning on placement	53.8 (N=57)	41.5 (N=44)	2.8 (N=3)	1.9 (N=2)	0 (N=0)	100 (N=106)
My employing agency contributed to my student's learning on placement	36.4 (N=39)	35.5 (N=38)	20.6 (N=22)	5.6 (N=6)	1.9 (N=2)	100 (N=107)
I would like to be a practice teacher again in the future	55.1 (N=59)	26.2 (N=28)	10.3 (N=11)	4.7 (N=5)	3.7 (N=4)	100 (N=107)
I had a manageable volume of college administration (Reports, meetings, etc.) related to this placement	19.8 (N=21)	40.6 (N=43)	21.7 (N=23)	10.4 (N=11)	7.5 (N=8)	100 (N=106)
My workload was adjusted to take account of my duties as a practice teacher	13.8 (N=13)	11.7 (N=11)	17.0 (N=16)	16.0 (N=15)	41.5 (N=39)	100 (N=94)
I find working as a practice teacher a rewarding experience	60.7 (N=65)	30.8 (N=33)	3.7 (N=4)	0.9 (N=1)	3.7 (N=4)	100 (N=107)

Table 14 outlines the percentages under each statement to investigate the experience of practice teaching from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It should be noted that an 'not applicable' option was added to this question as it was felt that not every statement would be applicable to every respondent. However, the not applicable responses were excluded from the data presented in this table to give a more accurate representation of the

proportions of relevant respondents agreeing or disagreeing with the statements. As the table and histogram show, the respondents were more likely to agree or strongly agree with statements around the value and contribution of students than with the statements around workload. For example, they agreed or strongly agreed with the statements around the valuable contribution of having a student on placement (81.1%); that their team contributed to the students learning (95.3%); and that they finding working as a practice teacher to be a rewarding experience (91.5%) compared to the much lower percentages for having a manageable volume of college administration (60.4%); and their workload being adjusted to accommodate their work as a practice teacher (25.5%). By far this final statement had the highest proportion of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement at 57.5 per cent.

The survey included an open-ended question asking about any positive contributions brought to their team by the most recent student the respondents supervised. The answers were varied but numerous responses mentioned that the student brought a fresh perspective and/or enthusiasm to the role. Others mentioned that because supervision required that they clearly outline what they were doing and why, it helped them in their own role, through examining their work processes. The student's knowledge about up-to-date policy was also seen as a positive. Finally, some of the respondents answered this question by outlining the specific tasks the students undertook which included case work, involvement in team meetings, and research. A very small number of the practice teachers responded 'none' to this question. A selection of the quotes are outlined below.

Quote 7: What positive contribution/s did the student make to the team/service?

The student made positive contributions through research and engaging 1-1 with some young people

Student created bonds with service users to illicit information for assessments which the team had not previously been aware of

My last student was an excellent student and she was able to work independently under supervision and was able to offer support to families directly during her placement

Enthusiasm and curiosity for case work

Very capable student engaged well with team, did very good quality work

Got on well with whole team; fresh perspective

Contributed to service improvement - undertook a role in updating important information and presented CPD to team re service accessibility

Took up some of the referrals

The student was a fantastic communicator and always eager to assist with the entire team taking every opportunity she could to gain more experience. Versatility and flexible in the team were evident in her practice as a student. This is a key piece that needs to be expressed to students to take charge of their own learning and being flexible to seek opportunities where possible

Gave the team a different ideas and ways of doing things. It's great to have a fresh set of eyes sometimes

Very helpful and obliging - always happy to help out More proactive as the placement progressed

Fresh perspective

Different insight to practice also asked questions as to why we did things in a particular way

Very helpful and obliging - always happy to help out; More proactive as the placement progressed

On this occasion, none

Student's give a different perspective on existing case work. When a student is reflective and engaged in the placement, they often offer a fresh view on difficult and complex cases to the entire MDT.

Chart 11: On a scale of very easy to very difficult, how did you find the following?

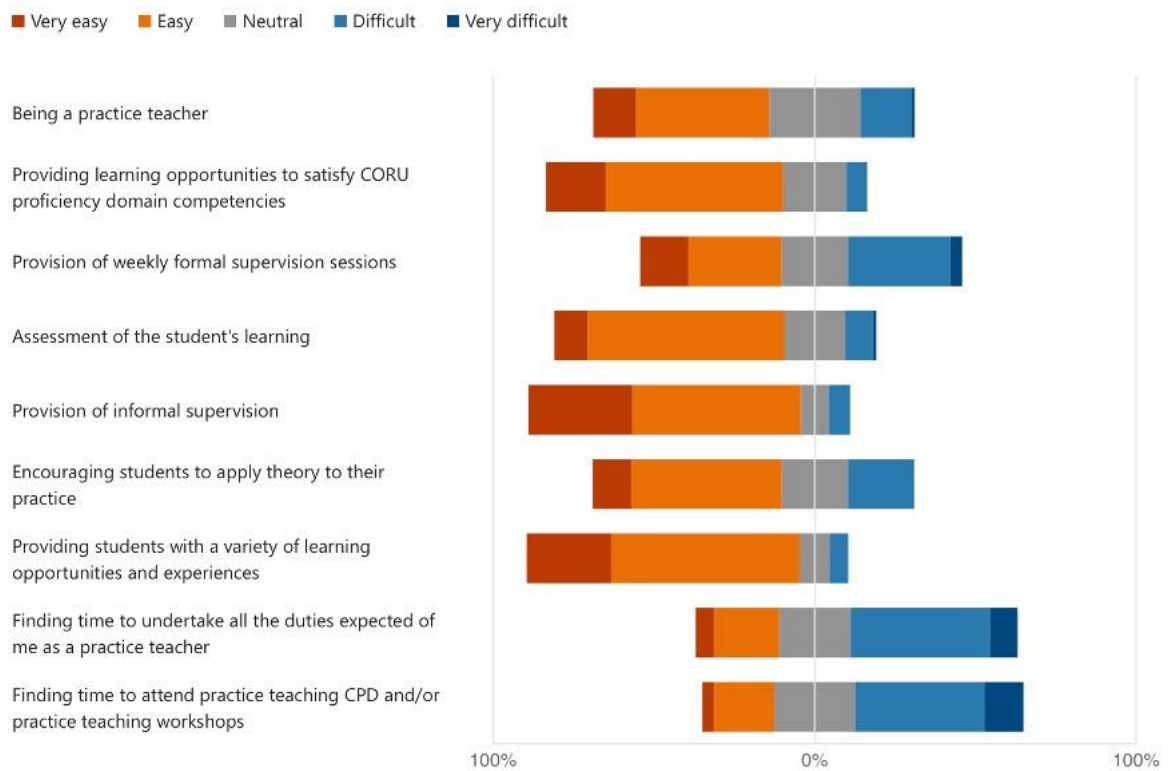


Chart 11 and table 15 clearly shows that the statements directly related to the time and workload associated with practice teaching are the ones that have the most responses of 'difficult' or very 'difficult', whereas the actual duties are more likely to be rated as very easy or easy. In other words, the responses indicate that it is not the duties associated with the role of practice teacher that the respondents find difficult, rather it is finding the time to carry out these duties. For example, high portions for the following statements stated that they found it easy or very easy: 84.9 per cent for providing students with a variety of learning experiences; 84.8 per cent for the provision of informal supervision; and 73.8 per cent for providing learning opportunities to satisfy CORU requirements. This compares to just 22.4 per cent who found it very easy or easy to find time to attend CPD or practice training workshops and 26 per cent who found it very easy or easy to find time to undertake all the duties expected of them as a practice teacher.

Table 15: On a scale of very easy to very difficult, how did you find the following?

	Very easy	Easy	Neutral	Difficult	Very difficult	Total
	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)	% (No.)
Being a practice teacher	13.2 (N=14)	41.1 (N=44)	28.3 (N=30)	16.0 (N=17)	0.9 (N=1)	100 (N=106)
Providing learning opportunities to satisfy CORU proficiency domain competencies	18.7 (N=20)	55.1 (N=59)	19.6 (N=21)	6.5 (N=7)	0 (N=0)	100 (N=107)
Provision of weekly formal supervision sessions	15.0 (N=16)	29.0 (N=31)	20.6 (N=22)	31.8 (N=34)	3.7 (N=4)	100 (N=107)
Assessment of the student's learning	10.5 (N=11)	61.0 (N=64)	19.0 (N=20)	8.6 (N=9)	1.0 (N=1)	100 (N=105)
Provision of informal supervision	32.4 (N=34)	52.4 (N=55)	8.6 (N=9)	6.7 (N=7)	0 (N=0)	100 (N=105)
Encouraging students to apply theory to their practice	12.1 (N=13)	46.7 (N=50)	20.6 (N=22)	20.6 (N=22)	0 (N=0)	100 (N=107)
Providing students with a variety of learning opportunities and experiences	26.4 (N=28)	58.5 (N=62)	9.4 (N=10)	5.7 (N=6)	0 (N=0)	100 (N=106)
Finding time to undertake all the duties expected of me as a practice teacher	5.8 (N=6)	20.2 (N=21)	22.1 (N=23)	43.3 (N=45)	8.7 (N=9)	100 (N=104)
Finding time to attend practice teaching CPD and/or practice teaching workshops	3.7 (N=4)	18.7 (N=20)	25.2 (N=27)	40.2 (N=43)	12.1 (N=13)	100 (N=107)

Quote 8: Have you any suggestions that you feel could improve the experience of practice teaching?



The final question on the survey was open-ended and asked the respondents if they had any suggestions that they felt could improve the experience of practice teaching? Again, there were a variety of response, a selection of which are outlined above. Notable ones, which were mentioned multiple times, related to a desire for the recognition of the workload involved with taking students and that caseloads would be adjusted to accommodate the extra work on practice teachers. Additionally, some suggested a desire for increased interaction with other practice teachers; better preparation for students before their placement, increasing the stipend (or paying it in vouchers); and reducing both the amount of paper work associated with the placement and the required frequency of formal supervision.

Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

The aim of this research was to investigate the experience of social workers in Ireland who undertook the role of practice teacher between September 2022 to May 2023. This was done through a cross-sectional survey designed to elicit the enablers and barriers to practice teaching from the perspective of those most recently active in undertaking the role. The purpose of this research was to provide a snapshot of the practice teaching experience to the practice learning co-ordinators in each of the six HEIs that offer social work education and who are members of the NPTSWI. This was to get a better understanding of issues that may be impacting the crisis in the sourcing of social work placements. Thus, the research question for this study was:

How do social workers describe the experience of working as a practice teacher in Ireland?

The findings very clearly illustrated a pattern in responses around the experience of practice teaching for practice teachers, which will be discussed in the following section

Enablers for practice teaching: Intrinsic motivation and a recognition of the importance and value of supervising placements

There were strong indicators in the research findings that practice teachers are intrinsically motivated to carry out the role due to a recognition of the importance and value of supervising placements for the students, for their own development and for the social work profession as a whole. Intrinsic motivation 'refers to people's spontaneous tendencies to be curious and interested, to seek out challenges and to exercise and develop their skills and knowledge, even in the absence of operationally separable rewards' (Di Domenico and Ryan, 2017, p. 1). Intrinsic motivation is more useful than external reward for maintaining interest and productivity (Martin, 2009). Having looked more closely at the theory around motivation, Develin and Mathews conclude that some theorists have:

‘...argued that what motivates workers is the content of their work - the intrinsic challenge, and interest of the task itself – while those factors which de-motivate workers are most likely to be associated with the context of work – working conditions, company policy and aspects of supervision’ (2012, p. 19)

They subsequently argue that the research on what motivates social workers to become and remain practice teachers is limited. However, one consistent theme that they found is the role of the employing agency in facilitating the practice teacher process through supporting this work:

‘Organisations which have a culture of encouraging placements, providing workload relief, releasing staff to attend training and briefing sessions, providing office space for students, and providing administrative support, tend to generate and keep practice assessors’ (Develin and Mathews, 2012, p. 20)

In the current study, the motivations with the highest proportions of responses that strongly agree or agree are more in line with internal rewards (‘I am committed to the education of future social workers’; ‘I work as a practice teacher for my own CPD’) than the external ones (‘additional payment/stipend motivates me to practice teach’; ‘encouragement from my manager/s motivated me to practice teach’). The fact that such a high proportion of respondents (97.2%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they are motivated to practice teach due to a commitment to the development of future social workers is a very positive indicator that social workers recognise the importance and value of undertaking this role. Throughout the open-ended questions, phrases that centred around *giving back* or aiding the *growth and development* of students were repeatedly used, which could be seen as another indicator of the strength of the intrinsic motivation to practice teach. When it came to the questions around their experience of practice teaching, the respondents mostly described this experience positively. Additionally, when asked what they liked most about practice teaching, again the responses focused on the growth, development and progression of the students. However, these phrases were also used in relation to the social workers themselves and they were positive about the impact that working as a practice teacher had on their practice as a social worker.

Despite these enablers, as the following section will discuss, there were two phrases used repeatedly that illustrated what gets in the way of these motivations: time and workload.

Barrier to practice teaching: The reoccurring time and workload issues

In general, social workers enjoy being practice teachers and find it to be a rewarding experience. However, issues associated with workload were prominent with respondents stating that their workloads are not being adjusted, thus the social workers have to do the placement supervision alongside their existing workload. When it came to the negative aspects of practice teaching described in the open-ended question, the issues of time and workload arose repeatedly. The responses indicated that the social workers felt overworked when they had to continue with their usual social work tasks and take on the additional tasks associated with practice teaching. For example, finding the time for the required number of formal supervision hours and completing all the paper work which was described as voluminous by some.

Another aspect to the issue with time and workload was related to the abilities of the student. Possibly because the practice teachers have such high workloads additional to the practice teaching role, they found it difficult when placements were not straightforward, i.e., if something went wrong or they had any difficulties with the student. Some questioned whether the ability of students had decreased in recent years, whilst others suggested that additional work be carried out with students before they took up their placements as it was felt that some are not prepared for the realities of the workplace.

Additionally in a number of the Likert scale questions the clear outliers in terms of responses were those that related to time and workload. For example, in a question where respondents were asked their level of agreement with a number of statements designed to explore their feelings around the practice teaching experience (Chart 10) the majority strongly agreed or agreed with all the statements except for the one focused on an adjustment of their workload to take account of practice teacher duties, where the majority either disagreed (16%) or

strongly disagreed (41.5%). Similarly, in the question around the ease or difficulty of the tasks associated with practice teaching, the outliers in terms of responses were related to time; finding time to undertake all practice teacher duties and finding time for CPD, where the majority rated both as difficult or very difficult and provision of weekly formal supervision sessions where 35.5% rated it as very difficult or difficult). This compared to all the other statements where the majority rated them as very easy or easy.

The responses to these Likert scale questions are a clear indicator of time and workload constituting a significant barrier to practice teaching. Similar was found by Domakin (2015, p. 403), who stated that:

A major issue identified by all agency-based practice educators was they were unable to devote sufficient attention to the role because they did not have a protected practice workload.

As well as acting as a potential barrier to encouraging social workers to act as practice teachers and/or encouraging practice teachers to undertake the role again in the future, the issue of unaltered caseloads has the potential to impact the quality of the learning experiences offered to social work students (Domakin, 2015). Indeed, research by Waterhouse *et al* (2011) illustrates the impact of time and workload on the learning experience with their finding that 73.8 per cent of their respondents stated that workload pressures are the main barrier to providing learning opportunities to social work students and 69 per cent cited lack of time as a barrier. However, both Domakin's research and the current study identified a lot of enthusiasm amongst social workers around practice teaching, despite the issues that they encountered around time and workload.

Conclusions

Overall, the survey findings are quite positive as they show that the desire to practice teach is generally there amongst those undertaking the role and they appreciate the value of practice teaching for students, for themselves and to the professional of social work as a

whole. However, the recurring theme throughout the research is the dual issues of time and workload. Although the respondents were generally positive about having the skills to undertake the duties associated with the role, they were a lot less positive about having the time or adjusted workload that allows them to carry out these duties. As such, it indicates that the important work for universities in attempting to increase access to social work placements, should not necessarily focus on the social workers themselves. Rather, the focus that is more likely to improve the experience of practice teaching, thus making it more attractive to social workers, is work with agencies that employ social workers. It is imperative that these agencies fully understand the importance of the practice placement experience for the development of future social workers and for maintaining high standards within the profession. Any initiative that aims to encourage social work employers to recognise the value of practice teaching through incorporating it into the social work role and therefore included within the workload is to be welcomed and encouraged. As O'Meara and Kelleher (2022, p. 17) stated in their scoping exercise for the Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW):

In the context of a competitive recruitment environment, and to fill vacancies and new posts arising, it is ultimately in the interests of employers to work with the universities around placements, to ensure adequate numbers of students can be accommodated on courses

As such they argued that:

Employers need to make more placements available and it is a source of puzzlement to some interviewees why this is not happening, considering the value and necessity of placements in identifying those unsuitable for careers in social work as well as preparing students for employment and creating a supply of potential employees' (O'Meara and Kelleher, 2022, p. 17).

Additionally, the findings around the levels of support available to practice teachers by the university as well as the volume of paperwork demands, should be carefully considered in order to improve the practice teaching experience for social workers.

Recommendations

Some recommendations include:

- Building on the intrinsic motivation that exists amongst social workers to act as practice teachers by working with employers to remove some of the significant time and workload barriers that exist for social workers when considering this role.
- Linked to this would involve work with employers to facilitate their comprehension of why it is in their best interests as employers of social workers to facilitate the practice teaching process as best they can.
- The recommendation by O'Meara and Kelleher in their scoping exercise to the IASW for a national strategy should be supported as this could help with this recognition of the value and centrality of practice teaching for the development of future social workers.
- An assessment of the paperwork requirements of the different universities would be useful in order to try to streamline the process somewhat so that practice teachers can expect some consistency if working with different universities.
- More preparatory work with students before their placement – focused on the realities of the world of work for social work practice – would be useful.
- Continuing to update the resources on the NPTSWI website would be valuable for practice teachers as the respondents who were aware of the website appreciated having numerous resources in one place.
- Fostering peer support amongst practice teachers could prove beneficial to improve their practice teaching experience as some suggested that these peer interactions were a highly valued form of support.

Bibliography

Baum, N. (2007) 'Field Supervisors' Feelings and Concerns at the Termination of the Supervisory Relationship', *The British journal of social work*, 37(6), pp. 1095-1112.

Bryman, A. (2012) *Social research methods*. 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chui, W. (2009) 'First practice placement: Great expectation and anxiety of a cohort of social work students', *The Journal of practice teaching & learning*, 9, pp. 10-32.

Cleak, H., O'Connor, E. and Roulston, A. (2022) 'Integrating relational knowing and structure learning in social work placements – a framework for learning in practice', *Social Work Education*, DOI: [10.1080/02615479.2022.2075337](https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2022.2075337) .

Univeristy College Cork (2022) *Course Handbook 2022-2023: Master of Social Work & Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work Studies*, Cork: University College Cork.

BASW NI/IASW/Northern Ireland Social Care Council/Coru (2020) *Shaping Social Workers' Identity: An All-Ireland Study*. Belfast.

Develin, D. and Mathews, I. (2012) 'What motivates social workers to become practice teachers?', *The Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning*, 8(1), pp. 18-30.

Di Domenico, S. I. and Ryan, R. M. (2017) 'The Emerging Neuroscience of Intrinsic Motivation: A New Frontier in Self-Determination Research', *Frontiers in human neuroscience*, 11, pp. 145-145.

Domakin, A. (2015) 'The Importance of Practice Learning in Social Work: Do We Practice What We Preach? ', 34(4), pp. 399-413.

Council on Social Work Education (2022) *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards: for Baccalaureate and Master's Social Work Programmes*. Available at: <https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/94471c42-13b8-493b-9041-b30f48533d64/2022-EPAS.pdf> (Accessed: 3rd May 2023).

Flanagan, N. and Wilson, E. (2018) 'What makes a good placement? Findings of a social work student-to-student research study', *Social Work Education*, 37(5), pp. 565-580.

Kuusisto, K., Cleak, H., Roulston, A. and Korkiamäki, R. (2022) 'Learning activities during practice placements: developing professional competence and social work identity of social work students', *Nordic Social Work Research*, pp. 1-14.

MacDermott, D. and Harkin-MacDermott, C. (2021) 'Perceptions of Trainee Practice Teachers in Northern Ireland: Assessing Competence and Readiness to Practise during COVID 19', *Practice: Social Work in Action*, 33(5), pp. 355-374.

Martin, B. (2009) 'Research productivity: some paths less travelled', *Australian Universities Review*, 51(1), pp. 14-20.

McLaughlin, H., Scholar, H. F., McCaughan, S. and Coleman, A. (2015) 'Are non-traditional social work placements second best learning opportunities for qualifying social work students?', *British Journal of Social Work*, 45(5), pp. 1469-1489.

O'Meara, K. and Kelleher, C. (2022) *Training, recruiting and retaining social workers in Ireland: A scoping exercise to assess and respond to significant challenges*, Dublin: Irish Association of Social Workers. Available at: <https://iasw.ie/publications-for-social-workers> (Accessed: 15th May 2023).

Prince, M., Wright, P., Stern, J. and Phelan, M. (2012) '9 - Epidemiology', *Core Psychiatry (Third Edition)*. Oxford: W.B. Saunders, pp. 115-129.

Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs. *Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers: Discussion (resumed)*. 2019.

Roulston, A., Cleak, H., Hayes, D., McFadden, P., Oconnor, E. and Shore, C. (2023) 'To fail or not to fail: enhancing our understanding of reasons why social work students failed practice placements (2015–2019)', *Social Work Education*, 42(4), pp. 459-475.

Short, M., Halton, C., Morris, B., Rose, J., Whitaker, L., Russ, E., Fitzroy, R., Appleton, C., Adamson, C., Woolven, M., Rush, E., Ivory, N., Berger, L., Morton, N., Duncombe, R. and Boyd, B. (2022) 'Enablers, markers, and aspects of quality innovative placements across distance: insights from a co-operative inquiry', *Social Work Education*, pp. 1-20.

Social Workers Registration Board (2019a) *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*, Dublin: CORU. Available at: <https://www.coru.ie/files-education/swrb-profession-specific-criteria-for-education-and-training-programmes.pdf> (Accessed: 2nd May 2023).

Social Workers Registration Board (2019b) *Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers*, Dublin: CORU. Available at: <https://www.coru.ie/files-education/swrb-standards-of-proficiency-for-social-workers.pdf> (Accessed: 17th May 2023).

Spector, P. E. (2019) 'Do Not Cross Me: Optimizing the Use of Cross-Sectional Designs', *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 34(2), pp. 125-137.

School of Applied Social Studies (2022) *Practice Placement Manual 2022-2023*, University College Cork.

TUSLA (2021a) *Report on the Practice Teacher's Feedback Questionnaire: September 2020-May 2021*, Dublin.

TUSLA (2021b) *Report on the Student Placement Feedback Questionnaire: January 2021 - May 2021*.

Van Selm, M., Jankowski, N.W. (2006) 'Conducting Online Surveys', *Qual Quant*, Vol. 40, pp. 435–456. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-005-8081-8> (Accessed 2nd May 2023).

Waterhouse, T., McLagan, S. and Murr, A. (2011) 'From Practitioner to Practice Educator: What Supports and What Hinders the Development of Confidence in Teaching and Assessing Student Social Workers?', *Practice: Social Work in Action*, 23(2), pp. 95-110.

Wheeler, J. M. (2017) *How do Social Work Students Develop their Professional Identity?* Professional Doctorate of Education, Plymouth University.

Wilson, E. and Flanagan, N. (2019) 'What tools facilitate learning on placement? Findings of a social work student-to-student research study', *Social Work Education*, 40(4), pp. 535-551.

Appendix one: The National Practice Teacher Questionnaire 2022-2023



National Practice Teachers Survey 2022-2023



You are invited to take part in the NPTSWI survey around your experience of practice teaching in Ireland

National Practice Teacher Survey Information Note and Consent Form

Please **read** and choose your **consent** preference below

1. Thank you for considering participating in this research project. The purpose of this document is to explain to you what the study is about and what your participation would involve; to enable you to make an informed choice.

The purpose of this study is to review your experience of working as a practice teacher in Ireland. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire which will include items around this experience and your satisfaction with the process. The survey should take around 10 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is **anonymous and voluntary**. As such, there is no obligation on you to participate and should you choose to do so you can refuse to answer specific questions if preferred. You maintain the right to withdraw from the study at any stage up to the point of data submission. At this point, your data

stage up to the point of data submission. At this point, your data will be collated with that of other participants and can no longer be retracted. All information you provide will be confidential and your anonymity will be protected throughout the study.

The anonymous data will be stored on a University College Cork supported cloud storage platform through OneDrive. The data will be stored for minimum of ten years.

This project is being carried out by an independent UCC researcher through the National Practice Teaching in Social Work Initiative (NPTSWI) and as such will include practice teachers from across the six universities offering social work education: Atlantic Technological University, Maynooth University, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin and University of Galway.

Anonymised data will be shared with the partner universities. Additionally, findings may be shared with the the Practice Advisory Boards, external placement agencies, and/or CORU as part of their monitoring process. The information you provide may contribute to research publications and/or conference presentations.

We do not anticipate any negative outcomes from participating in this study. This study has obtained ethical approval from the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee.

If you have any queries about this research, you can contact me at: niamhmurphy@ucc.ie

- I **consent** to participation in this survey and the sharing of anonymised data with partner universities
- I **do not consent** to participation

Background Questions

2. Age

The value must be a number

3. Gender

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to disclose

4. What type of agency do you work in?

- Tusla
- HSE
- Disability
- Probation
- Non-statutory agency
- Other

5. If you work in Tusla, which area do you work in?

- I do not work in Tusla
- Aftercare
- Adoption
- Child protection and welfare
- Children in care
- Foster care
- Intake and assessment
- PPFS
- Other

6. If you work in the HSE, which area do you work in?

- I do not work in the HSE
- AMH
- CAMHS
- Safeguarding
- Medical
- Primary Care
- Disability
- Other

7. How long have you worked as a **social worker** for?

- 2-3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-7 years
- 8-9 years
- Over 10 years

8. How many students have you supervised as a practice teacher to date?

- This was my first time as a practice teacher
- 2-3
- 4-5
- 6-7
- 8-9
- 10+

9. Please rate the following statements around motivations to engage in practice teaching

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am committed to the education of future social workers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am committed to engaging with Universities that offer social work qualifications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I work as a practice teacher for my own continuous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

professional
development

Encouragement from my colleagues motivated me to begin practice teaching

Encouragement from my manager/s motivated me to begin practice teaching

I am motivated to practice teach so that I can act as a gatekeeper for the profession

Additional payment/stipend motivates me to practice teach

10. If there is anything that motivates or demotivates you to engage in practice teaching, which was not mentioned in the previous question, please outline here.

11. What practice teacher training have you completed to date? (Please tick all that apply)

- Preparation for practice teaching (before the placement)
- Practice teaching training during the course of a placement
- Practice teaching continuous professional development (CPD) provided by the University
- Practice teaching continuous profession development (CPD) provided by any other organisation (non-university)
- Level 9 postgraduate qualification in practice teaching
- I have not attended any practice teacher training to date
- Other

Your experience of practice teaching

12. How would you rate your experience of practice teaching overall?

- very satisfactory
- satisfactory
- Neither satisfactory or unsatisfactory
- unsatisfactory
- very unsatisfactory

13. Please provide some reasons for your response

14. Would you recommend practice teaching to a colleague?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

15. Please give some reasons for why you would, would not, or are unsure whether you would recommend practice teaching to a colleague:

16. What do you enjoy **most** about practice teaching?

17. What do you enjoy **least** about practice teaching?

18. What National Practice Teaching Social Work Initiative (NPTSWI) resources have you used to date (Please tick all that apply)

- Website for practice teaching information and resources (e.g. videos, articles)
- Online CPD events with the IASW
- Attendance at the Educating Together practice teaching conference March 2023
- I have not used any NPTSWI resources to date
- Other

19. How likely are you to use NPTSWI resources in the future?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Undecided
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely

20. Please provide some reasons for why you are likely or unlikely to use NPTSWI resources in the future

Focus on **most recent** placement

Please answer these questions in relation to the **most recent** placement that you have supervised

21. What university was your student attending?

- Atlantic Technological University
- Maynooth University
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College Cork
- University College Dublin
- University of Galway

22. Was your student on an undergraduate or postgraduate programme?

- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate
- Unsure

23. What county is the organisation based in where you last worked as a practice teacher?

- Carlow

- Cavan
- Clare
- Cork
- Donegal
- Dublin
- Galway
- Kerry
- Kildare
- Kilkenny
- Laois
- Leitrim
- Limerick
- Longford
- Louth
- Mayo
- Meath
- Monaghan
- Offaly
- Roscommon

~

- Sligo
- Tipperary
- Waterford
- Westmeath
- Wexford
- Wicklow

24. Considering the most recent placement you supervised, please rate how supported you felt by the following stakeholders in undertaking your duties as a practice teacher

	Very supported	Somewhat supported	Neither supported nor unsupported	Somewhat unsupported	Very unsupported
Your team/colleagues in the workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your line manager	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your agency/employer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The practice learning co-ordinator	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college tutor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. Is there anyone else who supported you in your role as a practice teacher who was not named above? Please give details (remember not to include personal details such as names)

26. Thinking of your interactions with your student's university for your most recent placement, how would you rate the following?

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Not applicable
Communication from the university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Practice teacher manual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The course handbook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advance information about the placement from the university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CPD to support your practice teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Response time for queries and questions from university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other supports such as relevant reading and links to CPD videos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. Are there any additional areas of support from the university that would be useful to you as a practice teacher?

28. Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Having a student on placement made a valuable contribution to our team/service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My team contributed to my student's learning on placement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My employing agency contributed to my student's learning on placement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to be a practice teacher again in the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a manageable volume of						

college administration (Reports, meetings, etc.) related to this placement

My workload was adjusted to take account of my duties as a practice teacher

I find working as a practice teacher a rewarding experience

29. What positive contribution/s did the student make to the team/service?



30. On a scale of very easy to very difficult, how did you find the following?

Very easy Easy Neutral Difficult Very difficult

Being a practice teacher

Providing learning opportunities to satisfy CORU proficiency

domain
competencies

Provision of
weekly formal
supervision
sessions

Assessment
of the
student's
learning

Provision of
informal
supervision

Encouraging
students to
apply theory
to their
practice

Providing
students with
a variety of
learning
opportunities
and
experiences

Finding time
to undertake
all the duties
expected of
me as a
practice
teacher

Finding time
to attend
practice
teaching CPD
and/or
practice
teaching
workshops

31. Have you any suggestions that you feel could improve the experience of practice teaching?