An Evaluation of a

Pilot Tutor-led Social Work Student Placement Programme

St. James' Hospital and Trinity College, Dublin

Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

OSPIDÉAL SAN SÉAMAS
ST JAMES'S HOSPITAL

Health & Social Care Professions

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Ethics

This study received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Approval Committee of the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin (2nd July 2024, REAMs No: 3034). Further to this an application was approved by the St James' Hospital Research and Innovation office for social work staff participation in the evaluation.

Conflict statement

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare in respect of this study.

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Abbreviations

BSS	Bachelor in Social Studies
CASWE	Canadian Association for Social Work Education
CORU	Irish Health and Social Care Professionals Council/Social Workers Registration Board
CSWE	Council on Social Work Education
EPAS	Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
HSCP	Health and Social Care Professions
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
NEST	Networking and Educating Students Together
REAMs	Research Ethics Application Management system
SWSP	School Social Work and Social Policy
SJH	St. James' Hospital
TCD	Trinity College Dublin

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Social work, like many other health and social care professions (HSCPs) in Ireland, is experiencing a crisis in the procurement of sufficient numbers of placements, which are a required and integral component of social work education. Measures to incentivise and resource social workers to facilitate placements and act as practice teachers are considered necessary to achieve an adequate level of placement provision. One such measure, a pilot tutor-led student placement programme was developed by the practice education coordinators at the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin in partnership with the social work team at St James' Hospital. The project was funded under a placement initiative of the National Health and Social Care Professionals (HSCP) Office. Following an internal competition at the hospital, a senior social worker was seconded on a .5 WTE basis to the role of tutor to lead the project, for the duration of one placement cycle from September - December 2023.

Aims and objectives of the pilot tutor-led project

While agency-based clinical tutors are long established in other health and allied health professions, there is no equivalent role in social work to mentor and resource social workers to become practice teachers or to develop and deliver specialist practice-based teaching to students undertaking assessed, professional placements. The provision of social work placements has traditionally been seen as an optional 'add on' to the existing workload of individual practitioners, giving rise to precarity in procurement of sufficient numbers of placements for student social workers in each placement cycle. Social work is therefore at a distinct disadvantage in comparison with other health and allied health professions, regarding investment to ensure quality and quantity in supply of placements.

The pilot social work tutor-led project sought to redress this anomaly and explore the potential of an agency-based tutor role in health-related social work.

The key duties and responsibilities of the agency-based social work tutor were identified as follows:

- Promotion of social work practice education and recruitment of practice teachers.
- Act as a resource person for social work placements in the social work department, including provision of mentoring and CPD activities.
- Clarify the role of hospital-based tutor with the social work team at the beginning of the placement and hold regular review meetings over the duration of the placement with staff engaged in social work practice education.
- Supervision of practice education of students, in collaboration with social work practice teachers in all clinical areas as required.
- Act as lead practice teacher for one or more students.
- Liaison with the university and hospital colleagues regarding allocation of students to the hospital and matching with clinical specialisms.
- Local co-ordination of students at the hospital including office space, IT access and orientation.
- Co-ordination of learning contracts/placement objectives, for students at start of placement and facilitation of students to achieve their goals aligned to the CORU domains of proficiency.
- Organisation of a planned programme of relevant skills tutorials, group supervision, and peer learning activities for students while on placement.
- Provision of intermediate and final feedback to students about their progress and performance in conjunction with the practice teacher.
- Review and evaluation of each placement in conjunction with the student and practice teacher.

In 2024 further funding was sought and awarded by the HSCP to evaluate this pilot programme and to establish an evidence-based review of its efficacy or otherwise, in increasing the quality and quantity of social work placements. A further objective was provision of an evidence-informed template for the roll-out of future similar initiatives. Jo Greene, independent researcher was commissioned to undertake the evaluation.

Evaluation of the pilot tutor-led project

This evaluation report provides contextual information on contemporary challenges in the provision of social work practice education in Ireland and internationally. The pilot tutor-led programme is described and the scope of the tutor role in the context of one placement cycle is outlined. The methodology used in the research is then documented. The following chapter presents the results from a questionnaire distributed to all social work staff and staff from other disciplines involved in inter-professional education at St. James' Hospital. This is followed by the findings from in-depth interviews with key stakeholders involved in the pilot programme. The report concludes with a discussion of the findings and conclusions and proposes key recommendations for further development of service-based social work tutors in healthcare.

Chapter 2 - Background and Context

Introduction

This chapter provides a contextual background to the evaluation. The central role of assessed professional placements in social work education is discussed. Contemporary challenges in the provision of practice education in Ireland and internationally are explored and implications for expansion of social work programmes are addressed. In the absence of clinical/agency-based tutor positions in social work, the scope of the clinical tutor role in cognate disciplines is examined and its potential to address some of the current challenges in practice education is outlined. The pilot tutor-led programme is described and the tutor role in the context of one placement cycle is discussed. The cohort of students who participated in the pilot project were from the final year of the Trinity College Dublin, Bachelor in Social Studies (Social Work) (BSS) programme. The chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the BSS programme including an overview of the placement guidelines for students and practice teachers.

The central role of practice placements in social work education

To register as a social worker with the Irish health and social care professionals' regulator CORU, graduates must have successfully completed 1000 hours of professionally supervised, assessed placement as part of an accredited social work education programme (CORU, 2019b). Practice education shapes the training and professional development of social workers (Flanagan and Wilson, 2018) ensuring that future practitioners acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies to provide effective social work services across a wide range of health and social care settings. The role of practice placements is recognised internationally as central to social work education (Earls Larrison and Korr, 2013; McGuire and Lay, 2020; Gregory et al., 2025) and in Ireland as much as 50% of social work curriculum is delivered through assessed professional placements (Murphy et al., 2023). In fact placements have been referred to as the 'signature pedagogy' of social work education (Lyter, 2012; Wayne, Raskin and Bogo, 2010; Ayala et al.,

2018) and are highly valued by students in relation to skills and knowledge acquisition and professional identity development (Roulston et al., 2018; Cleak et al., 2023).

In the absence of a centralised placement system as is the case in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the U.K., Irish universities recruit registered social workers to act as practice teachers for each student cohort. Students are allocated to practice teachers on a one-to-one basis, for a fourteen-week placement in the agency where the social worker is employed. Each student completes two such placements in contrasting services, for example in healthcare and statutory child protection, over the course of their studies. For the duration of the placement, practice teachers hold the multiple roles of social work practitioner and student educator, and assessor. Practice teachers act as a bridge between the student and the agency, assess emergent learning needs, allocate and supervise students' practice, promote integration of theory, enable reflective practice and assess capacity to practice in accordance with the CORU domains of proficiency for social work. The five domains of proficiency are: professional autonomy and accountability, communication; collaborative practice and teamworking; safety and quality; professional development; professional knowledge and skills (CORU, 2019a). Each domain consists of a grouping of specified proficiencies.

Research on students' perspectives of effective placements highlights the importance of a collaborative student-practice teacher relationship and other supportive relationships within the organisation; opportunities to observe and undertake 'real-world' practice; and supervision encompassing reflective dialogue and structured teaching and learning processes (Bogo, 2015; Cleak et al., 2023). Studies undertaken by Wilson and Flanagan (2021) and Kourgiantakis et al. (2019) confirm the importance of supportive supervision, opportunities to observe experienced social workers and highlight the significance of feedback from practice teachers in promoting learning, resulting in student satisfaction with placement. The need for better alignment between academic and practice settings was also identified in research across the island of Ireland undertaken by Cleak et al. (2023)

The complexity of practice education and the challenge of balancing the demands of their agency workload, with the provision of teaching, support and assessment to meet university and regulatory standards have been identified (McAllister, 2013; Cook et al., 2024). Barriers to taking on a practice teaching role include time constraints, inadequate training and support, and lack of recognition of and allowance for the additional workload (Domakin, 2014; Hills et al., 2021; Murphy et al., 2023).

The expansion of social work programmes and implications for placements

The education of greater numbers of health and social care professionals is identified as a priority for addressing capacity in the health and social care workforce and a core component of this is establishing a sufficient and sustainable supply of student placements (Hills et al., 2021; Whiting et al., 2023). In response to workforce demands Ireland has significantly increased its student social work numbers. The past two years has seen regional development of new social work programmes, the introduction of an apprenticeship model of social work education and expansion of numbers on established programmes. On June 11th 2025, the Irish government approved a further expansion in training places for nine Health and Social Care Professions (HSCPs) including social work and announced targeted investment to support the associated clinical placements, staff, and infrastructure. The commitment of targeted investment to support clinical placements is crucial as growing demand is otherwise likely to result in a crisis in supply of quality placements at a time when agencies grapple with ever increasing demands for services, complexity of needs, workforce shortages and budgetary constraints as has been the experience internationally.

International social work research highlights the negative implications of expansion of education places without commensurate development and resourcing of practice education, resulting in inconsistency in meeting professional standards (Doel, 2009; Kalliath et al., 2011; McKee et al., 2015; Zuchowski et al., 2019; McFadden et al., 2020; Cleak et al., 2023; Whiting et al., 2023). The

sustainability of traditional placement models where a student is assigned to work with a named social work practitioner has been questioned (Bogo, 2015; Neden et al., 2018). Globally social work programmes find themselves in competition with each other to access placement opportunities for their students (Wayne et al., 2006; Greenblatt et al., 2019). In Australia variable quality in students' learning on placement was reported with agency partners less likely to provide supervision, attend training and accept students presenting with additional needs (Neden et al., 2018; Zuchowski et al., 2019). In 2013, the Canadian Association for Social Work Education declared a crisis in practice education (Drolet, 2020) as education places expanded while social workers were less available to provide supervision to social work students due to existing workload pressures (Regehr, 2013; McKee et al., 2015; Ayala et al., 2018). In many cases social workers who provided placements did not receive a reduction to their regular workload in recognition of the time and effort it takes to provide teaching and supervision to students (Wayne et al., 2006; Domakin, 2015). This negatively impacts both the quantity and quality of practice learning opportunities provided (Domakin, 2015; Ayala et al., 2018).

This crisis has led to calls for innovation in relation to conceptualisation, procurement, structuring, and resourcing of placements. Collaboration between agency-based supervisors and universities is seen as central to the development of innovative placement models (Zuchowski, 2014; Jones-Mutton et al., 2015; Zuchowski et al., 2018). Collaborations have also been developed between groups of universities and universities and agencies to provide joint field educator training, placement orientation, preparation and support (Drake, Pillay, and Diamandi, 2016; Zuchowski et al., 2018).

Placements in a medical/hospital-based social work context

An international definition of social work is formulated by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and states that social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (IFSW, 2014). Within this, the specialised role of medical social work facilitates a patient-centred approach which improves patient experiences by providing support to patients and their families, facilitating access to resources and advocating for patient rights (Ashcroft et al., 2024). Despite a long history of social work placements within hospitals, there is a surprising dearth of research on experiences of social work practice teaching and learning in health contexts. Health social workers take on practice educator roles in a context of ever-increasing demands on healthcare workers. Tensions between social and medical models of care add to the complexity of teaching and learning social work practice in healthcare settings.

Cognisance of recent and enduring pressures on the sector, led to an innovation in provision of hospital-based social work placements in Ireland in 2023 with the introduction of a clinical tutor position on a part-time basis funded by the Health and Social Care Professionals Office as part of their placement initiative. Despite the long establishment of this role in cognate disciplines this pilot was the first of its kind in social work in Ireland.

The role of clinical tutor in cognate disciplines

The role of clinical tutor is long established in health and allied health disciplines including nursing, medicine, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. The clinical tutor is primarily an educator, facilitating and enhancing learning for students in practice by encouraging critical thinking and enabling evidence-based practice (Dunleavy and Duggan, 2019). Flanagan et al (2021) conducted research on the clinical tutor role in mental health nursing in Ireland. They argue that as a joint academic and practice-based role, the primary focus of the clinical tutor is enabling students to translate theoretical knowledge into safe, quality practice. The value of a pastoral care function to support students' adjustment to the practice setting is

also emphasised. Australian research suggests positive role modelling by clinical tutors assists in development of medical students' professional competencies, values and attitudes. They specify three core characteristics of a positive role model: 1) clinical attributes, 2) teaching skills, and 3) personal qualities (Burgess et al., 2015).

In a social work context this specialist educator role focusing on enabling reflective, evidence-based practice and professional development in accordance with the CORU Social Work Registration Board Standards of Proficiency would substantially reduce the demands on individual social workers assuming practice teaching roles. In addition, the pastoral care and administrative potential of the role, for example managing induction for all students, would deliver a standardised induction experience and contribute to better alignment of university and agency objectives.

There are several challenges in practice education which have been identified (Bogo, 2015) and are now briefly outlined. Firstly, there is a variability in the quality of supervision, which can vary widely depending on the skills, experience and availability of established Practice Teachers. This may lead to inconsistencies in the quality of supervision and practical experiences that students receive. Establishing clear guidelines and standards for field work education will provide consistency in practice education. Secondly, balancing theory and practice in fast-paced healthcare settings may be challenging for students. Developing a strong theoretical knowledge is a foundational skill for social work students and transferring this knowledge to complex real-world acute settings is vital for professional competency. Developing structured reflective opportunities, case discussions and peer support can mitigate these concerns. Thirdly, developing cultural competence in social work training is a core feature. Students should have the opportunity to work with diverse patient populations and integrate cultural awareness and sensitivity into their practice. Engaging in reflective practice will develop and enhance cultural competence further and promote ethical reasoning (IFSW, 2014). Finally, healthcare system constraints such as limited resources, high caseloads and time pressures, can challenge the

provision of quality student placements. Students may also be allocated unrealistically high caseloads with limited supports. Working collaboratively with healthcare organisations and educational institutes can identify potential challenges and provide a quality learning environment for professional development (Domakin, 2014). Commentators note that incorporating evidence-based practice into social work education will equip students with the skills to apply empirical research findings in practice and will promote effective practice (Bogo, 2015).

The Pilot Tutor-Led Placement Programme

As discussed in Chapter 1 the Pilot Tutor-Led Placement Programme was an initiative of the Practice Education Team at the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College and the Medical Social Work Service, St. James's Hospital Dublin. Funding was awarded under a HSE HSCP placement initiative to appoint a .5 Senior Social Worker to act as an agency-based (clinical) tutor for one placement cycle. Six Senior Sophister Trinity College BSS students undertook their final placements as part of the programme which ran for fourteen weeks from September – December 2023. The tutor was appointed on a part-time basis through a secondment arrangement within the St James's social work service. Once appointed the tutor led the recruitment and induction of individual practice teachers from within the team and liaised with the university in allocating students to the practice teachers and hospital specialisms.

The tutor provided an in-depth group induction process for all students over the first two weeks of placement, which standardised the induction process. Student time during induction was split half-time between induction with the tutor and shadowing direct practice with their practice teacher, in order to support practice teachers who were already managing busy caseloads.
Fortnightly tutor-led group supervision and peer support sessions provided a regular, structured environment for students to discuss their practice and receive educational inputs, feedback and peer support. This provided an additional layer of supervision and support to that already provided by weekly practice teacher supervision with students.

The tutor also facilitated social work student participation in inter-professional learning opportunities coordinated by the hospital's interprofessional education initiative 'Networking and Educating Students Together' (NEST), enabling the students to deepen their understanding of complex healthcare systems and improve their capacity to provide patient-centred care (Mann, Gordon and MacLeod, 2009).

The tutor organised a student rota providing shadowing opportunities of varied social work specialties in the hospital as well as relevant community services to broaden student learning and further arranged student attendance at varied training courses relevant to the hospital setting and patient care.

Supporting and evaluating students' ongoing professional development, aligned to the CORU Social Workers Registration Board Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers was a key objective of the tutor role. Weekly skills development sessions were provided to the students as a group, with further tailored one-to-one sessions as needed, targeting varied subjects to support students to integrate theory into practice, navigate complex case management, developing critical thinking skills and reflective practice. Tutor feedback on individual student progress in respect of skills development aligned to the CORU Standards of Proficiency was provided to both the students and practice teachers.

The tutor worked concurrently with the students' practice teachers to support and resource practice teaching, address issues arising for practice teachers and students and contribute to student evaluation. The tutor-role is underpinned by a commitment to collaborative practice and a strengths-based approach.

The BSS programme

As discussed earlier, the cohort of students who participated in the pilot project were from the final year of the Trinity College Dublin, Bachelor in Social Studies (Social Work) (BSS) programme. This background chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the BSS programme including an overview of the placement expectations and the roles of the key stakeholders in the placement process.

The four-year Bachelor in Social Studies (Social Work) programme, combining academic and practice-based learning, is approved by the national regulatory body for health and social care professionals (CORU). Graduates are eligible to apply for registration with the CORU Social Workers Registration Board. The academic and practice curricula are designed and delivered in accordance with the CORU Criteria and Standards of Proficiency for Social Work Education and Training Programmes. The degree aims to provide students with the necessary knowledge, skills and value base to enter social work as competent beginning practitioners, to work professionally and accountably with service users and other professionals in diverse settings, and to use the guidance and support of senior colleagues effectively. The student cohort consists of school leavers and mature students.

Overview of Placement Processes

Practice-based education is an integral part of Bachelor in Social Studies programme. The university-based Practice Education Team acts as the interface between the School of Social Work and Social Policy and social work professionals in generating and supporting social work placements. Placements are offered in partnership with all agencies providing social work services in Ireland including the HSE, Tusla, the Probation Service, the community, nonprofit sector and the emerging private sector.

Student placements are undertaken in accordance with the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Social Workers (CORU Social Workers Registration Board, 2019). Students are required to successfully complete 1000 professional social work placement hours over the final two Sophister years of the programme. This builds on foundation level practice learning placement hours undertaken across the first and second years of the BSS programme. The Senior Sophister placement (500 hours) is generally undertaken from September to December and is the final placement of the four years of the BSS degree programme. It comprises of a full-time block placement of 14 weeks (70 days / 500 hours). Before students commence placement, they participate in a week-long pre-placement programme in the university.

Aims and Objectives of Professional Placements include:

- To develop and refine social work practice skills, knowledge and capacity aligned with CORU/SWRB Domains of Proficiency
- To understand the role, mandate and policies of the agency and the role of the social worker in this context.
- To work collaboratively, creatively and effectively with service users and carers.
- To work effectively as part of a social work team and in the context of inter-professional practice.
- To apply relevant research, theories and approaches in practice and in turn to learn from practice experience.
- To work in partnership with community-based agencies to access and develop resources for service users and carers.
- To become sensitised to ethical and professional issues and to apply ethical principles in practice.
- To utilise reflective practice and supervision to enable professional development and ensure best practice.

Practice Education Team

The university-based Practice Education Team co-ordinate the provision and development of practice-based education for social work students. They manage the selection, training and support of Practice Teachers for both the Bachelor in Social Studies (BSS) and MSW/P.Dip.SW programmes. They deliver Practice Teacher initial training and CPD courses; they also recruit and support Tutors and develop initiatives to promote practice teaching at agency and team levels. Using a reflective learning approach, they prepare students for placements and help them develop their learning objectives through scheduled class seminars prior to placement and during placement 'call-in' sessions and post placement teaching. Together with the Social Work Tutor,

the Practice Education Team are the primary college-based support to students while on placement.

The Practice Education Team seek to develop students' range of knowledge and skills through contrasting placement settings for example child and family and adult services; statutory (a setting where practice is set within statutory frameworks) and non-statutory agencies; drawing from the full range of available social work sectors. Decisions regarding the allocation of placements are taken based on the student's learning needs, prior experience, areas of interest and with reference to CORU guidelines. Placement planning is carried out in consultation with students, tutors and the BSS course team, in the context of available placement opportunities.

Practice Teachers

Practice Teachers are CORU/SWRB registered social workers who have a minimum of two years post qualifying social work experience, are in their current post for at least one year and have successfully completed Practice Teacher training. The practice teaching role entails supervising, mentoring and assessing social work students while on placement. This provides future practitioners with the practice skills required to work in the profession. These skills include developing their professional identity, reflective practice, critical thinking and cultivating an ethical approach to practice (Wilson and Flanagan, 2021; Murphy et al., 2023; CSWE, 2024). Under the guidance of a qualified practitioner, students obtain real-world practice experience and are given the opportunity to apply theory to their social work practice (Cleak et al., 2023). Practice Teachers also have a gatekeeping function in the social work profession and are responsible for maintaining standards to ensure that students are competent and 'fit for practice' in their professional role (Currer, 2009).

Social Work Tutor

In the Sophister years each BSS student is assigned an individual Social Work Tutor, who is primarily concerned with their professional development and maintains an ongoing, tutorial relationship with students across their placements. Social work tutors act as liaison between the BSS programme and the practice placement and have an important role in helping students

understand and actively engage with the process of learning from practice experience. Over the duration of each placement, they facilitate three placement review meetings. Their role includes:

- Monitoring and evaluation of practice learning experiences and quality of placements
- Ensuring achievement of learning aims and objectives, as per the Learning Agreement and aligned with the CORU Social Workers Registration Board Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers
- Supporting the student to make links between classroom learning and practice
- Promotion of open communication and provision of ongoing support to students and Practice Teachers
- Ongoing liaison with the college Practice Education Team.

Conclusion

This chapter presents a contextual background to ground the evaluation report by examining contemporary issues in practice education in an international context; exploring the potential of the clinical tutor role in addressing these issues; and describing the tutor-led pilot project. An overview of the Trinity College Dublin BSS (Social Work) programme is provided, setting out placement processes and objectives together with the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders. The next section of the evaluation report documents the research procedures undertaken for this evaluation.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methods adopted in this evaluation of the pilot Tutor-led social work placement programme in St. James' Hospital. It details the study design and rationale underpinning the methodological decisions used to undertake the evaluation study.

Research design

A mixed-methods approach was selected to review and evaluate the pilot placement programme. This combines the analysis of quantitative survey data and qualitative in-depth interviews. A questionnaire was administered to key stakeholders to explore the enablers and barriers to provision of social work student placements. This was complimented by an examination of the benefits and limitations of a Tutor-led placement programme from the perspectives of social work students who completed the pilot programme, Practice Teachers, external Practice Tutors, university placement co-ordinators and staff in the Social Work Department of the hospital.

Mixed-method designs have emerged as a pragmatic approach in evaluations as they employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a more complete answer to research questions (Bryman, 2012). This allows for a comprehensive exploration of the research topic by facilitating in-depth engagement and understanding. Stronger conclusions and recommendations may then be drawn than may be generated from a method that is solely reliant on a single approach (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). In the context of this research study, a mixed-methods approach is adopted which leans upon an interpretivist, social constructionist position to frame the analysis of the research.

The research methodologies are underpinned by action research in which participants are viewed as experts in terms of their own roles and experiences (MacDonald, 2012). The research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Tutor-led pilot placement programme and to strengthen and improve placement experiences for students, Practice Teachers and other relevant stakeholders. Taking an exploratory approach, the semi-structured interviews included a number of predetermined questions which were customised depending on the role of the participant. These were built upon with additional questions following the natural direction of the conversation to uncover a rich description of participants' own unique perspectives. This naturalistic approach allows factual responses and facilitates participant descriptions of their own experiences and interpretations (Sandelowski, 2010), constructing an interpretation of the pilot programme from multiple viewpoints. The findings which emerge from this evaluation will be shared and discussed with all stakeholders to inform future development of the programme and provide insights into how the Tutor-led placement programme can enhance the quality and quantity of social work placement opportunities.

A theoretical thematic analysis framework is utilised for the research study. It is regarded as a flexible and accessible approach which is compatible with constructionist approaches providing a rich and detailed account of data. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns across data. The process captures meanings and prevalence and requires researcher judgement to refine and categorise research themes. The theoretical thematic analysis approach taken here codes for the specific research question and where these occur across the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Research aims

The overall aim of the research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Tutor-led pilot programme in St James' Hospital. This evaluation seeks to understand:

- What are the enablers and barriers to provision of social work placements in an acute healthcare context?
- What is the potential for a tutor-led student placement programme to enhance the quality and quantity of placement opportunities in this context?

Research objectives

- Investigation of the enablers and barriers to provision of student placements
- Evaluation of the Tutor-led pilot placement programme at St James' Hospital

Research questions

The research questions this study will address are as follows:

1. What is the pilot model and how effective has it been in achieving its objectives?
2. What are the strengths of the Tutor-led programme as reported by stakeholders and students?
3. What are the constraints and challenges experienced by stakeholders in implementing the programme?
4. What are the experiences of students in completing the programme?
5. How successful is the programme in building future capacity for social work placements?

Participants

Research participants from each group were purposively recruited and facilitated by two sets of gatekeepers; the university placement co-ordinators and the social work manager at St. James' Hospital. The gatekeepers identified stakeholders who had sufficient involvement with the programme and contacted them by email to inform them of the evaluation and provide them with an option to participate. All participants had to meet the following inclusion/exclusion criteria to take part in the study:

- An involvement with the placement programme in St James' Hospital
- Be aged 18 or older
- Be considered capable of providing informed consent

In total, 22 participants responded to the online questionnaire and a further 15 participants took part in semi-structured in-depth interviews. This aims to build up a wide and comprehensive picture of perspectives on the pilot programme. Interviews were conducted with stakeholders from the following groups:

- Students (4)
- Practice Teachers (4)
- External Practice Tutors (3)
- Hospital Social Work Department senior staff (2)
- TCD Practice Education Co-ordinators (2)

Data collection

The evaluation was conducted over a six-month period commencing in August 2024. The mixed methods approach consisted of an online questionnaire and in-depth interviews, both of which are now described.

Quantitative measures

The researcher collaborated with staff from the Social Work Department in St. James' Hospital and School of Social Work and Social Policy at Trinity College to develop and generate an online questionnaire. This was administered using the Qualtrics XM experience management software platform (Qualtrics, 2025).

Potential participants from the Social Work Department in St. James' Hospital and the wider hospital Networking and Educating Students Together (NEST) interprofessional network were identified by the hospital social work manager (n=50) and were sent the questionnaire link by email. A week later, a reminder email was sent to encourage as many participants as possible to respond. The link to the anonymous online questionnaire was activated on Monday 25th November 2024 and was closed two weeks later, on Sunday 8th December 2024.

The anonymous online questionnaire aimed to capture general information about respondents and generate perspectives regarding their experiences of student placements. Detailed demographic data was not collected. The survey instrument contained a mixture of questions with both closed and open-ended responses. At the outset, participants were asked to read an information sheet relating to the questionnaire and confirm they were aged 18 or older (see appendices).

Qualitative measures

The fieldwork stage of the evaluation commenced on 29th August 2024 and consisted of individual in-depth interviews with social work students who completed the pilot programme, Practice Teachers, external Practice Tutors, university placement co-ordinators and staff in the Social Work Department. All qualitative interviews were conducted between 29th August and 8th November 2024.

All participants were initially contacted by email according to their relevant institution and subsequent correspondence continued via email with the researcher. TCD students, external Practice Tutors and placement co-ordinators were contacted by the administrator of the School of Social Work and Social Policy. Staff in St. James' Hospital were contacted by management in the Social Work Department. All participants were emailed a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (see appendices) which provided full and detailed information on what the evaluation entailed. Signed consent sheets were returned to the researcher. To protect confidentiality, all information was anonymised and all participants assigned a gender-neutral pseudonym.

The interviews were conducted either in-person or online and were recorded. The average interview duration was 31 minutes and 28 seconds. The in-person interviews were recorded on the researcher's voice recorder. The online interviews were recorded using MS Teams. No interviews had any significant technical issues and all were fully completed. Table 1 presents an overview of the qualitative participants, all were assigned pseudonyms.

Table 1: Qualitative interview participants

Ref	Pseudonym	Role	Interview	Duration
P01	Hayden	BSS Student	TCD in person	00:33:41
P02	Scout	Practice Teacher	TCD in person	00:31:05
P03	Fran	Social Work Department Senior Staff Member	SJH in person	00:40:40
P04	Sam	Social Work Department Senior Staff Member	SJH in person	01:00:23
P05	Jessie	Practice Teacher	SJH in person	00:26:41
P06	Charlie	BSS Student	TCD in person	00:19:53
P07	Jordan	BSS Student	Online MS Teams	00:19:08
P08	Cody	BSS Student	Online MS Teams	00:31:40
P09	Alex	Practice Teacher	Online MS Teams	00:18:56
P10	Pat	TCD Practice Co-ordinator	TCD in person	00:47:35
P11	Ashley	TCD Practice Co-ordinator	TCD in person	00:47:35
P12	Casey	External Practice Tutor	Online MS Teams	00:37:42
P13	Chris	External Practice Tutor	Online MS Teams	00:26:16
P14	Taylor	External Practice Tutor	Online MS Teams	00:24:54
P15	Jude	Practice Teacher	Online MS Teams	00:22:03

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide (see appendices) and were fully transcribed by the researcher. The topics covered in the interviews included broad questions about the effectiveness of the pilot programme, the enablers and barriers to the provision of social work placements and explored the potential for a Tutor-led student placement programme to enhance the quality and quantity of placements. Where participants are quoted, their words are presented verbatim to ensure authenticity.

Data management and analysis

The online survey was generated and administered using the Qualtrics XM experience management software platform. The qualitative open text survey responses were extracted and compiled in an MS Word document. All qualitative interviews were recorded using either the researcher's voice recorder or MS Teams. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and audio files were deleted at the conclusion of the data analysis process. All files and transcripts associated with the evaluation were stored using a two-step password protected Trinity College One Drive folder.

The questionnaire results were analysed to identify key themes of statistical relevance in the data. The analysis was conducted using SPSS Statistics and descriptive results were produced. The open text questionnaire responses and transcribed semi-structured interviews were analysed following a systematic process of reading, categorising, testing and refining the data. Adhering to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase guide to thematic analysis, a codebook was generated to reflect prevalent themes. These codes were grouped into concepts which were used to address the research questions.

The two phases of the evaluation were combined to provide a dual lens to capture the implementation of the pilot programme. Conducting a mixed method approach aims to develop an in-depth understanding with strong conclusions. The key strength of this pragmatic approach is that the quantitative method of measuring the effectiveness of the Tutor-led programme is complimented and enhanced by the qualitative exploration of staff and student perspectives of the pilot programme. Therefore, key factors impacting effectiveness of the programme can be uncovered and used to understand enablers and barriers to provision of student placements and inform further implementation stages.

Ethical considerations

The Research Ethics Approval Committee of the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin granted this evaluation ethical approval on 2nd July 2024 (REAMs No: 3034). Further to this an application was approved by the St James' Hospital Research and Innovation office for social work staff participation in the evaluation. The evaluation adhered to all the key tenets of a high standard of ethical research; informed and voluntary consent, non-malfeasance, beneficence, confidentiality, and anonymity. Participants were fully informed of the nature of their involvement in the evaluation and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. All responses to the online questionnaire were completely anonymous. All interviewees were given anonymity assurances, and it was explained at the start of interviews that no names of individuals would be identified in the final report. The research was undertaken in a manner to ensure no harm to participants or the researchers. It did not employ any covert or deceptive techniques, and all participants were treated respectfully. All data generated during the evaluation was only accessible to the researcher.

Study limitations and strengths

Every effort was taken in the design, administration and analysis of this evaluation to provide the most comprehensive account of the pilot Tutor-led placement programme at St. James' Hospital. However, there are several methodological issues which are now considered.

Firstly, in common with all online questionnaires, there is a potential for participation bias or non-response bias to impact the data collection. Non-response bias can occur when individuals decide not to respond to the questionnaire and therefore their valuable perspectives are not included in the analysis (Bryman, 2012). They may be unwilling or unable to respond and the questionnaire may be unrepresentative because the participants who do respond, possess certain traits or perspectives which impact the analysis (Fielding et al., 2017). To mitigate this risk and encourage as many participants as possible to respond, reminder emails were sent to

potential questionnaire participants. All questionnaire participants were anonymous therefore there is no mechanism to estimate the significance of non-response bias. It is anticipated that if there are any difference between responders and non-responders, the differences are not significant and therefore do not impact the findings.

Secondly, the impact of researcher bias is considered. Lincoln and Guba (1985) detail the importance of minimising the dynamics between researchers and researched. These include issues such as reactivity (influence of the researcher on the participant), respondent biases (information the participant choose to share), and our own research biases (researchers preconceived ideas and assumptions) (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In order to minimise these possible threats to validity, the researcher used a reflexive approach to examine judgements and decisions made during the data collection and analysis process. This aims to identify any influences that may impact the research process to ensure the research is legitimate and valid (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

A key strength of this evaluation is the multiple perspectives at different levels of the pilot programme that were consulted for this research study. Among those recruited to take part were students who had completed the pilot programme, Practice Teachers, external Practice Tutors, and people who are involved with the pilot programme at senior levels from within St. James' Hospital and Trinity College Dublin. All participants were able to provide their comparative insights of placements both before and after the pilot programme.

A further strength of this evaluation relates to the mixed methods research design. This utilises the online questionnaire to report the characteristics and general motivations of key stakeholders and is enhanced through the qualitative exploration of more nuanced experiences of the pilot programme using in-depth individual interviews.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research methods utilised in the evaluation of the pilot Tutor-led placement programme in St. James' Hospital. It details the study design and procedures, recruitment and data collection and management. Ethical issues were considered, and the study limitations and strengths were noted.

Chapter 4 - Questionnaire Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of an online questionnaire circulated by anonymous email link to the St. James' Hospital staff in the Social Work Department and the wider Networking and Educating Students Together (NEST) Interprofessional network (n= 50). The questionnaire was open for completion during a two-week period, from Monday 25th November to Sunday 8th December 2024. In total, 22 people completed the questionnaire which was delivered via the online Qualtrics platform. This represents a response rate of 44%.

The questionnaire contained a mix of questions with both closed and open-ended responses covering a broad range of topics relating to student placements in the Social Work Department at St. James' Hospital. Questions included background information regarding the respondent and probed their opinions on social work student placements, integrating practice teaching as part of their professional role and identity, enablers and barriers to student placements and the Tutor-led pilot programme. Participants were invited to explain further their more nuanced experiences, insights and feedback in open ended responses. The closed question data will be presented as tables and charts, and the open-ended questions will be presented through a selection of quotes from respondents. All respondents completed the same questionnaire however, to provide more nuanced understandings of perspectives of the two groups, there are additional questions specifically for the members of the Social Work Department and separately for the NEST group. The findings are presented in three parts, firstly the characteristics of respondents, secondly, responses concerning social work student placements in St. James' Hospital and finally responses relating to the pilot Tutor-led student placement programme.

Respondent Profile

A description of the respondents is now presented and details information about their characteristics, their professional role and student supervision experience.

The questionnaire was completed by 22 adult participants, of whom, 21 were female (95.5%) and one was male (4.5%). No respondents described themselves as non-binary and there were no missing values. Table 2 presents a distribution of respondents by gender.

Table 2: Questionnaire participants

Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**
Male	1	4.5
Female	21	95.5
Non-binary	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	0
Total (n)	**22**	**100**

Sixteen responses were returned from the Social Work Department and 6 from the wider NEST Interprofessional Network. When asked to describe their position in St. James' hospital, 68.2% (n=15) reported they held a social work role. Other reported roles included: Physiotherapist (9.0%), Occupational Therapist (4.5%) and Podiatry (4.5%). The majority of participants (31.8%) who completed the questionnaire have been in their current role for 4 to 9 years. Five reported they were in their current position for ten years or more (22.7%), whilst the lowest proportion of respondents (18.2%) were in their role less than one year. The reported length of time in current role is illustrated in figure 1.

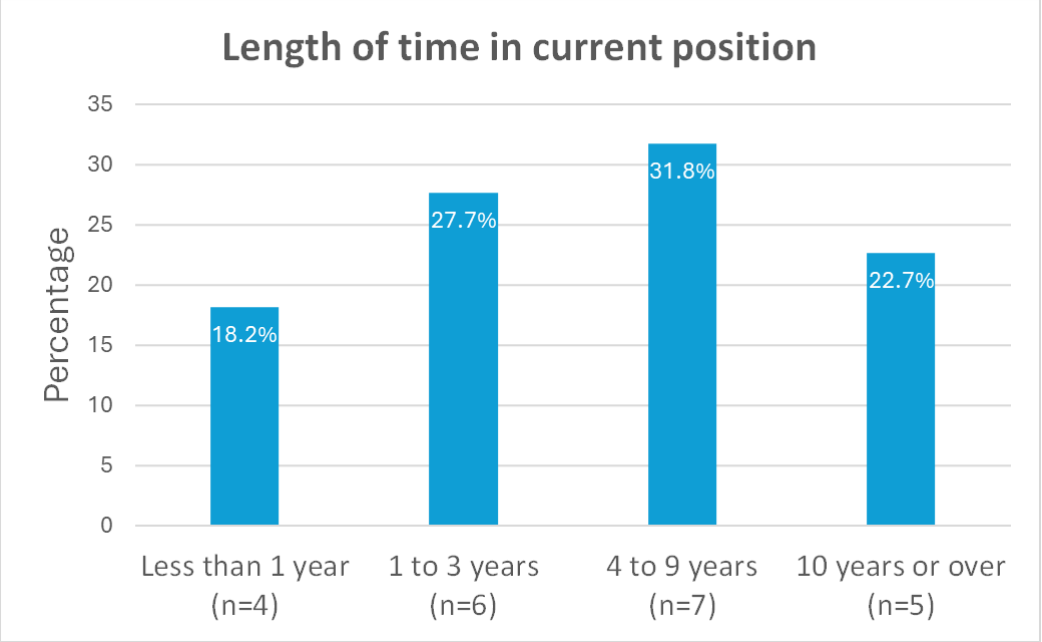

Figure 1: Length of time in current role

Of the 22 respondents to the questionnaire, the highest proportion (50.0%) stated they have supervised between 2 to 4 students. This was followed by first time practice educators (18.2%) and those who indicated they had supervised more than ten students (18.2%) over their career. Two respondents (9.0%) indicated they had not yet supervised a student on placement. These respondents were presented with an additional open-text response box to indicate why they had not undertaken a student placement to date. Both these respondents explained that they were at an early stage of their career and were building up their own experience before taking a student on placement. Respondents in the Social Work Department were asked if they had supervised a student during the pilot Tutor-led programme. Of the 16 responses, 15 (94.0%) indicated they had not taken on a student placement during the pilot programme. Table 3 presents an overview of how many students respondents have supervised during their career.

Table 3: Number of Students Previously Supervised

Students supervised	Number	Percentage
0	2	9.0
1	4	18.2
2-4	11	50.0
5-9	1	4.5
10+	4	18.2
Total (n)	**22**	**100**

All respondents were asked if being a Practice Teacher/Educator is an important part of their professional role and identity. Of the completed responses, 75.0% (n=15) agreed that yes, it was an important feature of their professional role and identity. Conversely, 25.0% (n=5) indicated that it was not an important feature. There were two missing values.

Figure 2: Professional role and identity

To provide further insights, an open text response box was provided for respondents to provide further information on their views regarding integrating practice teaching/education into their professional role and identity. In total, 16 participants provided further information, of which eight respondents in the Social Work Department highlighted the positive features that practice teaching brought to their professional role.

Foremost was the necessity to provide support and guidance to future social work practitioners by providing a platform for them to gain skills and knowledge in a practical way. The sentiment of "*giving back"* to educational institutions also featured, echoing how they were once given the opportunity to complete their own training, and it was now their turn to reciprocate. Respondents also cited how practice teaching benefits them, it *"enhances continuing professional development and career development."* Furthermore, it *"makes you stop and re-evaluate your work practices"* and frequently, this occurred through the lens of student observations. One respondent encapsulated these thoughts as follows:

> *"For me, it [the student on placement] enhances my practice both personally and professionally. It's important for me to be able to share the social work role and empower students to be confident in their practice and learn how to best support our patients"*

Respondents also noted how placements showcase careers in social work to students across a wide range of practice areas and has the potential to promote careers in the hospital context.

Some respondents cautioned that the existing busy workload of social work means student placements are an additional burden they cannot take on, *"I feel that caseloads and demands are too high to think about taking a student."* A further comment noted that there are already high expectations that cannot be fulfilled, such as undertaking research.

Amongst the NEST participants, respondents highlighted the supports they received from within their own departments when taking on student placements, both from colleagues and management. The importance of instilling a "*learning environment"* culture was seen as crucial. This continuous professional development occurred in multiple ways and was integrated into working practices through workshops, simulations, reflective sessions and ongoing regular feedback channels. Central to providing quality placements was having *"protected time and resources to spend with students"* as heavy clinical workloads could hinder practice education.

Social Work Student Placements

Encouraging Practice Teachers to take on placements

Respondents in the Social Work Department were asked specific questions relating to what would encourage and discourage them from taking a student on placement. To capture the range of individual experiences an open text box was provided, and respondents were asked to explain their perspectives. Thirteen respondents completed this open text response box.

The main incentive to taking a student was identified as having supports during the placement. Respondents in the Social Work Department singled out their heavy caseloads and lack of time as the key reasons they were reluctant to take on a student placement. The requirement to allocate extensive time for practice education was off-putting and different pressure points were identified. In particular, the first few weeks of the placement cycle were identified as being very *"time consuming"* with one respondent describing this initial period as *"daunting"*. Placements were regarded as *"overwhelming"* especially for first time Practice Teachers. For some, they felt there was a high expectation regarding their capacity to manage their core duties and a student placement in the context of high workloads, which could not always be achieved. To alleviate these concerns, respondents said they would be reassured if there were more supports in place

to assist them during placements. For many, this was envisaged as a Tutor role which would streamline induction processes, provide group learning and manage the student placement. One respondent commented succinctly what they needed:

> *"Help and support with induction, education and supervision of students as these things are all time consuming on top of an already busy caseload"*

Supports offered by a Tutor were regarded as vital *"in order to provide a good placement for a student"* and to encourage Practice Teachers to consider taking on a student. One respondent noted that taking students on placement offered the opportunity to showcase the work of medical social work and once qualified, perhaps students would be more likely to consider taking up a position in the Social Work Department. Furthermore, knowing that additional onsite supports are available to both Practice Teacher and student was invaluable especially if challenges arose. Personal experience of being on placement also resonated with respondents:

> *"Having gone through student work placement myself in the past, I am encouraged to contribute to students career progression and give back to the profession that shaped mine"*

One respondent commented that the placement cycle was very long and perhaps additional financial incentives could be offered. It was noted that some Practice Teachers may be more inclined to put in the extra hours of work required if they were getting paid better in recognition of the extra workload of student placements. A further point related to managing the high expectations of the educational institutions which was difficult in the context of already heavy caseloads. The university required, end of placement documentation was noted as very lengthy and time consuming to complete.

Relationships with educational institutions

Respondents in the Social Work Department were asked about their relationships with university social work programmes and how these relationships could be developed and strengthened. Eleven respondents provided detailed further information in an open text response box.

A central feature was fostering long-term good relationships with educational institutions and for many respondents, this began during their own social work training programme. Many respondents were still in contact with their own institution and continued to maintain a professional relationship with them:

> *"It is very beneficial for placement coordinators to foster good relationships with their students as they are more likely to agree to taking on a student in the future. Mine kept in contact and once I had completed my two years of practice they made contact with me to take a student!"*

Most respondents described their relationships with universities as "good" or "very good" with regular, ongoing contact with placement co-ordinators. Some commented they did not currently have any relationship with university staff. This was either because they did not usually take a student on placement, or they were newly qualified. Some expressed a wish to be more involved with universities and opportunities to become more integrated were suggested. Extending invitations to practice teachers to attend presentations by visiting lecturers in the university was one possibility and meeting the wider academic staff was seen as mutually beneficial and could foster research collaborations.

The Pilot Tutor-led Programme

Benefits of a Tutor-led programme for Practice Teachers

Respondents in the Social Work Department were asked to identify the main benefits of a Tutor-led student placement programme for Practice Teachers. The majority selected streamlined induction procedures (93.0%) and increased student supports, for instance, peer learning opportunities (93.0%), as the main benefits. These was closely followed by reduced workload (87.0%) and supports if issues arose (87.0%). Increased academic supports was selected by 67% of respondents. Respondents were provided with the opportunity to name any further key benefits in an open text box and a further identified benefit was how a Tutor would have the capacity to actively encourage staff to take students on placement. Figure 3 shows the identified key benefits of a Tutor-led programme for Practice Teachers.

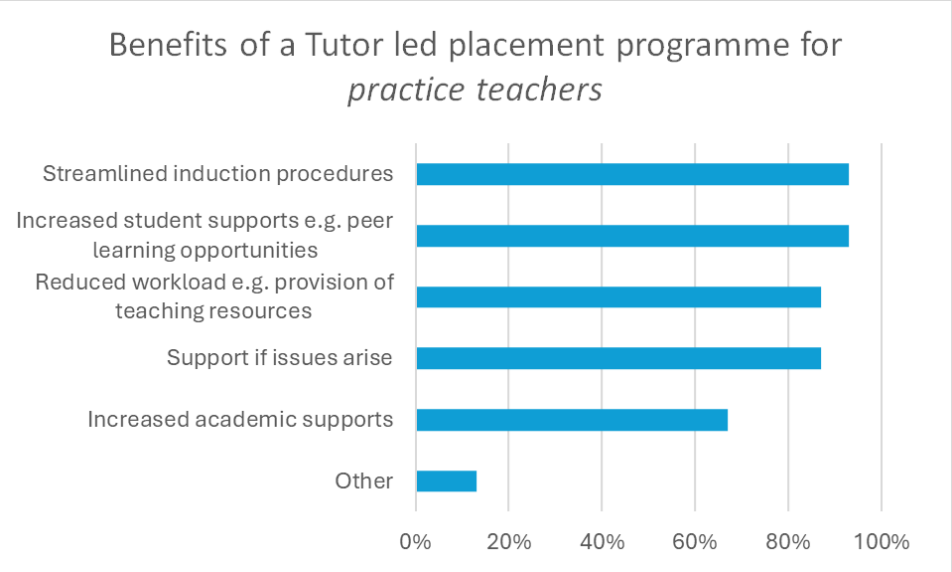

Figure 3: Benefits of a Tutor-led placement programme for Practice Teachers

Benefits of a Tutor-led programme for students

Respondents in the Social Work Department were asked to select the main benefits of a Tutor-led student placement programme for students. The majority identified peer learning through Tutor-led meetings (93.0%) as the key benefit for students. The second most selected benefit was increased student confidence (87.0%). Streamlined induction processes (80.0%), peer learning through interdisciplinary meetings (80.0%) and academic supports (80.0%) also featured prominently. Respondents were given the opportunity to identify any further key benefits for students in an open text box and one respondent identified a further benefit was that a Tutor was a named support person a student could go to if they had any issues with their placement. The identified key benefits of a Tutor-led programme for students are presented in figure 4.

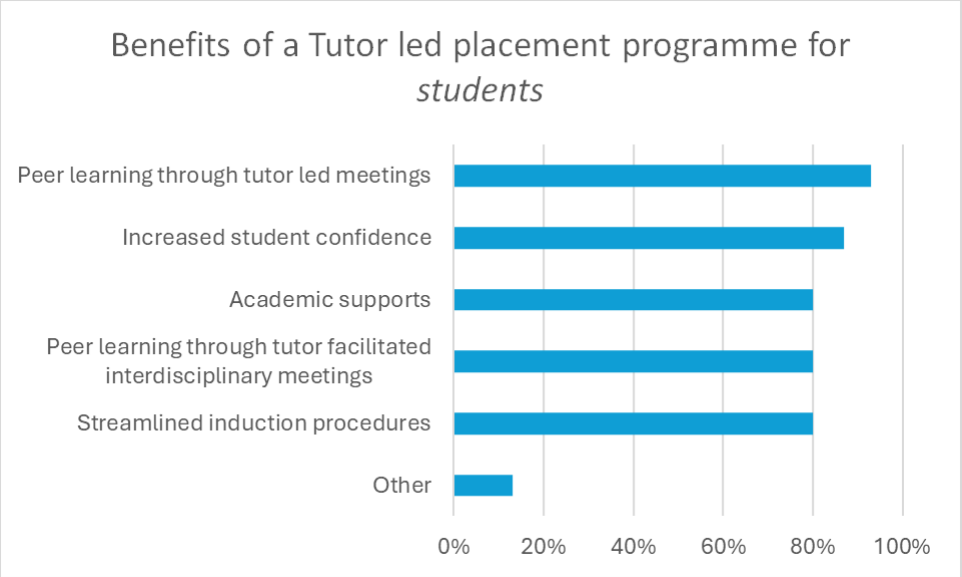

Figure 4: Benefits of a Tutor-led placement programme for students

Enhancing quality of placements

Respondents were asked if they thought a Tutor-led placement programme has the potential to enhance the quality of student placements. All respondents (100%, n=22) replied yes, the quality of student placements would be enhanced by the Tutor-led programme (figure 5). Respondents were asked in what way did the Tutor-led programme have this potential and 14 availed of the open-text response box to explain how they thought this occurred.

Primarily, respondents said the Tutor-led programme has the potential to enhance quality of placements by providing a structured and consistent approach to student learning. Students would *"follow a well-defined and structured curriculum and mentorship to achieve their learning objectives."* It was envisaged that a Tutor-led programme would co-ordinate and oversee all aspects of the student placement from start to conclusion to ensure a comprehensive and consistent quality placement.

The Tutor-led placement programme held numerous potential *"invaluable supports"* for Practice Teachers across the duration of the placement duration. Commencing from the outset of the placement with a streamlined group induction process that is centralised to avoid repetition by individual Practice Teachers. The Tutor was viewed as an ongoing liaison between Practice Teacher and student, stepping in if the Practice Teacher was off site or on leave. The Tutor-led programme provides a comprehensive support for Practice Teachers especially in the context of heavy caseloads. All these supports resulted in promoting practice teaching within the Department and made taking a student on placement a more attractive proposal for Practice Teachers.

Respondents also explained how a Tutor-led programme had the potential to enhance the quality of placements from a student perspective. The key benefit was the opportunity for peer learning and group supervision. A Tutor could facilitate group learning, identify and allocate flexible in-

depth support to students and organise further training as needed. Group resources and training could also extend to the wider multi-disciplinary network and the Tutor could facilitate social work student participation in NEST. Any additional individual supports that students need could be identified and this was seen as particularly valuable to address gaps in knowledge or extra supports for students that may find the placement challenging. Fostering a sense of community for students in a group learning environment was noted as a positive for a quality placement experience.

A Tutor-led programme role was considered an acknowledgment of the commitment necessary to provide a valuable source of support for both Practice Teachers and students as one respondent commented:

> *"Acknowledges the time required to adequately supervise a student and to provide a quality placement"*

Having a dedicated support person for Practice Teachers and students was viewed as beneficial to the smooth running and operation of the Department ultimately aiding the provision of quality student placements.

Respondents were given the opportunity to explain if they thought the Tutor-led programme would not enhance the quality of student placements and there were no responses to this open text box.

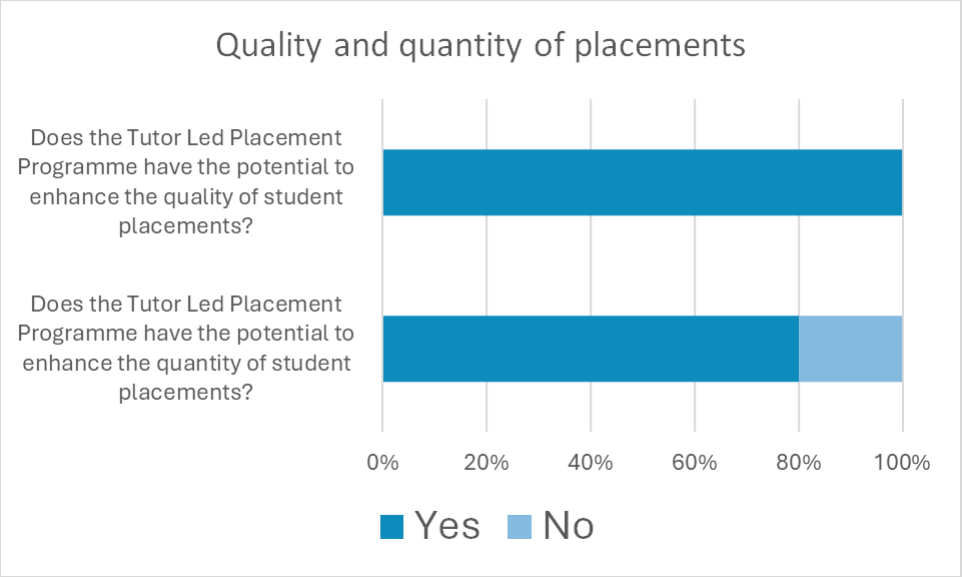

Figure 5: Quality and quantity of placements

Increasing quantity of student placements

Respondents in the Social Work Department were asked additional questions regarding the number of student placements. Of the 15 responses, 12 (80.0%) agreed that the Tutor-led programme has the potential to increase the quantity of student placements. Three (20.0%) disagreed (figure 5). All respondents were given the opportunity to explain their perspectives further in an open text response box.

Most responses centred around how the Tutor role supported and facilitated Practice Teachers to take a student on placement. This was described as taking a *"burden off"* the Practice Teacher by relieving their already stretched workload. There was a strong recognition that the time commitment of taking a student on top of their caseload was a big concern. However, many expressed that they felt they would be *"able to manage with support from a tutor."* Through the group supervision sessions, the Tutor could provide a standardised induction for the students on the policies and procedures of the Social Work Department, information on standard medical social work practices and educate and upskill students on available resources, such as the

different community services and long-term care processes. Essentially, the Tutor would support Practice Teachers with induction, education and supervision. This also meant that valuable time with the Practice Teacher was used efficiently and to the student's advantage.

> *"The Tutor role works seamlessly alongside the Practice Teacher role. It allowed for an additional layer of support and would make me more likely to want to take a student on placement"*

A recurring sentiment was that social workers felt they were more inclined to consider taking a student on placement when they know there are additional supports available from a Tutor. While this was envisaged mainly as lessening workloads, particularly for induction and training sessions, the Tutor role was also regarded as an important support and source of help if any challenging issues arose with a student.

One respondent thought about increasing placements from the student perspective, suggesting that by providing additional supports, students would experience a quality, successful placement. This would ultimately result in making a tutor supported placement more attractive to students and lead to an increase in the number of students seeking a placement in medical social work. There was also an acknowledgement by one respondent that taking students on placement was regarded favourably in terms of promotion within the Department. Furthermore, the Tutor could actively encourage staff to take on students at a future time as those considering taking on a Practice Teacher role can seek information and advice about future placements.

Three respondents did not agree the Tutor-led programme has the potential to increase the quantity of student placements. Of these, two cited the limited physical space to accommodate students. A further respondent said that while they agreed the quality of placements would be enhanced, ultimately it was the decision of universities to allocate student placement numbers.

A further question was asked regarding the decision to take a student on placement. Respondents in the Social Work Department were asked if the Tutor-led role was an ongoing feature for Social Work placements, would this influence your decision to take a student? Of the 15 responses, 12 (80.0%) said the presence of a Tutor role was “extremely likely” or “somewhat likely” to influence their decision to take a student on placement.

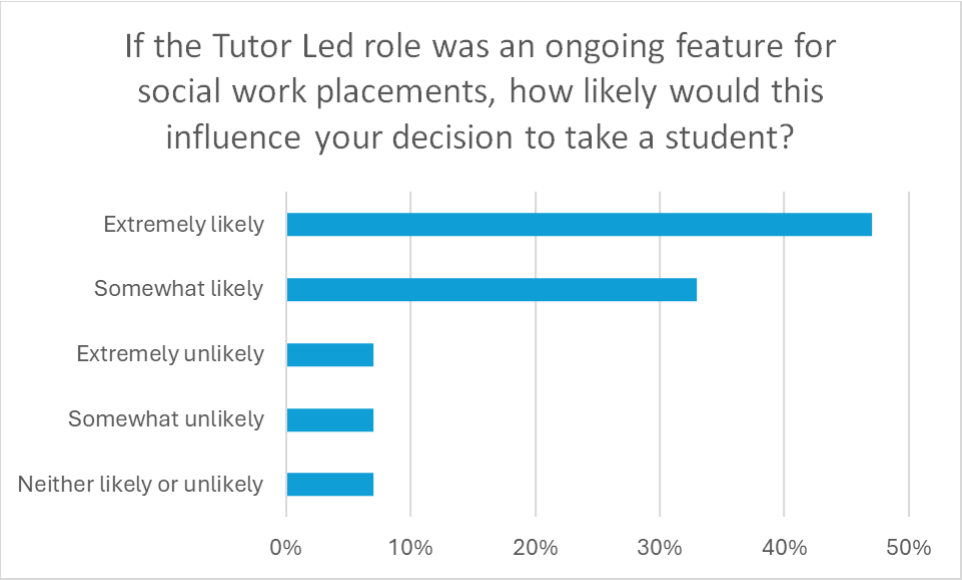

Figure 6: Decision to take a student

Enhancing interdisciplinary learning

Respondents in NEST were asked if a social work Tutor-led programme would enhance NEST and interdisciplinary learning. All respondents (100%) agreed a Tutor role would benefit NEST and interdisciplinary learning. Additionally, all respondents (100%) agreed that the addition of a Social Work Tutor role was of benefit to all students. To explore this further, respondents were asked what the main benefits a social work Tutor could bring to interdisciplinary learning.

NEST was regarded an important method of enhancing interprofessional practice in St. James's Hospital and promoting awareness of the work of different disciplines. It is seen as a key way to promote professional equity across disciplines, introduced from the earliest stages of student learning. The inclusion of a social work Tutor in NEST contributes to learning across all aspects of patient care and introduces different perspectives which help broaden more task orientated care:

> *"I found it very valuable to have a medical social work tutor to support the IPL sessions, to help provide a more holistic picture of the patient and inform students of social issues which would have a direct impact on their role"*

Guidance, mentorship and support to interprofessional students from a wide range of disciplines was of great benefit to help students refine their skills and reflect on their practice. It also served to bridge the gap between theory and real-life scenarios with practical applications. Ultimately, this would enhance quality of treatment and the patient experience.

NEST respondents were asked specifically how a social work Tutor role provides benefits to students from other disciplines. The addition of a social work Tutor was regarded as a key element of the interprofessional learning workshops. By discussing real world clinical scenarios

from a wide spectrum of perspectives, students had the opportunity to reflect on their practice and improve professional standards. There was a raised awareness of social issues impacting patients, creating a "*better understanding of the wider picture and psycho-social factors*."

Group learning sessions were also an opportunity to share practical information which one respondent described as "*setting realistic expectations"* for students, for example, the social work Tutor provided insights into how home care packages work and realistic timeframes to organise patient supports. An additional benefit was fostering understanding between professions. This occurred in two key ways, firstly how to communicate better with social work colleagues and secondly, create the space for social workers to contribute to better health outcomes for patients.

Respondents from the NEST group were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements on the inclusion of social work students in NEST (figure 7). All respondents strongly agreed that the inclusion of social work students in NEST enhances inter-disciplinary student learning (100%), provides students with opportunities to collaborate (100%), raises awareness of different roles (100%), raises the profile of social work (100%), and fosters inter-disciplinary collaboration (100%).

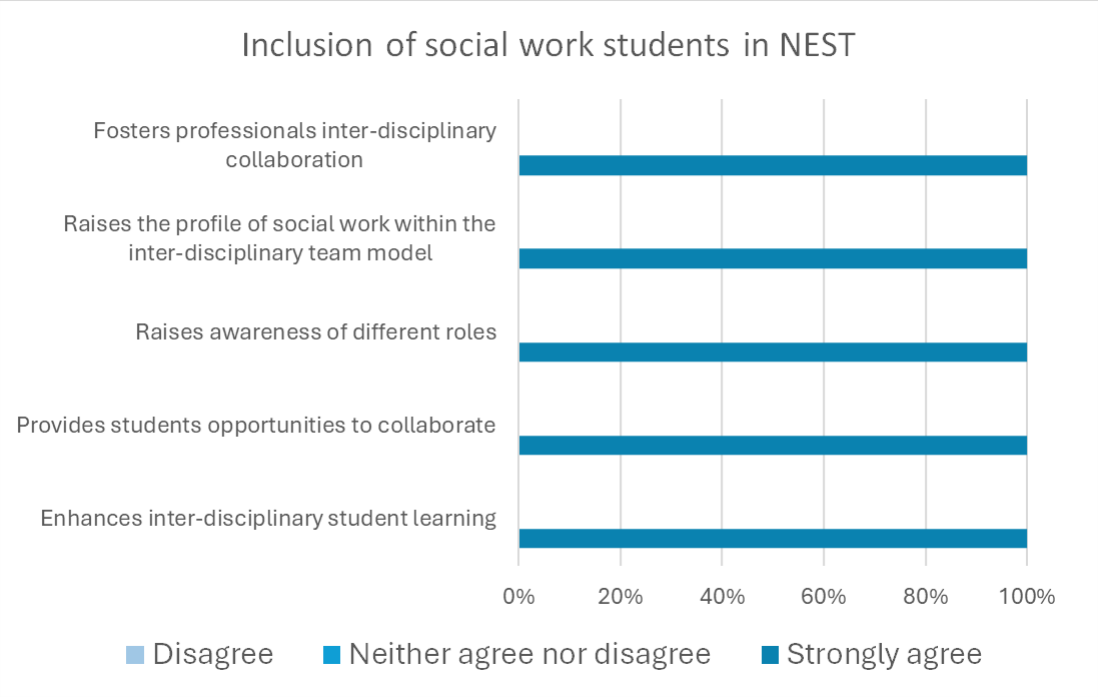

Figure 7: Inclusion of social work students in NEST

Increasing awareness of the social work role

To explore further the remit of social work in interprofessional learning, respondents in NEST were asked if the inclusion of social work students in NEST increased the awareness of the role of social work. All respondents (100%) agreed that social work students participating in NEST increased multidisciplinary awareness of the role of social work. Respondents were provided with an open text response box to reflect how this occurred.

For all respondents, responses centred around how bringing students together from different disciplines was mutually beneficial for learning. It created awareness of other roles and "*promotes positive multidisciplinary working*." By including social work students, all students are aware of the breadth of issues impacting patient care and outcomes:

> *"There are social issues that can affect patient's recovery from illness that other disciplines will learn from social workers, ultimately increasing the awareness of the role of social workers"*

The group learning sessions are a valuable site for sharing examples of a wide variety of clinical cases and providing space for discussion and incorporating alternative viewpoints, particularly in complex cases. The role of social work in *"advocating for patient preferences"* was an integral aspect of this.

Concluding comments and observations

To conclude the questionnaire, all respondents were asked if they wished to reflect further on student placements or the Tutor-led placement programme, and 10 respondents took the opportunity to do so. These reflective concluding comments provided participants the opportunity to include any issues not previously raised in the questionnaire or any issues that they wished to provide additional information or insights on.

Several respondents took this opportunity to express their support for the implementation of a Tutor-led student placement programme. The Tutor position was described as *"extremely beneficial for students"* and enabled Practice Teachers *"to focus on their role of case supervision and support."* Having a dedicated Tutor role also had the potential to increase the number of placements as there would be greater supports for Practice Teachers when taking a student:

> *"I thinking having a tutor in place would encourage more social workers to take on students for placement as they would know they have support from the tutor and taking a student may be less time consuming for them."*

Respondents used this opportunity to again cite their concerns surrounding taking a student in addition to a heavy caseload. A supportive Tutor position could mitigate this key barrier to taking a student. The benefits of a Tutor-led placement programme also extended beyond the Social Work Department with one NEST respondent commenting that:

> *"The involvement of Social workers Tutors in NEST has been valuable for collaboration and improved patient care."*

The following general comments were also observed. One respondent commented that a Social Work Department research post would be beneficial, as conducting research alongside busy caseloads is ambitious. Another respondent took the opportunity to reflect further on their relationship with university programmes and commented that they would like to see greater resources and materials made available to Practice Teachers and more structured documentation procedures from start to finish of placements. These included; hard copies of course handbooks, student meetings prior to placement, and documents such as report templates to be made available earlier. A final comment related to student feedback with one respondent suggesting that students should be able to give constructive feedback on their placements at their conclusion.

Summary of key questionnaire findings

- The majority of participants (54.5%) who completed the questionnaire have been in their current role for 4 or more years. Fifty percent of respondents have supervised between 2 to 4 students. The majority of respondents (94.0%) did not supervise a student during the pilot Tutor-led programme.

- 75.0% of respondents said being a Practice Teacher/Educator is an important feature of their professional role and identity.

- Reciprocating the support and guidance they were given while training and passing on skills and knowledge in a practical way and were key motivators for taking a student on placement.

- Creating a culture of continuous professional development in a learning environment was important and respondents felt that having a student observe their own practice was good for re-evaluating and maintaining standards.

- Knowledge that supports during placements are available were a key motivator when considering taking on a student. Supports were useful for streamlining induction procedures, group learning and supervision. These all contributed to creating a quality placement for students.

- The key benefits of a Tutor-led programme for Practice Teachers were identified as streamlined induction procedures (93.0%), increased student supports (93.0%) and supports if issues arose during the placement (87.0%).

- The key benefits of a Tutor-led programme for students were identified as peer learning (93.0%) and increased student confidence (87.0%).

- A Tutor-led programme could enhance quality of placements by providing a structured yet flexible approach with increased academic supports (80.0%) and peer learning including interdisciplinary group sessions (80.0%).

- 100% of respondents said a Tutor-led programme has the potential to enhance the quality of student placements.

- 80.0% of respondents said a Tutor-led programme has the potential to increase the number of student placements.

- 80.0% of Practice Teachers said a Tutor-led programme would influence positively their decision to take a student.

- Practice Teachers regarded the input and support of a Tutor as invaluable if challenges arose during a placement.

- Student placements were seen as an opportunity to showcase career opportunities as a medical social worker.

- 100% of respondents said the input of a social work Tutor in NEST would enhance interdisciplinary learning.

- 100% of respondents said the inclusion of social work students in NEST increased the awareness of the role of social work.

Conclusion

This chapter reported the findings of an online questionnaire to the staff of the Social Work Department and the Networking and Educating Students Together (NEST) Interprofessional network at St. James' Hospital Dublin. The findings were presented in three sections, firstly a profile of respondents, followed by questions relating to social work student placements and concluded with respondents' perspectives on the pilot Tutor-led placement programme.

The questionnaire findings provide a broad picture of perspectives of social work student placements and offers participants' perspectives of how a Tutor-led placement programme is beneficial for students, Practice Teachers and promoting interdisciplinary learning. The findings capture the insights and perspectives of the wider hospital professionals and Practice Teachers who did not participate in the pilot Tutor-led programme. The questionnaire provides a strong foundation for the qualitative reporting in the next chapter which provides an in-depth examination of the pilot Tutor-led placement programme in St. James' Hospital from the perspectives of those who participated in the programme.

Chapter 5 - Interview Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with participants involved in the pilot social work placement programme in St. James' Hospital Dublin. Participants included social work students who completed the pilot programme, practice teachers, university-based practice tutors, placement co-ordinators and staff from the Social Work Department of the hospital. A total of 15 participants took part. As detailed in the methods chapter, the main research aims and objectives were to understand the enablers and barriers to the provision of social work placements in an acute hospital context, and the capacity for a tutor-led student placement programme to enhance the quality and quantity of placement opportunities. Taking an exploratory approach, the semi-structured interviews had some predetermined questions which were customised depending on the role of the participant. These were built upon with additional probing questions following the natural direction of the conversation to uncover a rich description of the participants' unique perspectives. This naturalistic approach allows factual responses while also facilitating participants to describe their own experiences and interpretations (Sandelowski, 2010) and constructs an interpretation of the pilot programme from multiple viewpoints.

The qualitative findings are presented in five overarching sections with associated sub sections. Firstly, the benefits of a tutor-led placement programme for students is presented. This is followed by the benefits of the pilot for the social work staff and the Social Work Department in St James' Hospital. Next, the benefits of interprofessional learning are examined. Then, the challenges identified are explored. To conclude the chapter, ways to develop and improve the project are examined alongside a summary of the opportunities the pilot tutor post provided.

In order to capture the wide range of perspectives, each section is generally organised as follows; the student viewpoints are presented first, followed by perspectives from practice teachers. These are then complemented where relevant, by commentary from the wider network of professionals associated with the placement programme; senior staff in the Social Work Department of the hospital, university-based practice tutors and the university-based practice education co-ordinators.

Overall, participants reported very positively about the pilot placement programme and the role of the tutor in facilitating and enhancing student placements. Students reported how the group learning sessions advanced their academic progression, contributed to increased confidence and that they are now more likely to consider a career in medical social work. Practice Teachers reported a strong sense of feeling supported, appreciated streamlined induction processes and were more likely to consider taking on a student placement in future. Other participants reported that a structured placement programme is beneficial for learning, promotes awareness of the role of social work and raises the profile of a medical social work career. Establishing a Tutor role is regarded as an investment in practice education and a tutor is a central point of communication with educational institutions.

Excerpts are provided to illustrate the key themes and are presented verbatim for authenticity. All names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Participants

15 participants took part in semi-structured in-depth interviews. Table 4 below presents an overview of their characteristics. All participants were assigned pseudonyms.

Table 4: Profile of participants

Pseudonym	**Role**
Hayden	BSS Student
Charlie	BSS Student
Jordan	BSS Student
Cody	BSS Student
Scout	Practice Teacher
Jessie	Practice Teacher
Alex	Practice Teacher
Jude	Practice Teacher
Fran	Social Work Department Senior Staff Member
Sam	Social Work Department Senior Staff Member
Pat	TCD Practice Co-ordinator
Ashley	TCD Practice Co-ordinator
Casey	External Practice Tutor
Chris	External Practice Tutor
Taylor	External Practice Tutor

Benefits of the Tutor-led placement programme for students

Findings from the interviews with the social work students who participated in the pilot tutor-led placement programme evidence that the students believed that the tutor role elevated their placement experience in multiple ways. The specific benefits to students were i) the group learning sessions, ii) enhanced and tailored teaching and learning opportunities , and iii) the availability of an additional on-site support person. Each of these will be discussed below.

Group learning sessions

The facilitation of group student social work learning sessions was a unique core feature of the tutor-led pilot programme. These were detailed by the student Hayden who said that the opportunity to have tutor-led group sessions "*opens up a conversation"* as it provided the space to discuss cases and how to approach learning *"on the job."* Another student Cody commented that it is *"so easy to underestimate having a safe space for students"* and now they *"couldn't really picture my placement without it."* The group sessions were viewed by all students as a crucial feature in two important ways. Firstly, these sessions fostered peer support amongst social work students on placement and secondly, they created individualised learning opportunities.

Hayden recalled how it can be overwhelming going into a busy acute hospital environment but having the group sessions *"eased"* these fears. Hayden looked forward to the group learning meetings and the acute setting was not as stressful as they were expecting. It was reassuring to be with a group who were sharing and experiencing the same educational journey together.

> *"As a group, I would say we really did lean on that peer support, just giving a summary of our day or getting things off our chest, asking silly questions and bouncing ideas off each other….it really benefitted all of us, that informal feedback between the group" (Cody, student)*

Having professional support from the tutor during these group learning sessions was pivotal for discussing and teasing out the nuances of a case. Another student, Jordan, described how a real-world complex case would be provided by the tutor and the group would discuss scenarios of how it could be managed. Students were also encouraged to introduce examples from their own caseload and discuss options to manage their cases. Social work student Charlie said the effect of this was that it was *"bringing all the students together so we could support each other"* and this made a difference to the placement experience and promoted positive wellbeing within the group. Hayden also emphasised this point as can been seen in the following quote:

> *"If one of us was having a hard week or you had a really difficult case that drained you mentally, it was really nice to be able to go into the group session and sit down and discuss it with everyone, break it down step by step" (Hayden, student).*

The roleplay exercises facilitated by the tutor in these group learning sessions were also found to be beneficial in a *"no judgement zone"* and explored the different approaches that could be taken whilst leaning upon the professional advice and experience of the Tutor. The group learning sessions were regarded by all the social work students during the interviews as a *"safe"* and *"comfortable"* space to express themselves without feeling *"unbiasedly judged"* by their practice teacher or other professionals. Ultimately this created a strong foundation for an enhanced learning experience.

The Practice Teachers also commented favourably on their students participating in the group learning sessions and reported that they felt it enhanced their learning *"greatly.*" Jessie has extensive experience as a Practice Teacher and said that the peer learning sessions were perhaps the *"biggest asset"* of the pilot programme. On previous placements, students were "*disjointed"* across the hospital and the structured nature of sessions enables students to *"organically come*

together" to share ideas and talk about their experiences. The sense of shared, communal experience was seen as a valuable feature for another practice teacher Jude who commented that bringing the students together was unique and allowed them to form their own relationships and gain support from the group. Practice Teacher Alex agreed and said that the group sessions gave their student confidence in their practice and helped them understand expectations for their role:

> *"..knowing what other students were doing, validated their own experiences, it's that shared learning and those shared experiences which can help you overcome different obstacles as a student" (Alex, Practice Teacher).*

Reflecting on their own considerable previous experience of taking students on placement, Jude said that students on the pilot programme were:

> *"..a lot more expressive in terms of discussing cases, more reflective, of giving their professional opinion because they had a safe space to do that. The group sessions allowed them to feel more comfortable in their discussions and then they could carry it through in their practice" (Jude, Practice Teacher).*

Enhanced and tailored teaching and learning opportunities

The tutor-led programme created an ideal environment for enhanced learning opportunities with specific attention to the acute hospital setting. Students who completed their placement during the pilot spoke highly of the academic content of the group learning sessions the tutor facilitated, which provided a structured approach to their learning:

> *"We went through different practice approaches and theories, and I think definitely one thing we'd all say is that we didn't realise the basic things you would think final year social studies students should know" (Jordan, student).*

While filling in these knowledge gaps was beneficial for students, it was also identified by student Cody as having positive consequences for patient care: "*it was better for the student but more importantly, the patients we were dealing with as it didn't slow down the process for them."* The tutor-led sessions provided the opportunity to go through *"step by step"* the processes and real-world situations that occur in the medical social work department. The frequency of the sessions was also important and Cody a noted that because the group learning sessions occurred weekly, there was ample opportunities to follow up with further questions and go through all the *"nitty gritty details"* of what they were expected to know as a student.

> *"Having someone there to guide you in applying theories and approaches that you learn about in college to the type of patients and situations that come up in a medical setting…it was explained in a different way and it all just started to click" (Jordan, student).*

The group learning sessions provided the tutor unique insights into the continued development of student learning throughout the placement and created the opportunity for flexible approaches that could be tailored and individualised to meet learning gaps as they arose. This was regarded by all participants as a valuable feature of the pilot programme for students. Charlie reflected that the Tutor-led group sessions helped them a lot, both in terms of applying theory to practice but also filling in gaps in their knowledge relating to the acute hospital context:

> *"I'm not really familiar with home care packages, for me, that was completely new, I'd have been lost without the tutor, he explained what to do, so then when I went back to my practice teacher, I knew what to do" (Charlie, student).*

Social work student Cody appreciated that having a tutor on hand to seek support or advice from, was really beneficial especially in high pressure situations and says:

> *"..in an acute setting, you don't get as long with trying to get things sorted, it can be really down to the wire in terms of a discharge, so, not being stuck and being able to seek advice and support was really beneficial" (Cody, student).*

The tailored attention by the tutor was singled out by Hayden as very beneficial for their career development, as the tutor had the capacity to identify student interests and align them with relevant professionals:

> *"I'm very interested in addiction and homelessness and the Tutor knew that. So he made sure that I went around with that social worker on their caseload and was allocated some cases. We all got to experience a bit of everything, I don't think that would have happened if we didn't have the Tutor" (Hayden, student).*

Practice Teachers also appreciated the additional academic supports provided to students during the pilot programme and many commented that this was immediately visible in their practice:

> *"I got feedback from my student about how they were talking about different cases and as the weeks went on, I could see them applying the learnings that she got.*

> *The Tutor role gave the student more of a balance, different practices and different theories or frameworks to use" (Alex, Practice Teacher).*

Having the structured tutor-led placement programme provided Practice Teachers with assurance that there was a well-rounded approach to student learning. For some practice teachers it enhanced the individual supervision they provided each week. For example, Jessie found it helpful that even if something did not arise in the supervision sessions, they knew it would be addressed in the group sessions. Jude also noted that the tutor sessions enhanced the supervision practice teachers had with their student each week, providing the additional opportunity to *"do more of the theory element, more relating theory to practice."* The flexible approach to learning was valued by Practice Teacher Scout who commented that the Tutor-led programme:

> *"..gave students a chance to learn at their own pace, time to explore, ask each other questions and lean on each other for support, I think that was great" (Scout, Practice Teacher).*

Jude viewed the tutor role as valuable if a student was struggling during their placement. This can occur if they have difficulty relating theory to practice and need guidance on how to move to the next steps with a case. The benefit of a Tutor-led programme is that additional focused learning can be provided as needed when identified.

Availability of additional onsite support

All participants reflected how the tutor role was a valuable support to them, especially if there were issues or challenges. The tutor was seen as a central, yet impartial interface between students and practice teachers and by extension, to the wider network of professionals in the

hospital and educational institutions. For many, there were no issues to report during the pilot programme, but having a tutor provided reassurance that there was someone they could go to if an issue arose. This safety valve mechanism was an important feature for students and perhaps even more so for Practice Teachers.

While issues are unpredictable and dependent on the situational context, the Tutor role was seen as central to resolving any potential challenges at an early stage. Social work student Cody explained that the working relationship with hospital professionals can sometimes be fraught and acknowledged that the Tutor role is a trusted person that students can go to with their issues and said:

> *"The Tutor has an insight into how the hospital runs and can handle issues discreetly, they can solve issues within the hospital itself without having to make it a bigger issue than it needs to be" (Cody, student).*

It was highlighted by some students that there is an *"interesting dynamic between student and Practice Teacher in regard to grading"* which reflects the power imbalance which sometimes plays out in the student/teacher relationship. For students, successful completion of their placement is a necessary component of their social work qualification journey therefore, mechanisms to resolve any issues efficiently are desirable.

Students also took the opportunity to explain how the tutor role helped them to resolve conflicts with other health professionals regarding their casework. Hayden recounted how there was a 'clash' of opinion with other members on the multi-disciplinary team regarding how to support a patient. Following consultation with the Tutor, Hayden was able to build a convincing argument to persuade the other professionals to see their point of view:

> *"We had clashing opinions on how to support her discharge. I saw it from her personal perspective whereas they saw it from a medical perspective. I didn't know how to go about it without coming across as rude because I am still a student, so I brought the case to the Tutor. They helped me say professionally how I should be saying it and they ended up agreeing. So, the patient was supported the way they wanted" (Hayden, student).*

For Practice Teachers, having the Tutor if any issues arose was a crucial feature. This was particularly important for those who were new to practice teaching and was often cited as a key factor in the decision to take a student on placement. Having the *"trusted"* Tutor there as a support was described as follows:

> *"It put me more at ease because obviously one of my concerns getting a student was what if something isn't working? What if there's a breakdown? Obviously, I know I could go to the college but knowing someone was in the building in case I needed a bit of advice, was really important" (Scout, Practice Teacher).*

Access to a tutor was seen as beneficial by Practice Teachers and this was universally regarded as a valuable safety valve mechanism if there were issues during a placement. The support of a Tutor was also noted as beneficial for students by the Practice Teachers. There was an acknowledgement that sometimes students may not wish to involve their Practice Teacher and Jude says that the Tutor is an *"extra person"* for students to go to for guidance if they are experiencing an issue.

Perspectives from other professionals

Each student is also assigned a university-based tutor while on placement, sometimes also referred to as a practice tutor, fieldwork tutor or social work tutor. With over ten years in this position, Casey says their role is to represent the college and ensure the placement is proceeding as intended and is an intermediary between the college, the student and the Practice Teacher. Practice Tutors support and advocate for students and confirm that the placement has passed. They also report back to the educational institute if there are any issues. This group of participants were valuable in providing insights about the pilot programme as they offered a wider perspective of the benefits of the programme for students, Practice Teachers and the Social Work Department.

> *"I think the students found the pilot very helpful. They found it really supportive, they learned a lot. I think it helped them settle in quicker compared to placements in other years. These students were not overwhelmed and really well orientated" (Casey, Practice Tutor).*

Also noted by Practice Tutors was the group learning sessions and how the students benefitted from the supports of these sessions and learning from each other, their learning was rated as top quality. Practice Tutors also noted how the pilot fostered support amongst the students and Casey noted that *"this group seemed to have more of a rapport between them"* creating a solid basis for a successful placement:

> *"My students were so positive about the impact of the pilot programme on the placement, and you know, that has to be the biggest indicator whether something worked or not, so in that regard, I feel it worked and was obviously a very valuable support" (Taylor, Practice Tutor).*

Chris commented that having access to a Tutor on the pilot programme, seemed to *"really benefit the students because they had someone on site that they could go to"* and as Taylor cited, the *"good culture"* that had developed meant that if there had been issues, they were confident that they would have been easily addressed.

Reflecting on the benefits of the pilot programme for students, another placement tutor Fran said that the peer learning was key, *"bringing them all together, reflecting and sharing experiences."* This provided the forum to develop learning in a way that was not previously in place for students. The regular skills and focused learning sessions were applied to sample cases which build up knowledge efficiently and would help them in their practice:

> *"..the students received a more comprehensive and standardised input on a whole range of skills, theories and practice methods and how that relates to their placement and also to social work in a wider sense" (Sam, Social Work Department Senior Staff Member).*

From the educational perspective, Pat commented that the opportunity for students to work with different practitioners provided a well-rounded learning experience and also acted as an additional safeguard in supporting positive learning. Pat's quote reflects these points:

> *"..the tutor is another person who has sight of the student's work and ensures all the CORU learning goals are being met, they're there to uphold quality and to ensure there is active learning taking place" (Pat, TCD Practice Co-ordinator).*

Benefits of the Tutor-led programme for the Hospital Social Work Department

The pilot programme provided multiple benefits for the Social Work Department within St James' Hospital. Practice Teachers reported how the complimentary role of the Tutor supported them in their practice education. They cited streamlined induction processes, increased academic learning and back up if needed. This contributed to a culture of practice education, and they said they were more likely to consider taking a student in future. More general benefits for the Social Work Department included promoting the awareness of the social work role, raising the profile of a career in medical social work and having a central point of contact and liaison with higher educational institutions when co-ordinating placements.

Complimentary roles

Primarily, the Tutor role provides a complimentary role to the practice teacher which was frequently referred to by students as the "balance" or "mix" between the two professional roles:

> *"It was nice to have the balance between them, as they both would see different things as relevant. I feel my Practice Teacher was more focused on my project and college work, whereas the Tutor was focused on the bigger picture, my social work career focus and then like, mix them together and you get a fuller picture" (Hayden, student).*

The pilot programme afforded students with the structured practice education necessary to complete their social work qualification and also, availed of the individualised opportunities to provide students with a tailored, well rounded placement experience. The additional readings and peer learning sessions facilitated student exposure to a range of social work perspectives.

Some students noted that if their Practice Teacher was busy with their own caseload, the tutor was a point of contact they could avail of, either with a quick question or in the group:

> *"If you're not sure what theory to apply to a case, and you don't have time to discuss with your Practice Teacher, you could bring it to the group session" (Hayden, student)*.

This value of this second contact point was expanded further by Hayden:

> *"Your Practice Teacher is still doing all their work while having a student. So, if you didn't want to bother them, or if you know, they're really busy, you could go to the Tutor. So it took the load off a bit. I do think that was the main factor as to why I had such a good placement" (Hayden, student).*

Having the Tutor role as a backup was also noted by students as an important feature if practice teachers became unavailable, for instance due to leave or illness. The tutor could step in rather than another practice teacher being allocated to the student placement. This was noted by Jordan as alleviating potential stress for the students and the social work team as replacement supervision was not needed.

Practice Teachers also referred to the complimentary role of the tutor and noted that the tutor role *"fitted in perfectly"* and for the students, their placement experience *"flowed very naturally."* For practice teachers with less experience of practice education, the tutor role was particularly beneficial:

> *"..for me as my first placement experience, I was, like why is everyone saying it can be a bit tricky? You know, it was an absolutely fantastic experience to have a tutor, it just made things feel less daunting having a student for the first time" (Scout, Practice Teacher).*

Practice teachers said that the tutor would link in with them regularly to keep them informed of what was being covered and how their student was progressing. This also provided the opportunity for practice teachers to check in with the Tutor to *"ask are we on track with the expectations"* regarding placement progression and ensure that all milestones were being reached. The ability to have this 'in-house', without needing to contact the university was seen as useful and efficient. Alex says that *"it was just amazing to have that extra layer of support"* and the content covered in the group learning sessions meant practice teachers could focus on the information and issues they needed to discuss when supervising their student:

> *"..we didn't have to spend our time covering basics, we can really talk about the important things which the service user, the patient, needs and the best outcomes for them" (Alex, Practice Teacher).*

Streamlined induction

Students credited the comprehensive group induction sessions as *"fast tracking"* their introduction to the social work department and the hospital setting. This was key to settling into the placement quickly and seamlessly:

> *"I would really credit the induction sessions with being able to cement myself into the placement a lot quicker, once we started getting into the casework, we weren't slowed down trying to find out where things are, you know, it does take a bit of time when you're unfamiliar with the place, so when we started, we were all able to just get stuck in" (Cody, student).*

Hayden highlighted how tasks such as showing them around the Department, introducing them to staff, organising administrative tasks such as lanyards, transport and parking options were efficiently carried out:

> *"..it made it easier to do it as a group, so it was easier for us, easier for our Practice Teachers, easier for reception, it just made sense to have one person with all the students" (Hayden, student).*

A key benefit of the Tutor-led programme for Practice Teachers was the initial group induction sessions. All Practice Teachers expressed how induction processes are a time-consuming task:

> *"..it can be overwhelming and a bit daunting because you don't get time away from your own work, you have to juggle it, so not having to do the induction was a big benefit" (Jude, Practice Teacher).*

The first few weeks of placement were noted by some as *"quite slow until the student gets on their feet"* and having a tutor to facilitate and co-ordinate the induction and *"go over the basics, how everything works, how our systems work… it sped up understanding"*. This freed up precious time for the Practice Teacher to focus on core social work:

> *"It really gave me the opportunity to focus my attention on what my role as a social worker is, doing orientation around admin, the paperwork, IT systems, is really time heavy. I was able to hit the ground running with my student in terms of the day-to-day work of the social worker, patient care, values of social work and reflect on the role of social worker within a hospital…the real core work of social work" (Alex, Practice Teacher).*

By streamlining the induction processes and completing them in the group sessions with a Tutor, Practice Teachers were able to focus on developing a professional working relationship with their students and it alleviated concerns expressed by some regarding the time commitments needed at the outset of a placement.

Supporting students to connect with the social work team

An important aspect for students on placement is integrating quickly into the social work department. The tutor played an important role in fostering and building professional student - staff relationships within the Social Work Department. Hayden recalled how students were encouraged to come together for lunch in the Department. This developed relationships with the other students and introduced them to the wider social work team:

> *"I'd have lunch with them a couple of times a week, that's where I got to meet all the other social workers, and everyone else's Practice Teachers also. The Tutor would kind of initiate conversation, so everyone then got involved, everyone was very intertwined" (Hayden, student).*

When comparing the tutor-led placements to previous placements, Practice Teachers noted how the tutor-led programme seemed to excel at supporting the students to make connections within the wider social work department. Scout recalled how it was lovely to hear their student come back and relate what was discussed at the group and interdisciplinary learning sessions and how they then came to know the other students on placement through meeting them at lunchtimes. It was noted that being a student on placement can be isolating and there were not many opportunities to meet other students as they are spread across departments. However, the Tutor-led programme fostered this student community because it facilitated structured opportunities for them to be together and lean upon each other for peer support as needed. This would occur within the Social Work Department and across the wider hospital network:

> *"..just bringing them (students) together and they're all around the same table discussing things, I just think that's amazing" (Scout, Practice Teacher).*

Building community among the student group and integrating students on placement into the Social Work Department was also credited with increasing the visibility of students and potentially encouraging social workers to consider becoming practice teachers in the future.

Building capacity for placement provision

All the Practice Teachers agreed their experiences of the tutor-led programme was beneficial and would encourage them to continue taking students on placement. They felt it was likely that if

established, a Tutor-led programme could also encourage other social workers to take on the practice teacher role in the future.

When reflecting on their motivation for taking a student, Scout says that positive experiences as a student on placement was key, therefore creating a culture of good quality placements is necessary to encourage practice education over the long term. Scout commented that colleagues are sometimes reluctant to take students on placement and noted there are multiple reasons for this such as, potential stress should a placement break down, competing time commitments and lack of supports. However, the tutor-led placement programme has the potential to alleviate these concerns.

The supports that a hospital-based practice tutor can provide to practice teachers during placements are vital as they help relieve competing time demands within a busy workload. A recurring benefit identified by Practice Teachers was the value of the group induction sessions. Jessie noted this saved them time, as not having to cover orientation procedures made them *"feel that it would make having a student easier in terms of the demand on time."* This was further detailed by Alex who enjoyed getting straight into the practical field work with their student. The additional group learning sessions were also regarded as beneficial for bringing students up to speed on medical social work processes. When reflecting on conversations with other practice teachers regarding their previous placements, Alex says the content covered by the tutor *"makes such a difference to the time you can spend with a student."* Moreover, it allowed practice teachers to concentrate on different aspects of the student placement. Sharing knowledge about core social work was described as a fulfilling experience for practice teachers:

> *"..to give the student focused time, the exposure to what social work is, you're the voice of the patient, the practical work in the field and to have to spend your time*

> *going through the bureaucracy of things like the IT system and how it works, you're taking away that valuable time" (Alex, Practice Teacher).*

Jude says that just knowing there is the support of a tutor would encourage professionals to take students. Jude comments that colleagues are often reluctant to start the process of taking on the Practice Teacher role:

> *"..when you get the email to take students, some colleagues didn't feel confident, they felt a little bit uncertain, would they be able? But when the pilot scheme came out, there were people who were willing to come forward because they knew they'd have the support of a Tutor there as well" (Jude, Practice Teacher).*

This new confidence and willingness to take on a student placement extended to those relatively new to their role and also those more established in their positions. During the pilot placement programme some Practice Teachers felt there was a renewed interest in student placements across the Department. Scout credited this to the visibility of the group of students participating in group learning sessions and how this sparked conversation:

> *"I think even by us sharing information about the pilot and how it went, more people would be inclined to want to take on a student" (Scout, Practice Teacher).*

Concerns regarding placement break down were also addressed as Practice Teachers were aware that if there was an issue, the Tutor would be there to support and mediate. Jessie says that if the Tutor-led placement programme was established, it would be integrated into the Department and therefore would make taking on students easier. The supports available on a Tutor-led placement programme for Practice Teachers would be *"very helpful and definitely encourage colleagues to take on students."*

Encourage careers in medical social work

Social work student Cody felt very strongly that that completing the pilot Tutor-led placement had a *"massive impact"* on their choice to pursue a career in medical social work. Cody explains that the placement:

> *"..allowed me to experience the role, the best sides and also the challenges, in a very supported environment, which I really feel cannot be underestimated" (Cody, student).*

As a student on the pilot programme, Cody felt that the support and guidance received during the placement developed skills and instilled a *"confidence within my practice"* to pursue a medical social work role. Cody notes that although an interest in medical social work was always present, there is a perception that it is not suitable for recent graduates. Participating in the pilot programme changed this perception. Integrating students on placement into the Social Work Department was key for fostering professional relationships. Cody says the *"informal chats"* with other professionals revealed the possibility of a career in medical social work, an option not previously considered as possible. The *"door is left open for making contact"* if you are interested in employment. The advice on work opportunities and interview planning helped visualising themself in the role:

> *"I do genuinely credit the success of my placement last year to the career I'm planning on having now, I couldn't say for certain that I would be in a medical social work role now" (Cody, student).*

Hayden says they had previously anticipated following a different role in social work, but now this perspective has changed:

> *"..because I had such a good experience on placement, it made me think it's a really nice role. Now I'd love to do medical social work. I think having the Tutor there has shaped my viewpoint on it" (Hayden, student).*

Practice Teacher Scout agreed that there are sometimes incorrect perceptions surrounding careers in medical social work. This may be due to a *"fear of the unknown"* but actually, when students do their placement in the medical social work setting, they *"quickly realise that hospitals aren't that scary."* The positive placement experience of students participating in the pilot programme was seen as likely to have enduring consequences and student Hayden remarked that when they are asked for advice from other students or recent graduates regarding placement options or work opportunities, they now always recommend St. James' Hospital as the leading option.

Perspectives from other professionals

The university-based tutors commented how they observed that the initial orientation and induction sessions were of great value to the Practice Teachers. Casey said it *"avoided duplication"* and had the impression that the Practice Teachers were *"very appreciative"* that the Tutor-led on this task as it made sense that one person did the induction. The support of the Tutor was welcomed by Practice Teachers and was likely to encourage them to take on a student:

> *"I think if you offered that [Tutor role], you would get more takers because people are a little bit scared off by the workload and the time commitment" (Casey).*

Taylor agreed and said that *"if you alleviate the burden, then that makes them more likely to come back"* and take on placements in future. Undertaking a student on placement was viewed as an *"awful lot of responsibility"* so every opportunity to support placements should be utilised.

A further point raised by the Practice Tutors was how the pilot Tutor provided a safety net mechanism. This was seen as vital if unforeseen circumstances arose such as, absence due to sickness or industrial action, someone to *"keep the show on the road"* was needed. This was also extended to include any unforeseen issues with placements or students:

> *"They're nearly like a second pair of eyes or a safety net within the placement to keep things running if there are difficulties or bumps along the way" (Taylor, Practice Tutor).*

Having the support of the pilot tutor in the hospital was very valuable to the university-based tutors because it reassured them if there were any difficulties with a placement, they would be identified promptly and issues brought to their attention. This is vital to ensure issues are addressed as they arise and the student optimises opportunities to pass the placement component of their social work education.

Within the Social Work Department, a renewed interest in student placements was observed as Practice Teachers could see the benefits the pilot was bringing:

> *"In a high pace workplace with heavy caseloads, a lot are turned off taking students due to the additional burden, so anything you can do to make it easier for Practice Teachers is going to make it a more appealing option, it would encourage more people to take on a student" (Sam, Social Work Department).*

Having a Tutor was seen as a *"guarantee"* that there will be supports in place for Practice Teachers and Fran commented that there seemed to be *"more of a motivation around taking students"*. This was noted of particular importance for encouraging senior staff, who may have previously taken students, to return to practice teaching. It was also regarded as an opportunity for early career social workers to diversify their social work skills.

From the educational institution perspective, a Tutor role was also seen as *"raising the profile of practice education*" and cultivated a culture of taking students in the Social Work Department. This was seen as important for creating a consistent number of Practice Teachers which builds up expertise and experience that educational institutions can draw upon. Having the dedicated Tutor role was seen as an advantageous *"strategic interface"* between the placement setting and the university:

> *"..a central person that has an expertise in social work education and has good oversight of the students and their different needs, makes the transition to the acute setting seamless, liaises with the university, provides support on the ground like additional supervision and teaching…" (Ashley, TCD Practice Co-ordinator).*

The benefit of the Tutor role was explored further by Ashley. Having a central person who is familiar with the broad range of student capabilities is more likely to be receptive to their varying

needs and allows for more detailed student focused conversations. The tutor is also a central communication point to *"funnel information through"* to Practice Teachers efficiently from education institutes.

Interprofessional learning

During the pilot programme, the Tutor co-ordinated and facilitated social work students to participate in interprofessional learning sessions organised by NEST. This was viewed as a key benefit of the pilot programme by students, their Practice Teachers and the wider network of key stakeholders. In the multi-discipline sessions, there were enhanced learning opportunities and the opportunity to raise the profile of social work.

The interprofessional learning component was a unique feature of the pilot programme for social work students. These were described by Hayden as bringing students of different professions together to collaborate and learn in a multi-disciplinary team environment. An example of a complex case would be presented, and students would work together collaboratively. Each session focused on a different medical discipline or patient care topic and invited professionals to contribute their insights. The interprofessional learning element:

> *"..gave such a great insight into how each discipline viewed each other before actually getting out into the working world. I think it really opened our eyes to understand where and why we can work together, where we rely on each other… it's one thing to read or write an essay about it, but here we could see how it all works in person" (Cody, student).*

The Practice Teachers were very supportive of the interdisciplinary learning feature of the pilot programme and saw it as a *"big plus"* for students. They recognised that *"social work education*

should be about understanding different disciplines and perspectives" and that tutor facilitated group sessions were a core feature of advancing student learning:

> *"..you just can't beat that learning because it's something that they never would have seen with me in that kind of intense way" (Scout, Practice Teacher).*

Enhancing learning on placement

Charlie reflected that working with students from other disciplines was the most "brilliant and beneficial" aspect of the pilot programme as it was preparation for working in the real world. There were also immediate benefits during the placement, putting into practice what they were learning and bringing their experiences to the team meetings. Charlie says this really helped with teamwork and collaborating with other members of the professional team. Jordan extended this point and said that it was really nice to make connections with students from other professions and "make mistakes with them rather than with someone on the MDT team." These sessions were seen as way to interact with other students and explain things to each other in a "more basic way, that's easily understood and avoids all the jargon, they're on your level."

Students mentioned that the group sessions provided *"guidance on how to speak professionally to the other professionals."* This feature was also noted by the Practice Teachers and seen as invaluable:

> *"When you're a student on placement, you can sometimes feel a bit nervous speaking to doctors and nurses, it kind of feels like there's a bit of an imbalance of power" (Scout, Practice Teacher).*

Reflecting on previous placements, Jude commented that the students on the pilot programme seemed more *"confident in terms of engaging with the wider disciplinary teams."* Practice Teacher Alex commented that students on the pilot programme seemed to be *"more aware of the roles of others"* on the multidisciplinary teams. Alex also noted that students can be intimidated in meetings with other professionals, but the pilot programme offered the opportunity to mitigate this:

> *"..so for them to be able to go off into another forum and meet and reflect and discuss cases with other disciplines without that hierarchy, I think that really helps. They learned how to work together and find a holistic response to a patient's need" (Alex, Practice Teacher).*

Raising awareness of social work

Participating in the multi-disciplinary sessions was a valuable way to understand how other disciplines work and also to introduce students from other disciplines to the role of social workers. Hayden says:

> *"It was good to see other disciplines ideas of what's a priority on a certain case and ask what would physio do? What would OT do? Nobody understood what social work is. So, it was good to be able to explain it to them and they benefitted when they went into their caseloads understanding what they could refer to social work and what not to refer to social work" (Hayden, student).*

The group sessions were invaluable for learning how to explain the social work role to other disciplines which would be beneficial when working on professional teams in the future. Hayden says you need to be able *"to stand up for yourself and your role and not get pushed to the*

sidelines", and the group sessions provided the opportunity to practice these skills. The ongoing involvement of a social work Tutor role was further regarded as enhancing the profile of social work on multi-disciplinary teams as there were opportunities to cultivate professional relationships which would further enhance inter-professional learning.

There was an awareness by the social work students that meeting other students across a variety of disciplines was mutually beneficial for all their learning, raising awareness of the role of social work and there was also an acknowledgement that it was likely that paths would cross again in future professional roles.

The involvement of the social work Tutor in the interdisciplinary learning sessions was seen as a positive development in raising awareness of the role of social work within the wider hospital. It was characterised by Practice Teacher Jude as *"giving a platform for social work"* by highlighting the social work role. The sessions provided the opportunity to link in with Tutors in other professions and thereby become more integrated within multidisciplinary learning. Reflecting upon this unique feature on the pilot programme, Scout says the involvement of social work benefitted students from other disciplines also:

> *"..it's great because that's what's missing currently, but it was actively happening on the pilot, students from other disciplines were going into the workforce and they're like, I know what a social worker does and they'll be able to ask appropriate questions and make appropriate referrals" (Scout, Practice Teacher).*

Scout further described the involvement in interdisciplinary learning as empowering for social work students, this was especially important when working in multidisciplinary teams as they learned how to *"articulate your role and feel strong about explaining your role."*

Perspectives from other professionals

The participation of social work students in NEST was welcomed across the board by all professionals associated with the pilot programme. The Tutor was described as *"a champion for interprofessional learning for the social work team"* which provided a unique opportunity for students of different disciplines to work together to deconstruct and discuss sample cases:

> *"..to see the case in an alternative way, both from a problem identification perspective as well as a solution finding perspective, it brings the case alive in a protected space" (Sam, Social Work Department).*

Participants from the university emphasised that interprofessional learning on placement is an essential component of social work education in providing students with learning experiences to equip them for future practice:

> *"..it's the model for care delivery in healthcare and aligns with the CORU guidelines that students should have an opportunity to learn in an interprofessional context…working on multi-disciplinary teams is essential to preparing students for the workforce" (Pat, TCD Practice Co-ordinator).*

Ashley extends this and comments that participation in interprofessional learning helps students to clarify and define their roles on multi-disciplinary teams and aligns them with other health professionals who routinely participate in NEST as part of their training.

Challenges and considerations

All participants spoke very positively of the pilot programme and struggled to identify any issues, however, some concerns were raised which are now detailed.

Student perspectives

For students, the main challenges related to issues that are not specific to the pilot tutor post. For example, students described juggling their busy workload and schedules, limited desk space and computer access, learning new IT systems and managing university project work while on placement. The main concerns the students raised that were specific to the pilot tutor role was findings time to attend group sessions. This was more apparent as the placement progressed and there was an acknowledgement this was resolved by learning to manage their time more efficiently. These challenges are further outlined below:

- Finding desk and computer space was challenging for students. While hotdesking was accepted as inevitable on placement, some commented that it was often time consuming to locate a free desk and sometimes intrusive. It was also noted that inputting confidential patient information in busy environments was not ideal.

- Learning new IT systems was taxing for some students. Students have varying computer skills and IT systems and procedures can differ across institutions.

- Some students noted they felt pressured towards the end of their placement due to requirements to complete their university practice project. If these dates were staggered, this would maximise practice learning as students would benefit fully from their caseloads at a stage when they are most confident in their practice.

Practice Teacher perspectives

With experience of student placements both before and after the pilot programme, practice teachers were able to offer their comparative perspectives. For Practice Teachers, the main issues related to the time commitment involved in taking a student on placement. Some of their concerns also echoed those expressed by the students such as hot desking, delegation of work, scheduling and how students prioritised their time. These issues are outlined in more detail below:

- Having the tutor role in place was helpful for this placement cycle and Practice Teachers reported a positive experience. However, thinking forward to future placements practice teachers noted that supporting a student on placement is a significant commitment and some practice teachers reflected that it was now difficult to go back to placements without the pilot tutor role in place.

- Practice Teachers noted facilities are cramped and they are accustomed to student desk hopping. Many did endeavour to find a designated space for students to work, often sharing office space with their own student. However, this working environment was not ideal and could be intense. It would be preferrable for students to have access to their own dedicated space.

- Some Practice Teachers acknowledged they had developed their own routines regarding student placements, and it was initially difficult to delegate this work to the pilot tutor. However, the benefits of the pilot programme were evident, and they were confident that if established, a tutor-led programme would continue to develop and offer advantages.

- Practice Teachers noted that there was some ambiguity around how students prioritised their time, particularly at the outset of the placement, between group sessions and individual supervision time with them. This was generally resolved with greater attention to scheduling.

University based practice tutor perspectives

University based practice tutors raised concerns relating to how students prioritised their time, identifying student needs, course guidelines and reporting.

- Practice Tutors noted that some students at the beginning of their placement seemed unsure how to prioritise time between their Practice Teacher and their Tutor-led group learning. They noted that this was resolved quickly.

- Some Practice Tutors commented that due to a reduced interaction with Practice Teachers at the placement outset, there could be a delay in identifying if a student needed additional supports. This was important for the mid-placement review to confirm that a student was on track to pass their placement.

- The TCD BSS course handbook did not reflect the temporary changes that the pilot programme implemented. Some Practice Tutors commented that the handbook should have included an update on the pilot programme to provide clarity on the role of the pilot Tutor and how it fits in or relates to the roles of other professionals.

- Practice Tutors said they would like to have further input from the pilot Tutor. This would be useful mid-placement to provide insights into student learning opportunities.

Moving forward: Improvements and opportunities

All participants were very supportive of the pilot Tutor-led programme being established as a regular feature of placements in St. James' Hospital Dublin. Some improvements are briefly identified as follows:

- Identify if additional IT/computer training is required for individual students.
- Allocate a dedicated shared student desk and computer.
- Stagger student assessment due dates occurring at conclusion of placement.
- Clear scheduling of group sessions and supervision periods.
- Greater clarity regarding student priorities between group sessions and supervision.
- Tutor to report on student engagement with group learning opportunities for mid-way review meeting.
- Ensure educational institute guidelines include the agency-based tutor role.

An established tutor-led placement programme offers several potential opportunities which were identified by participants. These include increased learning, development of critical interpretation, promoting careers in medical social work, increasing quantity of placements and developing research collaborations.

- Some students have gaps in their knowledge regarding practical application of social work processes such as the Fair Deal schemes or home care packages. The tutor-led programme offers the opportunity to extend student learning in these focused practical areas.

- Tutor-led learning can offer students the space to engage in higher level thinking around societal justice and to develop their critical thinking skills. This would develop their

advocacy skills underpinned by a better interpretive understanding of patient situations and needs.

- The tutor-led programme can promote and enable evidence-based practice and there may be opportunities to develop and collaborate on research opportunities.

- The Tutor can work closely with prospective Practice Teachers to encourage them to consider taking a student on placement and provide ongoing support and resources over the duration of the placement.

- The tutor role is well placed to promote careers in medical social work, both for students on placement and to engage with wider groups of students.

A full-time Tutor-led placement programme offers several additional potential opportunities which were identified by participants. These include alignment with other professions, inclusion of social work students in interprofessional learning, co-ordination of placements, a central communication point in relation to practice education and relieving caseload pressures caused by the additional responsibilities of student placements in the Social Work Department.

- A full-time tutor role is preferred by both Social Work Department and educational institutions. This is viewed as a commitment to invest in practice education, and the Tutor role is seen as aligning social work with other professions in the hospital who have similar positions.

- The Tutor role can participate in and extend interdisciplinary learning opportunities. This is beneficial for both social work students and students from other disciplines.

- The Tutor could co-ordinate student placements, aligning student learning needs and interests with available Practice Teachers.

- The tutor could co-ordinate placements from different educational institutes at different times of year and become a central communication point for these institutes.

- The full-time Tutor role could include a practice component, drawing cases from the Departmental duty cover. This would benefit students with real-world case examples and alleviate some burden from the Department.

When asked to reflect on the benefits of the pilot Tutor-led programme, one participant encapsulated them as follows:

> *"Was it helpful? Yes, especially at the beginning with the induction. And as it went along, it was more the peer support side and additional learning needs. They had a forum to reflect and talk and identify their own needs and get peer supports. And, there's another person looking out for them and their specific needs, I think that is good" (Jessie, Practice Teacher).*

Summary of key findings

The benefits of the pilot Tutor-led placement programme were identified as:

For students:

- Group learning sessions enhanced student learning, both academic and procedural.
- Peer learning allowed students to lean upon each other and build support networks.
- Individualised learning can be identified to meet student needs.
- Learning in an interprofessional context.
- Increased student confidence.
- Placement co-ordinator with oversight of student progression.

For Practice Teachers:

- The Practice Teacher and Tutor fulfilled complimentary roles.
- Additional support when required to cover sick leave or annual leave.
- Streamlined induction processes.
- Students benefitted from increased academic and procedural learning.
- Focus on professional relationship with student rather than administrative tasks.
- Support if issues arise with placement.

For Social Work Department:

- Promote a culture of practice education within the social work department
- Building community within Department as student integrate more quickly with the social work team.
- Alignment with other professions.
- Encourage Practice Teachers to take on placements.
- Promote careers in medical social work.
- Raising awareness of role of social work profession in the hospital.
- Co-ordinate student placements.
- Central communication point with educational institutes.

Conclusion

This chapter reported the findings from interviews conducted with key personnel involved with the pilot tutor-led placement programme in St. James' Hospital Dublin. The chapter highlighted the perceived benefits of the tutor-led programme for students, Practice Teachers and other professionals in the Social Work Department. Challenges and considerations were also detailed and there was an exploration of improvements and opportunities that the pilot programme presents. The next chapter draws together some conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation.

Chapter 6 – **Discussion and Recommendations**

Introduction

This final chapter draws together the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative data to provide a critical analysis of the findings in the context of the research evidence reported. This analysis is situated against the objectives of the evaluation, as reflected in the main aims and research questions set out below.

The primary objectives of the evaluation of the pilot tutor-led programme were:

> *To understand the enablers and barriers to the provision of social work placements in an acute healthcare context;*
>
> *and*
>
> *To examine the potential for a Tutor-led Student Placement Programme to enhance the quality and quantity of placement opportunities in this context.*

In addition to these objectives, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the pilot model and how effective has it been in achieving its objectives?
2. What are the strengths of the tutor-led programme as reported by stakeholders and students?
3. What are the constraints and challenges experienced by stakeholders in implementing the programme?
4. What are the experiences of students in completing the programme?
5. How successful is the programme in building future capacity for social work placements?

To address the research aims and objectives, a mixed-methods approach was undertaken to evaluate the pilot tutor-led programme. A questionnaire was administered to key stakeholders, and this was complimented by in-depth qualitative interviews with students and staff directly involved with the pilot project. These strategies provided a broad picture of the perspectives of key stakeholders; social work students, practice teachers, university-based tutors, staff in the social work department of St James' Hospital and the university-based practice education coordinators, all of whom were involved in social work placements for the duration of the pilot tutor post. This section of the evaluation will present a discussion of the findings before concluding with a series of recommendations.

Overview of main findings

The preceding chapters have presented the findings from this evaluation, drawing on the multiple perspectives of those involved in the implementation of the project. The evidence strongly points to the success of the pilot programme in achieving its objectives. The findings demonstrate that the pilot programme mitigates barriers to the provision of social work placements, acts as a support to practice teachers and enhances the quality of learning for students. The tutor-led programme presents strong potential for facilitating student placements and increasing the quantity and quality of placements.

- If permanently established, the tutor-led placement programme would offer several key benefits and would be an investment in practice education in the hospital sector. The programme was found to be effective across multiple domains including: enhancing academic learning for students, promoting a culture which encourages practice teachers to take on placements, raising awareness of social work in an interdisciplinary context, supporting practice teachers and promoting careers in medical social work among new graduates. All participants were overwhelmingly positive of the pilot programme, and it was found to successfully foster enthusiasm and renewed interest in student placements in the wider Social Work Department. A key strength of the pilot tutor led programme was the fact that the tutor role complimented the work of the practice teachers. The tutor role supported the work of practice teachers, streamlined induction processes, acted as a safety net for practice teachers and students, was a central point to co-ordinate student placements and allowed for a flexible and tailored approach to student learning. Fostering community and promoting a culture of practice education had wide potential benefits for increasing the number of placements and raising awareness of the role of social work in interdisciplinary learning.

- Students still reported some challenges during their placement experience primarily related to practical issues such as limited space and computer access, managing a busy workload and university deadlines. However, these are ongoing issues and not specifically unique to the pilot programme.

- Practice Teachers reported challenges related to managing, heavy caseloads and the time commitments involved in taking a student on placement. However, there was a strong acknowledgement that these concerns were alleviated during the pilot programme and if established, the Tutor-led programme would mitigate these issues.

- The university-based practice tutors relayed some concerns relating to how students prioritised their time between the practice teacher and the hospital-based tutor. However, they acknowledged this would be easily resolved with further attention to scheduling.

- Student responses were overwhelmingly positive. They expressed strong satisfaction and support for the tutor-led pilot, and many said they were grateful they were given the opportunity to take part. They cited the group learning sessions, flexible academic supports, interdisciplinary learning and fostering peer supports and sense of community as key advantages of the pilot programme. They reported their positive experiences of the pilot programme meant they were now more likely to consider a career in medical social work.

- Findings indicate that the pilot tutor-led programme generated increased confidence and renewed interest in taking on student placements across St James' Hospital over the duration of the pilot project. For new or less experienced practice teachers, the tutor-led programme provided reassurances of supports, especially important if challenges arise during a placement. For more experienced Practice Teachers, their concern about the time commitment and additional workload involved in practice education was alleviated by the tutor who provided additional supports when needed. Support offered through a streamlined induction process, regular group supervision and involvement in interprofessional learning were of particular support to practice teachers.

Based on the findings of the surveys and the interviews as presented in Chapter 5, there are a number of key themes which have been identified and will be discussed below. The findings will be discussed in relation to the main aims and objectives of the evaluation; the enablers and barriers to provision of social work placements and the potential for a Tutor-led programme to enhance the quality and quantity of placements.

The enablers and barriers to provision of placements

This research finds that in common with international literature, concerns associated with the heavy workloads in the medical social work profession can hinder the provision of student placements (Whiting et al., 2023). Practice education is conducted alongside the demands of existing caseloads which poses a considerable barrier for those contemplating taking on the role of social work practice teacher (Murphy et al., 2023). The pilot tutor-led placement programme alleviated these concerns in multiple ways.

Findings from both the questionnaire and the interviews clearly illustrate that the provision of a streamlined induction process, availability for support if issues or challenges arise during the placement and additional teaching and learning support provided through group sessions, were key benefits of the tutor-led programme for Practice Teachers. Practice Teachers' feedback highlighted that if supports, such as those offered by the hospital-based tutor are in place, they were more likely to continue taking students into the future. The hospital-based tutor could streamline induction processes and offer group learning sessions to *"go over the basics...and speed up understanding"* allowing practice teachers to focus on developing a teaching and mentoring relationship with their students and alleviating concerns regarding the initial considerable time commitment needed at the outset of a placement. The tutor role was viewed as a vital support and *"safety net"* mechanism and reassured Practice Teachers that if there were any difficulties with a placement, they would have the support of the Tutor to resolve any issues. Moreover, in the case of practice teachers taking sick leave or holidays during a placement the tutor could provide continuity of support and supervision to the student ensuring placements could continue safely.

A key motivation for taking a student for those new to practice education was the concept of *"giving back" to the profession.* It is important that this initial intrinsic motivation is maintained to ensure availability of qualified and experienced practice teachers who continue to commit to practice education over their career. Ensuring these social workers feel supported in their practice teaching role, shown to be a key benefit of the pilot tutor post, is an important step in sustaining committed practice teachers. Creating a culture of practice education in the Social Work Department contributed to encouraging Practice Teachers to offer placements, this was especially evident for senior staff who may not have taken on a placement in some time. The tutor was a valuable interface between educational institutions and the Social Work Department in the hospital. Co-ordination of placements and matching students to practice teachers were viewed as positive steps forward, encouraging a pipeline provision of placements. Overall, the comprehensive supports offered by the Tutor-led programme in the context of heavy caseloads, makes taking a student on placement a more attractive prospect for Practice Teachers.

Enhancing quality and quantity of placements

Practice placements are a mandatory component of social work education. 1000 hours of supervised placements is the minimum requirement set out by CORU and students must be supervised by a CORU registered social worker for the duration of these placements. Placement is regarded as playing a key role in developing a students' professional competence and preparing them for the workforce (Magil et al., 2023). It is a crucial site to integrate and contextualise classroom learning (Flanagan and Wilson, 2018) and translate theory to practice (Domakin, 2014). The student/Practice Teacher relationship is highly significant for this learning, it anchors the students and prepares them for future practice (Bogo, 2015; Cleak et al., 2023). For Practice Teachers, making the commitment to take students on placement is often based on their previous practice teaching experiences. Therefore, creating placement programmes that are supported, well-structured and co-ordinated contributes to positive practice teaching experiences, in turn ensuring a continuous supply of placements (Domakin, 2014).

The questionnaire and interview findings demonstrate that the main benefits of the Tutor-led programme for students are peer learning, academic supports, increased confidence and another point of contact. The Tutor is well placed to address a wide range of student learning needs and tailor learning experiences to the best advantage for students. The Tutor is another point of contact for students and can support the Practice Teacher in monitoring their progress and mediate and offer advice if issues arise. Practice Teachers commented that having a student on placement makes them re-evaluate their own practice. Thus, engagement in teaching and learning with a student, supports their continuing professional development. Participation in interdisciplinary learning was overwhelmingly viewed as positive in providing a quality placement experience. Students reported that this increased their confidence and enhanced their multidisciplinary practice. The structured approach to learning offered by the tutor including facilitated group learning sessions enhances the consistency and quality of placement learning and addresses concerns in the literature regarding the variability in the quality of supervision (Bogo, 2015; Zuchowski et al., 2019). By investing in practice education through a Tutor-led programme, the quality and quantity of social work placements can be assured. Provision of agency-based tutors aligns Social Work with other HSCP professions, promoting inter-professional teaching and learning for students and ensuring better preparedness for future careers in health and social care.

Recommendations

The primary recommendation of this evaluation of the St James' Hospital Pilot tutor-led placement programme is that t**he role of practice-based tutor in social work should be established across all hospital and inter-professional sites**. There are numerous benefits to the formal establishment of a tutor post for social work departments, social work staff, social work students and higher education institutions. These are outlined in the table below:

Recommendation
The role of a practice-based tutor in social work should be established across all hospitals and interprofessional sites.

The benefits of this post are as outlined below:

Establishing a tutor post for social work would align social work with other health and allied health professionals	Clinical tutor posts are long-established in other disciplines for example, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and nursing, among others. Clinical tutor posts support the quality and quantity of placements for students across these disciplines. The lack of tutor posts for social work significantly disadvantages the profession in optimising practice-based education opportunities.
Establishing a tutor post for social work would mainstream social	An ongoing supply of newly qualified social workers is essential in order to build on and maintain work force requirements. The completion of 1000 hours of

work placements as part of social work service provision.	supervised social work placements is an essential component of social work education, therefore integrating provision of social work placements as a core part of service provision is essential to support ongoing training of social workers to ensure work force capacity.
Establishing a tutor post will build capacity for the provision of social work placements within hospital and interprofessional sites	Establishing full time, permanent tutor posts would support the development of a culture of professional and inter-professional learning and development. This in turn would increase the supply of student placements
The establishment of a social work tutor post will raise the profile of the role of social work within an interprofessional health context	Having a social work tutor working alongside other clinical tutors increases the stature and visibility of social work in an interprofessional context. Moreover, the social work tutor's engagement with students from other disciplines ensures that these students develop an accurate understanding of the role and scope of the social work profession within the interprofessional teams.
The establishment of a social work tutor post would support social work student engagement in interprofessional learning	Student learning is significantly enhanced by participating in interdisciplinary learning facilitated by the tutor role.
The establishment of a social work tutor post would make liaison between Higher Education	A tutor based in hospital and other interprofessional sites would act as a central liaison point between all HEIs and the placement agency. This will streamline placement planning and allocation allowing for a

Institutions and interprofessional sites more efficient	more efficient system than the current ad hoc process. The tutor-role would create a better feedback loop between placement sites and social work education providers.
The establishment of a social work tutor post will support the development of closer relationships between HEIs and placement sites building opportunity for research collaboration	Having a tutor post and an increase in student placements will support the development of closer relationships between social work practice and higher education institutions. This will create opportunities for collaboration in research projects and also allow HEIs to provide CPD opportunities relevant to current practice issues.
The establishment of a social work tutor post will support ongoing CPD for social work practice educators	Social workers providing placements will engage in training opportunities gaining knowledge in teaching and learning approaches, accessing learning resources and developing skills in aligning practice to the CORU proficiencies thereby embedding CORU standards in their day-today practice

Conclusion

This evaluation of the St James' Hospital pilot tutor project has found that the experience of all involved in the pilot project was overwhelmingly positive. Students and practice teachers did note some areas that will require consideration and development should the tutor post be made permanent. One concern raised was how students manage their time between the tutor and their practice teacher. This can be easily addressed should the post be developed. Other issues such as availability of desks and access to IT, are issues that go beyond the remit of the tutor post but do, nonetheless, require consideration as social work placement provision is increased and

developed within hospital and interprofessional settings. Positively, social workers who did not have a student during this time noted they were more likely to take a student in the future if there was a tutor in place. The benefits of an enhanced placement experience among the social workers, students, and university staff involved in this pilot are the strongest findings of this evaluation.

Given the current workforce crisis within all social work sectors, including hospitals and other interprofessional teams, together with the well documented crisis in placement provision impacting all social work education providers, the tutor post offers a pathway to begin to meaningfully address some of these challenges. While it may not be the total solution to the current crisis, the Tutor post would support social work student education, social workers' professional development and raise the profile of the profession within an interprofessional setting. Importantly, it would align the social work profession with other HSCP disciplines, allowing for better inter-professional learning for students and greater preparedness of social work graduates for practice in inter-professional contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent Form

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Appendix 4: Questionnaire Consent

Appendix 5: Online Questionnaire

Appendix 1: Consent Form

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
Trinity College Dublin

CONSENT FORM

Evaluation of a HSCP Funded Pilot Tutor Supported Placement Programme for Social Work Students in St James' Hospital Dublin

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I confirm that I am age 18 or older. ☐
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind. ☐
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. ☐
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research. ☐
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially. ☐
- I understand that in any reporting on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about. ☐
- I understand that anonymised extracts from the data may be quoted in reports and publications, and in various teaching and training contexts. ☐
- I understand that consent forms will be retained in Trinity College Dublin, in secure offices and password protected files for two years after the project has been completed. The original audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription and analysis has been completed. ☐
- I agree for my data, once anonymised, to be retained indefinitely in Trinity College Dublin's data archive or similar. ☐
- I understand that access to my archived data will be restricted to those engaged in research. ☐
- I understand that I am free to contact the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information. A member of this research team may contact me at a later date to invite me to participate in further research on the same or a similar topic, and I am free to accept or turn down such invitations. ☐

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Signature of participant *Date*

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

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Signature of researcher *Date*

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
Trinity College Dublin
Ollscoil Átha Cliath | The University of Dublin

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Evaluation of a HSCP Funded Pilot Tutor Supported Placement Programme for Social Work students in St James' Hospital Dublin

We would like to invite you to take part in an evaluation study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

WHO ARE WE AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT

We are a research team based at Trinity College Dublin, conducting an evaluation of the Pilot Tutor Supported Placement Programme for Social Work students at St James' Hospital Dublin. Your experiences, views, opinions and insights are our main focus and interest in this project. This evaluation is funded by the National HSCP Office.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

In order to participate, you need to familiarise yourself with the participant information (this form) and consent to take part in the research. You are still free to withdraw your participation at any time, without giving any reasons, and without any negative consequences.
If you consent to take part, you will be asked to either take part in a focus group and/or individual **interview** that will take about **30-50 minutes**. It will be conducted in person and be audio-recorded and transcribed. Alternatively, you may be asked to complete an online questionnaire.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

We are inviting you to take part in this study because you are involved with the Pilot Tutor Led Placement Programme, either as a student, practice teacher, tutor or other stakeholder involved in the delivery of this social work placement programme at St James' Hospital. Your experiences can provide information valuable to evaluating the programme.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The decision to participate - or not - is yours. If you do decide to participate, **you are also free to withdraw from the study at any time**, without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

We do not believe that the evaluation poses any risks. You do not stand to benefit from participation. The evaluation aims to yield an understanding of the provision of social work placements in an interprofessional healthcare context.

Scoil na hOibre Sóisialta agus an Pholasaí Shóisialta
Dámh na nEalaíon, na nDaonnachtaí
agus na nEolaíochtaí Sóisialta,
Foirgneamh na nEalaíon,
Coláiste na Tríonóide Baile Átha Cliath,
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WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Yes, all information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept confidential. No names will be identified, and pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants.
No information will be distributed to any other unauthorised individual or third party.

'It must be recognised that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by a lawful authority. In such circumstances the University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.'

HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

Signed consent forms and questionnaire documents will be retained in Trinity College Dublin, in password-protected files and inside secure offices, for two years after the project has been completed. Original audio recordings will be deleted as soon as they are no longer required, after transcription and the conclusion of analysis stage.
Anonymised interview transcripts and other data in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained indefinitely in Trinity College Dublin's data archive or similar. Access to the anonymised archived data will be restricted to those engaged in research. This is in order to enable full exploitation of the research data in publications or teaching materials that may be prepared or completed after the project has finished. Under freedom of information (FOI) and the general data protection regulations (GDPR) you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

It is important that the widest possible audience gets the opportunity to consult and learn from the findings of this project. People with a potential interest in the findings include academics, university students, policy makers, and diverse professionals working in the planning and delivery of healthcare and teaching services. In order to facilitate access to all these groups, the research team may publish and publicise the findings in diverse, open forums such as college classrooms, the Internet (e.g. TCD website, Twitter), online courses, international conferences and publications (journal articles, book chapters and reports). As stated above, all data in these reports of the findings will be fully anonymised so that your name or any other personal details will never feature in them.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

For any questions or further details, please contact:

Jo Greene
jogreene@tcd.ie

THANK YOU

Scoil na hOibre Sóisialta agus an Pholasaí Shóisialta
Dámh na nEalaíon, na nDaonnachtaí
agus na nEolaíochtaí Sóisialta,
Foirgneamh na nEalaíon,
Coláiste na Tríonóide Baile Átha Cliath,
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Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Interview Schedule – Evaluation of pilot Tutor-led placement programme

The schedule provided here relates to individual semi-structured interviews, which will be adapted, where necessary to reflect the participants role.

Preceding the interview, the researcher will:

- Welcome and thank the participant for taking part in the research
- The researcher will introduce themselves and explain what the research is about
- The Information Sheet will be reviewed to ensure informed consent will be given
- Consent will be sought to record the interview
- Reminder that participation in this study is completely voluntary, and they are free to withdraw from the study at any time and their identity will be protected
- The participant will be offered the opportunity to ask questions or clarify any issues they may have
- The consent form will be signed

The interview format is semi-structured and offers a guide for conversation. It will commence with a broad introductory question, inviting the participant to discuss their experience of their involvement with the programme. More specific questions will focus on the following topics:

- Participants will be asked for their experiences of the programme
- Participants will be asked to reflect on how effective the programme is
- Participants will be asked their thoughts on the benefits of the programme
- Participants will be asked their opinion on the programme can be strengthened
- Participants will be asked their views on the future direction of the programme

The interview will conclude by offering participants the chance to provide any additional information or thoughts that they feel are important but may not have been covered adequately in the interview.

Appendix 4: Questionnaire Consent

Evaluation of a HSCP Funded Pilot Tutor Supported Placement Programme for Social Work students in St James' Hospital Dublin

We would like to invite you to take part in an evaluation of the Pilot Tutor Supported Placement Programme for Social Work students at St James' Hospital Dublin in 2023. Your experiences, views, opinions and insights are our main focus and interest in this evaluation.

We are inviting you to take part in this study because you were involved with the Pilot Tutor Supported Placement Programme, either as a practice teacher or other stakeholder and/or you were part of the social work team at St James' Hospital during the pilot programme. Your experiences can provide information valuable to evaluating the programme.

About the Pilot Tutor Led Programme
The Tutor Led Programme commenced in September 2023 and ran for one placement cycle, until December 2023. Its main aims were to enhance student learning and build capacity for student education within the St James' Hospital Social Work team, developing additional placement opportunities while acting as a support and resource to established placement providers.

About this Evaluation
The objectives of this evaluation is to gather perspectives about taking a student on placement and whether a Tutor Led programme has the potential to enhance and increase student placements.

This evaluation is funded by the National HSCP Office. The survey is strictly confidential and your participation in this survey is voluntary. The information you provide is anonymous and will be held confidentially and in full compliance with data protection legislation. By consenting to participate, you acknowledge that you are willing to answer the questions in the survey and that your answers can be used in a future reports and publications.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. To start the survey, please confirm your understanding of the following statements:

- I understand that by progressing, I am agreeing to participate in the anonymous survey.
- I understand that I can opt out of the survey at any point, with no consequence to me.
- I understand that if I choose to exit the survey, it will not be possible to remove any responses I have entered as my answers are not identifiable.

Do you agree to the above terms?
By clicking 'yes', you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.

◯ No, I wish to exit the survey

◯ Yes, I wish to participate in the survey

→ Next

Appendix 5: Online Questionnaire

Questionnaire - Evaluation of pilot Tutor-led placement programme

The questionnaire instrument was delivered online via an online platform Qualtrics.

At the outset, participants were asked to read the participant information sheet, provide informed consent and confirm they are over 18 years of age. The questions in each section of the questionnaire are now outlined:

Section One – About you:

To start, could you please tell us a little about yourself

- What gender do you identify with?
- Please state your current role/grade
- How long are you in your current position?
- Did you supervise a social work student on the Tutor Led Pilot Programme during September to December 2023 in St James Hospital? (Social Work Dept only)
- Have you supervised a student on a social work placement but **not** on the Tutor Led Pilot Programme? (Social Work Dept only)
- In total, how many social work students have you supervised?
- You indicated that you have not yet taken a social work student on placement, can you say why? (Social Work Dept only)
- Are you considering taking a Social Work Student on placement in the future? (Social Work Dept only)

Section Two – The pilot programme

- Do you think a Tutor-led placement programme has the potential to enhance the quality of student placements?
- In what way does the Tutor Led Placement Programme have the potential to **enhance the quality** of student placements?
- Why do you think the Tutor Led Placement Programme does **not** enhance quality of student placements?
- Do you think the Tutor Led Placement Programme has the potential to **increase the quantity** of student placements?
- In what way does the Tutor Led Placement Programme have the potential to **increase** the number of student placements?
- Why do you think the Tutor Led Placement Programme does **not** have the potential to increase the number of student placements?
- Would an ongoing Social Work Tutor role enhance NEST and interdisciplinary learning? (NEST participants only)
- What are the main benefits an ongoing Social Work Tutor role could bring to NEST and interdisciplinary learning? (NEST participants only)

- Do you think **social work students** participating in NEST increased multidisciplinary awareness of the role of social work? (NEST participants only)
- How did the inclusion of **social work students** in NEST increase awareness of the role of social work? (NEST participants only)
- How did the inclusion of **social work students** in NEST increase awareness of the role of social work? (NEST participants only)
- How did the Social Work Tutor role provide benefits to students from other disciplines? (NEST participants only)
- If the Tutor Led role was an ongoing feature for Social Work placements, how likely would this influence your decision to take a student? (Social Work Dept only)
- What are the main benefits of a Tutor Led student placement programme **for practice teachers**? (tick all that apply) (Social Work Dept only)
- What are the main benefits of a Tutor Led student placement programme for **students**? (tick all that apply)
- What would **encourage** you to take a student on social work placement? (Social Work Dept only)
- What might **discourage** you from taking a student on social work placement? (Social Work Dept only)

Section 3 – Practice education

- Is being a Practice Teacher an important part of your professional role and identity?
- Which features of practice teaching/education are important to your professional role and identity? (Please tick all that apply)
- How would you describe your relationship with university social work programmes? Please include how these relationships could be strengthened and developed. (Social Work Dept only).
- Please indicate your agreement with the following statements regarding your relationship with university social work programmes (Social Work Dept only)
    - Documentation and materials provided are easy to use and understand
    - University staff are available and supportive
    - Practice teachers are well resourced to carry out their role
    - There are opportunities to provide feedback

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:

Tutor Led Placements for social work students:

- Enhances student learning
- Raises profile of social work in the context of a teaching hospital
- Raises the profile of social work within the inter-disciplinary team model of service delivery
- Would encourage me to consider taking a student on placement

To conclude, do you have any further comments on Social Work student placements or wish to provide any additional information?

Section 4: Conclusion

Thank you for participating in this survey, we are grateful for your time. This information will help us to understand how to enhance and improve social work student placements.

If you require further information about this evaluation, you can contact any of the following:

Evaluation Researcher
Jo Greene
jogreene@tcd.ie

TCD Placement Co-ordinators
Erna O'Connor
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Please select next button to exit and close the survey

At the questionnaire conclusion, participants were thanked for completing the questionnaire and an email link to the research team and Pilot Programme tutor was provided in case of any further queries.