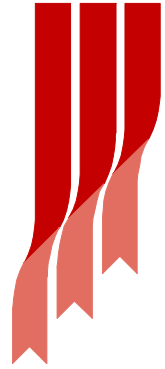


SCOTTISH INSTITUTE  
FOR EXCELLENCE IN  
SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION



# **Social Work Graduate Fast Track Scheme Evaluation Report 2006**

**Hooks and Anchors:**

**Recruitment and Retention  
for the Scottish Social Services**

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### **Acknowledgements**

Many people, including employers, university staff and fast track trainees have given of their time and experience to provide detailed responses to the survey. Their contribution to a much greater understanding of initiatives designed to address the recruitment and retention of social workers in Scotland is greatly appreciated.

I would particularly like to thank Stacey MacDonald, Fast Track Scheme Administrator, for her patience and support in the preparation of this report.

Lynne Hooton  
Fast Track Project Officer  
March 2006

## **Social Work Graduate Fast Track Scheme Evaluation Report 2005**

### **Executive Summary**

The Social Work Graduate Fast Track Scheme is one of a range of collaborative initiatives introduced by the Scottish Executive in 2003 to address issues of recruitment and retention within the social work profession in Scotland. The scheme was developed and implemented in partnership with CoSLA and the universities that deliver qualifying social work programmes.

This evaluation indicates that the scheme is perceived as being largely successful in providing 'change of career' opportunities and in bringing some excellent new people to the profession.

Throughout this report, "trainees" mean the people undertaking the scheme and "staff" means the university and employer staff who responded to the survey.

#### **Key messages:**

1. The scheme is seen by trainees and staff as an effective route to a career in social work for graduates who wish to change careers. The present scheme is not, however, seen as a fast track to senior positions within the profession.
2. The scheme is meeting its original objective to increase the number of qualified staff in the workforce and in bringing 'new blood' into the profession.
3. Much greater flexibility, including recognition of prior learning, is sought by all.
4. Some staff expressed concern about the quality of learning opportunities for trainees. This concern was not borne out by the views of trainees themselves.
5. Collaboration is an important aspect of the success of the scheme.

#### **Additional messages from staff:**

1. The scheme should have been part of a properly funded, co-ordinated response to workforce development strategy which will accommodate diversity and local needs.
2. The scheme should accommodate both existing staff and 'new blood' trainees.
3. Administration of the scheme has improved greatly, but remains time-consuming.
4. Practical opportunities for collaboration and improved relationships between universities and employers are valued and should be further developed.
5. The scheme is seen by a number of employers as being demanding on resources. In some cases, this has led to a reduction in the number of places taken up.

#### **Additional messages from trainees:**

1. Receiving a salary was a key factor in participation. Nearly all of the trainees said that they could not otherwise have afforded to come into social work.
2. Participants were positive about their experiences, including practice learning opportunities, and were satisfied with the quality of the fast track scheme.

3. When trainees received support from university staff and their employers this made a huge difference, especially if combined with good pre-study work experience.
4. Communication delays in the selection process, particularly in the early stages of the scheme, were experienced as stressful.
5. Nearly all trainees confirmed that involvement with the scheme had increased their motivation to pursue a social work career, that it was a good investment and that they intended to remain in a social work career for at least five years.

### **Recommendations from the evaluation**

1. There is a need to ensure that we have a comprehensive, properly resourced strategy to attract and retain graduates and other change of career recruits, respond to local priorities and promote diversity within the future social services workforce.
2. The training and development needs both of existing staff and 'new blood' recruits need to be addressed across all sectors.
3. Collaborative workforce development should build on the collaborative opportunities which have been established within the scheme, particularly between the universities, employers and the Scottish Executive.
4. Consistent support for trainees, effective communication and streamlined organisation remain important issues to be addressed throughout the remainder of the scheme and in any future developments.
5. A funding strategy to support greater flexibility in the delivery and uptake of programmes (encouraging recognition of prior learning in the context of the SCQF) is required. Financial support for trainees needs to be adequate and equitable. To achieve this, a better understanding of the real costs to universities, employers and trainees is needed.

## 1 Introduction

The Social Work Graduate Fast Track Scheme was developed through a partnership between the (then) Scottish Executive Social Work Services Inspectorate, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA), universities and social work employers as part of a strategy to address the recruitment and retention of social workers within the profession. The scheme provides graduates in any discipline with a unique opportunity to obtain a professional social work qualification while in salaried employment with a social work agency.

The scheme is one of a range of strategic initiatives set out in the Framework for Social Work Education<sup>1</sup>, launched in January 2003 by Cathy Jamieson MSP, then Minister for Education and Young People.

The scheme was devised to address three aspects of workforce planning:

- a perceived acute shortage of qualified social workers, particularly in children's services;
- an anticipated reduction in the number of trainees qualifying through standard routes, due to the move from a three year degree to a four year honours degree;
- the need to provide support for employers in meeting the qualification requirements for registration of the workforce.

The scheme was primarily intended to bring 'new blood' into social work.

The scheme will have four cohorts in total, with a final intake of trainees in 2006/7. All of Scotland's 32 Local Authorities have participated in the scheme and voluntary sector organisations have been included since 2005. All of the universities who offer qualifying social work programmes are involved in the scheme.

Responses were received from 70 employers and university staff and also from 130 trainees.

The vast majority of the first cohort of 97 trainees have now qualified and are working with their employers, mainly in children's services.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Executive (2003) The Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland

## **2 Evaluation of the Scheme**

This is the second evaluation of the scheme. An initial evaluation<sup>2</sup> addressed issues relating to the implementation of the 2003 scheme and made a number of recommendations which have now been incorporated.

Further studies are planned to evaluate the longer term impact of the scheme on the workforce and on those workers who participated in the scheme.

### **2.1 Objectives of the evaluation**

- To evaluate the progress of the scheme in achieving its original objectives.
- To evaluate trainees', employers' and other stakeholders' experience of the scheme.
- To identify strengths and weaknesses of the scheme and to highlight development needs.

### **2.2 Methodology**

The findings in this report are drawn from the responses of staff and trainees to two postal questionnaires. In October 2005, survey forms were distributed to approximately one hundred key contacts in universities and employer organisations. As the aim was to obtain as much feedback as possible, two survey forms were sent to each of the key contacts and they were asked to pass the second form to a colleague who might be interested in providing feedback on the scheme.

A separate questionnaire (containing some shared content) was distributed to the three hundred and twenty three Fast Track trainees who have participated or are currently participating in the scheme. Fourteen of these questionnaires were returned undelivered as the trainees had moved address. Responses were accepted until mid December 2005. Appendix 1 provides a profile of the respondents.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement, on a five point scale, with a range of statements relating to relevant aspects of the Fast Track scheme. Specific comments were invited at the end of each section and at the end of the questionnaire. The wealth of comments has been used to inform the wider discussion in the report and to illustrate the main findings.

### **2.3 Presentation of the report**

The report is presented in sections drawing from the key findings of the evaluation. Quotations from comments made by respondents are presented in italics and anonymity is preserved throughout the report. Appendix 4 shows a summary of staff responses and Appendix 5 gives the summary of trainee responses.

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<sup>2</sup> Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (2004) Social Work Fast Track Graduate Scheme 2003 Evaluation Report

All percentages in the Tables and text have been rounded and therefore may not add up to 100%. In the Tables, the heading 'Neither/No Info' means that respondents either chose the response 'neither agree nor disagree', or else did not provide a response.

## **2.4 Context in which the scheme was implemented**

As part of a wider debate on the role of social work in Scottish society, social work education and its contribution to workforce development has been subject to detailed scrutiny, debate and reorganisation in recent years. The discussion on the reasons for the shortfall in numbers of social workers has taken place in a context of unprecedented challenges and against a background of increasing public expectations and generally adverse media reporting.

The Scottish Executive's modernising agenda for the profession was outlined in a twelve point Action Plan for the Social Services Workforce (April 2002)<sup>3</sup>. This has been complemented by a range of strategies including the Framework for Social Work Education<sup>4</sup> and the current 21<sup>st</sup> Century Review of Social Work which is due to report in February 2006. Implementation of the Action Plan and Framework, have been supported by the work of:

- The National Workforce Group, established in 2003 to review the needs of the workforce and which has published a National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland<sup>5</sup>.
- The Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (The Institute) was also established in 2003, with a primary function to support the development of the new social work honours degree.
- The Scottish Social Services Council which was established in 2001 and is responsible for the regulation of the social services workforce, including education and training.

A key element of this agenda was the new four year honours degree, introduced as the qualifying level for social workers within The Framework for Social Work Education, 2003. The Fast Track Scheme was also announced as part of this Framework and is one of a raft of measures designed to address recruitment and retention difficulties. Other initiatives include the Care in Scotland campaign to raise the profile of the profession and awareness of jobs in the social care sector and the Incentive Scheme designed to assist employers to attract and retain social workers in high priority posts.

The increasing pressure on social services and the specific recommendations of a number of well publicised inquiries (O'Brien, Laming and Scottish Borders, among others) have highlighted the impact of resource shortages, including low staffing levels, on the delivery

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<sup>3</sup> Scottish Executive: The Action Plan for the Social Services Workforce 2002 (page 9)

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Executive (2003) The Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland

<sup>5</sup> Scottish Executive (2005) National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland: A Plan for Action 2005 - 2010

of services. This has been particularly evident in the area of the care and protection of children.

The Scottish Executive provides statistics on social worker staffing. The latest summary from October 2005 is outlined in Appendix 3. This suggests that although there continues to be an overall shortage of social workers, the level of vacancies has remained stable at 536, with a slight reduction (0.7%) in vacancies in Children's Services over the four months from July to October 2005<sup>6</sup>.

A complex range of factors impact on establishment levels of social work staff in Local Authorities. These include:

- New policy initiatives which lead to an expansion in posts.
- Replacement demand when workers retire or leave the profession.
- Reorganisation and restructuring associated with workload management.
- Varying definitions of a vacant post.

## 2.5 Background to the Fast Track Scheme

The Fast Track scheme has become well established since its introduction in the spring of 2003. From August 2003, the Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (the Institute) has administered the scheme under the direction of a Reference Group consisting of representatives of the Scottish Executive, CoSLA, the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW), the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and the Institute.

The initial remit was to recruit 50 suitable graduates to local authority trainee posts in child care. In August 2003, the scheme was extended by a further 70 trainee posts. In February 2004 the scheme was extended for a further three years, with up to 150 trainee places available in each of the three years. As can be seen from Table 1, there has been a consistently high level of interest in the scheme, with over 1000 eligible applicants during each of the three years.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Eligible Applicants</b>	<b>No of places available</b>	<b>No of trainees appointed</b>
2003	1077	120	97
2004	1653	150	122
2005	1703	150	104

*Table 1: Demand and availability of traineeships*

Trainee places were originally allocated on a quota basis with each of the 32 Local Authorities in Scotland having one trainee place and the remaining places being allocated on the basis of overall staffing circumstances.

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<sup>6</sup> Source: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/77843/0018789.pdf>



The first group of trainees were selected through a national recruitment centre for admission to the scheme. This selection process involved observed group discussion, panel and individual interviews and psychometric testing of candidates. The recruitment centre, held at the CoSLA offices in Edinburgh, also provided opportunities to share information and respond to trainees' questions. Once admitted to the scheme, trainees were interviewed by interested employers and university programmes to secure their traineeship and university place.

For the second cohort the appointment processes were simplified and took place within six regional areas, each co-ordinated by a senior member of social work staff. Employers and university staff generally shared selection processes to reduce the volume of interview activity. In response to feedback from participants, a more localised system was subsequently developed with central support and administration. Collaboration between employers and universities in the selection of trainees continued and was further developed.

The first cohort of trainees was targeted particularly at children's services. The second intake was opened up to include other statutory service areas and a proportion (approximately 20%) of existing graduate employees. More recently, there have been developments to include the voluntary sector, the residential child care sector and positive action to support black and minority ethnic trainees within the scheme.

Trainees are employed in social work agencies during their traineeship and on successful completion of their programme are then re-employed as qualified social workers. The two year contract is a key retention element of the scheme. Trainees normally complete a two to three month period of work experience with their employer at the beginning of the traineeship. The duration of the scheme varies from 15 to 24 months depending on which university programme trainees attend. Appendix 2, Table B4 shows the duration of university programmes attended by the trainees.

Trainees come from a very wide range of backgrounds including nursing and other health professions, teaching, the police force, the civil service, engineering, life assurance, IT, youth work and social care. The advertised salary during their training is 12k to 14k. The salary level is determined by the employing agencies. The Scottish Executive fund 10k per year per student towards education and support. Local Authority employers are expected to offset some of the costs against their existing vacancies.

Information on the gender, age and ethnic background of participants in the overall Fast Track scheme is provided in Appendix 2, Tables, B1, B2 and B3. Information on the progression of trainees within the scheme is given in Table B5.

It is clear from the evaluation that there was some confusion and a range of differing expectations about a number of aspects of the scheme. In part, this is because the original scheme of 50 places was transformed by its rapid expansion. The clarity of the original objectives was altered by subsequent decisions to extend the scheme to 550 potential traineeships over a four year period.

### 3 Key Messages from the 2005 Evaluation

**3.1 The scheme is seen by trainees and staff as an effective route to a career in social work for graduates who wish to change careers. The present scheme is not, however, seen as a fast track to senior positions within the profession.**

#### 3.1.1 Change of career opportunities

As can be seen from the figure below, 74% of staff and 91% of trainees agreed that the Fast Track scheme is an effective way of providing a route to a career in social work for graduates who wish to change career. (Figure 1)

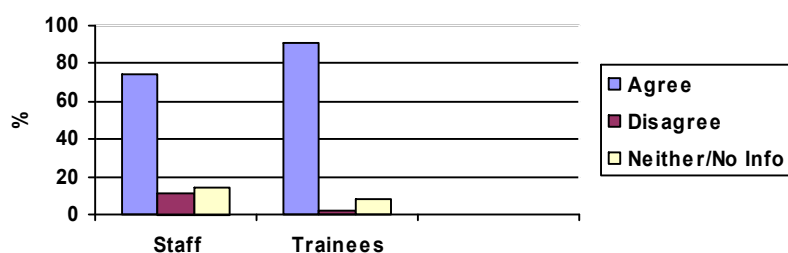


Figure 1: The Fast Track scheme is an effective way of providing an alternative route to a career in social work for graduates who wish to change career

A number of employers commented positively on the opportunity for recruits with experience in other areas to enter the profession.

*It has been a welcome, effective innovation. Quality graduates who would not/could not consider career change have been recruited.* (Employer)

Trainee respondents also highlighted the benefits of the scheme, particularly the salary, in reaching decisions to make a career change and enter the social work profession.

*Graduates don't always pick a career degree first time. Fast Track enables a career change without having to start from scratch and self fund.* (Trainee)

Only 32% of trainees however were convinced that their learning needs in entering the social care field, often from a very different background, had been clearly addressed within the scheme (Table 2).

Trainees' response to statement:	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
The needs of trainees in making career changes were clearly addressed within the scheme	41 (32%)	26 (20%)	63 (49%)

Table 2: Learning needs of trainees

The quotation below illustrates the particular challenges which trainees may face as they change career.

*My impression is that local authorities are used to workers becoming qualified after long periods in support assistant roles – these people know the ‘rules’, if not the theoretical basis for them. This is the most difficult area to catch up on when coming from a different background – theoretical parts you can learn. (Trainee)*

In a culture of job mobility and flexibility, there is a necessary two way process of recruitment and retention. Strategies are needed both to retain staff within the social services profession and also to facilitate the entry of new workers who wish to change career from other professions.

### 3.1.2 Fast Track to senior positions

The scheme is seen by both staff and trainees to provide a potential fast track to social work qualification rather than the more traditional view of fast track to senior positions where graduates are specifically recruited on to accelerated development programmes, with a view to their reaching senior management positions in less time than usual.

Only 17% of staff thought that the scheme was providing a pool of high potential staff, able to reach senior positions. Only 9% of trainees thought that they would reach senior positions more quickly than social workers who had undertaken different routes to qualification (Figures 2 & 3).

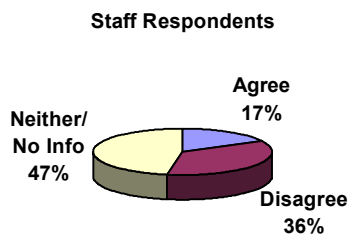


Figure 2: The Fast Track scheme is providing a pool of high potential staff who will be able to reach senior positions

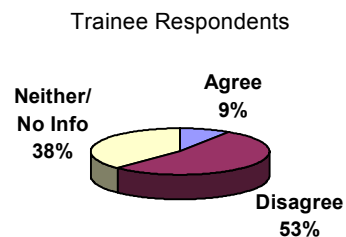


Figure 3: On completion of the Fast Track scheme, I expect to reach senior positions more quickly than social workers who have undertaken different routes.

A number of staff clearly indicated that the scheme is not regarded as providing or being intended to provide a fast track to senior positions within the profession.

*It has served its purpose – but it is not about quality (or superior quality) of participants. (University staff)*

The quotation below illustrates the comments from a number of trainees

*I certainly don't think the Fast Track scheme put me at an advantage over colleagues – if anything, I am playing catch-up.* (Trainee)

Fast Track trainees are not thought by academic staff to be qualitatively different from other postgraduate students. Generally, the calibre of trainees is reported to be at least as good as other students. (Table 3)

Staff response to the statement:	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
<b>Fast Track participants are essentially of the same quality as trainees on other routes</b>			
<b>Academic Staff</b>	<b>13 (72%)</b>	<b>2 (11%)</b>	<b>3 (17%)</b>
<b>Employers</b>	<b>23 (44%)</b>	<b>14 (27%)</b>	<b>15 (29%)</b>

Table 3: Quality of Fast Track trainees

Comments from employers showed that, on the whole, they were positive about the high calibre of trainees and workers.

**3.2 Participants in the evaluation believe that the scheme is meeting its original objective to increase the number of qualified staff in the workforce and in bringing 'new blood' into the profession.**

**3.2.1 Increasing the number of qualified staff**

79% of staff and 89% of trainees agreed with the view that the scheme is meeting its original objective to increase the number of qualified staff in the workforce (Figure 4).

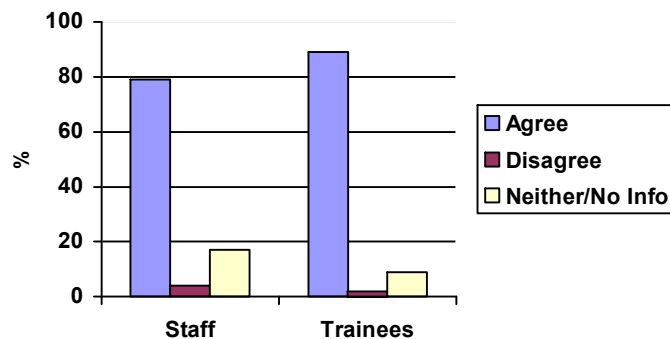


Figure 4: The Fast Track scheme is meeting its original objective to increase the number of qualified staff in the workforce

The high number of eligible applicants each year has enhanced this aspect of the scheme as there has been a large pool from which to select trainees. Many employers commented that the increase in the number of qualified staff in the workforce was the most positive aspect of the scheme and indicated that a substantial increase has been achieved.

*The scheme has made a genuine impact on recruitment and attracted graduates who otherwise would not have considered social work as a career option* (Employer)

Although the number of social workers has increased as a result of the Fast Track scheme and other initiatives, over the same period, the demand for social workers by employers has continued to expand and the demand from employers has also continued to exceed supply. (Appendix 3)

### 3.2.2 Bringing ‘new blood’ into the profession

59% of staff and 77% of trainees believe the scheme has been successful in bringing ‘new blood’ into the social work profession. (Figure 5)

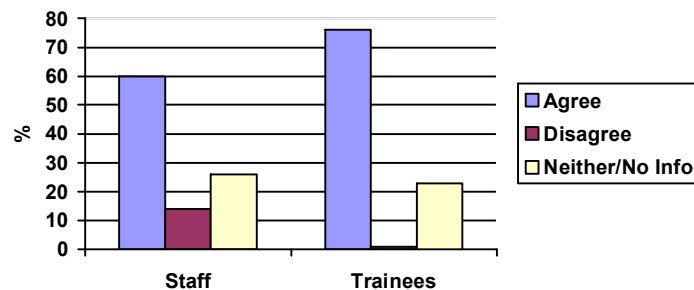


Figure 5: The scheme has been successful in bringing ‘new blood’ into the social work profession

Only 16% of the trainees had applied to the postgraduate bursary scheme in addition to the Fast Track scheme. This would seem to support the view that the Fast Track scheme has brought new people into the profession and does not simply ‘divert’ trainees from standard programmes. This concern was expressed by universities in the early days.

### 3.2.3 Recruitment issues

Although a small number of Local Authorities have indicated that they have now reached their establishment figure for qualified social workers, recruitment difficulties were still seen as a major issue by 71% of all staff respondents (70% of employers and 83% of academic staff). (Table 4)

<b>Staff response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
Recruitment issues are still problematic within the profession	<b>50 (71%)</b>	<b>7 (10%)</b>	<b>13 (19%)</b>
The Fast Track scheme has been effective in helping to address the recruitment difficulties in social work	<b>41 (59%)</b>	<b>12 (17%)</b>	<b>17 (24%)</b>

Table 4: Recruitment issues

Evidence that the Fast Track scheme is beginning to make a difference was noted by a number of employers.

*We have two very able qualified workers in post from the first tranche with others on the way.* (Employer)

The latest statistics from the Scottish Executive Health and Care Series (Oct 2005)<sup>7</sup> (Appendix 3) show that although the number of social worker vacancies continues to be stable (536), the number of filled social worker posts has increased. Employers in the Fast Track survey commented on continuing recruitment difficulties in front line children and families services and in mental health services.

### 3.2.4 Retention issues

The two year contract with an employer following qualification is part of the scheme designed to assist employers with their retention of qualified social workers, particularly in prioritised posts.

As Table 5 shows, the scheme was not felt to have aggravated existing difficulties with the retention of experienced social workers.

<b>Staff response to statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
The scheme has aggravated existing difficulties with the retention of experienced social workers	<b>13 (19%)</b>	<b>23 (33%)</b>	<b>34 (49%)</b>

Table 5: Staff response to retention issues

Some employers expressed reservations about the numbers of newly qualified workers now in the profession and whether or not Fast Track graduates are adequately prepared to undertake the most difficult duties. However, employers reported mainly positive experiences.

*We obtained three good workers from the scheme who went into care and assessment teams and have stayed.* (Employer)

<sup>7</sup> Source: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/77843/0018789.pdf>

In this evaluation, 90% of the trainees confirmed that they expected to continue to be in a social work career in five years time. On the whole, trainees view the contract element as a ‘job guarantee’ and an essential, positive aspect of the decision they made to enter the social work profession (Table 6).

Trainees’ response to statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
I expect that I will continue to be in a social work career in five years time.	117 (90%)	2 (2%)	11 (9%)

Table 6: Trainee response to retention issues

### 3.2.5 Impact on the profile of social work

One aim of the recent activity within the sector has been to raise the profile of social work as a profession. More than half of the staff (54%) and almost half of the trainees (49%) agreed that the scheme has helped to promote a positive image of the social work profession (Figure 6).

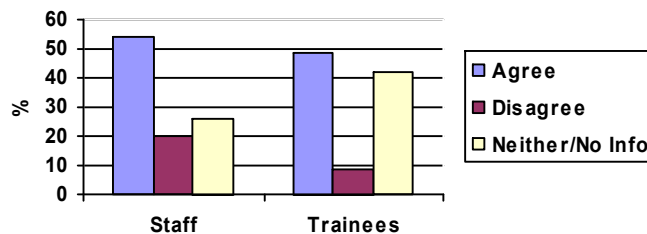


Figure 6: The Fast Track scheme has helped to promote a positive image of the social work profession

Positive comments were made about the contribution of the Fast Track scheme in this regard. These included:

*The Fast Track scheme has assisted in raising the profile of social work as an important profession and one which is of value within society (Trainee)*

*The scheme has promoted and highlighted to a wide audience of graduates a career in social work as a positive thing. (Employer)*

However, concern was expressed by some respondents that the large number of unsuccessful applicants may have been counter productive.

**3.3 Much greater flexibility, including recognition of prior learning, is sought by all.**

**3.3.1 Increased flexibility in educational provision**

The scheme is one part of a spectrum of learning and development provision within a diverse education system, designed to respond to differing learner needs. Although there is a range of distance learning and integrated learning opportunities, the mainstay of qualifying social work education is still full time postgraduate (two years) or undergraduate (four years) study at university.

It is evident throughout the evaluation that respondents believe that the financial cost of training on a full time basis, combined with perceived low pay scales within the profession can have a prohibitive impact on those considering social work as a career. 90% of the staff respondents expressed the view that there should be further mixed and flexible routes to qualifying training (Table 7).

Staff response to statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
Further mixed and flexible routes to enter the social work profession should be developed	63 (90%)	0 (0%)	7 (10%)

Table 7: Flexibility of educational provision

The following comment was typical of a number on this issue:

*There should be a variety of routes, both distance learning and Fast Track as a means of offering something that can meet the learning needs of a range of potential candidates. If there is flexibility and opportunities for existing staff this will help with recruitment and retention.* (Employer)

Staff comments highlight that separate arrangements are needed, as part of an overall plan, to address the needs of people in the workforce who wish to gain professional qualifications.

The Fast Track scheme was regarded by 64% of staff to have made a useful contribution to the development of flexible entry to the social work profession (Table 8).

Staff response to statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
The scheme has made a useful contribution to the development of flexible entry to the social work profession	45 (64%)	19 (27%)	6 (9%)

Table 8: Contribution of flexible entry to Fast Track scheme



Support for the development of flexible learning opportunities is widespread. The Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE)<sup>8</sup> promote arrangements for flexible learning, accelerated entry and recognition of previous learning. The National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland<sup>9</sup> endorses flexibility in social work education with three key recommendations:

- Opportunities and choices for staff to choose how to progress in their careers must be developed.
- We need to find effective ways for people to gain recognition for the skills they already have.
- We need to create opportunities for learning and development that allow people to learn in more flexible ways

### 3.3.2 Recognition of prior informal learning

The Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF)<sup>10</sup> and the recently published Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning<sup>11</sup> promote and support co-ordinated and flexible learning opportunities.

Three quarters of staff agreed that there should have been greater scope in the scheme for recognition of prior informal learning (Table 9).

Staff response to statements	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
There should have been greater scope for the recognition of prior informal learning (RPL or APEL)	52 (74%)	5 (7%)	13 (19%)

Table 9: Recognition of prior informal learning

However, some of the staff comments indicated that pressure and incentive to achieve more flexible provision is diluted through current disincentives in the funding system and other barriers including administration issues and concern about standards.

Bridging opportunities and courses were recommended by a number of respondents as part of a framework of co-ordinated career pathways.

<sup>8</sup> Scottish Executive (2003) The Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland (page 21)

<sup>9</sup> Scottish Executive (2005) National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland: A Plan for Action 2005 - 2010

<sup>10</sup> Quality Assurance Agency (2002) Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework: National Plan for Implementation of the Framework

<sup>11</sup> Quality Assurance Agency (2005) Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning (RPL)

### 3.3.3 Distance learning

Table 10 shows that almost half of the staff respondents (49%) felt that distance learning programmes are more cost effective than full time routes.

Staff response to statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
Distance learning programmes are more cost effective than full time routes	34 (49%)	12 (17%)	24 (34%)

Table 10: Staff perception of distance learning

While believing that distance learning programmes are more cost effective, a number of employers confirmed a need to offer other routes to qualification.

*Whilst Fast Track is a relatively expensive course in comparison to distance learning routes to qualification, it does offer a pool of people who will contribute to developing a different culture within our profession. A mixed range of routes to qualification would also offer the potential to capitalise on the talent and ability that exists within our workforce, through offering a range of courses that will best meet the needs of the larger workforce.*  
(Employer)

Employer enthusiasm for distance learning routes is not generally matched by trainees (Table 11). 64% of trainees disagreed that they would have preferred to study on a distance learning route rather than a full time route. Comments indicated that most of those who wished to study on a distance learning route were, in fact, doing so.

Trainees' response to statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
I prefer/would have preferred to study on a distance learning route rather than a full time route	17 (13%)	83 (64%)	30 (23%)

Table 11: Trainees' study route preference

The short timescale for preparation of the entrance portfolio for the two distance learning routes was felt to be very demanding especially for those who do not have previous social care experience.

*Initial portfolio of a distance learning route is the most intensely demanding element due to new environment and not knowing processes and lacking caseload examples at first.* (Trainee)

Some trainees clearly benefit from the opportunity to undertake their qualification through a distance learning programme.

*Enjoying learning through distance learning at my own pace and when I choose to study.* (Trainee)

The status of trainees during the period of portfolio completion needs to be clarified, for both staff and for trainees, not only for Fast Track trainees but in developing flexible learning opportunities more generally. Several trainees reported that they were unsure of the support they could expect during this time and that they could not access the university library and other resources until they had successfully completed the portfolio.

**3.4 Some staff expressed concern about the quality of learning opportunities for trainees. This concern was not borne out by the views of trainees themselves.**

**3.4.1 Quality of the learning opportunities**

Although generally staff agreed that the quality of learning opportunities for Fast Track trainees had been comparable to that for other trainees, a significant proportion disagreed (27%). (Figure 7)

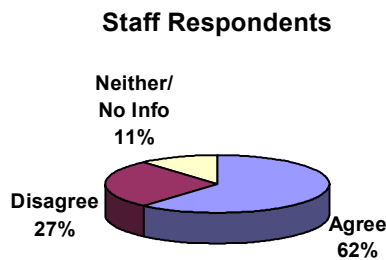


Figure 7: The quality of learning opportunities for Fast Track trainees has been comparable to that for trainees on other qualifying programmes

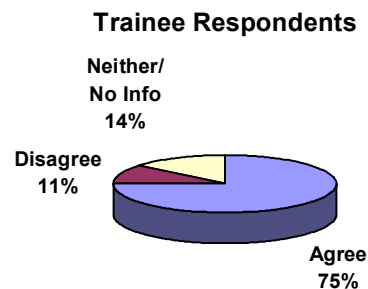


Figure 8: My impression is that the quality of the learning opportunities for Fast Track trainees has been comparable to that for trainees on other qualifying programmes.

It should be noted that all programmes within the scheme met the quality assurance requirements of their host institutions and were subject to approval in line with the requirements of the Scottish Social Services Council.

However, within this context, some issues were highlighted by staff including the maintenance of standards and quality in a shortened timescale and the potential preparedness of the new workers. This was expressed as a fear that Fast Track trainees may not be as confident and competent on qualification as other newly qualified workers.

*In relation to quality of learning opportunities, there is no way of maintaining quality while sacrificing the time required to embed, develop and consolidate critical thinking and practice skills. It is in this respect that the learning opportunities are less good for Fast Track trainees. (University staff)*

*Schemes that reduce the academic learning and practice learning dilute the knowledge and skills base of new social workers and undermine the concept of training that requires four years.*  
(Employer)

Trainees, on the other hand, did not reflect significant concern in their responses. Three quarters of them (75%) confirmed their impression of the quality of learning opportunities for Fast Track trainees as comparable to that for trainees on other qualifying programmes (Figure 8).

### 3.4.2 The pace of learning

It was clear however, that staff and trainees did share a concern about the pace of learning.

*Trainees are expected to learn at a pace that does not allow for consolidation or reflection.* (University staff)

*The pace of the course was fast, much faster than I had expected. At times I did feel stressed and drained.* (Trainee)

*The stress of the scheme's academic and practice requirements within a very limited timescale were extensive, but have prepared me for some of the stresses within the working environment.*  
(Trainee)

### 3.4.3 Trainees' experience of learning on the scheme.

The vast majority of trainees (87%) reported that their experience of the scheme was intellectually stimulating. 79% of trainees were confident that the knowledge, skills and values they were acquiring would enable them to practice as new social workers. However, a quarter of the trainees (25%) indicated that they felt that they would need more support than other newly qualified workers in their first post. Trainees were divided in their opinion about whether or not they had found the overall workload too heavy; 31% agreed and 31% disagreed. Trainees were more likely to comment on workload demands if they were studying on a distance learning route while employed in their agency (Table 12).

<b>Trainees' response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
The experience of the scheme is/was intellectually stimulating	<b>113 (87%)</b>	<b>9 (7%)</b>	<b>8 (6%)</b>
I feel confident that the knowledge and skills and values I am acquiring/have acquired will enable me to practice as a new social worker	<b>102 (79%)</b>	<b>7 (5%)</b>	<b>21 (16%)</b>
As a result of undertaking a 'faster' route, I will need more support than other newly qualified workers in my first post.	<b>32 (25%)</b>	<b>68 (52%)</b>	<b>30 (23%)</b>
I found the overall workload is/was too heavy.	<b>40 (31%)</b>	<b>41 (31%)</b>	<b>49 (38%)</b>

Table 12: Trainee experience of learning

Trainees indicated that they experienced some frustration over a range of organisational matters, including contractual issues, duplicate form filling, confusing information, delays in receiving information and differences between the pay and conditions of participating trainees.

### **3.5 Collaboration is an important aspect of the success of the scheme.**

#### **3.5.1 Collaborative relationships**

61% of staff agreed that collaborative relationships have been an important aspect of the success of the scheme. Only half of the staff respondents (50%) and a slightly greater proportion of the trainees, however, felt that the scheme had provided a good model of partnership between the Scottish Executive, social work employers and the universities. (Table 13)

<b>Staff response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
The collaborative relationships have been an important aspect of the success of the scheme	<b>43</b> (61%)	<b>7</b> (10%)	<b>20</b> (29%)
The scheme has provided a good model of partnership between the Scottish Executive, social work employers and the universities	<b>35</b> (50%)	<b>22</b> (31%)	<b>13</b> (19%)
<b>Trainees' response to statement</b>			
The scheme has provided an effective model of partnership between the Scottish Executive, employers and the universities	<b>77</b> (59%)	<b>18</b> (14%)	<b>35</b> (27%)

*Table 13: Collaborative relationships*

*Working collaboratively with colleagues in neighbouring councils and universities has been very positive.* (Employer)

*Collaboration improved between university and local authority training sections.* (University staff)

Comments indicate that while collaborative relationships in general were seen to be important, in practice there was a range of experience of their actual effectiveness.

The National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland (2005)<sup>12</sup> has emphasised the importance of partnership: “Employers and training providers need to work in partnership to ensure learning supply meets the needs of employers”.

<sup>12</sup> Scottish Executive (2005) National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland: A Plan for Action 2005 – 2010 (page 2)

Several university staff commented on the fact that Fast Track funding has helped to demonstrate to university senior management that the Scottish Executive and employers are clearly supporting social work programmes.

Scotland is often seen as being the right size for the kind of close collaborative working necessary for the success of this and similar initiatives. Many employers and universities in Scotland already had good working relationships with each other and it was possible to build on these to establish an innovative national Fast Track scheme.

### 3.5.2 Level of consultation

A specific concern expressed by a number of university staff and employers was in relation to the level of initial consultation. Overall figures in Table 14 show that only 17% of staff (19% of employers and 11% of academic staff) felt that there was sufficient consultation prior to the implementation of the Fast Track scheme.

Staff response to statements	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
There was sufficient consultation prior to the implementation of the Fast Track scheme.	12 (17%)	37 (53%)	21 (30%)

Table 14: Level of consultation

*I consider that the Scottish Executive 'drove' this agenda without appropriate consideration and as a 'separate' rather than an inclusive agenda. (Employer)*

Staff also reported significant difficulties and a lack of preparatory information in the early stages. It seems that these uncertainties may have contributed to delays in the development of ownership of the scheme and may subsequently have had an impact on participation and the take up of places within the scheme.

### 3.6 Summary of key messages from the evaluation findings

- **The scheme is seen by trainees and staff as an effective route to a career in social work for graduates who wish to change careers. The present scheme is not, however, seen as a fast track to senior positions within the profession.**
- **The scheme is meeting its original objective to increase the number of qualified staff in the workforce and in bringing 'new blood' into the profession.**
- **Much greater flexibility, including recognition of prior informal learning, is sought by all.**
- **Some staff expressed concern about the quality of learning opportunities for trainees. This concern was not borne out by the views of trainees themselves.**
- **Collaboration is an important aspect of the success of the scheme.**

## 4 Additional Messages from Staff

**4.1 The scheme should have been part of a properly funded, co-ordinated response to the wider workforce development strategy which will accommodate diversity and local needs.**

### 4.1.1 Workforce planning

A plea for a flexible, co-ordinated approach to workforce planning was strongly voiced by employers and university staff. This suggests that the recent strategies and initiatives may not yet be sufficiently embedded to have had an impact on the experience of the workforce. There was recognition, however, that development requires sustained, collaborative commitment from all parties. To be more effective, a better understanding is required of the range of needs and barriers to implementation, including resource constraints.

*What is required is a coherent approach to social work workforce planning allied to recruitment and retention that is properly resourced to recruit, train and support suitable candidates from all walks of life, backgrounds and ages into the profession on a long term basis. (Employer)*

Feedback from the survey indicates that comprehensive policy responses to workforce development needs have not yet been effectively integrated. Concerns about the supply of practice learning opportunities, pressures on existing staff to support Fast Track trainees and new workers in already short staffed teams and registration needs were all identified as elements to be addressed.

The speed with which the scheme was introduced and implemented was felt to be especially problematic. University staff commented specifically on the extent of the demands being made on staff who were simultaneously developing and delivering the new degree programmes. Some concern was also expressed about the underlying principle in introducing a 'fast' route to qualification.

*At precisely the time when social work education and employers had finally achieved recognition that professionally qualified social workers required full degree programmes, the ethos of Fast Track which allowed for quicker qualification, was undermining. (University staff)*

*I believe that in order to support the scheme and other initiatives, we need to support and promote a learning culture where learning opportunities are an integral part of meeting the standards of the Codes of Practice. (Employer)*

#### 4.1.2 Parallel employer schemes

Increasing numbers of agencies are developing local schemes which exist alongside the national Fast Track scheme. Such a combination of schemes is generally regarded as being complementary in attracting ‘new blood’ candidates and developing career pathways for staff in social services. 61% of respondents agreed that the best outcomes have been where the Fast Track scheme is embedded within wider recruitment and retention strategies (Table 15).

Staff response to statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
The best outcomes have been where the Fast Track scheme is embedded within wider recruitment and retention strategies within agencies	43 (61%)	0 (0%)	27 (39%)

Table 15: Parallel employer schemes

A number of respondents indicated that the Fast Track scheme is seen as another initiative in a series of trainee schemes which have been designed to meet particular needs in particular contexts. Examples include the graduate social work trainee scheme run by various Local Authority employers during the 1970s, the Strathclyde Regional Council Black Workers secondment scheme in the late 1980s/early 1990s and the Tayforth trainee scheme for trainees with disabilities, also in the early 1990s. Some employers and University staff mentioned positive experience of earlier schemes and a need to distil and build on best practice, within a co-ordinated strategy.

#### 4.1.3 Diversification within the workforce

A number of employers commented on the potential of the scheme to support their own policies to encourage greater diversification within the sector.

In June 2005 a part-time Development Worker was appointed in conjunction with Positive Action for Training in Housing (PATH) to offer additional support to Fast Track trainees from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

This arrangement had only been in place for a few months before the survey was carried out and it emerged that many of the respondents were not aware of this aspect of the scheme. Nevertheless, this development was generally welcomed and 26% of staff felt that it had been a helpful outcome of the scheme (Table 16). 13% of staff disagreed with this and comments indicated that a ‘piecemeal’ approach was not felt to be appropriate.

Staff response to statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
The development of support for trainees from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds has been a helpful outcome of the scheme	18 (26%)	9 (13%)	43 (61%)

Table 16: Diversification



*I would agree that there should be an initiative to recruit from Black and Minority ethnic backgrounds.* (Employer)

*We would have preferred greater numbers of applicants from Black and Ethnic minority backgrounds.* (Employer)

As Table 17 shows, 64% of respondents felt that more should be done to improve representation of other minority groups, including people with disabilities.

<b>Staff response to statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
More should be done to improve representation of other minority groups, including people with disabilities	<b>45 (64%)</b>	<b>2 (3%)</b>	<b>23 (33%)</b>

*Table 17: Minority group representation*

#### **4.1.4 Service Users and Carers**

A clear outcome of the survey was that service users and their carers are not yet seen to be integrated in the scheme. Only 21% of staff respondents felt that service users and carers were sufficiently involved (Table 18).

<b>Staff response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
Service users and carers are sufficiently involved in the scheme	<b>15 (21%)</b>	<b>18 (26%)</b>	<b>37 (53%)</b>

*Table 18 Service user and carer representation*

The recruitment process was identified as a particular area where this should have been more effective.

*I don't feel from my experience that service users and carers have been sufficiently involved (in recruitment), due to timescales and general 'scale'/size of operation.* (Employer)

On-going development of this aspect within the wider context of social work education was acknowledged by a number of respondents.

#### **4.1.5 Rural communities**

Respondents confirmed that a national scheme needs to take account of the fact that different employers may have considerably different needs and priorities, particularly perhaps employers in rural communities. 16% of staff respondents agreed that the scheme has benefited urban communities at the expense of rural areas. This response was strongest from staff who worked in smaller authorities (Table 19).

<b>Staff response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
The scheme has benefited urban communities at the expense of rural areas	<b>11</b> (15.7%)	<b>10</b> (14.3%)	<b>49</b> (70%)

*Table 19: Rural communities*

The location of universities, a preference for distance learning, the need for trainees to have independent transport and the costs of travelling were mentioned as issues by a number of respondents.

*The scheme does appear to have benefited the larger authorities who may have invested more people to administer the scheme and support the trainees through the training process.* (Employer)

*The fact that the scheme was administered centrally does not suit the needs of the islands.* (Employer)

*The scheme is not publicised in a way that is meaningful for rural areas.* (Employer)

#### **4.1.6 The voluntary sector**

From the outset, it was intended that any extension to the scheme should include the voluntary sector. The Voluntary Sector Workforce Report 2004<sup>13</sup> indicates that 92% of providers in this sector report difficulties with recruitment. In 2005 therefore a pilot scheme was introduced which involves three Fast Track trainees and two voluntary sector organisations. The voluntary sector are participating in the scheme again in 2006. 77% of staff respondents confirmed the importance of involving the voluntary sector in this way (Table 20).

<b>Staff response to statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
It is important to involve the voluntary sector in the scheme	<b>54</b> (77%)	<b>5</b> (7%)	<b>11</b> (16%)

*Table 20: Voluntary sector inclusion*

Comment was made that issues of recruitment and retention are sometimes not perceived to be as great a problem in the voluntary sector as they are in the statutory sector.

#### **4.1.7 The residential care sector**

46% of staff respondents confirmed that there should be a greater focus on the training needs of the residential care sector in the scheme (Table 21).

<sup>13</sup> The Community Care and Voluntary Sector Workforce Report (2004) (page 3)

The Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC) are participants in the Fast Track scheme and offer the opportunity to undertake a residential child care pathway.

<b>Staff response to statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
There should be a greater focus on the training needs of the residential care sector in the scheme	<b>32 (46%)</b>	<b>14 (20%)</b>	<b>24 (34%)</b>

*Table 21: Residential care sector*

However there was some ambivalence about the overall relevance of the scheme for the residential child care sector, perhaps summed up in the following comment.

*The specific needs of the residential sector need their own focus.*  
(Employer)

#### **4.1.8 Postgraduate and undergraduate workforce strategies**

There was strong support for the development of a national undergraduate workforce strategy (70%) and a national postgraduate workforce strategy (67%) as part of a comprehensive strategy on workforce development (Table 22).

<b>Staff response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
There should be a national undergraduate workforce strategy	<b>49 (70%)</b>	<b>2 (3%)</b>	<b>19 (27%)</b>
There should be a national postgraduate workforce strategy	<b>47 (67%)</b>	<b>3 (4%)</b>	<b>20 (29%)</b>

*Table 22: National workforce strategies*

Continuous professional development, particularly at post qualifying level, was identified as an important element of such a strategy.

#### **4.1.9 Continuation of the Fast Track scheme**

Overall, half of the staff respondents felt that the Fast Track scheme should continue beyond 2006, but that the scope of an extended scheme should be broadened (Table 23).

<b>Staff response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
The Fast Track scheme should continue beyond 2006	<b>35 (50%)</b>	<b>21 (30%)</b>	<b>14 (20%)</b>
If continued, the scope of the scheme should be broadened	<b>35 (50%)</b>	<b>3 (4%)</b>	<b>32 (46%)</b>

*Table 23: Continuation of Fast Track scheme*

There was a difference between employers and university staff in support for a continued scheme. 54% of employers, but only 39% of university staff thought the scheme should continue.

Wider comments indicated that the Fast Track scheme in its present form is thought to have served its purpose.

*Local employers are saying that they are at saturation point for newly qualified workers. The time for Fast Track is finished.*  
(University staff)

*I think it would be useful to continue the scheme, but perhaps just a few places per authority and to use the remainder for other initiatives in recruitment and retention.* (Employer)

Four fifths of university staff, and two fifths of employers felt that the key objectives of graduate recruitment could be achieved by amendment to the existing postgraduate bursary scheme. A number of employers also expressed the opinion that it would have been more effective to have provided additional funding to agencies to develop ‘grow your own’ schemes.

Comment was also made that extensions to the bursary scheme would not support the retention aspect of the scheme as it would not ensure that qualified social workers would remain, even for a specified period, in Scotland.

**4.2 The scheme should accommodate both existing staff and ‘new blood’ trainees.**

**4.2.1 The existing social care workforce**

Respondents have indicated that the Fast Track scheme was introduced at a time when there were insufficient opportunities for existing staff to gain a professional qualification. The ‘new blood’ only element of the pilot scheme was felt to have contributed to some tensions within agencies (Table 24).

<b>Staff response to statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
More emphasis should have been placed on the existing social care workforce within the scheme	<b>43 (61%)</b>	<b>6 (9%)</b>	<b>21 (30%)</b>

*Table 24: Existing social care workforce*

*(The Fast Track scheme) made less qualified staff feel devalued.*  
(Employer)

Following the recommendations of the Fast Track Evaluation Report 2003<sup>14</sup> the original eligibility requirements of the scheme were expanded to include existing social services staff who were degree holders and wished to apply to the scheme. This addressed some of the tensions and perceived issues of inequity. However, it is not clear whether all staff were aware of this development.

#### 4.2.2 Eligibility for the remainder of the scheme

One impact of the scheme has been a call for a more concerted approach to qualifying opportunities for the existing social care workforce. In relation to the existing Fast Track scheme, over 70% of staff thought that the scheme should continue to be available for existing staff who meet eligibility criteria and nearly 60% of staff felt that the scheme should be extended to include experienced members of staff who do not necessarily have a degree (Table 25).

Staff response to statements	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
The scheme should continue to be available for existing staff who meet eligibility criteria	51 (73%)	11 (16%)	8 (11%)
The scheme should be extended to include experienced existing members of staff who do not necessarily hold a degree	41 (59%)	20 (29%)	9 (13%)
The scheme should only be available for 'new blood' applicants	5 (7%)	53 (76%)	12 (17%)

Table 25: Eligibility for remainder of scheme

In respect of the recruitment process for the Fast Track scheme, employers have highlighted the importance of indications that trainees will be committed to work in their agency in the longer term. Having some experience of social work and/or a good understanding of the social work task was also identified as being important.

There were many positive comments from employers about the quality of the trainees and workers who have been appointed. The importance of facilitating opportunities for new recruits to enter the profession or change careers was also regarded as fundamental to improving staffing shortages.

*It was/is important that the target of the scheme is as wide as possible and that appointment should also be by merit. It should not be a substitute for internal routes to qualification (Employer)*

<sup>14</sup> Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (2004) Social Work Fast Track Graduate Scheme 2003 Evaluation Report

**4.3 Administration of the scheme has improved greatly, but remains time-consuming.**

**4.3.1 Administrative process**

The implementation of a national scheme within a tight timescale was challenging, not only in relation to the selection of trainees but also in terms of employment and university education. Initial administrative difficulties are outlined in the 2003 Fast Track Evaluation Report<sup>15</sup>. As expectations have become clearer and organisation of the scheme has become embedded, reported satisfaction levels have increased (Table 26). Many, however, do not think that the balance between centralised and local administration is yet right.

Staff response to statements	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
I am satisfied with the current administrative process managed by the Institute	47 (67%)	4 (6%)	19 (27%)
I am satisfied with the improved balance between central (Institute) and local administrative processes	29 (41%)	7 (10%)	34 (49%)

Table 26: Current administrative arrangements

67% of staff reported overall satisfaction with the current administration process managed by the Institute. A number of respondents indicated that they were not directly involved with the selection and administration processes.

*We think the scheme has been administered very well given the scale and complexity of the task.* (Employer)

**4.3.2 Streamlining administration**

Employers and university staff have demonstrated commitment to the scheme and have devoted considerable financial and staff resources to facilitating its success. Nonetheless, staff are consistent in their desire to see further streamlining of administrative processes. A number of employers have said that they would prefer more local control over the process along with the current level of centralised support.

*Due to the ‘national’ nature of the scheme and the volume of applicants, it is very time consuming and labour intensive to administer and manage the commitment of selection processes (to only recruit 3 – 6 trainees) – however, I can’t think of a way round this!* (Employer)

<sup>15</sup> Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (2004) Social Work Graduate Fast Track Scheme 2003 Evaluation Report

### 4.3.3 On-line administration system

Once the initial gremlins of the on-line administration system were rectified, this innovation received considerable approval and is reported as being particularly user-friendly.

*The on-line recruitment and selection processes were excellent and easy to use. (University staff)*

Almost half of the respondents thought that the development of the on-line administration system for the scheme should be extended to form a national database for prospective social work trainees (Table 27).

Staff response to statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
The development of the on-line administration system for the scheme should be extended to form a national database for prospective social work trainees	34 (47%)	8 (11%)	28 (40%)

Table 27: On-line administration system

## 4.4 Practical opportunities for collaboration and improved relationships between universities and employers are valued and should be further developed.

### 4.4.1 Practical opportunities for collaboration

Positive comments were made by both university staff and employers on the practical opportunities to work collaboratively within the scheme. A number of employers mentioned this as the most positive aspect of the scheme. The development of the joint selection process and allocation of places was particularly highlighted in this respect.

However, effective collaboration was not consistent across the scheme and some employers and some university staff reported a lower than expected level of contact.

Despite the time pressures and stress under which different participants were working, there is evidence throughout the evaluation of considerable good practice in collaborative working between universities and employers and a desire to continue build on this. However a third of respondents (34%) did not agree that the communication was effective and identified considerable scope for development (Table 28).

Staff response to statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
The communication between agencies and universities in the combined allocation of places is effective	31 (44%)	24 (34%)	15 (21%)

Table 28: Communication

There was a mixed response to the effectiveness of the collaboration between employers, the universities, the Scottish Executive and the Institute. Over a third of staff (36%) did not think this was successful in respect of the administrative aspects of the scheme although 30% expressed more positive views (Table 29).

Staff response to statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
The collaboration between employers, the universities, the Scottish Executive and the Institute has been very effective (with regard to administrative aspects)	21 (30%)	25 (36%)	24 (34%)

Table 29: Collaboration

**4.5 The scheme is seen by a number of employers as being demanding on resources. In some cases, this has led to a reduction in the number of places taken up.**

Information was sought in the survey about possible reasons behind a lower than expected uptake of places by employers. Table 30 below shows the number of places available each year within the scheme and the number of trainees appointed in each year. There were more than sufficient places available at universities for each cohort.

Year	Number of Trainees appointed	Number of places available
2003	97	120
2004	122	150
2005	104	150

Table 30: Uptake of places

It emerged that the level of places taken up by employers within the scheme was considered to be reasonable in the light of the financial and other resource constraints within which employers were operating.

Table 31 shows that all staff were equally divided in their views about whether or not the scheme is cost effective for employers in increasing the number of social workers.

Staff Response to statements	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
The scheme is cost effective for social work employers in increasing the number of social workers	22 (31%)	22 (31%)	26 (37%)
Other training needs within the workforce deserve greater priority in the use of available resources	26 (37%)	14 (20%)	30 (43%)
The Fast Track scheme is an effective use of public funds	26 (37%)	24 (34%)	20 (29%)
<b>Trainee response to statement</b>			
The Fast Track scheme is an effective use of public funds	114 (88%)	1 (1%)	15 (12%)

Table 31: Cost effectiveness



A few employers commented that they would have preferred the Scottish Executive to have paid for the salary costs and associated employment costs, travel and books for trainees. Comment was also made that the majority of the funding was seen to go to the universities.

Staff identified a range of resource issues which were relevant to the lower take-up of places. A number of hidden costs were identified, including support costs and staff time in administration. There was a perception in a small number of agencies that they had reached a saturation point in the number of Fast Track trainees that could be supported in teams where there were already staff shortages. Concern about pressure on practice learning opportunities and other demands on a range of staff were also identified.

*There is a view in my authority that there is a limit (and we have reached it); that a child care team can only cope with one trainee at a time, due to the demands on the senior social worker and the team and there is not enough time and resources to devote to a trainee beyond this. (Employer)*

<b>Staff Response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
Employers have reached saturation point in the number of Fast Track trainees they can support	<b>28</b> (40%)	<b>11</b> (16%)	<b>31</b> (44%)
Concern about pressure on practice learning opportunities is a factor in the lack of uptake of places within employing agencies	<b>33</b> (47%)	<b>13</b> (19%)	<b>24</b> (34%)
The practice learning demands associated with Fast Track programmes have led to an increased role for practice teachers	<b>46</b> (66%)	<b>13</b> (18%)	<b>11</b> (16%)
The scheme is an additional burden on experienced academic and agency staff	<b>30</b> (43%)	<b>18</b> (26%)	<b>22</b> (31%)

*Table 32: Limitations on uptake of places*

Funding in the Scottish social services is complex with many competing demands on finite resources. The Action Plan for the Social Services Workforce 2002<sup>16</sup> estimated that investment in learning and training at that time was running at well under 2% of operating costs. The recently published National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce<sup>17</sup> suggests that “commissioning agencies and service providers should work towards identifying 3% of service costs to training and development”.

A number of employers think that the scheme is too expensive for them because there are other pressures on the funding referred to as ‘staff vacancy money’.

<sup>16</sup> Scottish Executive(2002) The Action Plan for the Social Services Workforce (page 9)

<sup>17</sup> Scottish Executive (2005) National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland: A Plan for Action 2005 -2010 (page 15)

#### **4.5. University funding**

A number of the university staff commented on the financial benefits of the scheme. However they identified strategic resource issues which still need to be resolved. For example, universities have indicated that long term funding for postgraduate social work routes is from bursary income. Several universities have expressed concern about not jeopardising this through short term, Fast Track and similar initiatives.

#### **4.6 Summary of the additional messages from staff**

- **The scheme should have been part of a properly funded, co-ordinated response to the wider workforce development strategy which will accommodate diversity and local needs.**
- **The scheme should accommodate both existing staff and ‘new blood’ trainees.**
- **Administration of the scheme has improved greatly, but remains time-consuming.**
- **Practical opportunities for collaboration and improved relationships between universities and employers are valued and should be further developed.**
- **The scheme is seen by a number of employers as being demanding on resources. In some cases, this has led to a reduction in the number of places taken up.**

## 5 Additional Messages from Trainees

### 5.1 Receiving a salary was a key factor in participation. Nearly all of the trainees said that they could not otherwise have afforded to come into social work.

Almost all of the trainee respondents mentioned the salary as a key factor in choosing the Fast Track scheme. The security provided by guaranteed employment was also a crucial factor, mentioned by over half of the respondents (Table 33).

Trainees' response to statements	Agree	Disagree	Neither/No information
Receiving a salary as a trainee social worker was a crucial factor in my decision to change career	96 (74%)	5 (4%)	29 (22%)
Receiving a salary as a trainee social worker was a crucial factor in my decision to choose a career in social work.	80 (62%)	27 (21%)	23 (18%)

Table 33: Importance of salary

There were many comments similar to the following:

*I chose it because I have financial commitments and would not have been able to survive on the normal bursary route. I also liked the fact that I was guaranteed a job when I completed the course.* (Trainee)

*I couldn't have studied social work if I hadn't had a basic salary while training. As a single parent it would have been financially impossible.* (Trainee)

Although the salary element was widely welcomed, a number of trainees mentioned that it was "still a financial struggle". The widely varying salary levels between employing agencies was also identified as an issue. However, these issues were raised in a context where trainees were conscious of alternative bursary levels.

### 5.2 Participants were positive about their experiences, including practice learning opportunities, and were satisfied with the quality of the Fast Track scheme.

#### 5.2.1 Quality within the scheme

83% of trainees were satisfied with the overall quality of the scheme. Some of the small number who said that they were not satisfied indicated that the reasons for this included organisational issues and a perceived lack of support. 76% of trainees believed that the scheme was preparing them well for a career in social work (Table 34).

<b>Trainees' response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
Overall, I am satisfied with quality of the Fast Track scheme	<b>108 (83%)</b>	<b>7 (5%)</b>	<b>15 (12%)</b>
The scheme is preparing/has prepared me well for a career in social work	<b>99 (76%)</b>	<b>7 (5%)</b>	<b>24 (19%)</b>

Table 34: Quality within scheme

There were several comments similar to the following:

*The scheme is excellent and has met my needs and expectations at almost every level. Really enjoyed and got a lot from placement and although it's been and will be very hard work – it is definitely worth it!* (Trainee)

*I don't think anything fully prepares you for a job in social work, although the Fast Track scheme gave me an excellent grounding on the theories, role and task of social workers.* (Trainee)

### 5.2.2 Practice Learning

Trainees also made positive statements about their practice learning experiences, most of the 37 of those who did not respond to this question indicated that they had not yet commenced their direct practice learning (Table 35).

<b>Trainees' response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
My practice learning experiences were very positive.	<b>74 (57%)</b>	<b>19 (15%)</b>	<b>37 (29%)</b>
Practice learning experiences were more demanding than I had expected	<b>39 (30%)</b>	<b>32 (25%)</b>	<b>59 (45%)</b>

Table 35: Practice learning

*The course was demanding, but I thoroughly enjoyed doing it. I was fortunate to have good placements with good practice supervisors.* (Trainee)

Slightly over half of the trainees who responded on this issue indicated that they found their practice learning experiences were more demanding than they had expected. It seems that a small number of Fast Track trainees struggled while on placement. The reasons behind this were not within the scope of this evaluation, but it may be useful in a future evaluation to investigate whether the nature of the Fast Track scheme exacerbated any difficulties experienced by trainees.

### 5.2.3 Resources for trainees

Some trainees were concerned about the level of resources available to support them in their studies. Just under half (49%) of the trainees agreed that they were sufficient to support their studies (Table 36). All university programmes were mentioned in this regard.

<b>Trainees' response to statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
Learning resources are/were sufficient to support my studies	<b>64</b> (49%)	<b>40</b> (31%)	<b>26</b> (20%)

Table 36: Resources for trainees

Books and computers were identified as inadequate resources. Some trainees commented on limited access to libraries and learning centres.

*There were insufficient resources available, such as books in the library. Deadlines did not account for Fast Track trainees who were on placement at different times from mainstream courses.*  
(Trainee)

*Resources, e.g. computer access, were poor – too many trainees, too few computers.* (Trainee)

### 5.2.4 Relevance of degree subject and social care experience

Although many trainees have considerable life experience and often skills brought from another career, their views were sought on whether previous experience in the social care field and a relevant degree were important in achieving success (Table 37). Neither of these requirements were pre-requisites for entry to the scheme itself, but they are usually expected as entry requirements for most postgraduate social work programmes in Scotland.

<b>Trainees' response to statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
It is more difficult to succeed on the programme if you do not have previous social care experience	<b>74</b> (58%)	<b>30</b> (23%)	<b>25</b> (19%)
It is more difficult to succeed on the programme if you do not have a related degree	<b>45</b> (35%)	<b>38</b> (29%)	<b>47</b> (36%)

Table 37: Relevance of degree subject and social care experience

Trainees were fairly evenly divided in their views on the advantage of having studied a relevant subject in their degree. There was however a greater distinction on the benefits of previous social care experience with over half of the trainees (58%) indicating that this was helpful in achieving the qualification.

**5.3 When trainees received support from university staff and their employers this made a huge difference, especially if combined with good pre-study work experience. Where this was missing, trainees felt unsupported.**

**5.3.1 Employment and communication**

Table 38 shows that 87% of trainees confirmed the importance to them of the employment aspect of the scheme.

<b>Trainees' response to statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
Trainees on the Fast Track scheme have benefited from the opportunity to be employed within a social work agency.	<b>113 (87%)</b>	<b>3 (2%)</b>	<b>14 (11%)</b>
Participating in the Fast Track scheme has been helpful in developing a positive relationship with my employer	<b>62 (48%)</b>	<b>15 (12%)</b>	<b>53 (41%)</b>

*Table 38: Employment relationship*

When trainees received good support from their employers, this was greatly appreciated and was considered helpful in developing mutual relationships. Nearly all of the employing agencies in the scheme were mentioned positively as providing support.

*My employer was supportive and informative offering me access to literature related to my course as well as advice and guidance appropriate to my needs. (Trainee)*

*During my time on Fast Track, I received a lot of support from my tutor and employer which I feel is important as a Fast Track student. (Trainee)*

However, this was not the experience of all trainees; 12% reported that being on the scheme had not been helpful in developing a positive relationship with their employer.

*My Council doesn't feel as though it knows what to do with its trainees. (Trainee)*

*I was pretty much paid a salary and left to get on with it. This suited me, as studying required a flexibility that was difficult to reconcile with normal employment terms. (Trainee)*

### 5.3.2 Pre-study work experience

It was known that the pre-study work experience was sometimes difficult to implement as intended. This was largely due to timescales, particularly in the early stages of the scheme. Some trainees reported that they did not have pre-study work experience with their employer. These difficulties were reduced for later cohorts and over half of the trainees (54%) felt that their pre-study experience was related to their learning needs (Table 39).

<b>Trainees' response to statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
The pre-study practical experience was related to my learning needs as a trainee.	<b>70 (54%)</b>	<b>22 (17%)</b>	<b>38 (29%)</b>

Table 39: Pre-study experience

The initial work experience with their agency was especially valued by trainees as part of the package. It was clear from the responses that when this period was structured with an identified employer contact and communication with other trainees, this gave them a very good start with benefits that continued throughout their programme.

*I found the initial induction with the local authority to be very important in preparing for the course and in making me feel supported and excited to become a social work student/trainee.*  
(Trainee)

*There seems to be a variation in experience of pre-course work with Fast Track trainees which I feel should have some sort of structure for all those taken on.* (Trainee)

### 5.3.3 Levels of communication between employers and universities

Table 40 illustrates that there were mixed perceptions of levels of communication and co-ordination between employers and universities. 31% of trainee respondents were satisfied with levels of communication, while 38% expressed dissatisfaction.

<b>Trainees' response to statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
There is/was good communication between my university and my employer.	<b>40 (31%)</b>	<b>49 (38%)</b>	<b>41 (32%)</b>

Table 40: Communication between employers and universities

Comments indicated that this was an area where there was some confusion and that this should be addressed in continued or future initiatives.

*Communication between employer and university was not great – both sides stating lack of clarity, but did communicate. The problem appeared to be asking the other – what do we do now?*  
(Trainee)

### 5.3.4 Integration with other trainees and staff

Although 22% of trainees reported difficulties, integration with non-Fast Track trainees on programmes was not regarded, in general, by trainees as difficult (Table 41).

*I do not consider Fast Track qualified social workers to be better than others. This is a cause of animosity.* (Trainee)

<b>Trainees' response to statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
Integration with other, non-Fast Track, trainees on the programme was difficult	<b>29 (22%)</b>	<b>73 (56%)</b>	<b>28 (22%)</b>

*Table 41: Integration*

A small number of trainees said they were conscious that a few members of academic staff were not comfortable with the nature of the scheme.

*The university staff clearly pointed out that we were salaried and different, which felt uncomfortable, but other trainees were great.* (Trainee)

*Trainees on other programmes were resentful of the fact that Fast Track trainees could achieve a professional qualification in less time whilst earning a full salary.* (University staff)

Both social work managers and a few trainees reported occasional tensions with staff in agencies, but on the whole, positive relationships were highlighted.



**5.4 Communication delays in the selection process, particularly in the early stages of the scheme, were experienced as stressful.**

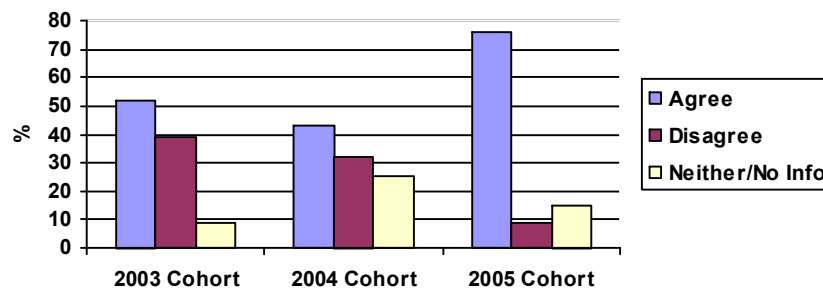
**5.4.1 Selection and appointment process**

The selection and appointment process was particularly vulnerable to communication difficulties and delays, especially in the early stages of the scheme (Table 42). An effective communication strategy therefore is a key element of any new national initiative. Rushed timescales, as experienced in the early stages of the implementation of the Fast Track scheme undoubtedly contributed to a number of delays in communication which were experienced by the trainees as being stressful.

<b>Trainees' response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
The selection process was well organised and ran smoothly	<b>74 (57%)</b>	<b>33 (25%)</b>	<b>23 (18%)</b>

*Table 42: Selection process*

Figure 9 below illustrates the responses from progressive cohorts on their experience of the organisation of the scheme and shows greater satisfaction over time.



*Figure 9: Trainees' response to the statement 'The selection process was well organised and ran smoothly'*

**5.4.2. Central administration point**

Having a central information and administration point for recruitment to the scheme was valued by 72% of the respondents (Table 43).

<b>Trainees response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
It was helpful to have a central information and administration point for recruitment to the scheme	<b>94 (72%)</b>	<b>8 (6%)</b>	<b>28 (22%)</b>

*Table 43: Central administration*

### 5.4.3 Support and advice in the selection process

The increasing satisfaction of the three cohorts with the support and advice which they received in relation to the organisation of the selection process is illustrated in Figure 10.

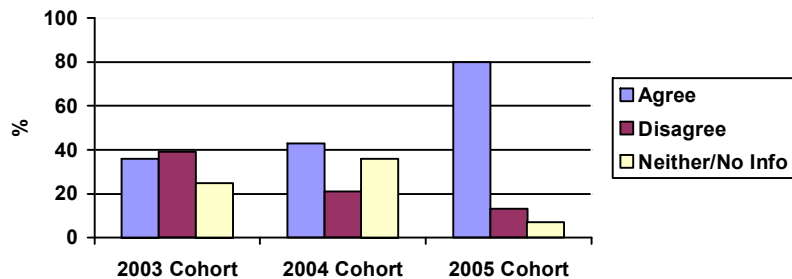


Figure 10: Trainees' response to statement 'Over the experience as a whole, I received sufficient support and advice (Selection process and organisation)'

As the scheme developed each of the cohorts had slightly different organisational issues to contend with. These are illustrated by the comments below.

#### From the 2003 cohort:

*The interview was well organised however, it was a very lengthy process overall. (Trainee)*

*For me, the selection process became very complicated at local authority stage e.g. having to decide whether to accept an offer from one authority or wait and see whether my preferred authority would offer me a place. (Trainee)*

#### From the 2004 cohort:

*There were real problems with the online application process. (Trainee)*

*Well organised selection process but delay in receiving starting dates which caused problems in handing in notice for previous job. (Trainee)*

#### From the 2005 cohort:

*I thought it was very well organised and professional (Trainee)*

*The need to complete multiple disclosure forms and duplication of information for concerned parties. (Trainee)*

#### 5.4.4 Disclosure Scotland

Under the new requirements for registration, trainees, including Fast Track trainees, were required to be registered on the student part of the Scottish Social Services Register from 2004. Trainees and staff groups both reported that the issue of duplicate requests for Disclosure Scotland reports needs to be addressed. In addition there have been some concerns about the length of time it can sometimes take to complete this process with the consequent delay in commencement of the scheme. These issues are currently being addressed by registration staff within the Scottish Social Services Council.

#### 5.4.5 National Recruitment Centre

The national recruitment centre was outlined in the earlier section 'Background to the Fast Track scheme'. Of the 2003 cohort, 17 (55%) of the 31 respondents attended the recruitment centre in Edinburgh. Fourteen (45%) did not attend and were appointed through a panel process. Both groups of respondents were successful in completing their traineeships. The national recruitment centre was only in operation for first group of trainees.

Trainees were very positive in their comments about the national recruitment centre. In particular they were impressed by the perceived impartiality of the process.

*In my opinion, I think that the (original) selection process for the first phase of 'Fast Track' trainees was by far the most successful in attracting 'new blood' to the profession. Later phases that allowed employers to vet candidates simply allowed them to put existing workers up for qualification. Fortunately for me, as the (original) selection process was impartial, I was able to compete fairly for a place that would otherwise have remained 'in house'. (Trainee)*

*I think selection centre in Edinburgh was a great idea – opportunity to compete on an equal playing field, not otherwise available. (Trainee)*

*I was impressed with that aspect of the scheme. I felt the selection process in Edinburgh was thorough and informative. (Trainee)*

**5.5 Nearly all trainees confirmed that involvement with the scheme had increased their motivation to pursue a social work career, that it was a good investment and that they intended to remain in a social work career for at least five years.**

### 5.5.1 Trainees' motivation

Responses to the following group of statements indicate the high levels of motivation on the part of most trainees. Nearly all trainees felt that the scheme was a good investment of their time and energy and that their experience had raised their awareness of the need for continuing professional development as they progress through their careers (Table 44). A small, but significant number of respondents (14%) felt that the expectations that they had prior to the scheme were not being met by their experience. It was difficult to draw conclusions about the potential reasons for this as there was little further comment on this issue. This area might usefully be explored further in a future evaluation.

<b>Trainees response to statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither/No information</b>
Involvement with the Fast Track scheme has increased my motivation to pursue a career in social work	<b>106 (82%)</b>	<b>7 (5%)</b>	<b>17 (13%)</b>
The expectations I had prior to the scheme are being met/were met by my experience	<b>89 (69%)</b>	<b>18 (14%)</b>	<b>23 (18%)</b>
I feel the scheme is a good investment	<b>121 (93%)</b>	<b>1 (1%)</b>	<b>8 (6%)</b>
I would recommend the scheme to a friend	<b>112 (86%)</b>	<b>4 (3%)</b>	<b>14 (11%)</b>
The Fast Track scheme has raised my awareness of the need for continuing professional development/lifelong learning	<b>113 (87%)</b>	<b>2 (2%)</b>	<b>15 (12%)</b>
I expect that I will continue to be in a social work career in five years time	<b>117 (90%)</b>	<b>2 (2%)</b>	<b>11 (9%)</b>

Table 44: Trainee motivation

High motivation levels help to sustain trainees in a very demanding context.

*It provided a fantastic opportunity to get into social work, but it was not for the faint-hearted.* (Trainee)

Most trainees said that they would be happy to recommend the scheme to a friend. In terms of the retention element of the scheme, trainees confirmed that their involvement had increased their motivation to pursue a career in social work and that they expected to continue to be in a social work career in five years time.

## 5.6 Summary of the additional messages from the trainees

- **Receiving a salary was a key factor in participation. Nearly all of the trainees said that they could not otherwise have afforded to come into social work.**
- **Participants were positive about their experiences, including practice learning opportunities, and were satisfied with the quality of the Fast Track scheme.**
- **When trainees received support from university staff and their employers this made a huge difference, especially if combined with good pre-study work experience. Where this was missing, trainees felt unsupported.**
- **Communication delays in the selection process, particularly in the early stages of the scheme, were experienced as stressful.**
- **Nearly all trainees confirmed that involvement with the scheme had increased their motivation to pursue a social work career, that it was a good investment and that they intended to remain in a social work career for at least five years.**

## 6 Support for Trainees

It was known from previous anecdotal feedback from trainees that they valued the support they received and regarded adequate support frameworks as being crucial to their success in completing very demanding traineeships. Through the survey, further information was sought on the sources of support which were important to trainees. The responses are outlined in Table 45.

<b>Responses from trainees in thinking about the relevant importance of support from various sources, ranked on a 5 point scale - 5 (very important) to 1 (unimportant).</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>No Info</b>
Support from employer	73	25	17	9	5	1
Support from tutor/academic staff	90	27	8	1	3	1
Support from practice teacher and placement agency staff	91	23	7	0	2	7
Support from other trainees	49	50	26	3	1	1
Support from friends and family	60	44	19	6	0	1
Support from Fast Track scheme staff	22	31	37	17	16	7

*Table 45: Importance of support*

As perhaps could have been expected, support from all sources was highly prized and especially from academic and practice learning staff. Support from employers, peers, family and friends were also significant. Anxiety about the level of support available in their first post was mentioned by a number of respondents.

In general, trainees confirmed evidence of huge commitment from employer, practice teacher and academic staff at all levels.

*Excellent support and motivation from everybody involved in the scheme – Fast Track staff, university staff, employer, employees, and all trainees. (Trainee)*

There was however, considerable variation in their experience.

*I felt that my employer was not aware of us and occasionally felt that some tutors were less supportive because we were Fast Track trainees. (Trainee)*

*Support from most sources was positive but limited, e.g. university staff were under extra pressure because of us. (Trainee)*

It is clear from trainees' comments, that having designated support staff for Fast Track trainees in agencies and universities was felt to work most effectively.

*Initially we had a designated person within our agency who liaised with university, which was excellent. (Trainee)*

*Having a tutor that was solely for the Fast Track trainees really helped! (Trainee)*

In implementing an initiative such as the Fast Track scheme, a key determinant of success is the consistent quality and availability of support mechanisms for the participants. The findings from the survey indicate that support from all sources is very important and that clear information and designated staff, with whom participants can discuss issues at an early stage, are essential.

## 7 Conclusion and Recommendations

This evaluation has shown that respondents believe that the Fast Track scheme has been largely successful in providing ‘change of career’ opportunities and in bringing some excellent new people to the profession. However, there is a continuing need to address recruitment and retention issues to ensure that service users receive the level of service which they are entitled to expect.

*It has made a difference and the investment in the sector is much appreciated. Perhaps, a new version that is much more inclusive of experienced social care workers with some accreditation of prior informal learning would be a better focus for the future.*  
(Employer)

The following recommendations emerged from the findings of this evaluation:

- 1 There is a need to ensure that we have a comprehensive, properly resourced, strategy to attract and retain graduates and other change of career recruits, respond to local priorities and promote diversity within the future social services workforce.**
- 2 The training and development needs both of existing staff and ‘new blood’ recruits need to be addressed across all sectors.**
- 3 Collaborative workforce development should build on the opportunities which have been established within the scheme, particularly between the universities, employers and the Scottish Executive.**
- 4 Consistent support for trainees’, effective communication and streamlined organisation remain important issues to be addressed throughout the remainder of the scheme and in any future developments.**
- 5 A funding strategy to support greater flexibility in the delivery and uptake of programmes (encouraging recognition of prior informal learning in the context of the SCQF) is required. Financial support for trainees/trainees needs to be adequate and equitable. To achieve this, a better understanding of the real costs to universities, employers and trainees is needed.**

Finally, in relation to the overall impact of Fast Track and similar initiatives, the findings of this evaluation support the observation noted by Viney et al (1996)<sup>18</sup> that “the trick is to recruit a small but steady stream of graduates, to avoid over-enthusiastic recruiting at the peaks and turning the tap off in the dips”.

Lynne Hooton  
Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education  
March 2006

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<sup>18</sup> Viney, C, Adamson, S and Doherty, N (1996) *Paradoxes of fast-track career management* in Personnel Review 26/3 (pp179)

## Profile of the Respondents to the Evaluation

### A Staff Respondents

Responses were received from 70 staff who had been involved with the Fast Track Scheme. 52 were employers and 18 were from universities. Staff roles in agencies are outlined below. Fifty of the employer respondents were from Local Authorities, two were from voluntary agencies.

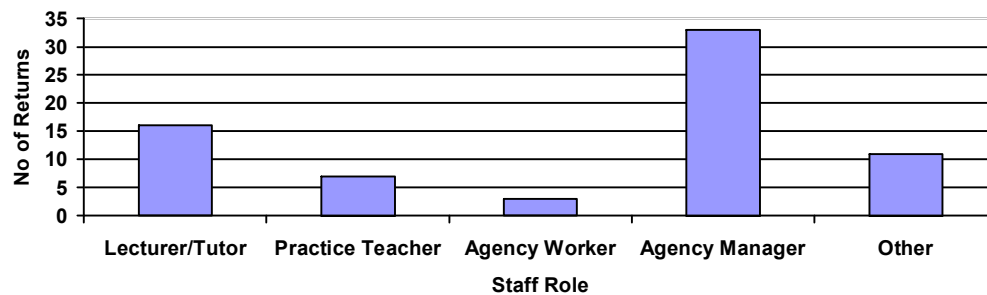


Figure A1: Staff Role of Respondents

'Other' staff roles included those who described their role as Director of Social Service (1) Head of University Social Work Dept (1), Administrative staff (1), HR staff (2), Training Staff (4) and Practice Learning staff (2)

	2003	2004	2005
<b>Employers</b>	32 (62%)	39 (75%)	34 (65%)
<b>University Staff</b>	17 (94%)	18 (100%)	18 (100%)

Table A1: Staff respondents' involvement within the scheme



## B Trainee Respondents

130 of the 323 trainees who have participated in the scheme responded to the questionnaire – a response rate of approximately 40%.

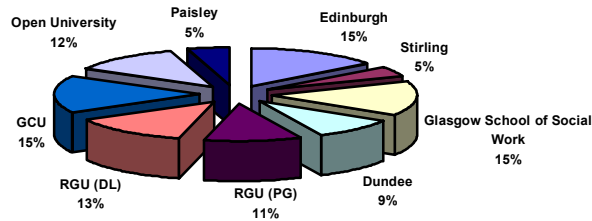


Figure A2: University course attended by trainee respondents

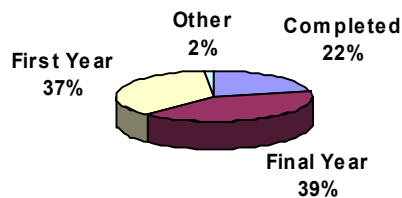


Figure A3: Stage in programme

Figure A3 illustrates the respondent's stage in the programme at the time of completing the questionnaire. The 'Other' category included two trainees, one who indicated that they were awaiting final confirmation of results and another who was awaiting the decision of a Programme Assessment Board.

### Respondents from each trainee cohort:

There was a reasonable spread of trainees who responded to the evaluation from across the three cohorts (Table A2)

Intake 1 (2003)		Intake 2 (2004)		Intake 3 (2005)	
No of Returns	% of Intake	No of Returns	% of Intake	No of Returns	% of Intake
31	32%	53	43%	46	44%

Table A2: Trainee respondents by year of intake

## Trainee Respondent Statistics

Council/Organisation	Trainee Respondents In the Evaluation	2003 No of Trainees Appointed	2004 No of Trainees Appointed	2005 No of Trainees Appointed	Total for first three cohorts
Aberdeen City	6	5	2	3	10
Aberdeenshire	6	2	7	7	16
Angus	3	1	2	4	7
Argyll and Bute	3	3	2	1	6
City of Edinburgh	11	10	13	20	43
Clackmannanshire	2	2	1	0	3
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	0	0	1	0	1
Dumfries & Galloway	8	4	2	5	11
Dundee City	1	4	4	0	8
East Ayrshire	2	2	0	2	4
East Dunbartonshire	4	2	6	4	12
East Lothian	3	2	2	3	7
East Renfrewshire	2	2	2	2	6
Falkirk	1	2	0	0	2
Fife	6	2	5	11	18
Glasgow City	32	26	29	8	63
Highland	9	5	6	8	19
Inverclyde	0	0	3	2	5
Midlothian	2	2	4	4	10
Moray	1	0	1	1	2
North Ayrshire	2	4	4	0	8
North Lanarkshire	1	5	0	0	5
Orkney Islands	1	1	1	1	3
Perth and Kinross	3	0	1	3	4
Renfrewshire	1	4	4	2	10
Scottish Borders	2	1	4	0	5
Shetland Islands	0	0	0	0	0
South Ayrshire	1	1	1	2	4
South Lanarkshire	4	3	6	6	15
Stirling	3	1	3	2	6
West Dunbartonshire	4	0	4	0	4
West Lothian	2	1	2	0	3
Voluntary Sector	2	n/a	n/a	3	3
No Information	1				
<b>Totals</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>323</b>

Table A3: Employers of trainees who participated in Fast Track scheme

Respondents were employed by the Voluntary Sector and 29 of the 32 Local Authorities. (Evaluation forms were not received from trainees in Inverclyde or the Western Isles. There are no trainees in the Shetland Islands.)

<b>Universities</b>	<b>Trainee Respondents in the Evaluation</b>	<b>2003 No of Trainees</b>	<b>2004 No of Trainees</b>	<b>2005 No of Trainees</b>	<b>Total for first three cohorts</b>
Dundee University	12	7	12	15	34
Edinburgh University	19	16	21	27	64
Glasgow Caledonian University	21	11	24	9	43
Glasgow School of Social Work	19	12	24	12	48
Paisley University	6	10	11	8	30
Open University (Distance Learning)	16	29	4	n/a	34
Robert Gordon University (Distance Learning)	17	1	16	21	37
Robert Gordon University	14	9	4	10	21
Stirling University	6	2	6	2	12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>323</b>

*Table A4: Universities attended by trainees who participated in Fast Track scheme*

## Summary Statistics on the Fast Track Scheme

It should be noted that statistics in the tables below are drawn from information available to the scheme in November 2005.

### Age profile

Age Range	Eligible applicants			Interviewed candidates			Successful entrants		
	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
20 - 29	n/a	793	904	n/a	104	165	37	54	53
30 - 39	n/a	421	393	n/a	85	91	29	37	27
40 - 49	n/a	308	311	n/a	78	74	22	26	21
50 and over	n/a	113	94	n/a	23	16	3	5	3
Not completed	n/a	18	1	n/a	1	0	6	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1077</b>	<b>1653</b>	<b>1703</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>104</b>

Table B1: Age range of applicants and entrants to the Fast Track scheme

### Gender profile

Gender Range	Eligible applicants			Interviewed candidates			Successful entrants		
	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
Male	n/a	495	454	n/a	83	75	18	33	19
Female	n/a	1143	1106	n/a	204	242	79	85	74
Not completed	n/a	15	143	n/a	4	29	0	4	11
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1077</b>	<b>1653</b>	<b>1703</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>104</b>

Table B2: Gender of applicants and entrants to the Fast Track scheme

### Ethnic background profile

Ethnic Background	Eligible applicants			Interviewed candidates			Successful entrants		
	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
White	n/a	1579	1480	n/a	247	254	94	102	81
Mixed	n/a	9	14	n/a	6	5	0	2	1
Asian	n/a	9	56	n/a	7	17	2	0	3
Black	n/a	5	55	n/a	4	12	1	0	4
Other	n/a	4	8	n/a	5	2	0	0	0
Not completed	n/a	47	90	n/a	22	56	0	18	15
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1077</b>	<b>1653</b>	<b>1703</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>104</b>

Table B3: Ethnic background of applicants and entrants to the Fast Track scheme

## Duration of programmes

University Programmes	Approximate duration of programme in months		
	2003	2004	2005
Dundee University	16	21	21
Edinburgh University	17	19	19
Glasgow Caledonian University	16 including portfolio	21	21
Glasgow School of Social Work	15	15	20
Paisley University	16 including portfolio	16 including portfolio	16 including portfolio
Open University (Distance Learning)	23 (minimum)	23 (minimum)	n/a
Robert Gordon University (Distance Learning)	18 (plus portfolio)	18 (plus portfolio)	18 (plus portfolio)
Robert Gordon University	18	18	18
Stirling University	21	21	22

Table B4: Duration of university programmes

## Progression (November 2005)

Stage of progression	2003 cohort No of Trainees	2004 cohort No of Trainees	2005 cohort No of Trainees	Total
Successfully completed programme	85	0	0	85
Some work to be completed	5	0	0	5
Progressing on schedule	0	115	102	217
Temporarily withdrawn	0	2	0	2
Withdrawn	5	3	2	10
Transferred to another programme	1	0	0	1
Studies terminated	1	2	0	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>323</b>

Table B5: Progression of trainees

### Scottish Executive information on social worker staffing

#### Summary Figures on Social Worker Staffing Statistics: October 2005<sup>19</sup>

	Filled posts ( WTE)				Vacancies ( WTE)					Vacancies as % of posts		
	October 05	July 05	Change since July 05	% change since July 05	October 05	July 05	Change since July 05	% change since July 05	% vacancies >6 months	October 05	July 05	% change since July 05
All social workers	4915	4772	143	3%	536	536	0	0%	35%	9.8%	10.1%	-0.3%
Children's services	2249	2144	105	5%	271	277	-6	-2%	41%	10.8%	11.4%	-0.7%
Adult services	1582	1560	21	1%	174	158	16	10%	29%	9.9%	9.2%	0.7%
Offenders services	781	749	31	4%	62	69	-6	-9%	22%	7.4%	8.4%	-1.0%
Generic service	304	318	-14	-4%	29	33	-4	-12%	40%	8.8%	9.4%	-0.7%
All senior social workers	1026	954	72	8%	119	95	24	25%	48%	10.4%	9.0%	1.3%
All main grade social workers	3889	3818	71	2%	417	441	-24	-5%	32%	9.7%	10.4%	-0.7%

Notes:

WTE stands for the whole time equivalent for each post and is expressed as a Figure between 0 and 1. Where Local Authorities were unable to provide vacancies breakdowns, vacancies were assumed to be <6 months. Due to reclassification and staff groups not previously included, Glasgow has reported a large increase of staff and vacancies. South Lanarkshire were unable to determine the number of vacancies in Adult Services so the July 2005 Figure was used. Aberdeenshire, East Dunbartonshire and South Ayrshire were unable to provide October 2005 Figures so their July 2005 Figures were used instead.

<sup>19</sup> From Scottish Executive Statistics Publication Notice: Health and Care Series: SOCIAL WORKER POSTS AND VACANCIES: OCTOBER 2005. Source: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/11/0295947/59479>

## Summary of Staff Responses Fast Track Scheme – Staff Evaluation Form

70 Staff Responses

**1. Which of the following best describes your role in the fast track scheme?**

Tutor/Lecturer	16	Agency worker	3
Practice Teacher	7	Agency manager	33
Link Supervisor	0		
Other (please describe)	11		

**2. Which of the following best describes the agency in which you are primarily based?**

Voluntary Organisation	2	Health agency	0
Local Authority Social Work Service	50	Local Authority Education Service	0
Local Authority Housing Service	0	University	18
Other (please describe)	0		

**3. In which year(s) have you been involved with the fast track scheme?**

	Yes	No	No Info
2003 intake of trainees	49	19	2
2004 intake of trainees	57	11	2
2005 intake of trainees	52	16	2

<b>4. This question relates to the overall scheme:</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Information
<b>S4.1</b> The fast track scheme is meeting its original objective to increase the number of qualified staff in the workforce	13	42	11	3	0	1
<b>S4.2</b> The quality of learning opportunities for fast track trainees has been comparable to that for trainees on other qualifying programmes	7	36	7	14	5	1
<b>S4.3</b> There was sufficient consultation prior to the implementation of the fast track scheme	1	11	20	24	13	1
<b>S4.4</b> The scheme has been successful in bringing 'new blood' into the social work profession	4	38	17	7	3	1
<b>S4.5</b> The scheme has provided a good model of partnership between the Scottish Executive, social work employers and the universities	4	31	12	19	3	1
<b>S4.6</b> The fast track scheme has helped to promote a positive image of the social work profession	3	35	18	13	1	0
<b>S4.7</b> The fast track scheme is an effective use of public funds	3	23	19	18	6	1
<b>S4.8</b> The fast track scheme is providing a pool of high potential staff who will be able to reach senior positions	1	11	32	19	6	1
<b>S4.9</b> The fast track scheme has been effective in helping to address the recruitment difficulties in social work	6	35	16	11	1	1
<b>S4.10</b> The fast track scheme is an effective way of providing an alternative route to a career in social work for graduates who wish to change career	5	47	9	6	2	1
<b>S4.11</b> The scheme has made a useful contribution to the development of flexible entry to the social work profession	7	38	6	13	6	0
<b>S4.12</b> Fast track participants are essentially of the same quality as trainees on other routes	13	23	16	14	2	2

<b>5. This question relates to workforce issues:</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Information
<b>S5.1</b> The scheme is cost effective for social work employers in increasing the number of social workers	0	22	23	16	6	3
<b>S5.2</b> The scheme is an additional burden on experienced academic and agency staff	9	21	19	15	3	3
<b>S5.3</b> The communication between agencies and universities in the combined allocation of places is effective	5	26	12	20	4	3
<b>S5.4</b> Recruitment issues are still problematic within the profession	20	30	10	6	1	3



<b>S5.6</b> More emphasis should have been placed on the existing social care workforce within the scheme	<b>19</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>S5.7</b> The scheme has aggravated existing difficulties with the retention of experienced social workers	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>6. This question relates to administrative aspects of the scheme:</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Information
<b>S6.1</b> I am satisfied with the current administrative process managed by the Institute	<b>6</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>S6.2</b> The development of the on-line administration system for the scheme should be extended to form a national database for prospective social work trainees	<b>6</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>S6.3</b> The collaboration between employers, the universities, the Scottish Executive and the Institute has been very effective	<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>S6.4</b> I am satisfied with the improved balance between central (Institute) and local administrative processes	<b>3</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>S6.5</b> The scheme has benefited urban communities at the expense of rural areas	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

<b>7. This question relates to particular groups within the workforce:</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Information
<b>S7.1</b> The development of support for trainees from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds has been a helpful outcome of the scheme	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>S7.2</b> More should be done to improve representation of other minority groups, including people with disabilities	<b>12</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>S7.3</b> It is important to involve the voluntary sector in the scheme	<b>19</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>S7.4</b> There should be a greater focus on the training needs of the residential care sector in the scheme	<b>7</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>S7.6</b> Service users and carers are sufficiently involved in the scheme	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>8. This question relates to the demand for places within the scheme:</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Information
<b>S8.1</b> Concern about pressure on practice learning opportunities is a factor in the lack of uptake of places within employing agencies	10	23	21	10	3	3
<b>S8.2</b> The practice learning demands associated with fast track programmes have led to an increased role for practice teachers	17	29	9	7	5	2
<b>S8.3</b> Employers have reached saturation point in the number of fast track trainees they can support	3	25	28	11	0	3
<b>S8.4</b> Other training needs within the workforce deserve greater priority in the use of available resources	11	15	29	14	0	1
<b>S8.5</b> The fast track scheme has increased awareness of opportunities for training progression for the whole of the social services workforce	2	29	19	16	3	1
<b>S8.6</b> Distance learning programmes are more cost effective than full time routes	12	22	21	7	5	3

<b>9. This question relates to issues during the remainder of the existing scheme (last intake 2006):</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Information
<b>S9.1</b> The scheme should continue to be available for existing staff who meet eligibility criteria	13	38	5	9	2	3
<b>S9.2</b> The scheme should be extended to include experienced existing members of staff who do not necessarily hold a degree	16	25	6	14	6	3
<b>S9.3</b> The scheme should only be available for 'new blood' applicants	0	5	9	29	24	3
<b>S9.4</b> The best outcomes have been where the fast track scheme is embedded within wider recruitment and retention strategies within agencies	17	26	25	0	0	2

<b>10. This question relates to principles underpinning the fast track scheme:</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Information
<b>S10.1</b> The collaborative relationships have been an important aspect of the success of the scheme	6	37	18	7	0	2
<b>S10.2</b> Further mixed and flexible routes to enter the social work profession should be developed	25	38	6	0	0	1
<b>S10.3</b> There should have been greater scope for the recognition of prior learning (RPL or APEL)	18	34	11	1	4	2
<b>S10.4</b> There should be a national postgraduate	16	31	16	1	2	4

workforce strategy						
<b>S10.5</b> There should be a national undergraduate workforce strategy	<b>16</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

<b>11. This question relates to possible developments and future initiatives:</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Information
<b>S11.1</b> The fast track scheme should continue beyond 2006	7	28	10	12	9	4
<b>S11.2</b> If continued, the scope of the scheme should be broadened (You may wish to comment on your response in the box at the end of this question)	10	25	15	1	2	17
<b>S11.3</b> Key objectives of graduate recruitments could be achieved by amendment to the existing postgraduate bursary scheme	13	21	24	6	0	6
<b>S11.4</b> The Scottish Executive should extend the existing bursary scheme rather than investing further in fast track schemes	16	19	20	11	0	4
<b>S11.5</b> The distinction between the Scottish Executive fast track trainees and trainees recruited through the bursary scheme has been unhelpful	17	20	22	4	0	7

**Respondents who provided their contact details: Yes 39 (55.7%) No 31 (44.3%)**

**Lynne Hooton  
March 2006**

## Summary of Trainee Responses Fast Track Scheme – Student/Trainee Evaluation Form

130 Responses

**About your involvement with the Scottish Fast Track Scheme:**

**1. Which University do/did you attend?**

Glasgow Caledonian University	21	Glasgow School of Social Work	19
Open University	16	Robert Gordon University <i>(BA by Distance Learning)</i>	17
Robert Gordon University <i>(PG, Campus Route)</i>	14	University of Dundee	12
University of Edinburgh	19	University of Paisley	6
University of Stirling	6		

**2. Who is your employer within the scheme?**

Aberdeen City	6	East Renfrewshire	2	Renfrewshire	1
Aberdeenshire	6	Falkirk	1	Scottish Borders	2
Angus	3	Fife	7	South Ayrshire	1
Argyll and Bute	3	Glasgow City	32	South Lanarkshire	4
Clackmannanshire	2	Highland	9	Stirling	3
City of Edinburgh	11	Midlothian	2	West Dunbartonshire	4
Dumfries & Galloway	8	Moray	1	West Lothian	2
Dundee City	2	North Ayrshire	2	Voluntary Sector	2
East Ayrshire	1	North Lanarkshire	1	No Information	1
East Dunbartonshire	4	Orkney	1		
East Lothian	3	Perth and Kinross	3		

**3. In which year did you commence your traineeship?**

2003	31
2004	53
2005	46

**4. Did you attend the Selection Centre at Haymarket, Edinburgh in June 2003?**

Yes 18      No 112      No Info 0

**5. Did you complete a portfolio of work as part of advanced entry to a University programme?**

Yes 23      No 105      No Info 2

**6. In addition to applying for the Fast Track Scheme, did you also apply to a postgraduate programme through the normal bursary route?**

Yes 21      No 108      No Info 1

**7. Please indicate your stage in the programme:**

I have completed the qualifying programme	<b>29</b>
I am in the final year as a trainee	<b>51</b>
I am in the first year as a trainee	<b>47</b>

Other: 

<b>2</b>
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**8. This question relates to the overall scheme:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Information
<b>T8.1</b> The fast track scheme is meeting its original objective to increase the number of qualified staff in the workforce.	<b>43</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>T8.2</b> My impression is that the quality of the learning opportunities for fast track trainees has been comparable to that for trainees on other qualifying programmes.	<b>28</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>T8.3</b> The fast track scheme is an effective way of providing an alternative route to a career in social work for graduates who wish to change career.	<b>56</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>T8.4</b> The scheme has been successful in bringing 'new blood' into the social work profession.	<b>35</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>T8.5</b> The scheme has provided an effective model of partnership between the Scottish Executive, employers and the universities	<b>28</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>T8.6</b> The fast track scheme has helped to promote a positive image of the social work profession	<b>16</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>T8.7</b> The fast track scheme is an effective use of public funds	<b>46</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

**9. This question relates to the selection process and organisation of the scheme:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Information
<b>T9.1</b> It was helpful to have a central information and administration point for recruitment to the scheme	<b>31</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>T9.2</b> The selection process was well organised and ran smoothly	<b>18</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>T9.3</b> Over the experience as a whole, I received sufficient support and advice	<b>15</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>T9.4</b> The needs of trainees in making career changes were clearly addressed within the scheme	<b>5</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>T9.5</b> It is more difficult to succeed on the programme if you do not have a related degree	<b>16</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>T9.6</b> It is more difficult to succeed on the programme if you do not have previous social care experience	<b>16</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>10. This question relates to the academic and practice learning aspects of your programme</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Information
<b>T10.1</b> The experience of the scheme is/was intellectually stimulating	43	70	5	9	0	3
<b>T10.2</b> I found the overall workload is/was too heavy.	6	33	46	40	1	4
<b>T10.3</b> Integration with other, non-fast track, trainees on the programme was difficult	6	24	22	52	21	5
<b>T10.4</b> Learning resources are/were sufficient to support my studies	12	52	21	34	6	5
<b>T10.5</b> Practice learning experiences were more demanding than I had expected	8	31	37	29	3	22
<b>T10.6</b> My practice learning experiences were very positive.	26	48	14	15	4	23
<b>T10.7</b> I feel confident that the knowledge and skills and values I am acquiring/have acquired will enable me to practice as a new social worker	31	71	13	4	3	8
<b>T10.8</b> I prefer/would have preferred to study on a distance learning route rather than a full time route	5	12	17	47	36	13

<b>11. This question relates to your employment as a Fast Track Trainee Social Worker</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Information
<b>T11.1</b> Trainees on the fast track scheme have benefited from the opportunity to be employed within a social work agency	48	65	8	3	0	6
<b>T11.2</b> The pre-study practical experience was related to my learning needs as a trainee.	25	45	24	15	7	14
<b>T11.3</b> Receiving a salary as a trainee social worker was a crucial factor in my decision to change career (if applicable).	65	31	11	3	2	18
<b>T11.4</b> Receiving a salary as a trainee social worker was a crucial factor in my decision to choose a career in social work.	53	27	19	23	4	4
<b>T11.5</b> Participating in the fast track scheme has been helpful in developing a positive relationship with my employer	17	45	47	9	6	6
<b>T11.6</b> Involvement with the fast track scheme has increased my motivation to pursue a career in social work	55	51	16	6	1	1

12. This question relates to your overall experience of the Fast Track Scheme	Information					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No
T12.1 The expectations I had prior to the scheme are being met/were met by my experience	27	62	20	17	1	3
T12.2 I feel the scheme is a good investment	51	70	7	1	0	1
T12.3 I would recommend the scheme to a friend	55	57	12	4	0	2
T12.4 The scheme is preparing/has prepared me well for a career in social work	36	63	21	6	1	3
T12.5 There is/was good communication between my university and my employer	6	34	35	33	16	6
T12.6 Overall, I am satisfied with quality of the fast track scheme	22	86	12	5	2	3

13. This question relates to your plans for your career in social work	Information					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No
T13.1 As a result of undertaking a 'faster' route, I will need more support than other newly qualified workers in my first post.	7	25	25	55	13	5
T13.2 On completion of the fast track scheme, I expect to reach senior positions more quickly than social workers who have undertaken different routes.	0	12	46	54	15	3
T13.3 The fast track scheme has raised my awareness of the need for continuing professional development/lifelong learning.	37	76	15	1	1	0
T13.4 I expect that I will continue to be in a social work career in five years time.	56	61	9	1	1	2

#### 14. Support needs

In thinking about the following supports for your studies on the programme please indicate their importance to your success by circling the appropriate point on the scale of 5 (*very important*) to 1 (*unimportant*).

	5	4	3	2	1	No Info
T14.1 Support from employer	73	25	17	9	5	1
T14.2 Support from tutor/academic staff	90	27	8	1	3	1
T14.3 Support from practice teacher and placement agency staff	91	23	7	0	2	7
T14.4 Support from other trainees	49	50	26	3	1	1
T14.5 Support from friends and family	60	44	19	6	0	1
T14.6 Support from fast track scheme staff	22	31	37	17	16	7

Respondents who provided their contact details (optional): Yes **86** (66.2%) No **44** (33.8%)

Lynne Hooton  
March 2006