



# MA/PGDip/PGCert Child Welfare and Protection

*Author: Rachel Balen*

University of Huddersfield

## Catalyst: External factors

The development of this postgraduate pathway within the School of Human and Health Sciences was prompted by a number of diverse factors both externally and internally. At the point of original validation of the MA in Child Protection in 1992, the issue of child abuse and debates about the best way(s) to protect children had been of major public, political and professional concern for twenty years and lay at the heart of the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

Increasingly it had been recognised that an emphasis on inter-agency approaches was crucial to improving policy and practice in this area and that practitioners and managers needed to be kept fully informed of developments in knowledge and research in the area. Education and training at the postqualifying level was seen as crucial to this. However, there was not, in this region, a more advanced and in-depth course of study available for those who may need and benefit from it.

In November 1989 CCETSW commissioned the University of Leeds to carry out a feasibility study to identify areas of need and likely demand for postqualifying training in child protection within the region (P McLoughlin and Mike Stein (1990), *Child Protection Training Feasibility Study*, University of Leeds).

It was established that while the volume of training produced by training departments had certainly increased in the previous two years there was a significant demand for advanced training particularly:

- “(a) to enable staff to acquire increased knowledge and skills in long-term planning for children;
- (b) to enable staff to develop their skills in direct work with children, post investigation and assessment work; and
- (c) to enable staff to develop their supervisory and managerial skills.”

(McLoughlin and Stein (1990), p5)

An interesting discovery made by a training needs analysis, carried out by one local authority, showed that numerous field workers were undertaking self- MA/PGDip/PGCert Child Welfare and Protection financed part-time post qualifying courses in their spare time. This was seen as a “decisive indicator of the demand from the field”. The findings of this feasibility study provided an important backcloth to the planning and validation of the then MA in Child Protection.

## Catalyst: Internal factors

During this period a majority of members of staff in the then Division of Social Work and Applied Social Studies had developed a range of expertise in the area of child abuse and child protection. Some had become recognised as leading figures regionally, nationally and internationally, their work now being

co-ordinated through the School's Centre for Applied Childhood Studies. This expertise covers a number of dimensions - theory, policy and practice - and is reflected in a range of activities - research, consultancy, external examining, validating, teaching, publications and practice itself. In the process firm links had also been established with numerous social work agencies who both inform and contribute to the work of the Division which is now part of the School's Department of Health, Social Work and Community Studies. Some of this was formalised via the consortium arrangements with local statutory social work agencies for the delivery of the Diploma in Social Work and the East Pennine Post-Qualifying and Training Consortium which the Division was instrumental in establishing and in which it continues to play a central part.

Similarly there was close collaboration between the Division of Health at the University and numerous health authorities in the region. Not only was this evidenced in the provision of Diplomas in Health Visiting and District Nursing, but also the establishment and development of a number of other programmes at the post-registration level.

Staff in both Divisions worked closely together and had increasingly developed shared learning opportunities for students on the respective social work and health Diploma courses. Staff in the Division of Social Work and Applied Social Studies had had, for example, a long tradition of teaching and assessing on the Diploma in Health Visiting.

### **Planning, Preparation and Support**

In August 1990 ENB and CCETSW published outline courses entitled Introductory Course on Principles of Child Protection (Course Number 970) and Child Protection Post-Qualifying Long Course (Course Number 430) which identified the need for such courses together with outline criteria for approval, entry requirements, course aims, content and assessment. It was felt that the 430 course provided an excellent basis and framework for planning a postgraduate pathway in Child Protection. Application was made to CCETSW Regional Office in early February 1991 for development money to progress the planning work. In the event CCETSW Regional office made a single grant of £2,000.

“to facilitate the necessary collaborative work and meetings with the regional and local Health Authorities, Social Service Agencies, and academic institutions.”

This initial collaborative planning work was successfully completed and a report sent to CCETSW in December 1991.

At the outset, a core planning group was established with representatives from Kirklees Personal Services, Wakefield Community and Social Services, Bradford Health Authority and the then Divisions of Health and Social Work and Applied Social Studies in the School of Human and Health Sciences. All those involved in the core planning group were very committed to the initiative.

The group met on five separate occasions between March and November 1991 for planning and co-ordination purposes. In between meetings, individuals took on a variety of tasks, much of which involved liaison with regional professional and training groups, representatives of other agencies and personnel within their own organisations. The planning group received an enthusiastic response from practitioners and managers. In addition the Yorkshire Regional Health Authority supported the initiative. In July of 1991 an application was made for approval in principle for the course to the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting. Approval in principle was given by the ENB.

It was also felt important to carry out a detailed study of the other known eight courses around the country and compare these to the ENB/CCETSW guidelines (Course No 430). This was completed by early September 1991. It was noted that not only was there no post-qualifying child protection course available in the region but that there was no course available nationally which attempted to follow the ENB/CCETSW course guidelines.

During the Autumn of 1991 a planning group was also established in the School of Human and Health Sciences to develop a School Modular Postgraduate Scheme. It was agreed that the post-qualifying child protection course should be developed as a Postgraduate Diploma in Child Protection and that this should constitute the point of registration for the ENB430 but that students could then extend this to Masters via the completion of a dissertation. In effect the post-qualifying course in child protection would be developed as a formal pathway in the School of Human and Health Sciences Modular Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme with a view to a September 1993 start.

By this time the core planning group felt that it was important to widen the planning process and inform agencies not yet involved of the progress made thus far. With this in mind a Workshop was held with twenty people in attendance and others sending apologies saying they wished to be kept informed of the development. Nine Health authorities and four social service departments were represented together with colleagues from CCETSW and the University. The workshop proved very productive. Not only did participants identify the need for such a course they supported the work done to that point and expressed a willingness to participate in the future detailed planning.

Following the November 1991 meeting, the core planning group was widened, with a further five meetings taking place, about six weeks apart. The purpose of the meetings was to receive and review work done, set future tasks and make decisions. Much of the detailed work was undertaken by smaller subgroups which reported back to the core planning group. Throughout it was a priority to ensure that the multi-disciplinary partnership philosophy of the course should be reflected in the planning process itself. It proved a very productive way of working.

### Summary of the MA Child Protection Pathway at the point of Validation in 1992

- The pathway represented a development which took advantage of a number of opportunities which had come together to support post-qualifying education and training for social work and health professionals in the context of the growth of the University's modular postgraduate schemes. It provided for the extension of an area where there were acknowledged strengths within the School of Human and Health Sciences both in terms of the area of Child Protection and the close collaborative relationships which have been developed with regional social work and health colleagues.
- The pathway was explicitly designed to fit in with the School of Human and Health Sciences Postgraduate Credit and Accumulation Transfer Scheme. It was also designed to take advantage of changes in the post-qualifying education and training of social work and health professionals. While a CCETSW approved Post-Qualifying Social Work Consortium was not going to be formally in place in the region to offer the programme post-qualifying status at the time of the original validation, representatives of the regional pilot consortium were fully involved in the development. Thus it was planned to pursue CCETSW post-qualifying recognition as soon as this was possible. Registration for ENB430 could be claimed at the PgDip point if the student had completed the Practice Module.
- The proposal took full advantage of developments in work-based learning, learning agreements and the use of mentors. An explicit attempt was made via the use of learning outcomes to harmonise and integrate more traditional college-based academic learning with the need to enhance skill development in the workplace.

### Development Issues

- In 1996 application was made to the East Pennine Post Qualifying Consortium for the MA in Child Protection to be validated for CCETSW's Advanced Award in Social Work. This application was approved, enabling students with a professional social work qualification who successfully complete the MA via the Practice Module Route, to claim the Advanced Award. The programme was successful in its application for re-validation by the Consortium in 2000.
- In 2000 the programme was also re-validated by the English Nursing Board, enabling students with a recognised health professional qualification who complete the PgDip via the Practice Module Route, to claim the ENB 430.
- In 2000 the title of the pathway was changed to MA in Child Welfare and Protection. This amendment was introduced in order to reflect changes in the nature of professional practice which were already being embraced by the teaching content of the modules within the pathway.
- During the first few years of the pathway's existence, the majority of entrants were drawn from social work. As local authority spending controls have tightened, this proportion has gradually reduced. Over the last 2 years it has become clear that the number of social work applicants has been severely affected by the proposed developments in the area of post-qualifying child care training, i.e. the requirement for social workers to undertake the PQ in Child Care Award. Thus since 1997 the percentage of students from a social work background commencing on the pathway has fallen from 50%, to 33% (1998), to 28% 1999 to 18% in 2000.

- Considerable discussions took place between the respective Programme and Pathway teaching teams, Registry and the office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs) in order to ensure that students on the new professional pathway in the School, the PQ in Child Care are also registered for an academic award within the MA in Child Welfare and Protection.
- The MA pathway was revised to enable the nesting of the professional PQ Child Care Award as a route within the MA Child Welfare and Protection. The successful completion of CCETSW's PQ Child Care Award leads to the award of the PgDip in Child Welfare and Protection.
- It is expected that at a number of students who complete the PQ Child Care Award/PgDip Child Welfare and Protection will then want to continue their studies to obtain the academic award of MA Child Welfare and Protection. The social work professional market for the pathway will be maintained.

## Course in Action

The Pathway has been consistently well evaluated by students, External Examiners and external bodies (CCETSW, ENB). Although the Pathway is advertised in professional journals, much recruitment is based on word of mouth. Students comment that they benefit personally and professionally from learning alongside professionals from other disciplines: the current first year intake includes social workers, GALs, health visitors, nurses, school nurses and a child and adolescent mental health worker. Student groups have in the past included Training / Staff development workers, primary educators and policewomen.

## Difficulties

In common with other similar Pathways, the main difficulties for students are caused by the tension between the demands of family life and pressurised / unpredictable work situations, and the requirements of university academic systems and timetables.

## Other Developments

Building on the experience of this Pathway, the School has, in recent years, developed 2 further interdisciplinary Masters programmes in the fields of Health & Social Care and Risk Management & Public Protection.

The Pathway Leader, Rachel Balen, can be contacted via telephone or e-mail.

Rachel Balen  
 School of Human and Health Sciences  
 University of Huddersfield  
 Queensgate  
 Huddersfield  
 W Yorks HD1 3DH

*Tel:* 01484 472411

[r.balen@hud.ac.uk](mailto:r.balen@hud.ac.uk)



**Social Policy  
and Social Work  
(SWAP)**

The Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work (SWAP)  
University of Southampton School of Social Sciences  
Southampton  
SO17 1BJ



Printed on recycled paper