

## **Challenges facing international social workers: English managers' perceptions**

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### **Abstract**

International labour mobility is occurring in social work and isolated studies are beginning to research this topic. This article reports on one aspect of research into the experiences of 'international social workers' (ISWs) in London (UK), namely, the perceptions of the managers who supervise them, with regards to their preparedness, induction and support needs.

### **Key words**

**International social workers, labour mobility, induction, migration, managers' perceptions**

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## **Challenges facing international social workers: English managers' perceptions**

### **Introduction**

International labour mobility is a feature of 21st century life in many spheres of work including social work, an occupation often thought of as practising only in local communities and national contexts; and in which a good understanding of relevant language and culture are essential. However, the factors which influence labour mobility more generally – not least lack of employment opportunities in one country relative to shortage of staff (and/or better working conditions) elsewhere - also affect the provision of social welfare services and therefore movement of social workers across national borders. We identify these staff as 'international social workers' (ISWs), recognising the particular experience they bring, both of the migratory and settlement processes and of living and working in different cultures.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, (at least) there has been an acknowledged shortage of social work and social care workers in British agencies, not least in the London area, a city of 8.5m inhabitants living in 607 square miles. London is a multi-cultural city which includes numerous 'communities' within its administrative boundaries, with pockets of huge wealth, but also many people experiencing relative poverty (often with attendant ill health and inadequate housing) and interpersonal problems for which social work intervention is sought or directed. It is often in the more deprived areas of the city that staff turnover is high, and one organisational response to

recruitment difficulties has been to attract social workers from abroad. However, staff shortages and international recruitment are not peculiar to London, or indeed to the UK, and there has been recent interest in researching the experiences of international social workers in Canada, New Zealand, as well as the UK.

This qualitative research project was undertaken in selected London boroughs and bordering county councils, the aim of which was to investigate the post-arrival integration, professional practice and development of a sample of 28 ISWs. The funders also required an exploration of the perspectives of senior staff managing them, and this article reports on the findings from additional interviews with the subset of 15 managers with experience of working with ISWs.

Internationalising social work is not just about the mobility of professionals (Lyons, 1999) and while social work is arguably a global profession it is not yet a common project, and a unifying universal paradigm of social work has yet to emerge (Weiss-Gal, I. & Welbourne, 2008; Trygged 2010). For example, the dominant social work paradigm in the UK has developed in response to a particular set of national needs and conditions characterised by an emphasis on direct practice and the need to balance empowerment with notions of social control (Crisp, 2008) particularly in statutory social work. The rise of new managerialism and prioritisation of case management processes have combined with a high level of public and political scrutiny, of child and family social work, (Stanley, 2013) leading to a distinctive form of 'British social work'. This practice paradigm often poses considerable challenges for local social work graduates and practitioners, and presents a practice reality which is difficult to anticipate for the ISWs who have never previously worked in the UK.

On the basis of the findings arising from the participant group of English managers our central argument is that while British social work presents challenges for everyone, the mismatch between organisational requirements and the unfamiliarity of ISWs with local practice contexts presents unique and little published obstacles to both the ISWs themselves and to their managers.

The relevance of these issues is traversed in the following literature review which illustrates the systemic issues and personal issues created by this particular migratory movement, and pattern of recruitment.

### **International Labour Migration: theories, literature and the English context**

Economic theories remain the best known of the many lenses through which migration can be viewed. The existence of 'push-pull factors' in both the country of origin and the destination country

(affecting people's decisions to migrate) are linked to neo-liberal Marxist political economy and world systems theory. These argue that the uneven configuration of world markets explains the immigration of people from less powerful peripheral countries to more powerful and wealthier core countries (Lee 1966 cited in Price, 2009 p.20; Segal & Heck, 2012). In the case of professional workers, including social workers, intermediaries such as recruitment agencies are often used to target and attract valued workers to fill gaps in the domestic labour market (Bernard- Grouteau, 2007 cited in Price, 2009). However, while push-pull factors affect social workers, similarly to other migrants, motivations that include adventure, altruism, opportunities to explore cultural roots and/or improve life chances and professional development have been suggested by Lyons and Huegler (2012), in line with an interdisciplinary approach and migration systems theory. This argues that migration is best understood by recognising the dynamic link between structural factors e.g. the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries (based on colonisation, political influence, trade investment and cultural ties) and individual reasons, involving immigrants' beliefs, and pre-existing social and familial networks in the destination country (Castles & Miller, 2003). Such links and networks are evident in the migration of social workers to the UK from countries including Australia, India and South Africa (e.g. Hussein et al, 2011)

Transnational theory, emerging more recently from Anthropology, positions immigration as a dynamic social process (Castles & Miller, 2003; Flavell, 2008). This theory originally focussed on the movement of people from economically peripheral countries to centres of capital linked to the availability of employment opportunities, however it also recognises the development of circulatory or repeated mobility patterns of migratory movement. Such arrangements now stand alongside conventional and traditional patterns of temporary or permanent migration, as skilled migrants with valued expertise in destination countries view their migratory movement as opportunistic, circular, and not necessarily linked to permanent settlement (Castles & Millar, 2003; Flavell, 2008). Anecdotal evidence suggests that this process is evident among some international social workers (Lyons and Littlechild, 2006).

To date the motivations and experiences of internationally mobile social workers (i.e. social workers who move to another country to undertake professional activity) are under- researched (Hugman, Moosa – Mitha, Moyo, 2010; Lyons and Huegler, 2012), although a small body of literature is developing in this field. Some national studies have drawn on secondary data either exclusively (e.g. Walsh et al, 2009, regarding Republic of Ireland) or as the basis for subsequent empirical research (e.g. Hussein et al, 2009, re England) but there is, as yet, no comprehensive, global data about the scale or pattern of international labour migration in social work. However, receiving countries

generally require evidence of the equivalence of overseas qualifications and some 'flows' and trends in this field can be identified from this data.

A strong illustration of the demands of the labour market influencing mobility patterns are evident in Ireland (Walsh et al, 2009); England (Hussein et al, 2009); Canada (Pullen-Sansfacon, 2012b); and South Africa. In the last case restricted job opportunities acted as a push factor relative to the pull of the English labour market, since, of the social workers who qualified and registered with the South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP) in 2003/4, 66% went on to work in the UK (Pullen-Sansfacon et al, 2012). Labour market conditions are also a factor in New Zealand, which has been both a sending and receiving country over the past decade or so (Bartley et al, 2012).

Despite labour market needs, getting qualifications recognised has been identified as a costly and tedious process in Canada (Pullen-Sansfacon, 2013); England (Hussein et al, 2009) and New Zealand (Bartley et al, 2012); and then obtaining employment is not always easy, e.g. in Canada (Yee et al, 2006) or England (Hussein et al, 2011). Two factors give applicants an advantage in the job market – proficiency in the relevant language; and the actual or presumed similarities between the education received 'abroad' and that available in the receiving country, for example, see Hussein et al (2009); Walsh et al (2009) and Pullen-Sansfacon et al (2012c) re nationality of international recruits in England, Ireland and Canada respectively. However, in the case of England, issues in relation to language proficiency might arise owing to a tightening of national immigration policies, which have recently favoured labour mobility between European Union countries rather than internationally. Thus, by 2011, European ISWs constituted 1,700 out of a total of 6,946 ISWs, a fourfold increase in actual numbers (of European ISWs) since 2005 (Lyons and Hanna, 2011).

On the question of educational background, Pullen-Sansfacon and colleagues (2012a) identified the importance of (presumed) congruence between professional education and values relative to the new situation in facilitating the adaptation of ISWs, an assumption also evident in recruitment patterns to England (Hussein et al, 2009) and Ireland (Walsh et al, 2009). But Pullen-Sansfacon et al (2012a) also found many differences in social work curricula, regulatory and ethical frameworks between Canada, South Africa and the UK, notwithstanding some commonalities in origins and the efforts of international social work bodies to promote global standards of education and ethics (IASSW, 2004; IFSW, 2004). Such studies illustrate the dominance of national political contexts; local social concerns; and cultural considerations in shaping social work organisation and practice and related educational programmes, resulting in sometimes unanticipated challenges facing ISWs.

Once in work, problems can arise in adaptation related to different cultural and role expectations. These have been noted in England (Hussein et al, 2009) and Canada (Pullen-Sansfacon, 2012b); and findings on ISWs facing racism and discrimination have been reported in England (Stevens et al, 2012; Manthorpe et al, 2010) and Ireland (Walsh et al, 2010). The latter case was linked to the 'feminization of migration' (Castles and Millar, 2003) which may have particular implications for social work as a predominantly female profession globally.

The specifics of the social work labour market in England relative to increasingly 'tight' immigration policies, have been described elsewhere (Lyons and Hanna, 2011; Hussein et al, 2012). However, the status of England as a 'receiving country' in relation to migration of social workers has been evidenced by registration figures from the General Social Care Council (GSCC)(2011)\*, according to which 8.7% of the work force in England received their training and social work qualification outside the UK. An analysis of the countries of origin in 2011 and comparison with 2005 figures also showed both an increase in the number of countries from which ISWs were being recruited (from 65 to 83) and a shift in the proportions of ISWs coming from European Union countries, relative to countries with Commonwealth connections (e.g. Canada or India) and/or sharing a common language (e.g. USA): 24% of international social workers came from EU countries in 2011 relative to 18% in 2005 (Lyons and Hanna, 2011).

Given the economic and political conditions, there have been significant changes in the British social welfare system but labour shortages have persisted in social work, particularly in relation to work with children and families in the community, which itself has become almost exclusively defined in 'child protection' terms. An early response to this (observable from around 2000) was recruitment of social work staff from overseas either through recruitment agencies (e.g. Chittleburgh, 2006) or through targeted recruitment drives e.g. utilising the personal connections and initiative of individual staff within the department needing new practitioners (Lyons, 2006). This recruitment has been primarily aimed at 'plugging the gaps' in the child protection services which constitute a practice area avoided by local social workers because of the challenging and stressful nature of the work (Welbourne et al, 2007). Thus the supply and retention of experienced staff in a difficult field of work forms the immediate context for the recruitment of overseas trained and qualified social workers (Crisp, 2009; Welbourne, Harrison & Ford, 2007; Walsh, Wilson & O'Connor, 2009). Despite recent increases in the supply of social work graduates and a fall in social work vacancies, local authorities and county councils continue to recruit and contract international social workers new to the U.K to remedy staff shortages in this critically important area of social service delivery, presenting particular challenges to the managers charged with overseeing their work.

The social and emotional impacts associated with migration have been well documented (Lee and Westwood, 1996; Casado et al, 2010), and Ward & Styles (2005) commented that, regardless of country of origin, immigration can have a long lasting impact on a person's identity associated as it is with multiple losses - of home, community and country. What then does social work labour mobility mean for individual ISWs, managers and indeed social work teams in the agencies to which ISWs are recruited? Simpson, investigating the experiences of several Romanian ISWs, found that despite their good qualifications, and knowledge of theories & methods, the reality of English social work was something that these international workers had never experienced (Simpson, 2009). Simpson commented on the intensified short term pressure placed on teams by international recruits whose appointments are paradoxically intended to provide immediate relief to the additional work load generated by existing social work vacancies. In a reflective commentary published in *Professional Social Work* three ISWs from different countries of origin wrote of the culture shock they experienced adapting to an unfamiliar practice context and coping with a profound new life experience (Rayner, Voltz & Swart, 2012). Choi (2003) in a study of expatriate social workers noted the testing effects presented by different social economic systems, language and social customs on individual expatriate social workers, and their families, commonly manifesting in symptoms of culture shock, frustration and disappointment.

Finally, a common theme identified in the studies in Canada, and New Zealand is the significance to ISWs of regular supervisory support, a point reinforced in a recent Canadian study of 15 social workers where frequent supervision was identified as an important factor in facilitating professional adaptation (Pullen Sansfacon et al, 2013).

Having identified from the literature some of the complex systemic issues generated by this form of social work recruitment, the views of a sample of English social work managers are here reported, following a brief account of the research study.

## **The study**

### *Research design*

The study was a qualitative research project, funded by the Nuffield foundation, aimed at exploring the direct and reported experiences of social workers recruited from abroad to work in children and family teams in and around London. Two groups of respondents were identified in statutory child and family services, 28 ISWs and 15 social work managers with current or recent experience of supervising ISWs. The findings reported here are from interviews with the sample of 15 SW managers in the study.

Data were gathered through face to face interviews, guided by semi -structured interview schedules. The responses were audio taped with participants' permission and comparative and thematic analysis was used to interpret the data (Padgett, 2008). The project received ethical approval from the University Human Ethics Committee of the lead author. Snowball sampling through informed and knowledgeable contacts were utilised to secure purposive samples of ISWs and of managers.

### *The Sample of Managers*

The 15 SW managers who participated in this study comprised three men and twelve women, all social work qualified and with managerial experience. The sample included both practice managers (of social work teams) and service managers. Six members of the manager sample were non-British, including four who formerly had been recruited as ISWs, themselves. Ten participants had experience of working with ISWs in more than one borough, suggesting that managing such a group is not an uncommon experience for managers in the London area. Participants had direct experience of managing between three and 10 ISWs from a range of countries:- South Africa, Zimbabwe, the USA , India, New Zealand, Canada and Australia, and from Romania and Germany in the EU.

### *The research questions*

Social Work manager's views were sought on the following questions. How well prepared were ISWs for the work to be undertaken? What particular challenges did ISWs face in adapting their practice to a new environment? What provisions were made for the induction, training and support for new ISWs? Is overseas recruitment an effective strategy for alleviating gaps in the Child and Family services labour market? The findings presented next report on the managers' perceptions of these issues.

## **Findings from the sample of managers**

### *Preparation for work in the UK*

Consistent with an interdisciplinary theoretical approach to immigration (Castles & Millar, 2003), managers considered that ISWs were motivated to come to the UK for a variety of work related and personal reasons. They observed that experienced child protection social workers from sending countries with established child and family welfare structures and legislation adjusted more quickly to UK practice requirements. However, managers often commented that the experience of ISWs new to the UK generally confounded the expectations and preconceptions they had of the work. Managers frequently used the words 'shock', 'challenge' and 'steep learning curve' to describe the initial reactions of ISWs to the work required of them.

*Interviewer: 'How well prepared do you think people are for the sorts of (social work) roles they are expected to assume here?'*

*Manager: 'Not very, and I think that is partly because it's very difficult to describe what social work is like here. I also think it is a big step to go from one set of legislation to another and to grapple with English as a second language and report writing - it's difficult.'* (M.4 p.3)

*'I think it takes time for them to adapt and I think it's difficult to put that into words in advance, to say, this is how things are'. (M. 5 P. 2)*

Regarding the challenges, managers observed that these varied, depending on the dominant practice paradigm of the sending country. Australians, New Zealanders, Americans and Canadians were generally thought to be better prepared. However, they were still challenged by caseloads, court processes, the slowness of computerised recording systems and the levels of paper work required. Particular aspects of the U.K. Child and Family legislation were more challenging for some groups e.g. New Zealand ISWs struggled with final court orders since their home legislation – in spirit and form - is quite different. ISWs from various parts of Africa and the Indian subcontinent (where a community work social work model is more dominant) encountered challenges adapting to very different statutory requirements and legal interventions, the casework method, report writing, and managing hostility in relationships with service users. Conversely, American child protection workers were observed to find it difficult to adapt to a more accommodating and less adversarial style of engaging and working with parents. The social workers from the EU were seen to encounter challenges created by English as second language, and working in a way that placed little or no emphasis on social pedagogy and therapeutic interventions with families. Lack of opportunity for therapeutic intervention was also reported to be a concern for those American social workers without previous child protection experience.

Managers also confirmed that the personal aspects of adjustments required when relocating present challenges which can compound the problems of adaptation faced in the professional context. One manager commented on this from her own experience:

*'I came on my own, I didn't know anyone, and it was absolute hell. When you're young –you think you can do anything, but I don't think people understand that it's going to take at least six months to settle and everything's different, how you pay your gas and electricity, your water, tenancy agreements- it's all different.'* (M.3 p.6)

Despite the initial culture shock of the work – and the sense that most were not really prepared for what they found - the ISWs were generally well regarded by these managers for their work ethic, child focus, skills and commitment.

### *Induction*

Commonly, ISW induction includes a corporate introduction to the organisation as a whole. Social Work managers reported being primarily responsible for inducting new staff including ISWs but how, and how well, they achieved this objective, both individually and between boroughs, varied considerably.

*'Different local authorities do different things and some do it better than others.'*

(M.2 p.5.)

Some managers commented that generally they were satisfied with the induction that ISWs received while others stated that international recruits in their Department received nothing more than other new staff and that ISWs placed through employment agencies received rather less. Those who reflected more on this issue made two additional points. Firstly, they attempted to ease the entry process by limiting the initial caseloads of ISWs. Secondly, they frequently felt unsure how to pitch induction to those social workers who were not newly qualified or inexperienced, but who were nonetheless working in the UK for the first time. One manager suggested that the lack of a comprehensive, coherent approach to induction presented particular difficulties for social workers from the USA where a full induction programme was expected and considered extremely important by new staff.

### *Adequacy of support*

Managers recognised the importance of their support to ISWs. This included not just work related induction and on-going supervision but also emotional support and practical information about living in London.

*'I come from abroad myself so I do understand what it is like to live in a country that is not your own even though for me perhaps it was not as hard as someone who has English as a second language. But it's still not easy. It's not home.'* (M. 11 p.7)

ISWs have reported that collegial support is important to their professional integration and managers in this sample recognized that team members were another important avenue of support for overseas staff. Despite this, it was conveyed that high staff turnover and cultural diversity are

accepted aspects of social work teams in London and little is done formally to prepare teams for the arrival of ISWs:

*INT: 'How do they (social work teams) respond to an ISW?'*

*Manager: 'That's mine, and here's your locker'. I guess social work here has such a history of staff turnover that people just arrive (M.10 p. 6)*

*The effectiveness of overseas recruitment as a strategy*

How statutory child and family social work in the UK differs from that of other countries was a dominant theme in the data, suggesting the importance that managers attach to local knowledge and to the way in which the social work role is commonly understood and constructed in England.

The findings revealed mixed feelings amongst managers about the efficacy of overseas recruitment, alongside recognition that the situation regarding recruitment is changing:

*'One of the biggest benefits at the time was recruitment was very hard and we are in a different climate now and recruitment is not so hard so in that sense that was a benefit at the time and I think people from different countries and different cultures bring different things and make us think about different things so that's a benefit as well.'* (M.4 P.7)

Managers observed that ISWs were still applying for positions although a drop in the numbers of applicants from outside the EU was noted. Overseas recruitment was seen as a useful way of filling vacancies and attracting motivated staff with experience and good skills. Conversely, it was also considered an expensive form of recruitment whether through use of group recruitment strategies or agency locums. Concerns were expressed that overseas staff did not stay long and that, in order for the investment in their induction, support and training to pay dividends, practitioners needed to be in post for at least two years:

*'I think if they then don't stay very long it's a bit of a... whether the investment is value for money it's hard to work out really'* (M.2 P. 6)

Broader concerns were also raised about the capacity of the UK work force and the systemic issues which necessitated overseas recruitment, despite increases in the numbers of home graduates and contracting vacancies.

*'I think the recruitment drives are more cost effective than going for individual social workers. The bigger issue is why we are looking outside this country? If you interview*

*people abroad you need to put the effort in to support them, otherwise you lose them.* (M.14)

The findings reported indicate the views of those responsible for managing ISWs, a perspective which has been largely unexplored. What then can be learned from this initial exploration of manager's perceptions of the experiences and contributions of ISWs?

### **Discussion**

These findings reinforce those from other studies in a number of respects. For example, problems of adapting to new policy, legislative and organisational cultures as well as different norms regarding professional practice have been identified elsewhere as part of the culture shock experienced by ISWs. It has also been noted that migration involves substantial practical challenges and is an ongoing and life-changing event for even the most well prepared professional migrant (Lee & Westwood, 1996; Castles & Miller, 2003; Segal & Heck, 2012). Managers recognised the significance of an international move itself, and the post arrival issues that often compounded the challenges ISWs encountered with professional adaptation and integration. This reinforces other findings in the literature that highlight the major social and emotional adjustments international social work recruits experience in finding accommodation; grappling with unfamiliar geography and transport systems; and developing friendship and support networks. Child protection social workers often cite collegial support as significant to their job satisfaction (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006) and this has also been identified by ISWs as a factor supporting professional integration but Simpson (2009) similarly identified lack of preparation of teams as reported in this study.

British managers recognise that ISWs relocate to the UK for a range of professional and personal reasons of which the former concern continued professional development, career advancement, and improved pay and working conditions. Dominelli (2010) suggests that, while there is considerable scope for knowledge transfer and learning via social work labour mobility, this should not be assumed. Managers in this study revealed that while many ISWs are recognised as arriving with considerable skills and experience, they tend to be located as learners in organisations rather than as co-learners or as sources of knowledge, particularly in their initial two years. This phenomenon has also been observed in other professional groups (Williams & Balaz, 2008) and it highlights the contradictory nature of managing a group of workers who are positioned simultaneously as both experienced practitioners and as learners. These findings emphasise managers' concerns about the readiness for practice and initial shock involved for international staff (wherever they come from) in adapting professionally the work in and around London, reflecting the

background of intense scrutiny and accountability to which statutory child and family social work services are subject in the UK.

It is interesting to consider the managers' apprehensions in light of arguments about social work as a common international professional project (Weiss-Gal and Welbourne, 2008). The notion of 'British social work' or 'social work in England' figured prominently in discussion with managers about the challenges they saw as facing ISWs in adapting to practice in London. These discussions focus on the importance of welfare and legal discourses in shaping how the social work role is constructed (Healy, 2005 p.17), and the extent to which local knowledge of welfare regimes, legislative frameworks and court proceedings in England is valued by managers and regarded as core to effective social work service delivery.

The findings of this study also demonstrate that managing ISWs is a complex, labour intensive task particularly with staff new to the UK and from dissimilar jurisdictions and welfare regimes: assumptions about what people know and don't know cannot be taken for granted. This is also a managerial undertaking that requires an appreciation of the psychosocial impacts of immigration and the level of professional adaptation required by working and living in another country, for which many ISWs themselves are unprepared. Comments from the managers indicate a general lack of coherence and sustained planning around the recruitment and retention of overseas staff and an organisational over-reliance on managers as individuals to induct and support frontline ISWs in addition to their numerous other responsibilities. Manager's comments concerning the efficacy of overseas recruitment as a strategy for remedying gaps in local labour supply, particularly in statutory child and family services, further highlight the contradictions associated with managing this group's professional integration and induction as well as their on-going support and career development.

Our findings imply that overseas recruitment in the UK is not a simple answer to alleviating gaps in labour force capacity, and managers do not view it as such. In order to maximise the economic investment and professional benefits entailed in recruiting ISWs it is essential for policy and organisational initiatives to provide appropriate support for both ISWs and the people who manage them. This might be achieved in a variety of ways. First, at an interpersonal level, the appointment of peer mentors could provide an additional form of support to that provided by managers. This would enable team members to take an active role in the integration of ISWs; and, if peer mentoring was recognised as a component in continuing professional development (CPD), would be of instrumental benefit to colleagues as well.

Second, given that the UK remains a receiving country for ISWs, the social workers' registration board (Health Professions Council) should publish consistent national guidelines with recruitment agencies about the aims and content of induction programmes for ISWs specifically. This since the voluntary code (Brown et al 2008) carries little weight in the policy and resource allocation programmes of statutory agencies responsible for child and family social work.

Third, it is also incumbent on international organisations, such as the International Federation of Social Workers, to develop international protocols to manage the professional movement and adaptation of ISWs, as well as supporting research in this field. Such moves could add to our knowledge about the complex issue of social work mobility and lead to more co-ordinated efforts to maximise its advantages to individual workers, social work organisations and service users.

### **Conclusion**

The findings reported here are from a small scale, exploratory study and the extent to which they are relevant and transferable to other countries experiencing international mobility of social workers might be questioned. However, the findings were consistent with other studies focusing on international social workers themselves (including in countries other than England) and, in addition, have highlighted the important role and neglected perspectives of the people who manage them.

The study indicates that, notwithstanding changing conditions, ISWs continue to be recruited into child and family services in London and the Home Counties. It has also revealed a first-hand appreciation that managing ISWs is a multifaceted undertaking, and that overseas recruitment can be an expensive solution that cannot be assumed to deliver simple solutions to a complex problem. The advantages of mobility include a different experience of social work and opportunities to broaden both personal and professional horizons. However, few ISWs are prepared for the pressures of practice in a field of work in England which has attracted intense negative public and political attention, and where managers feel hard pressed to support them. Recruitment of social workers from the global labour market has provided a 'quick fix' to workforce shortages, but has not been accompanied by service and staffing developments which could enable realisation of the individual and organisational benefits of the appointment of ISWs, in the short term and for longer.

These findings suggest that it may be timely for national registration bodies and international professional associations to acknowledge that ISWs require more than an examination of their qualifications in order to work abroad. In addition, national bodies have a responsibility to ensure that managers are sufficiently resourced and prepared to enable ISWs to make the best use possible

of the often considerable skills, knowledge and commitment they bring from their countries of origin.

\* Endnote: until 1st August 2012, there were four General Social Care Councils (one each for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland) responsible for registering all qualified social workers and thus confirming the eligibility for employment in social work designated posts. A unit within the GSCC had specific responsibility for assessing the equivalence of 'overseas qualifications' of international social workers employed or seeking work in England and conferring registration status if appropriate. Since 1/8/12 this responsibility has been taken over by the Health Professions Council (HPC) and the four GSC Councils have been abolished.

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