Newly-qualified Social Workers in a Statutory Adult Social Care Agency: Being, Becoming and Belonging in the First Year of Post-qualifying Practice

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ASYE    Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
HEI     Higher Education Institution
NQSW    Newly-qualified Social Worker(s)
SWRB    Social Work Reform Board
Abstract

This dissertation relates to an arts-based action inquiry process, identifying emergent themes in the experience of NQSW (newly-qualified social workers) in statutory adult care. As researcher, I am also a practice educator within the organisation.

I use Kearns and McArdle’s (2012) narrative research into resilience, to explore ideas of being, becoming and belonging, using the perspectives of academic institutions and employers, aspects of competence and capability, and the development of identity. These are examined through the lens of the aesthetic, the ‘emotional and visceral response’ (Warren 2002:225) of the new worker to the organisational environment.

In a workshop setting, research participants use arts materials, including dolls, as an opportunity for sensemaking. Gaya Wicks and Rippins’ (2010) work with dolls and doll-making informs my method, materials and analysis. Drawing on literature relating to qualitative research, with some comparison to social work theory and values, I examine the power of arts based action inquiry to surface and make sense of the emotion related to being a newly-qualified professional. The powerful presence of the doll as workshop material is explored through existing literature.

The dissertation includes photographs of the artefacts created in the workshop, and a discussion of their status, ownership and interpretation. The reader is invited to view them in the context of the participants’ narrative.

The study concludes that the participants’ narrative is congruent with existing literature. Recommendations include the importance of employing organisations developing tolerance of uncertainty and apparent failure, as dissonance and lack of clarity provide valuable learning environments, which support the development of creativity and resilience.

Arts-based methods appear effective in identifying emergent themes, rather than providing answers to specific questions, and they represent a valuable opportunity for NQSW to reflect on the emotions and aesthetics of their experience. Pre-existing relationships of trust between participants, and researcher/facilitator expertise are likely to promote the application of arts-based approaches within organisational realities.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Newly-qualified Social Workers in a Statutory Adult Social Care agency: Being, Becoming and Belonging in the First Year of Post-Qualifying Practice

1:1 Overview: The Research Question and Focus

Being, Becoming and Belonging in the First Year in Post-qualifying Practice, is an exploration of the experience of NQSW (Newly-qualified Social Workers) who are employed in a statutory adult social care agency. As an employee of the Social Care Learning and Development team of a statutory agency in England, I support continuing professional development for social work professionals from students on qualifying courses through post-qualifying frameworks. The agency implemented the Skills for Care Framework for Newly-qualified Social Workers (Skills for Care 2011) to support the development of confidence and competence in NQSW; following the recommendations of the Social Work Reform Board, this has been superseded for NQSW cohorts since 2013 by the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment: ASYE (Social Work Task Force 2009).  

My starting point for this dissertation was the stated concern of NQSW in the agency, as to what they did not know and could not do in terms of meeting the expectations of the employing agency, now that they were professionally qualified, registered and practicing in a statutory setting. The importance of the experience of transition from the academic community of practice to that of the workplace is recognised in research literature. Also of significance is the agency's move to modern ways of working, characterised by increasing mobility, flexibility and autonomy of operational social care staff.

The focus of my research was the NQSW experience of the development of professional identity, as members of teams whose dynamics were potentially compromised by the physical separation and changing physical environment of modern working (Levi 2011). Kearns and McArdle (2012:387) note the vulnerability of NQSW to hostile organizational environments, in terms of professional development and effective support; they suggest being, becoming,
and belonging as the ‘psychological and emotional dimensions of identity’ (2012:288), which are vulnerable to the other demands experienced by professionals in transition; these conflicting demands became the starting point for my study.

1:2 Policy development and significant issues for Social Work in England

An understanding of the quantity and complexity of legislation and policy relating to social care, some dating back some 65 years, provides an informative backdrop to the experience of NQSW. Kynaston (2007:150) suggests that the legislative changes following the second World War, including the National Assistance Act 1948 (Geo6) heralded “…a sometimes Kafkaesque trial – endured mainly by those least able to complain…” In the development of a welfare system administered by the state, rather than local authorities, Kynaston argues that a huge bureaucracy was created, with inevitable difficulties in accountability and responsibility. There is a metaphor used by trainers in my agency in recent years, of social care legislation being like an unruly shrub; when there is a need for new legislation another shoot grows, but pruning does not take place. Hence the legislation used by social workers has long historical roots, and can be experienced as complex and sometimes contradictory.

Lauerman (2013) examines the changes to the landscape and principles of the welfare state from its creation in 1948, and the inherent difficulties of a system which seeks to provide universal as well as targeted support. He notes that local government reform in the 1960’s and 1970’s was in part intended to introduce generic social work, the “…move towards taking responsibility for a whole range of individual and family social problems.” (2012:2). However, he suggests that although there is shift, welcomed by practitioners, towards working in partnership with people who use services (DH 2007), the dominant focus has been on integration between health and social care (ADASS 2007).

Keen et al (2013) provide an overview of the legislative and policy drivers which underpin the context within which NQSW are beginning their careers, and conclude that:

“Treading a path through such a complex world requires models of social work practice that maintain the value base, yet can also facilitate the
development of services and their management and promote personal and professional growth.” (2013: 3)

Acknowledging the theoretical and legislative frameworks for social work, and the importance of maintaining underpinning values and ethics, The College of Social Work suggests that the profession requires resilience, creativity and responsiveness to change, in order to meet contemporary challenges:

“Modern social work is about promoting choice and control, supporting people to live independently as active citizens in their communities. As public funding evaporates and the state pulls back, this must be more than empty rhetoric.” (TCSW 2012a)

Recent Serious Case Reviews have impacted on social work practice in the form of policy development; Munro (2011) informed the development of the Professional Capabilities Framework, and the ASYE. Pike et al (2010) examine the importance of design and delivery of training, and effective learning transfer, in the context of serious case reviews relating to adult service users; they conclude that, as noted by Kearns and McArdrle (2012:388), the effective transfer of learning requires more than the ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ dimensions.

My study builds on recognition within the agency that the continuing professional development of NQSW as confident professionals requires them to make sense of their lived experience as employees. In the context of Action Research, the approach which informs this study, Broussine (2008:157), and Reason and Bradbury (2008:149) discuss Heron’s proposition that theoretical knowledge should be congruent with other types of knowledge. The development of the Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers (TCSW 2012) similarly requires that for successful transition from student to qualified professional, NQSW develop beyond ‘theoretical, propositional knowledge of academia’ (Reason and Bradbury 2008:149). The potential for emergent knowledge in Heron’s work is discussed in 2.2.

1:3 Research Participants

The participants in this study have qualified as social workers in England, having undertaken a degree programme (BSc, BA or MA), and their employment within the agency is their first post-qualifying experience.

My research focuses on the lived experience of a cohort of NQSW who began working for the agency in a specific 12 month period, and
uses data from one workshop and a follow-up interview. Action Research is the
approach which I use in this inquiry, and Coghlan and Brannick (2010) confirm
its usefulness in developing professional practice in an organisational context.
Based on Reason and Bradburys’ working definition, Action Research is a
process which brings together ‘action and reflection, theory and practice, in
participation with others’(2008:1),

**1:4 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study, as stated in the application for Ethical and
Research Governance approval (Appendices 1 and 2) was to explore the
everyday experience of NQSW through arts-based action enquiry, using a cycle
of investigation, action and reflection to promote sensemaking. The notion of
sensemaking relates to accessing and making sense of experience which is
difficult to voice (Weick 2007, Keen et al 2013); this is explored in more detail in
3:3. The same section of the Methodology chapter examines Taylor and
Ladkins’ (2009) distinction of the four processes of arts-based approaches,
through which I developed my understanding of arts-based methods in support
sensemaking. The use of dolls, ‘…one of the symbolic treasures of the
instinctual nature.’ (Pinkola Estes 2008:84) is also discussed in Chapter 3.

My application for Research Governance and Ethical Approval (Appendix
2) proposed the following objectives for the study:

- Promoting self-reflection and sense-making for participants, which may
  include changes for their approach to day to day professional practice.
- Furthering knowledge for this group of NQSWs in the development of
  resilience, professional identity and a strengths-based approach to
  professional capability.
- Informing the agency use of work-based research methodologies.
- Informing the researcher, through critical reflection, in the development of
  her professional practice as a Practice Educator.
- Because this is an emergent process, to record recurrent themes and
  emergent issues.

In the Research Governance and Ethical Approval application (Appendix
2), I additionally commented that, in exploring the development of identity, the
study would pay attention to participants’ responses on particular issues, and explore their experience as a cohort; my intention was that this should be a restorative activity for the participants. These objectives not only assumed that the participants consider that they have a pre-existing identity as a cohort, but also pre-supposed a level of determination on the part of the researcher, As the study evolved I learned that it was not for me as researcher to determine what would be significant issues for the participants, and the extent to which the research process would achieve the stated objectives. In making assumptions about how far I could shape the process and outcomes participants’ experience of such systems, I would potentially confine my evaluation to ‘standard outcome measures’ (Kushner 2005a:120), and the ‘single narrative’ (Chelmsinsky 2012:80), rather than involving the participants in making sense of, and evaluating, the data (Kushner 2011). As I developed the research and the dissertation, the specific language of the Aims and Objectives in my original proposal evolved, through successive reflective cycles, into an understanding that the emergent nature of the research methodology would shape the learning to be achieved. This demonstrated for me in the comparatively early stages of my research that the reflection on learning which is central to social work practice (Kolb 1984, Schon 1991), also promotes the validity and rigour of Action Research.

Shaw (2008) suggests that the ethics of the design of qualitative research do not belong only to the early stages of the project, but will underpin the whole research process; he suggests that, particularly in terms of securing informed consent, the researcher may not always be able to inform, and there is the inference that the researcher will not know what they do not know (2008:401). Whilst the ethics of design are not confined to the earlier stages of qualitative research, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) similarly note that analysis does not only happen at a later stage: “What is conventionally referred to as analysis is a pervasive activity throughout the life of a research project.” (1996:11). I have therefore sought to acknowledge the participatory and democratic nature of the research process (Reason and Bradbury 2008:1), and to recognise the significance of unexpected, emergent themes, and ambiguities in the research (Coffey and Atkinson 1996:15).
1.5 Dissertation Structure

As an overview of the dissertation, this introductory chapter has discussed significant policy and issues relating to the topic, the NQSW cohort from which the participants came, and the evolution of the original Aims and Objectives of the study. Chapter 2, the Literature Review, will explore the research relating to the experience of newly-qualified professionals in transition to their first qualified post. It also considers aspects of modern working and emotional responses to the working environment. In Chapter 3, Methodology, the theoretical bases of action research and arts-based action inquiry are explored, including the notion of sensemaking and the philosophy which supports the validity of the research.

Chapter 4 sets out and analyses the data in the context of the knowledge which has been discussed in the Literature Review, while Chapter 5 considers at new knowledge in relation to the Methodology. Chapter 6 evaluates and draws conclusions from the research process and the study, and makes recommendations. Supportive material for the research process is contained in the appendices.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

*May you have a strong foundation when the winds of changes shift*  
*(Bob Dylan: Forever Young)*

2:1 Introduction

Chapter 1 provided the context for my research, exploring how the topic of the development of identity in NQSW is situated in the legislative and policy context of social work, and in guidance and best practice in supporting NQSW. Chapter 2 considers the literature through which I have refined my focus; two pieces of literature initially prompted my perspectives on the research topic and methodology. The first of these, Kearns and McArdles’ (2012) narrative study on the construction of identity through resilience, is explored in this literature review; it was formative in situating my understanding of the unsettling nature of the transition from student to qualified professional. The second, Gaya Wicks and Rippins’ (2010) work using dolls and doll-making, with students on a leadership module, prompted my development of arts-based research using dolls. While discussion of this takes place in 3:4, the research literature reviewed in 2:4 introduces qualitative, arts-based methods as appropriate in researching how new employees experience the workplace.

2:2 considers research into the transition from student to qualified professional, identifying themes in the research literature, and the language of the research relating to transition and newness. 2:3 discusses the nature of being, becoming and belonging, and the interconnectedness of these ideas. 2:4 considers research on employee experiences of physical space, and emotional responses to modern working, including consequences for team dynamics and developing a sense of belonging. Within this, some research into the use of arts-based methods is included, setting the scene for discussion in Chapter 3 of specific work with dolls.

2:2 The Transition from Student to Qualified Professional
The research literature examined here has three recurrent and interdependent themes. The first is the difference in perspective between HEI’s (Higher Education Institutions) who provide social work qualifying degree programmes, and employers of social workers; this is the potential ‘gap’ through which, literature suggests, NQSW may fall during their first post-qualifying year (Keen et al, 2013). The second is the developing debate about competence and capability as measures of effective practice and continuing professional development, and the third is the importance of the development of ‘being’ and identity.

Moriarty et al (2011) undertook a scoping review of the experience of transition for NQSW and other newly-qualified professionals, exploring the concept of ‘preparedness’. The studies which they examined used individual and group interviews and questionnaires, and there were few longitudinal studies. The themes which they identify are the tension between HEI and employer expectations, an emphasis on how HEI’s prepare qualifying workers for entering the workplace, and the predominance of individual NQSW and supervisor voices, with the ‘conspicuous omission’ (2011:1351) of the wider system of practice and particularly the voice of service users and carers, a perspective which was included in only one study. (Bates et al, 2010)

Moriarty et al note that:

“The majority of studies identified restricted data collection to supervisors and newly qualified professionals, and relied on the evidence of perceived, rather than actual, performance.” (2011:1351)

They conclude that, in the studies they examine, the perceptions of supervisors and newly-qualified workers are of the effectiveness of performance and the experience of transition. Moriarty et al suggest that the improvement of the experience of newly-qualified workers should be viewed in the wider context; there is also relevance for my research in that that Moriarty et al’s work has not identified research which focuses on emotion and narrative, beyond the emotional context of newness to a professional role in terms of the ‘reality shock’ (2011:1349) for new nurses; this suggests that my methodology and focus will not substantially duplicate previous studies. In examining the experience of social workers in transition from the student role to that of the qualified professional, they identify that there is “…a fundamental distinction between those who view qualifying education as a development process, and
those who view it as an end product.” (Moriarty et al 2011:1351, in Taylor and Bogo 2013:12) The suggestion is that the intention of the HEI’s (Higher Education Institutions) to deliver qualifying programmes which produce self-directed confident learners, is to some extent at odds with the hopes of employing agencies that NQSW would ‘hit the ground running’ in terms of confidence in processes and delivery to service users (Galpin et al 2013). NQSW may experience an uncomfortable transition between the two with the potential to fall through the gap between them. (Keen et al 2013).

The participants in this research have worked formally through the Skills for Care (2011) NQSW framework, which supported professional development and measured competence, consolidated by a post-qualifying academic award. During this time, and consistent with the recommendations of the Social Work Reform Board (Social Work Task Force 2009), the NQSW framework has been superseded by the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) (Skills for Care 2013). This provides a framework which measures capability rather than competence, and has developed the debate as to the measurement of professional development in relation to these two concepts, and the potential impact on standards for professional practice. (Taylor and Bogo 2013).

Describing the government plans to reform social work in England, following the recommendations of the Social Work Reform Board, Taylor and Bogo (2013) examine the literature on competence and capability. They describe the tension identified by Bates et al (2010), Brown et al (2007), and Moriarty et al (2011), between the providers of social work qualifying programmes, and employing agencies.

Bates et al’s paper describes and discusses the longitudinal study by Brown et al of a group of newly-qualified social workers, involving questionnaires and interviews of NQSW and supervisors; this considered how well social work qualifying programmes prepared students for the workplace. This study concurs with Kearns and McArdle (2012), and Humphrey (2013) in the importance of the development of being:

“…professional knowledge becomes more concerned with ‘being’ a professional rather than just ‘having’ the requisite factual knowledge, and is thus necessarily complex and extensive.” (Bates et al 2010:154)

Kinman and Grant (2011) studied emotional intelligence, reflective ability, empathy and social competence as predictors of resilience for those...
undertaking social work qualifying training, using questionnaires; their study, involving 240 respondents, suggested a high correlation between these factors and resilience to stress; however, they note that using their methodology, cause and effect cannot necessarily be established, and longitudinal studies would refine the nature of this apparent correlation.

Kearns and McArdles’ study used the Grotberg resilience framework (2012:385), which explores those dimensions of being, having and doing. The use of storytelling as a research method aims to explore ‘…their interpretations of their lives’ (2012:388) within organisational and wider systems, and the researchers develop new narratives through reflection on their own experiences, values and beliefs. They suggest that previous social work literature has focused on burnout and deficit, and that insufficient attention has been paid to the positives and rewards. Kearns and McArdle acknowledge the dominant themes in literature relating to newly-qualified professionals:

“…managing the interface between two such different ‘communities of practice’ as the university and the workplace appeared to engage with the delicate balance of challenge, control, support and protection.” (2012:389)

Using Grotberg’s framework they identify the characteristics of developing resilience in NQSW. ‘I Am’ involves optimism and self-esteem, valuing complexity and challenge, and a balance of idealism and realism. In the dimension ‘I Have’ the nature of support, particularly in transition between the roles of student and qualified professional, are significant, as are effective role models and a culture of trust in the team and the organisation. Important in the ‘I Can’ dimension are skills of communication, relationship building and problem-solving, practice wisdom (‘knowing’ rather than ‘doing’), and an understanding of self within the organisational culture. Humphrey, in exploring the dilemmas of doing insider research in professional education, similarly notes that:

“…processes of becoming are at the heart of professional socialization and yet have frequently been overlooked in studies of professional education. In other words, students do not simply amass new knowledge or apply new skills, but rather they start to internalise new ways of being, doing, feeling, perceiving and thinking…” (2013: 574)

As noted in section 1:4, this internalisation offers the potential for learning. Van Maanen values ambiguity and working with ‘logical opposites’
(1995:137) as a means of understanding and problem solving in complex situations. The themes of ‘being’, ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ develop Reason’s (2001), and Page and Broussines’ (in Broussine, 2008) discussions on Heron’s Ways of Knowing. Heron identifies four ways or modes of Knowing (Heron 1971, summarised by Reason 2001:184-5). Propositional knowing is the intellectual, theoretical knowledge, the ‘knowing about’, which may be seen as the core academic knowledge of NQSW (although the learning outcomes of HEI’s are likely to address all modes of Heron’s epistemology). Practical knowing is the knowing how to do, the skill or competence of ‘I can’ (Kearns and McArdle, 2012), the ‘hitting the ground running’ (Galpin et al 2013) for NQSW. Experiential knowing is of direct contact and experience, and Presentational knowing is the expression of what is known; Page and Broussine (in Broussine, 2008:157) suggest that such presentational knowledge may not be articulated verbally or even consciously. Heron emphasises that different types of knowing are privileged in different ways through organisations; he suggests that for the well-being of the organisation, and the validity of the learning, these should be congruent However, Page and Broussine consider that dissonance between types of knowing offers the opportunity for the development of ideas, and the making of a difference to practice within the organisation; they suggest that creative enquiry may provide a means of exploring congruence and dissonance. This notion informed my decision to use arts-based action inquiry as the methodology for my research, and my awareness of the complexity of the undertaking; Domagalski (1999), in confirming the legitimacy of research relating to emotion in organisations, suggests that:

“...studying internally felt emotion is fraught with complexity, not in the least because the challenge entailed in capturing the essence of individuals who may not be entirely conscious of their inner feelings. Also, because once these feelings are articulated and worked on by the employee, they are subject to change.” (1999: 848 -9)

by Kearns and McArdle (2012) and Kinman and Grant (2011). Fineman and Gabriel (1996:137), in their study of emotion in organisations, describe the experience of ‘…sudden immersion in deep water…’ for new employees. In the context of Coffey and Atkinsons’ (1996) discussion of metaphor as ‘a ubiquitous feature of a culture’s or an individual’s thinking and discourse’ (1996:85), the origin of this language in academic research and practice education would seem to be significant in terms of my research. If this is the metanarrative in professional communities of practice education and statutory agencies, there is the potential for me as researcher to use such metaphors deductively in my interaction with the research participants, rather than trusting to the emergent nature of the process and participants’ ability to evaluate. The emergent themes for participants may be consistent with current dominant discourses; if these themes are already known to practice educators and agencies, what is the extent of acknowledgement, and how are they being addressed? Humphrey (2013:578), cautions that discourse and sensemaking may not be shared by professional communities in relation to knowledge and values. Cutliffe and McKenna (2002) similarly suggest that qualitative research should provide meaning for participant and researcher, but it will not necessarily be the same meaning.

2:3 Being Becoming and Belonging

The phrase ‘being, becoming and belonging’ (Yuval-Davis 2006 in Kearns and McArdle 2012:388) suggests a contrast with organisational expectations of newly-qualified professionals that they should ‘know’ and be able to ‘do’. As previously noted, Bates et al (2010) confirm that ‘being’ a professional is complex and extensive, and Humphrey suggests that ‘becoming’ involves professional socialisation, which requires not only being, but also doing, feeling perceiving and thinking. Yuval-Davis (2009:18) suggests that ‘belonging’ is characterised by feeling at home, safe, and emotionally attached; it brings the notion of boundaries and divisions, and, she suggests, becomes more important when there is a threat. Yuval-Davis develops her analysis in terms of political and gender issues; further exploration of these areas undoubtedly has relevance for my study, but is not central to my focus and therefore is not further developed in this dissertation. However, her
characterisation of potential threat to belonging, and the formation of ‘us’ and ‘them’, is consistent with the language of research relating to NQSW, the potential of falling through a gap.

Pare and Le Maistre (2006:363) study transitions to the workplace, focussing on effective induction; they note that for the community of practice which the NQSW is joining:

“...the arrival of a newcomer can mean fresh perspectives, new expertise, and revitalizing energy – or disruptions, resistance and unwelcome work for veteran staff.”

Their analysis has resonance with Taylor and Bogos’ (2011) ‘Perfect Opportunity~Perfect Storm’, suggesting how finely-balanced the outcome of the NQSW experience may be, and how dependent it is on the host organisation. In the organisation which is the subject of my study, the implementation of modern working is likely to impact on the transitional experience of NQSW in relation to specific aspects identified by Pare and Le Maistre. They emphasise the importance of co-participation, characterised by interaction and co-operation; these link to the importance of feeling oneself to be part of the team, of being ‘...granted a sense of belonging...’ (2006:374), which contributes to building professional identity. Vince (2001:1329) also confirms the importance of social interaction:

“Learning primarily occurs in the context of social relations and as a result of complex interactions, which are profoundly influenced by both individual and collective emotions.”

The theme of informal interactions is discussed in 2:4 in relation to team dynamics and the experience of the physical environment. Pare and Le Maistre note that the use of the physical space of the workplace and how areas for activity are proscribed will be different to that of the NQSW’s place of learning; the literature explored in 2:4 suggests that one of the unintended consequences of modern working is likely to be that all employees learn to use physical space differently, and the functions and meaning ascribed by them individually and collectively to particular areas of the environment may not be as the organisation intended.

The notion of a corporate culture (Peters and Waterman 1982) is challenged by aesthetic approaches which deal with, in Weick’s (2007) terms, the unpredictable and unknowable. Strati (1999:2) says that aesthetics in organizational life concerns human knowledge ‘…yielded by the perceptive faculties of hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste, and by the capacity for aesthetic judgement.’ Warren (2002:225) uses the assumption of aesthetic experience as beginning with a sensory perception, and the resulting ‘emotional and visceral response’ is mediated by context, by cultural, organisational and social factors.

The NQSW in my research have begun working in an organisation which, in moving to modern ways of working, is changing the physical environment and use of technology to promote hot-desking and home-working. In making sense of their situation and developing new identity, NQSW are prompted by cues from their working environment (Weick 1995 in Keen et al 2013:27), including both minority and dominant discourses within the organisation. This literature review identifies three specific issues in relation to modern working which have an impact on the being, becoming and belonging; these issues are: the impact on the development of relationships where team members are physically separated for much of the time, the unintended consequences of remote working and the meaning which employees ascribe to physical spaces in their working environment. This last aspect is explored through research using respondent-led photography, including a discussion of visual expression and the importance of context; this provides an introduction to the use of arts-based action enquiry in organisational research, which is developed in chapter 3.

Levi (2011) approaches the impact on group dynamics of ‘virtual teams’, from a perspective of social, environmental and organisational psychology. Although the teams employing the NQSW in my study have a physical environment, there is encouragement from the organisation and provision of the technology for home working; teams are provided with neighbourhoods of hot-desks in an environment where other teams are also working, and for some teams this has meant a move from a previous office base which the team may have felt to be their own for many years. Levi’s emphasis, therefore, on the changes which result from increased physical separation are relevant to the teams which the NQSW have joined. Levi suggests that the physical separation
of team members changes how people interact, and the dynamics of the group process; although NQSW have come to teams as newcomers, they come to an environment where the individual and collective emotions of existing team members are being challenged by new ways of working.

Team dynamics are, suggests Levi, changed in terms of communication, decision-making and participation, and there are likely to be both benefits and challenges. Existing teams are likely to learn how to select, use and adapt technologies and develop strategies for maintaining team cohesion; nonetheless, there are likely to be unintended and unanticipated effects on the organisation, and on the social relationships which this literature review has identified as important for NQSW in transition:

“Because communication plays an important role in maintaining social relations and organizational culture, the lack of social information in a type of communication may prevent new social relations from developing…” (2011:258)

Levi confirms the importance of informal interaction between team members, in building interpersonal relationships and developing team identity. Wilkinson (2011), and Shortt and Warren (2012) explore emotional responses to physical environment, and would appear to confirm and develop Levi’s view of the importance of casual conversation and the sharing of social information, of the checking in which takes place between team members. He notes a range of issues arising for virtual teams, which would seem to be particularly pertinent for the newcomer, who must learn to understand team culture and dynamics and to find their place. In communication by email, for example, there is the potential for dissonance between the sender and the recipient, as the social cues are absent; for new workers who do not have prior knowledge of team culture this is likely to be particularly challenging. “Virtual team members do not learn how to ‘read’ the emotion in each other’s communication…” (2011:269) For the NQSW addressing Humphrey’s (2013) imperative of professional socialisation, developing an understanding of the emotional and social context of the team is likely to present a challenge. Levi suggests there is a greater potential for team members to suspect ‘social loafing’, that others are not pulling their weight within the team; for the NQSW seeking safety and a sense of belonging, there may therefore be the difficulty of proving to be ‘one of us’ in Yuval-Davis’s terms (2009).
Wilkinson’s (2011) research concerned the responses of workers to remote working, and demonstrated the role of emotion in modern working and the unintended consequences of the preparations which are made by organisations. The provision of choice and appropriate support can lead to a sense of guilt in employees working from home, and counter intuitively, those who have less choice may experience a sense of freedom. Wilkinson noted that employees who feel guilty are likely to work harder, but because they appear committed does not mean that they are motivated. In the context of Levi’s suggestion of the risk of social loafing, this research presents a further challenge to NQSW in understanding the consequences of the move to modern working for the teams to which they are seeking to belong.

Wilkinson’s study and Rippins’ (2011a: 830) discussion of workers’ sense of alienation in the workplace and search for meaning: ‘…sterility and hopelessness of contemporary organizational ritual…’ confirm the individual and collective emotion within organisations. Even when the life of an organisation appears to continue quietly, Boudens (2005: 1302) suggests, “…there are forceful, sometimes overwhelming emotions that accompany these experiences.” Rippin (2011) examines stories surrounding corporate architecture, suggesting that whilst buildings will consciously or unconsciously manifest organisational culture, there will be counter-narratives as to how employees experience the space. Shortt and Warren (2012), in research using respondent-led photography, found that “sacred ‘hiding and escaping’ places…were important and meaningful territories…”:

“It seems the ‘in-between’ spaces…all have key and important meanings…and…had emotional and confessional stories to tell.” (2012:27).

Shortt and Warren asked workers to photograph the places which were important for them; workers photographed stairwells, kitchen areas, smoking areas, corridors, corners, and other hidden places. Shortt and Warren found that the significant areas where people form the social contacts are these unexpected, liminal spaces, where workers exchange the kind of personal information and shared stories which develop team cohesion.

The research relating to working environments, remote working and virtual teams, when considered in conjunction with the issues discussed in 2:2 and 2:3, may well be significant for the participants in my research in being becoming and belonging. Shortt and Warren (2012:30-31) confirm the ‘varied,
multi-sensory, emotional narratives' of bringing together the photographer, researcher and image. Brown et al (2009:324) comment that 'narrative is simply there, like life itself international, trans-historical and trans-cultural…' The notion that employees will experience their workplace through all their senses would seem to underpin the titles of research papers as noted in 2:2. Rose (2007:51), in discussing Art as visual expression, suggests that photos are able to capture the feel and texture of the workplace in a way which is difficult and lengthy in the written word; and inevitably ‘…some emotions evade verbal or written expression.’ (2007:248). Rose’s comment on feel and texture, and Strati’s statement of the importance of perceptive faculties confirmed my view that I wished to develop a workshop involving touch, texture, and visual cues, as well as narrative.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of my study, the characteristics of arts-based action research, and the tools which I used in facilitating the arts-based workshop.
Chapter 3
Methodology

*Forget your perfect offering,*
*There is a crack, a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in.*
*(Leonard Cohen, Anthem)*

3:1 Introduction:

This chapter identifies the tools used, in undertaking an arts-based action research inquiry, to demonstrate the validity of my research and findings in exploring the topic. Recognising, as Marshall et al (2010:76) note, that there are ‘real consequences flowing from…actions and decisions’ in action research, as a researcher in my employing organisation I must live with and act on the learning which comes from the study. Initially, I will explore my philosophical stance in undertaking this study, and then consider action learning as an approach, and the specific characteristics of arts-based action inquiry. Subsequent sections of this chapter discuss the participant-researcher relationship and related ethical issues, the arts materials used, then the workshop and interview processes.

Lincoln and Guba (1986) are explicit as to the influence of the researcher’s perspectives and assumptions in qualitative research, and note the imperative for the researcher, in formulating the question and research methodology, to decide on their ontological and epistemological stance:

“…the dictum “believing is seeing”…what we hope or expect to see blinds researchers (and) evaluators…to other questions which may be pressing, or at least of equal import.” (1986:561)

In developing my understanding of the characteristics of action research and its relevance to my area of inquiry, I have noted the parallels between the values and knowledge of social work and the principles of action research. The themes identified by Bell (2013:524), in reviewing the literature on social work research methodology and ethics, would seem to offer a basis for my ontology. Not only should social work research provide benefit, but should do so through the entire research process. With the notion of beneficence comes that of empowerment; Bloor, (in Bell 2013), provides an analysis which resonates with
policy developments described in 1:4, characterised by principles of self-
determination and expertise by experience (DH 2007):

“…Bloor considers inter-subjectivity to be at the ontological heart of
social work theory and notes that research methodology should therefore
consistently and consciously reflect the interconnectedness between
researchers and participants, aiming for ‘power with’ approaches to
research, rather than ‘power over’.” (Bell 2013:524)

Thus the active involvement of research participants in the process and
the production of knowledge, are central to my research perspective. This active
participation offers the opportunity for the data from the research process to
contribute to the development of theory, the approach of Grounded Theory
(Denscombe 2007, Lincoln and Guba 1986); my intention is that theory should
be generated through the analysis of data, that the researcher should be honest
about their assumptions, and that knowledge generated should be useful and
add to sensemaking for the participants. This characteristic gives other
researchers an opportunity to test the hypothesis and transferability of the
research:

“When you inquire into what is going on, when you show people your
train of thought and put forward hypotheses to be tested, you are
generating data.” (Coghlan and Brannick 2010:31)

In terms of my epistemological stance, the evolution of my knowledge will
occur, I believe inevitably, through the lens of my existing social work
knowledge and practice experience, and my commitment to the generation of
knowledge through my interaction with others in the agency and wider
community. Coghlan and Brannick use the metaphor of a zoom lens to explain
the range of possibilities available to the action researcher, how much of the
system should be researched; my world is central to the validity of my research,
and determines my decisions as to the focus of research:

“Researchers’ epistemological and ontological perspectives legitimate
their own distinctive way of doing research and determine what they
consider a valid, legitimate contribution to knowledge or theory…”
Coghlan and Brannick 2010:41.

Although, as a social work professional, I have my metaphorical toolkit of
toolkit of
toolkit of
toolkit of
theory to inform how and why things are as they are, and how change may be
affected, I recognise in this study Bell’s assertion of the importance of the
‘…engagement of research participants as active empowered agents on the
process' (2013:524), and the democratization of knowledge production. Brydon-Miller et al (2003:13) confirm that:

“Action research rejects the notion of an objective, value-free approach to knowledge generation in favour of an explicitly political, socially engaged, and democratic practice.”

3:2 Characteristics of Action Research

Denscombe (2007) states that Action Research is a framework, rather than a method of research; its emphasis is on making a difference, and individual practitioners will select their own techniques for data collection; social work practice takes place within a similar complex framework, underpinned by clear values and ethics. Just as social work practitioners make decisions about strategies and techniques, based on their theoretical knowledge, practice wisdom and knowledge of process, so action research is a particular approach based on existing knowledge, rather than a specific theory; Reason and Bradbury (2008) note the ‘diverse practices of action research’, which they draw together to provide a framework, while Brydon-Miller et al state that “…it is not a single academic discipline but an approach to research that has emerged over time from a broad range of fields.” (2003:11) Reason and Bradbury suggest the benefit of action research in promoting social justice, as a “…democratic process….in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes…” (2008:1).

Taking action is central to action research, providing the opportunity for the testing, evaluation and analysis of theory; implicit in this is the researcher’s inclusion as part of the research, and subsequent change; the reflective cycles which support researchers in evaluation and reframing of their research focus are those which are likely to underpin reflective practice in social work, for example, Egan (2010), and Gibbs (1988). Reason and Bradbury (2001) in Brydon-Miller et al (2003: 10) state that:

“It (Action Research) seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.”

The notion of participants as experts by experience has been discussed in 3:1; the relationship between participants and the action researcher, bears similarities with the theories which underpin social work assessment and
intervention, and recognise the expertise of the individual, but also the role of the worker in the process, for example, the Exchange Model (Smale et al 1993). Issues of power have also been referred to in 3:1; the power of the participant group in Action Research to effect change is likely to be greater than their power as individuals. As a researcher, I recognise the significance of pre-existing relationships between individuals, group dynamics, confidentiality, ownership of information, and potential of power relationships and imbalances; these issues are discussed in subsequent sections of this Methodology chapter, and where appropriate are further considered in my analysis and evaluation in Chapter 5.

3:3 Art-based Action Inquiry

Among the ‘diverse practices’ within Reason and Bradburys’ framework of action research is Action Inquiry, characterised by the researcher as an insider, working with others to develop knowledge about personal and professional practice. Gaya Wicks and Rippin note the emphasis of the inquiry process on developing sensemaking (2010:261); Reason and Bradbury refer to the promotion of participants’ ability to inquire into the values and assumptions from which they are operating (Isaacs 1999, in Reason and Bradbury 2008:238). This is the notion of double loop learning, which is central to action inquiry (Torbert 2011). Torbert suggests that, in practice, double loop learning requires ‘listening for the music’ (1999:190) in interactions. Double loop learning may change ways of thinking, and lead to different perspectives and ways of working; action inquiry is research which takes place with others in communities of practice (1999, 2011). Torbert emphasises that for research to be action inquiry, three areas should be explored together, promoting the achievement of outcomes, the development of joint effectiveness, and the making of meaning and awareness; it has to be ‘instrumental, practical and emancipatory’ (1999:190).

Working with collage as preparation for undertaking my dissertation, I understood the importance of Weick’s analysis of sensemaking (2007, Keen 2013:27) in developing my own best practice, and this prompted my reflection on how I could use this practice wisdom to promote learning for NQSW within the agency. My previous support, as a practice educator, for the participants in
this research, had been through processes based on logic and rationality, the ticking of competencies on a checklist within a Framework “...whose structure featured the gathering of a large portfolio of evidence which was measured against outcome statements…” (Skills for Care 2013: Introduction). However, Weick suggests that registering and adapting to a complex world requires ‘complex thinking and perception’ (2007:10), but he suggests that there is ‘life beyond confused complexity’.

“To drop the tools of rationality is to gain access to lightness in the form of intuitions, feelings, stories, improvisation, experience...novel words...All of these nonlogical activities enable people to solve problems and enact their potential.” (2007:15)

The opportunity to develop and facilitate a workshop in which participants produced an artefact, which would make sense of an experience which they had not been able to voice, addressed the sense I had had that the support which I provided to NQSW through the agency did not reach some fundamental issues which needed to be explored and developed. While literature seeking to describe the NQSW experience refers to Weick’s notion of sensemaking, Taylor and Ladkin (2009), in examining the effectiveness of arts-based methods in managerial development, also cite Weick’s view of the ‘confused complexity’ of the world, and they assert that arts-based methods provide a means of accessing and understanding workplace experience. Strati (1999) suggested that the difficulty with much organisational research was its assumption that the generation and exchange of ideas within organisations was rational, and devoid of sensations. Kearns and McArdle also suggest that professional practice cannot be ‘self-less’ (2012:388), furthermore that there is responsibility on organisations to promote the integration of self into the working environment.

Taylor and Ladkins’ (2009:56) analysis of the design and implementation of arts-based methods suggests the importance of careful preparation underpinned by theoretical knowledge and a range of skills. They note four distinctive process which underpin arts-based developmental approaches: the development of artistic skills, which can be transferred to professional practice; the potential for inner thoughts and feelings to be revealed and represented in art; the capturing of the ‘essence’ of a situation, showing greater depth and relationship of concepts; and the act of making art,
which can be a healing experience, to address sense of fragmentation and disconnection. Taylor and Ladkin suggest the value in skilled practitioners using arts based methods to achieve well-defined objectives; Gaya Wicks and Rippin (2010:274) conclude “…that facilitators of arts-based approaches ideally need sufficient expertise and understanding of both artistic approaches and organizational realities.”

Although I have a perspective on organisational realities, and some experience of facilitation, I would claim no expertise in artistic approaches. I was also unable to identify examples of the use of arts-based methods in the agency, although there was anecdotal information of the use, for example, of peg dolls in reminiscence work with older people in the independent sector. Consilium (2013), in partnership with Skills for care, have researched the role of arts in promoting independence and wellbeing for service users in social care; they conclude that arts-based activities can facilitate social interaction and creativity, and promote changes in workforce culture, which in turn promote improved outcomes for service users. Consistent with Taylor and Ladkins’ identification of the complex interlinked processes of arts-based action inquiry, Consilium (2013:4) suggest that “Training can be valuable in enabling some care staff to challenge preconceptions that the end product is the focus, and realise the value of the process.” Although Taylor and Ladkin (2009:55) caution that there is the potential for arts-based methods to be viewed as ‘flavor of the month’, Consilium situate their research within contemporary social policy, which suggests that the value of art-based activity is gaining currency in statutory social care settings.

3:4 Dolls and Doll-making in Arts-based Research

Gaya Wicks and Rippin (2010) use dolls and doll-making in arts-based action inquiry, whose participants (students on a leadership and management course) are able to undertake purposeful activity, and critically reflect on their participation in the process, exploring parallels with conceptualisations of leadership. They suggest that employing art as experience rather than product allows “…people to work intuitively and to bypass their customary cognitive processes.” (2010: 274)
Existing literature on doll-making, Gaya Wicks and Rippin note, largely refers to doll-making as craft, with academic literature relating to dolls having an anthropological perspective. In my reflections, below, on my discomfiture and unease about using dolls, I have referred to aspects of Gaya Wicks and Rippins’ analysis, and to an ethnographic study (Averett and Soper 2011) using a mutilated Barbie doll as part of a shadow box. Gaya Wicks and Rippins’ analysis includes the work of Pinkola Estes who, from a psychoanalytical perspective, uses a Russian traditional tale to explore the doll as “inner reason, inner knowing, and inner consciousness.” (2008:85).

My perceptions and experiences underpinned my choice of workshop materials (figure 1); reading the literature relating to dolls, it was clear that the choice of materials, which at first glance appeared straightforward, could not be value-neutral. I provided a range of workshop materials, including foam and wooden doll templates, canvas stuffed dolls (which I hand made, so each was slightly different; I used photographic images from Gaya Wicks and Rippin 2010 as a guide), and fabric, felt, card, glue and paint. The range of materials was intended to provide participants with a choice as to whether to use the dolls, and my intention was to offer a range of textures to be worked with, in addition to the visual cues of the shapes. This was important in recognising the participants as experts in their own situation, and the potential meanings for them of the materials presented. In developing my research, I experienced times of apprehension about the use of human body images in the workshop, particularly while sewing the canvas dolls, confirming Gaya Wicks and Rippins’ recognition of the power of dolls. However, providing participants with no option other than to use the dolls would potentially negate the motivations which they may initially have had for agreeing to take part; Bell (2013:524) identifies the basic motivation of research participants as wanting to help others, but also suggests that:

“The art of attracting research participants is an important step in the research process with the researcher needing to carefully consider the methods most likely to capture the imagination of potential participants and then engage these people in the research process.”
There was a potential that in capturing the imagination of participants, the use of dolls may have impacted negatively on their sense of comfort in taking part. In preparing for the workshop, I considered gender and cultural sensitivity in the provision of materials, in the context of Taylor and Ladkins’ (2009) discussion of the importance of expertise in using art-based methods. I had not asked for participants’ self-definition as part of the preparation for the
workshop, and in assembling workshop materials I made decisions based on my assumptions of utility and satisfaction (for example, colourful fabrics, tactile materials). I was aware of my underpinning assumptions about gender, perception of disability and ethnicity in relation to the participants, which may have compounded my apprehension when making the dolls, which were of a uniform shape, made of cream-coloured canvas.

This reflection and my discomfiture are themselves predicated on the assumption that if the dolls are used, participants will use them to represent themselves. My review of literature suggested that the complexity and ambiguity which underpin this assumption contribute to the powerful symbolism of the doll; dolls emanate “…an awesome and compelling presence which acts upon persons, changing them spiritually.” (Pinkola Estes 2008:84) While she speaks of the doll as ‘…a small and glowing facsimile of the original Self’ (2008:85), this is a voice within the wider self. Pinkola Estes relates her discussion to a Russian tale where the doll in a woman’s pocket is called upon as intuition and instinct. Cook’s (2013) study of Ice Age Art notes that portable images of human figures may have been “…the product of a playful nature…(or)...as a means of bringing the protective, helpful powers of spirits to your side.” (2013:25)

Toffoletti (2007) discusses the role of the Barbie Doll in popular culture, and the shadow box created by Soper (Averett and Soper 2011) includes a mutilated Barbie doll; while at times Soper notes that she had emotionally become the Barbie doll, for her it is primarily a symbol of her fears. Gaya Wicks and Rippins’ students are asked to produce a leadership touchstone; while some dolls are seen as mirror images, one includes a representation of a manager. My interpretation of their analysis is that an artefact produced may appear to be a hand-made double, but actually offers a manifestation of “…that which we are unable to face; that which is too disquieting or intolerable to contemplate or work with in any sustained way.” (Gaya Wicks and Rippin, 2010:265). Therefore, in choosing materials, workshop participants may not consciously base those choices on self-definition.

I recognise that for me there is further learning in relation to doll-making as art, and the issues considered in the previous paragraph merit wider research and depth of analysis, which is beyond the scope of my current study.
Before addressing the specifics of the workshop, I consider some issues relating to the workshop participants.

**3:5 Participant/ Researcher Relationship: Considerations and Ethics**

Of eleven potential participants, four of these no longer worked for the organisation. Retention of social workers is an issue of national significance, and the views of the NQSW who no longer worked for the agency could have contributed a great deal to the research. I judged that this would be an appropriate piece of work, but that within the ethical approval which had been sought I could not make this contact. From seven potential participants, three participants, who were known to each other, took part in the workshop.

Shaw (2008:411) advises that “Participatory, emancipatory forms of research make conventional views of ethics hard to sustain.” The Ethical Approval and Research Governance Approval processes were significant in prompting my reflection on ethical issues, including informed consent and confidentiality; the participants are familiar with the notion of informed consent, and I believe we share agreement as to its constituents. However, as Humphrey 2013:575, in considering dilemmas in ethnographic study, cautions ‘... such projects evolve in response to changing conditions, rendering the prediction of future consequences distinctly hazardous’. Humphrey suggests the responsibility for insider researchers to develop skills in anticipating and ameliorating the unintended consequences of emergent perspectives and ways of thinking.

To address confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for the participants. Because of the small sample size, there was a risk of ‘betrayal’ (Shaw 2008:409); some statements from the workshop and interviews have not been used. In terms of the maintenance of confidentiality for service users, carers and colleagues, Humphrey (2013:577) considers whether qualitative researchers “…routinely if inadvertently invite participants to breach agency-based norms around confidentiality?” The workshop plan (appendix 6) provided an opportunity for discussion at the beginning of the workshop, and maintenance of confidentiality was supported by the participants’ professional standards and practice knowledge.
My aim was to develop through the research process, a relationship of ‘power with’, rather than ‘power over’ the participants (Bell, 2013:524). I could not make assumptions as to how much the participants may wish to disclose to each other; in my role as a practice educator, I view them as a cohort, a group of people with shared experience, but they may not do so. Levi (2011:87) notes the cognitive and emotional components of trust, and within the workshop, my expectation was that the participants would feel this emotional component, that they could trust each other with information that was shared. Although the workshop plan provided the opportunity to agree ground rules on confidentiality of participants’ information, it did not explicitly address how the development of group cohesion would be supported; based on my previous knowledge of the participants, I trusted them to work effectively as a group, to the extent that I chose to leave the room while they were creating their artefacts.

Action research requires the researcher to model behaviour which is congruent with their values and ethical stance, be willing to examine the question, and be curious about outcomes; Marshall and Reason (2007) also note the importance of ‘radical empiricism’ and ‘humility’. A significant aspect of humility is the recognition that because I had been involved in support for NQSW there may critical feedback in terms of its implementation; I needed to be aware of the potential for my professional or personal behaviour to be commented on in the research, and how this would influence the research process, but also that the participants may be constrained from giving this feedback.

A related issue was that I may make assumptions, predominantly about shared meaning with the participants. Humphrey (2013:579) cautions against the assumption of shared discourse within a profession, particularly in terms of values; my qualifying learning had taken place 30 years prior to that of the participants. The development of policy in response to a changing political landscape, theoretical development, changing frameworks of competence and capability, and changes in expectations of professional registration, would mean that I could not claim, in Humphrey’s term, ‘insider status and…collegiate rapport’.

In discussing the role of the participant observer, Denscombe (2007:207) notes that the researcher’s perceptions will be influenced by personal factors. He cautions that the observer is likely to see what they are
used to seeing, and will use their previous experience to identify and make sense of ambiguity. In my study, ambiguity and contradiction offer potentially rich seams for the surfacing of emotion and meaning, so my understanding of the significance and emphasis with which I imbue aspects of the participants’ sensemaking will impact significantly on the validity of the findings; in terms of Torbert’s (1999) view that the making of meaning is central to action inquiry, this impact should not necessarily undermine the validity of the research. Denscombe also suggests that ‘accentuated perception’ (2007:208) is at work here; the researcher’s previous experience and current physiological and emotional situation will determine how they filter and prioritise what they see and hear.

3:6 Workshop and Interviews

The stated aim of the study (appendix 1) was to explore, through an arts-based action inquiry process, the everyday experience of NQSW, using a cycle of investigation, action and reflection. The previous sections of this chapter have explored the characteristics of this style of qualitative research, and shown how these relate to the development and implementation of my study. In terms of the research objectives, the promotion of self-reflection, sensemaking and the furthering of knowledge for the participants were intended to be achieved through the workshop and interviews, with the opportunity for further reflection from the dissertation analysis and evaluation. The information for the agency as to work-based research methodologies is intended to be available from the completed dissertation, and as a researcher, I will use all aspects of the process in developing my professional practice.

Participants were invited to take part in a 3 hour arts-based workshop and follow up interviews two weeks afterwards. The rationale for having interviews two weeks after the workshop was that it provided opportunity for participants for sensemaking and development of knowledge, and for me as researcher to write up the data; additionally, it was intended to be sensitive to teams’ capacity issues, in releasing participants for further research activity. Issues of geography and time-management meant that I held two follow-up interview sessions, one with a single participant, and the other with two participants.
A preference was expressed for the sessions not to be audio-recorded, a response which I will explore in 5:1; I therefore made notes during the sessions and recorded these more fully directly after the workshop and interviews.

As I was concerned to ensure an emotional separation between the participants’ work, and their participation in the workshop, I selected a venue for the workshop which, to my knowledge, held no significance for any participant, and where they could not be interrupted by work issues. I hoped to deliberately create a space for sensemaking, valuing the participants as experts in their own right. This recognises Brydon-Miller et al’s:

“…abiding respect for people’s knowledge and for their ability to understand and address the issues confronting them and their communities.” (2003:14)

Simpson et al’s concept of ‘negative capability’ is a state of ‘reflective inaction’, which they suggest can “…create an intermediate space that enables one to continue to think in difficult situations” (2002:1213). In conceptualising the environment which I wished to create for the workshop, I recognised that the intermediate spaces created through negative capability and the liminal spaces identified by Shortt and Warren (2012) in effect were both places where important insights occurred, but which were not necessarily recognised as significant by outsiders. Humphrey (2013:578) notes the significance of the space provided for the research, in relation to participants’ perceptions of the role of the researcher, and the potential for creating anxiety for participants.

The workshop plan (Appendix 6) describes the process. The participants had comparatively little time to familiarise themselves with the theoretical context of the workshop; there was some information in the Participants Information sheet (appendix 3), and at the beginning of the workshop a short sharing of information to set the workshop in context. This was significantly different to the research which informed my work. Gaya Wicks and Rippins’ (2010) workshop using dolls and doll-making involved introductory sessions on arts-based research approaches which linked to students’ existing knowledge. Averett and Sopers’ (2011) research related to a student on a social work programme who undertook an ethnographic assignment as part of their qualifying programme.

Following this brief introduction to the underpinning theory, I invited the participants to select, from a selection of 20, up to two postcards which
attracted their attention in the context of the workshop focus. This aspect of the workshop reflects was intended to provide a bridge from the theoretical discussion to the arts-based activity, and to develop the potential for new insight which is offered by Simpson et al’s intermediate spaces (2002), in Cohen’s (1992) terms, the cracks where the light gets in. Each participant described to the others the meaning of the postcards for them.

They were then invited to use the arts materials to explore their experience of their first post-qualifying year. There was no imperative to produce an artefact and no suggestion of the importance of skill; Rippin (2007: 213) in her action inquiry into collaborative working in a quilting group, reminds us that “The relational aspect of collaborative work can be inhibiting as well as stimulating”; while her study refers to a round robin collaboration, there could be a risk with the workshop which I have devised, that there is a sense of being pressurised into producing a finished piece to a high standard. Rippin also introduces the notion of reciprocity, of the influence of the participants on each other.

There is the question as to whether my workshop was implicitly, or gave permission to be, a collective endeavour, and how my decision to leave the participants together to create their artefacts influenced the data. I had intended to stay in the room, to facilitate and address questions. However, I had left the room briefly at the beginning of this part of the workshop, and could hear animated conversation from the workshop room; when I returned the level of communication diminished considerably. Having the sense that my presence may inhibit their communication, I told the participants I would leave them with the workshop materials for 30 minutes. I made this decision, with consideration to Torbert’s (2011) imperatives for action inquiry, that the making of meaning and promotion of joint effectiveness may be enhanced by my leaving the workshop for a period of time. I return to this issue in my analysis.

On returning to the workshop, I invited the participants in turn to talk about the process of creating their artefacts. The discussion evolved into a sharing of views about some of the ideas which had arisen.

The participants were invited to photograph their postcards and artefacts to be included in the dissertation. We agreed that whilst the artefacts belong to the participants, the researcher is using photographic images in dissertation.
The participants agreed that I should keep the artefacts until my dissertation was completed, when the participants would decide what to do with them.

The follow up interviews took place some two weeks later; although described as ‘interviews’, these were intended to be conversations which developed the narrative from the workshop. The intention was to develop ‘…deeper, or thicker, description of a particular reality construction.’ (Ungar 2003:93).

3:7 Summary

This chapter has identified the theoretical basis for my methodology, my underpinning philosophy, and the tools used for undertaking the research. Chapter 4 presents and analyses the data from the research, relating findings to existing knowledge as identified in the literature review.
Chapter 4

Research Findings and Analysis

We can’t return, we can only look behind
From where we came
And go ‘round and ‘round and ‘round in the Circle Game.
(Joni Mitchell: The Circle Game)

4:1 Introduction: What is the Data?

In this chapter, I present the data which emerged from the workshop and subsequent interviews, then examine key themes. Underpinning the analysis is my awareness that there are many aspects which merit detailed exploration, and in concentrating my metaphorical zoom lens on specific issues, based on my assumptions and perspectives on the context, there is a tension between ensuring that I acknowledge ‘many concepts and multiple linkages’ (Coffey and Atkinson 1996:144), and ensuring that the narratives of the participants have primacy and are not submerged in my assumptions about their context. However, consistent with the principles of qualitative research, I recognise that my assumptions and biases also contribute to validity of the findings.

The arts-based action inquiry process generates a range of data, and within the concurrent development of my research and dissertation, the data addresses Marshall et al’s (2010) requirement for the two sets of activities, problem solving and the generation of new knowledge. My data therefore include the artefacts themselves, photographs of those artefacts (which may in future be seen and interpreted by participants and others), the reflections of participants during the workshop, the follow up interviews, and my reflection on the data. This is by no means an exhaustive list, as, for example, another researcher may use my study to inform their own cyclical learning; the use by participants in my workshop of postcards which were originally produced within different contexts and other purposes, demonstrates the value, as Warren (2002) suggests, of sharing visible data.

If, as Kushner (2011) emphasises, the data in Action Research comes from the experience of the participants themselves, and they must be involved in sensemaking and evaluation, then it is imperative for me as researcher to enable future researchers to access the voice of the participants, and not only
my own analysis of the data. Photographs of the artefacts are included in this section; the narrative was transcribed from written notes taken by me during the workshop and interviews. In judging the rigour and validity of my research, the reader must therefore consider the balance of information from the photographs and the inevitable bias of my transcribed notes, given Chelminksy’s (2012) caution of the single narrative, and Lincoln et al’s (1986:561) ‘believing is seeing’. From preceding chapters, the contextual information, perspectives from the literature review, and discussion of my philosophical standpoint will, I hope, inform the reader in adjusting their own focus on the data included and the significance ascribed.

A further issue in managing the presentation of data is the relationship between photographs of the artefacts, the participants’ narratives on those, and the narrative added by me as researcher. How far should the images speak for themselves? As researcher I have made the assumption that they are rich in information, and the information I believe they hold is based on my lived experience. Warren (2002:225), in her exploration of the use of photography to research organisational aesthetics, recognises ‘…the artifice of dividing image from text…’ and suggests that:

“This rests on the assumption that written texts and images have relative merits as modes of dissemination in their own right, with neither taking precedence over the other in terms of authority, or claim to ‘truth’.” (2002: abstract)

By way of demonstrating this, Warren’s paper includes a blurred photograph, which appears to have no representational meaning separate from its verbal explanation; however, Warren suggests that this photo nonetheless conveys emotion and meaning (2002:233). Catalini and Minkler (2010:442), reviewing the literature on Photovoice (community-based participatory research) found that:

“Most typically, the main source of data used to answer questions was not the photographs themselves but rather transcripts from photo-elicited group discussions or individual benefits.”

In terms of the potential generation of new knowledge from the research activity, the artefacts and narrative are also a record of the action inquiry process: my development of the study, sharing of information with prospective participants, and processes within the workshop and interviews, Guillemin
(2004:225) comments that drawings produced in a study are “simultaneously a visual product and the record of the process of production.” The data presented in 4:2 should therefore be viewed in the context of the interrelatedness of these issues.

4:2 Data and Analysis from Workshop and Interviews

The three workshop participants have been given pseudonyms: ‘Caroline’, ‘Sharon’ and ‘Anita’. For follow up interviews, I met with Caroline in a 1:1 interview, and with Sharon and Anita together; interviews were arranged to minimise impact on organisational capacity and on users of services. To identify emergent themes from the analysis, I have integrated the workshop data and the narrative from the follow up interviews.

The interviews were conversations designed to develop narrative, and were not structured, other than that for me as a researcher, I prompted discussion from points that I had found interesting in the workshop, with all the bias and assumptions inherent in qualitative research.

Participants expressed that they had felt some apprehension whilst travelling to the workshop; Sharon articulated this as being unsure how it would be to have to go back, and reflect on the experience of being newly-qualified that she was glad to have come out of. On seeing the dolls presented as workshop materials, one participant related them to voodoo dolls, and in the interviews, all participants said they had made this connection.

The workshop was held in an afternoon, with participants having worked during the morning. They commented at points during the session that it was good to have the opportunity to be away from their work, time out, and space to reflect. The selection of postcards as a means of providing a bridge between the day’s work and an arts-based workshop was recognised by participants as an effective technique; participants chose two postcard images each.

The Postcards: Caroline’s postcards (fig 2) relate to the emotions which she experienced when she began work for the organisation: she selects the partial pink face (Lawton 2001) as when she first started as an NQSW she felt as if she was not a whole person. Her second postcard reminds her that the experience of working felt like a mess, a thicket so dense it was impossible to make sense of it or find a way out (Solomons 2001).
Sharon’s first postcard (fig 3) is entitled ‘cold dark matter’ (Parker 1991), the title and the image are important to her choice; the image suggests her
trying to find a way out of the thicket, and also needing to take with her the person who was being supported. The second postcard (Heath Robinson 1917) illustrates her sense of how she has developed:

“I’m on the pinnacle: on my own, prominent, with noise all around. There’s a sense of weight on my shoulders, I’ve read somewhere that being an NQSW is a bit like having a knapsack – initially you spend your time gathering stuff together and putting it, and as time goes on you become more confident and are able to find useful things in the knapsack to pull out and use.”

Anita (fig 5) chooses a postcard representing a photograph of James Dean (Stern 1955); as a newly qualified worker, she experienced an initial feeling of hiding away, but also that others in the organisation, notably managers, seemed to be hiding when she needed their support. The second postcard looks like a misty blur (Pearson 2001):

“Initially it is all a blur; I remember driving home from work in the early months of the job, it reminds me of how I felt and that the weather was rubbish – winter weather with grey skies, mist and rain. And I felt rubbish.”

Caroline’s dolls: Caroline uses the foam and wooden dolls (Fig 2), and describes how she chose them:

“As soon as I looked at the materials I knew what I was going to do with them, especially the first part - the zigzag shape jumped out at me, and was how I felt, not feeling comfortable and right.”

The red zigzags face inward onto the foam doll, as pressure on Caroline from outside of herself, everyone expecting something of her. The blue zigzags, fewer in number and facing outwards represent times when Caroline felt she had fought back at colleagues and the wider organisation pressuring her. She moves to forwards and upwards to happier times, the colours become more calm and neutral, and smiley faces become bigger; in moving forwards and upwards, Caroline also moves to ‘a different kind of loneliness’, initially it was feeling that she was alone and wouldn’t be backed up by colleagues and the organisation, and as she feels herself part of the team (the well-ordered wooden dolls, with only one male doll as there not many men around), she wishes to defend the team against outside pressures.
Figure 3 Sharon (a)

Figure 4 Sharon (b)
“I feel I came in at the bottom, eager to learn. I felt apprehensive about me as a new worker and how I felt I was treated, but now I have moved on and my concern is for the social work and for the team in general. There are still issues of power and support.”

*Sharon’s Doll:* Sharon’s is a two-sided canvas doll (Fig 3 and 4), one side is exposed with a neutral facial expression, and the other is smiling slightly and fully dressed, including her agency ID badge. Sharon experiences a need for the balance of roles, not only in the job, but also balancing personal life and all the changes that happen:

“Sometimes I get lost as an individual. I now think I know my identity as a social worker and then it flips back and it’s as if I was exposed again, I have different identities at different times. Sometimes feeling weighted down with a burden on my shoulders. Its important to get together with peers, there’s the impact of service users dying, you get to know them and their families, it’s an emotional job. But I am full of enthusiasm.”

*Anita’s Doll:* Anita has a canvas doll (Fig 5) topped with several foam hand shapes. For her, the camouflage fabric is a sense of not being able to see a way through, and feeling lost:

“The hands represent pressures, having to know everything but feeling I know nothing. There’s a small smiley, but only a small one. I have used a small ‘praise’ sticker, but only a small one – I get small amounts of praise from those around, but not those higher up in the agency. The ‘good girl’ sticker – sometimes people are ageist because you are young. The orange hat is there because of a feeling of standing out because I know nothing, when everybody else knows what they need to. And lots of hats – juggling and feeling unable to switch off: represents all the legislation we have to know and manage. The wooden figure at the side is the people that we work with – meant to be at the centre of our work, but is pushed to one side by everything else we have to do. The red bleary eyes show I am tired, trying to see through how to do things.”

*Participants’ comments from Group Discussion:* The individual participant reflection on their artefacts was followed by a group discussion. Participants’ comments, as noted here, come from that discussion and were also developed in follow-up interviews.

‘There was a sense of gasping for air.’
‘Feeling like a rabbit in the headlights.’
‘Feeling of having been built up like building blocks, then being dismantled.’
Figure 5: Anita
‘Nothing prepares you for the transition, the change to working with such complexity. Perhaps keeping a slow process in the first year would be better, and it would have also been beneficial to have had more experience as a student of important processes such as Safeguarding, and use of the Mental Capacity Act, it would be less of a massive change.’

‘However you work, it is never the right kind of work. What you do that is good is lost.’

‘Feeling safe is best.’

‘Feeling part of a community and the support of peers is so important.’

‘My sense that the team I went into was not settled, I was concerned about how people were treated. ‘Feels like the agency requires you to treat people’s lives like a box, need to be acknowledged and valued – service users and workers.’

‘Important that the manager had an open door when you needed advice.’

‘Actually I feel better about being in the job. It’s a strange journey – when do you stop being new? ‘Being able to do the job is all down to reflection about the work and what’s going on for you.’

‘It’s about hitting the ground running, about learning and serving your time.’

Follow-up Interviews: Participant reflections on the workshop/ research process.

On participant information provided: ‘The preparation was fine; I knew what to expect from the workshop, from the information you had sent round.’

On being asked whether it would have made a difference if the theory of arts-based action research had been discussed in greater detail: ‘Knowing more about the theory may have skewed what we did.’

‘To have known more about the theory … might have frightened us and made it harder for us to get started on making something.’

On how participants approached making their artefacts: ‘I did what I did with the postcards – sat and waited until something came up.’

‘Producing a piece was the gentle building of ideas.’

‘It was instant and grew from using the postcards.’

‘What I produced was not artistic or good, but I understood that that wasn’t the point.’

Reflecting on how they had gone about working with the materials provided, after I left the room: ‘We talked about work generally, and chatted – it was an opportunity to separate from work and think about something else.’
‘The workshop gave the opportunity for some time out and some reflection, and that in itself was good.’

*Use of materials:* Comment was made in the original workshop about voodoo dolls, and all participants said again in the interviews, that dolls can mean something sinister and threatening.

*What participants took from the workshop:* ‘I didn’t come up with anything new, but it made me think again of things I’d thought or done already.’

‘Workshop provided focus for reflection, but nothing new.’

**4:3 The Topic: Key Themes and Perspectives on the Literature Review**

The process, artefacts and interviews are viewed from the perspective of transitional identity, of ‘being, becoming and belonging’, as noted by Kearns and McArdle (2012:389) and their experience of the working environment.

The participants’ narrative of their postcards suggested a common theme of being in a dense place, from which it is difficult to exit, or to make sense; there is some ambiguity here, with the need to find a way out balanced by the need to hide away. This may relate to Van Maanen’s (1995) valuing of ambiguity as a learning opportunity, for sensemaking to be achieved through Humphrey’s (2013:574) processes of becoming. Hiding and escaping are significant themes for Shortt and Warren (2012), and the spaces in which this occurs are spaces of importance, sacred spaces which are chosen positively. The newcomer, Pare and Le Maistre (2006) suggest, has to learn the functions assigned by the organisation to physical spaces of the workplace, and this perhaps relates to Yuval-Davis’ (2009) suggestion of the importance of feeling ‘at home’ and understanding boundaries and divisions as a means of coming to belong. Shortt and Warrens’ research demonstrates the significance of areas for which functions are not assigned, and that the opportunity to hide or escape may be a ‘logical opposite’ in Van Maanen’s terms, a place where sensemaking can begin; this opportunity within adversity is suggested in NQSW research, for example, Taylor and Bogos’ (2011) “Perfect Oppoportunity~Perfect Storm”

The physical experience of the NQSW in the workplace is a consistent thread through the data, echoing the language of research relating to NQSW and also organisational aesthetics; Warren’s (2002) research title asks participants to ‘show me how it feels to work here’, and the language of NQSW
research identified in 2:2 also suggests the sudden impact of disconcerting sensations. Apprehension and uncertainty, the sensation of pressure and being burdened are central to the artefacts and the participants’ narrative; however, they also recognise the possibility of developing a degree of certainty and control over their environment through interaction and exchange with others in the organisation.

This ‘I Have’ dimension (Kearns and McArdle 2012), of mutual support and trust with team colleagues and others in the organisation, would seem to develop from the participants’ growing understanding of how knowledge is privileged in the organisation. Their experience of ‘having to know everything but knowing nothing’, and the wearing of many hats reflects the range of expectations they feel are upon them; this concern resonates with the recognition in literature relating to NQSW of the problematic interface between the communities of practice of higher education and employing authorities. The participants recognise the lack of congruence between their ‘Ways of Knowing’ (Heron 1971, summarised by Reason 2001:184-5), and their uncertainty as to how knowledge is valued by the organisation. However, their narrative suggests the development of ideas through this dissonance (Page and Broussine, in Broussine 2008). For example, the contents of the rucksack which is initially a burden, but actually contains useful knowledge and strategies, addressing the development of Kearns and McArdles’ ‘I Can’ dimension of problem solving and practice wisdom.

The artefacts, supported by participant narrative, signify movement and the development of identity, with attendant risk of loneliness, exposure and threat during the process. There is, in Caroline’s move to ‘a different kind of loneliness’, and Sharon’s two-sided doll, a gradual acquisition of the sense of belonging, through a sense of structure and order as part of a team, and as an individual with distinct identity. Pare and Le Maistre (2006) suggest that while the newcomer-old-timer relationship is beneficial, it is important for the newcomer to move beyond this; sharing their perspectives and reflections with their peers, and increasing participation in team dynamics, brings opportunities for belonging; they characterise these as double metamorphoses for the newcomer and professional community. The NQSW may still experience loneliness but the boundaries change; central to Yuval Davis’s (2009) notion of belonging is that of boundaries against a perceived external threat: for the
participants, the initial me-them boundary changes as the experience feeling part of team and being protective of colleagues. Anita’s ‘small amounts of praise’ suggest the building of positive relationships – the boundary here is with those ‘higher up’ the organisation.

In exploring the nature of transition, Lauerman (2014) suggests the inevitability of the unexpected, unintended and possibly abrupt experiences in the process, that “…change is likely to be experienced as…a series of disconnected steps rather than a smooth transition”, a series of spontaneous and unexpected events rather than a predictable flow. These times of dissonance and unease perhaps relate to the learning opportunities offered, in Kushner’s (2005a) terms, by the unintended and the failing, and can be viewed through Heron’s Ways of Knowing (Reason 2001).

There is an implicit challenge of becoming and belonging in an organisation moving to modern working practices, with changing physical environments, unintended consequences for group dynamics (Levi 2011) and emotional responses which are sometimes counter-intuitive (Shortt and Warren, 2012; Wilkinson, 2011). The participants’ narrative about their artefacts spoke of identity formation and the experience of transition; although the organisation’s move to modern working was not highlighted by them, notions of physical symptoms and the move to finding one’s place within a team and the wider organisation, and the emotions provoked, were noted by them as significant.

4:4 Implications for Practice

The original aim of the research was to explore the everyday experience of NQSW in the agency. The objectives for the participants were to promote the development of practice, and consequently the outcomes for service users, carers, families and communities, and to support the NQSW in developing their capability as professionals; the objective for me as researcher was to develop my professional practice, and thereby support more effectively professional development within the organisation.

My analysis of the artefacts and the participants’ narrative suggests key themes in the experience of NQSW. In making this statement, I note Humphrey’s caution of the assumption of shared discourses, but that professionals do not necessarily share the same language “….or enjoy equality
in our ease of access to it – so our ways of organising knowledge and making sense of practice could be mismatched.” (2013: 578).

I would suggest that the participants did explore everyday experience; however, a further aspect of inquiry is the extent to which the emergent themes originated from specific events, from Lauerman’s (2014) disconnected steps of transition, or whether their reflection is based on a smooth gradual metamorphosis. The participants commented that they had not learned anything new from the workshop; it may be that my objectives were overly ambitious, and that the workshop itself was another step in transition which would only have value when reflected on in the context of a range of other experiences.

The participants recognised the ‘gap’ between differing expectations and the valuing of types of knowledge. (Keen et al 2013) There was little reference in the workshop to agency procedures and recording systems, rather a view of the overall landscape, and the emotional experience of being newcomer to the organisation and to the profession.

Pare and Le Maistre (2006) note the inevitable tension between what is and what could be that is highlighted by the arrival of newcomers, but that this tension can be an opportunity for mutual transformation:

“…proactive newcomers stimulate and change the communities they seek to join, forcing them to look again at habitual practice and, in the process, causing them to learn more about themselves and about their work.” (2006:379)

A point of significance for organisations employing NQSW is that the attitude of the host community should be open to this positive contribution of newcomers, that the changes in perception, feeling and thinking which are central to becoming (Humphrey 2013), should also be experienced by team colleagues and the wider organisation

If this mutual transformation is to occur, there is a particular difficulty where teams are modern working, particularly as many teams are multi-disciplinary, and are attempting to develop cohesion in the context of differing cultures, values, and perspectives. The participants did not speak of modern working specifically; this may have been because for this group modern working was already underway, so was not a significant change to their previous working environment within the organisation. The characteristics of modern working weave through the participants’ narrative, and they appear to have experienced
are some of the unintended and counter intuitive emotional responses which have been identified through research (Levi, 2011; Wilkinson, 2011).

The narrative of the participants was of initially being within, surrounded and unsure of a clear path, a situation which moves to greater clarity through the development of resilience and sensemaking in terms of the organisational context. In the balance of self-determination and organisational support, autonomy may not be perceived to be helpful if one has not had the opportunity to make sense of one’s place.

Shortt and Warren (2012) suggest that, in looking to formality of the work environment, organisations may be looking in the wrong place for what is important to workers. Similarly, it may be that the use of formal structures to support and assess competence and capability in NQSW will not be effective without recognition of the emotional and aesthetic. In terms of the objectives of the study, the development of my own practice in relation to NQSW is linked to the dissemination of findings from this study to others involved in the support of NQSW; the organisational narrative relating to NQSW is crucial to the development of being, becoming and belonging. The organisational culture, and the practices of those involved in the continuing professional development of NQSW should not only encourage the successful completion of a first year in practice, but explicitly offer the opportunity to become part of an organisation which recognises the value of mutual transformation.
Chapter 5

Arts-based Action Research and My Study

5:1 Reflections on the Research Process

As the research process progressed, I developed my understanding of Taylor and Ladkins’ (2009) analysis of the use of arts-based methods, and their emphasis on careful preparation, theoretical knowledge and range of skills. In the following reflections I have identified issues which resonate for me as a first-time researcher using these methods, and which impacted on the learning achieved in relation to the aims and objectives of the study; as an emergent process, the research methodology has highlighted some unexpected areas of significance, which provide crucial learning for me as researcher.

Audio recording: In preparatory discussions, each participant expressed a preference that the research should not be audio-recorded; the predominant concern stated was hearing the sound of their own voice. My research was intended to give voice to what appeared to me to be a minority discourse, that of the newcomer. However, agreement to being recorded may put the participant in a vulnerable situation, whatever the ethics and values espoused by the researcher. Page and Broussine (Broussine 2008) suggest the vulnerability of participants in expressing ways of knowing which may be contrary to those valued by the organisation. Practical and propositional knowing are valued by authorities employing NQSW; the narrative of the participants in my study included their feeling of the pressure of competing expectations, and it was important for me to be sensitive to participants’ wellbeing should the creative process challenge these dominant ways of knowing. The complexity of the participant–researcher relationship may mean that participants are uneasy about audio-recording their thoughts and feelings. Humphrey (2013:581) suggests that the insider who is also a researcher experiences walking a tightrope, where stakeholders in the research may use them to convey messages to the organisation; she also notes the professional dilemma of ‘…simultaneously occupying a range of professional roles.’ (2013: 577).

The Postcards: Two aspects of the description by Page and Broussine (Broussine 2008:156) of their use of postcards with research participants are
relevant here; they use postcards as a means for stepping back from the rational “...and to set aside their organizational role masks in order to take up roles as research participants and inquirers”, but they recognise the potential scepticism of participants in using methods which may not seem like ‘real’ research methods. The participants in my study did not voice scepticism for the task, negotiating between themselves for postcards and recognising similarities between what was chosen. As qualified social workers, they recognise a range of types of knowledge, and their understanding of the importance of self in is central to developing professional identity; this may have made them more open to the experience. Conversely, conscious recognition and understanding may have impeded the setting aside of organisational role mask. The lack of scepticism from participants may therefore not have been based in their setting aside propositional knowledge, but in the nature of pre-existing relationships between participants or my intention to create a ‘...power with...’ relationship (Bell 2013, as discussed in 3:5). It may also indicate the managed optimism which Kearns and McArdle (2012:385) note as central to the ‘I Am’ dimension of resilience.

In recognising this openness, I am also aware of the constraints on the participants in setting aside their organisational masks and dropping the tools of rationality (Weick 2007). The participants are likely to feel uncertainty in the evolving process, and may not share my assumptions of the level of trust in the participant-researcher relationship. They may feel constrained in expressing “…thoughts, feelings and emotions that hitherto were well-guarded within organizational cultures where such expression might make them vulnerable.” (Page and Broussine, in Broussine 2008:160)

The theme of lack of clarity which emerged from the postcards appeared to hold significance which I had not anticipated, as a point where the dropping of the tools of rationality began, and sensemaking was enabled. I had anticipated the postcard exercise as an icebreaker, the transition from work role to research participant. However, it assumed deeper significance, where double loop learning began (Torbert 1999), as the fixed points of reference which are used to make sense of situations were not present.

Use of materials and the development of artefacts: Caroline’s response to the arts materials was immediate, the red felted material jumped out at her as a colour of ‘not feeling comfortable and right’. Although at the beginning of the
workshop and in later interviews all participants noted the unsettling nature of the dolls, it was colour, rather than the dolls, which prompted Caroline to begin her artefact. She then describes how she uses more calm and neutral colours as she becomes happier.

For Sharon and Anita there is a more gentle building ideas, pausing to see what arises. The notion of negative capability may offer insight here; Simpson et al (2002), whilst recognising the ‘positive capability’ of knowledge and experience, note the value of being able to pause, absorb some strong and difficult emotions, ‘…to listen, to wait and, crucially, to learn through and from…waiting’ (2002:1213). This analysis presupposes the presence of those strong and difficult emotions, and as researcher I base my supposition on the participants’ later description of their artefacts.

Humphrey (2013) emphasises the relevance of role and environment in relation to where the research takes place, and the making sense of the experience. I had intended to find as neutral a place as possible to hold the workshop and interviews, given the reality of organisational life that venues are likely to hold meaning for participants.

*Group associations and reflection:* During the time when I was out of the room, and left the participants to create their artefacts, they did not specifically discuss what they were doing with the art materials, but used the opportunity for talking as means of removing them from ‘the day job’. In this, I recognise Fineman and Gabriel’s “Exchanging gossip, jokes and anecdotes is often central to the way we make sense of our experiences.’ (1996:1).

When I returned, the participants discussed their own artefacts, and considered the process, but because of time constraints they did not have the opportunity to comment on what each other had produced. In considering the use of the social photo matrix, Sievers (2008) distinguishes the individual’s ownership and interpretation of what they have produced, and the opportunity for a group to construct social meanings when ownership is relinquished:

“…there is space for as many associations as there are people in the room, and…there is no need to reach a consensus or arrive at a shared meaning.” (2008:235).

The implication for my workshop is that this was a missed opportunity for a range of perspectives on sensemaking where, Sievers emphasises, the artefact and not the person is the medium of discourse. Gaya Wicks and
Rippins’ workshop involves the opportunity for valuable feedback from the group, noting in one instance “…the tenderness and aptness of others’ responses.” (2010:270).

**Artistic merit versus Emergence:** One participant comments that what they produced was not artistic or good, but they knew this wasn’t the point; the participants did not report themselves as feeling inhibited by the process or needing to produce an artefact which met external standards of artistic merit. Reflecting on ‘ways of leading’ in relation to collaborative pieces of work in a quilting group, Rippin (2007) suggests that:

“The relational aspect of collaborative work can be inhibiting as well as stimulating…not wanting to let friends down. This is a neglected consequence of collaborative working and shared leadership. The pressure to perform can act as a break rather than a stimulus to creativity.” (2007:213)

While Rippin’s observations relate to the creation of ‘an homogenous, well-integrated whole’, in producing a quilt, I believe her comments are relevant to the research participants; although producing individual artefacts in a different context, where the primary purpose was not to produce a creative piece, there could have been the potential for participants to feel inhibited by the perception of others’ artistic skills.

In my application for Ethical Approval (appendices 1, 2) I used the terms ‘art’ and ‘craft’ interchangeably. A library search for ‘craft’ in relation to qualitative research generated a range of articles addressing ‘craft’ as techniques of developing concepts and methodology, and the skills of implementation, confirming the need for attention to fine detail and an approach to my research as something creative and developmental. Adams (2010:21) considers the craft of interviewing in the context of qualitative research: “…with practice, the craft of interviewing can indeed become an art.” Cutliffe and McKenna (2002) situate ‘craft’ in three interrelated components of qualitative research: the search for shared meaning by participants of their everyday experience, the need for qualitative researchers to recognise an element of faith in their research, and the need for verification from participants. In the context of my research project, I can relate the term ‘craft’ to my developing knowledge and skills as a practitioner researcher, and Adams’ introduction of the notion of practice suggests that my qualitative research and workshop content are very much at the ‘craft’ stage. The literature relating to narrative
Knowledge of methodology: The view of the participants was that the workshop was effective for them without having knowledge of the theory and principles of action research, and they commented that greater knowledge may have ‘skewed’ what happened, or deterred them. Catalini and Minklers’ (2010) evaluation of photovoice research is informative here, in examining how projects prepare participants. They refer to the technical and ethical aspects of photovoice where training is given to participants; they note that in some studies, the specific decision is made not to provide formalised training, with a preference for:

“…a minimum of researcher interference with the participants' naturalistic style of expression and interpretation of the key theme...the photographs did not need to communicate to others but simply serve as raw data for qualitative analysis.” (2010: 441).

There is learning here for me in that were I a more experienced facilitator, or user of art as a medium, I would have distinguished in the workshop and planning for interviews whether the primary purpose of the artefacts was for the participants to review their own pieces qualitatively, to comment on each other's, or to provide material for the evaluation of others. This reflection illustrates, I believe, the truth of Humphrey's observation of the permeability of boundaries in qualitative research, and “…the twists and turns of evolving methodology…” (2013:575) In terms of this evolving methodology I recognise in 4:1 the range of types of data generated by the workshop and interviews. Catalini and Minkler note that of the projects in their sample which involved basic training for participants, half included training on ethics and safety. The participants in my research, as social workers professionals, are likely to have an implicit understanding of the underlying issues of ethics and power; however this depth of understanding does not absolve the researcher from recognising and addressing their vulnerability.

5:2 Dolls and Doll-Making

So what difference did the use of dolls make? From the materials provided, all workshop participants used a version of the dolls, and all...
commented on the immediate connotation of dolls as potentially sinister and threatening.

I have discussed in 3:4 the unsettling nature of the issues which emerged for me whilst gathering the workshop materials and making the canvas dolls; I had few points of reference from my previous experience or theoretical knowledge to make sense of my own responses to making the dolls. During the workshop, I experienced an immediate emotional, visceral response (Warren, 2002) to the power of the artefacts and subsequent photographic images, consistent with the literature on the use of dolls in arts-based research.

In future research I would refine the language used in explaining the research task during the workshop; the lack of clarity about how I described to the participants what they would produce means that it is difficult to draw conclusions as to whether the dolls are direct representations of the research participant at the current point in time, or whether there is more complex symbolism. In writing the dissertation I have used the word ‘artefact’, without definition of this for the participants. Gaya Wicks and Rippin (2010) use the term ‘touchstone’ in their workshops. This use of language and implicit expectation has implications for how the researcher prepares materials for the workshop, and further learning for me is the development of theoretical knowledge relating to my own assumptions about gender, self-definition, and cultural associations with dolls, which I have begun to explore in 3:4. In Averett and Sopers’ research (2011), the participant identifies their own materials, with consequent significant learning; this suggests the value of involving the research participants in the gathering of workshop materials.

A surprising aspect of the workshop for me was that the use of postcards, which I considered an ‘icebreaker’ activity, held a far more important function, in addressing Page and Broussine’s (Broussine 2008) organizational role masks, and Wieck’s (2007) dropping of the tools of rationality. It was in rereading, after the workshop, the research literature relating to the importance of expertise and skills for facilitators (Gaya Wicks and Rippin 2010, Taylor and Ladkin 2009), that I understood how crucial the postcard exercise had been for the process of emergence.

The artefacts which the participants produced had greater significance than a mere compliance with my wishes as researcher, suggesting that at least to some extent the participants experienced the effectiveness of the use of dolls
in arts-based research. Although this is an assumption based on my own response to what was produced, the narrative generated by the artefacts suggests the power of the dolls. All participants initially identified the anxiety which was provoked by the workshop materials; Gaya Wicks and Rippin (2010:264) comment on the “…ambiguity of status and the power to evoke strong reactions…" of the use of dolls, and their associations to spiritual and ritual practice. There are examples in 3:4 of dolls in folklore, anthropology and literature, including their properties as items of protection and intuition.

5:3 Arts-based Methods in the Organisation.

In my reflections on the use of arts-based research, and dolls as workshop materials, I have noted significant issues; this section considers the significance of my findings for the use of arts-based methods in the organisation for research and as a learning and development tool.

Gaya Wicks and Rippin suggest that employing art as experience rather than product allows “…people to work intuitively and to bypass their customary cognitive processes” (2010: 274), while Pinkola Estes notes the power of dolls to promote “…inner reason, inner knowing, and inner consciousness.” (2008:85) As researcher, I experienced an emotional response to the artefacts and the participants’ narrative; the artefacts, I suggest, provoke an immediate response for those viewing them, and I have sought to convey their impact through the photographs in chapter 4. The workshop data exists to be revisited by the participants, and viewed by others in the context of existing knowledge in the organisation.

My recognition of the significance of pre-existing relationships between workshop participants developed as I related the effectiveness of the postcard exercise to Page and Boussines’ (Broussine 2008:156) analysis of trust and vulnerability. The use of arts-based methods, for the purposes of research and the development of knowledge, is likely to be more effective and better received as part of a wider programme of learning and development for NQSW who are able to consider themselves part of a cohort.

A stated objective of the study was to inform the agency use of work-based research methodologies. Taylor and Ladkin (2009:55) caution that “At worst, arts-based methods can act as the ‘flavor of the month’”, with little idea as to their value as development activities. Such activities may be seen to be
out of touch with the realities of operational teams, and with the need to prioritise training which is specific to agency implementation of policy within organisational restructuring. Staller and Krummer-Nevo (2013) advise that, in writing qualitative articles, it is important to consider one’s audience, and to consider how the topic, population, profession or methodology should be approached; in disseminating the findings of this study within the agency, I will consider this, the importance of beginning from the agency perspective in contributing to the knowledge base and application of arts-based methods. The aesthetic, emotional nature of the data and process of production may to pose a significant challenge in the sharing of my findings.

I had intended the workshop to be a restorative activity for the participants; they noted that it was a useful opportunity to reflect on how far they had travelled from their first days as employees of the agency, but I believe that for this to have been a restorative experience, a skilled facilitator and more structured preparation were necessary. From this study, I recognise the potential power of dolls as a research tool, and the imperative to consider the group dynamic and organisational context when using arts-based methods for research and learning. Consilium (2013) in exploring the role of the arts in delivering social care, note the importance of ‘artists’ having the skill and experience in working with service users; while this seems to acknowledge the importance of working with people who are vulnerable, and having an appropriate ethical framework, it also suggests that people with specific artistic skills are important in effective outcomes for the intervention, particularly in the area identified by Taylor and Ladkin (2009) of skills transfer. Consilium also identify, among areas of knowledge requiring further development, that there needs to be greater clarity as to specific knowledge and skills for those delivering, and better evaluation and quality assurance.

My apprehension that the course of my research has diverged somewhat from the Aims and Objectives (appendices 1 and 2), is tempered by the views of Kushner (2005a), who states the value of the unintended, the apparent failure, as opportunities for learning from research. He notes that change methodologies focus on learning, and researchers may view failure as a learning opportunity; this perspective may not be tolerated in an organisational or professional context where competencies and outcomes are measured. He suggests that qualitative evaluation, in recognising the complexity of context:
“…frequently shows up accomplishments which may not be recognised in standard outcome measures – usually labelled unintended – but which are socially desirable, even so.” (2005a:120)

Analysis of the data in relation to methodology suggests that, while the research has not generated substantial new knowledge, as anticipated in the Aims and Objectives, the use of arts-based action research has supported the emergence of consistent themes to inform future support for NQSW, and the use of arts-based methodology in the agency. Coghlan and Brannick (2010:31) suggest the importance of the researcher showing their train of thought through qualitative research, and this in itself contributes to the generation of knowledge. In Kushner’s terms, it is difficult to identify ‘standard outcome measures’ from my study, but the emergent themes, as discussed in 6:2, offer what I believe is a clear basis for the continued development of the use of arts-based methods in the organisation.

Developing the reflections from Chapters 4 and 5, Chapter 6 offers an evaluation of the study, conclusions as to the achievement of the Aims and Objectives, and Recommendations.
Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

6:1 The Study: An Evaluation

Analysis of existing literature and my own experience suggest that there are a range of perspectives on how newly-qualified professionals are most effectively supported and the range of views of individuals in my organisation echoes issues raised by existing research. Although the data from my arts-based workshop suggests that participants were enabled, in Gaya Wicks and Rippins’ (2010) terms, to work intuitively, the comment was made by a participant that they had not learned anything new. Given this, how may I claim validity for the outcomes of this piece of research, if views on the topic are so disparate, and are constantly evolving in a changing political and organisational context? How do I demonstrate that I have added value to the debate, given Van Maanen’s caution that “Most of us have little training or aptitude for analyzing metaphors, deciphering tropes, recognizing voice, or examining rhetorical ploys.” (2010:241)

At the very least, it would seem crucial that the researcher can justify the reliability of what they have observed, and relate to theoretical bases of both the topic and the methodology. Reason and Bradbury (2008:33) suggest that validity may be derived from common sense, viewing findings inductively and deductively, empathetic involvement in the process, and situated in the context of interested communities. Bryman (2008:377) considers Lincoln and Gubas’ (1986) dimensions of trustworthiness, including credibility, which would seem to benefit from critical feedback from the community of practice which was studied. Bryman’s discussion also includes notions of authenticity and fairness. Torbert (1999:190) requires that action research is “instrumental, practical and emancipatory”, in achieving original outcomes, joint effectiveness, and sensemaking.

In demonstrating the validity of my study, I relate to Kushner’s (2010) proposal that validity is based on Truth, Beauty and Justice, as this would seem to encapsulate the ideas identified in the previous paragraph. ‘Truth’ refers to the reporting of observed reality, but with the recognition that in qualitative research the subjectivity of the researcher is significant. According to Kushner
(2011), the data comes from participants; but the evolution of this research suggests that role ambiguity and bias are integral to evaluation. In 3:5, the ethical issues of the participant / researcher relationship are explored in relation to bias. Shaw (2008:409) notes that “…as we encourage people to tell their stories, we become characters in those stories, and this changes those stories.” The lived experience and agenda are therefore central to what is being created. Ungar suggests the challenge of providing an honest analysis, while being explicit about one’s biases and assumptions:

“Researchers filter through their cultural baggage predeterminations as to outcomes, processes, relationships, and the meaning of language.” (2003:96)

I have presented photographs of the postcards and artefacts with participant narrative, and in doing so, have made decisions about visual representation, design and order of presentation. The challenge of presentation of data is discussed in 4:1, recognising that the physical data and narrative generated from the workshop and interviews is viewed through a succession of lenses as it moves from the ownership of the participants to the consideration of a wider audience.

In terms of ‘Beauty’, Kushner says that if research is not to be merely a collection of data, there needs to be a coherent point of view. My intention in chapter 3 has been to identify my ontological and epistemological stance, and my use of arts-based action research as a thread of coherence and congruence throughout the study. However, whilst the researcher should have a point of view, I understand the importance of Torbert's (1999) notion of the importance of humility in legitimising action research, in that the researcher should be adaptable and flexible, and throughout the research process be prepared to challenge their chosen focus and assumptions. Lincoln and Guba (1986) note the potential for researchers to find what they hoped or expected to see. Chelminsky (2012: 80) suggests the potential for the single narrative, even in the most robust of methodologies, and the introduction of bias into the evaluation and analysis. The topic of this research has a political context, is related to national policy drivers and organisational change, and therefore Chelminsky provides a cautionary note in informing my approach and awareness of how I should frame my research question and parameters:
“Today...we are seeing a remarkable expansion of the politically inspired single narrative across a variety of subject areas, with interventions deliberately structured to ask only those questions which will lead to the right, or desired answer” (2012: 80)

Justice, Kushner (2010) contends, concerns participation and self-determination; in 3:2 I have considered the shared values of social work and action research, and the notion of the expertise of the participant (Smale et al 1993). Kushner values participants sharing theoretical control in designing evaluation, harnessing theory and methodology:

“In emergent designs, variables are embraced and studied for their promise in seeking alternative explanations that are valued as a form of theorizing about a case.” (2005b:580)

The implication of Kushner’s view of self-determination and participation would seem to be that participants’ involvement should not cease with the generation of data.

Kushner (2010) notes the addition, to truth, beauty, and justice, of the dimension of the value which the research provides for the community. He considers that the practice of evaluation is challenging, but:

“One of the benefits of well-designed evaluation is in creating open and critical information systems based on exchange between groups who normally may not otherwise interact…” (2005a: 113)

This has implications for how and with whom the information from my study is disseminated. Edwards and Turnbull, in the context of the evaluation of leadership development, suggest that evaluation has to be more than a measurement, and argue for ‘an alternative lens’ (2013:5) for more rigorous understanding, not only at the individual level, but also as a means of examining the organisation.

An area of challenge which I experienced in evaluation was the achievement of a balance of new knowledge in relation to the topic and the methodology. In their review of research involving photographic images, Catalini and Minkler (2010:447) found that the process for researchers moving from photos to findings was rarely mentioned in the studies which they examined; however, they found that studies consistently explore issues of participation and ethics. Marshall et al (2010:77) suggest that ‘Achieving an appropriate balance between the problem-solving interest and the research interest is a major challenge for action researcher.’ They caution against too
close a focus on the research aspect which may mean that solutions to the research question are overlooked, and this in itself is an ethical issue. I found that evidence in terms of the process, and the participants’ awareness of ethical and participatory issues, emerged more readily, although I was aware of the potential for assumption because of my anticipation of these issues. My analysis in relation to the topic was assisted by having the permission of the participants to keep the artefacts, as well as photos, during my evaluation and dissertation writing; the opportunity to hold the artefacts as well as viewing images of them perhaps enabled me to shed my organisational role mask (Page and Broussine, in Broussine: 2008)

The small sample size does not negate my findings; Kushner (2011:314) affirms the legitimacy of small samples and localised cases in promoting change. Research articles which have informed my methodology relate to small sample sizes. Kearns and McArdle (2012) used a narrative approach with 3 participants, and Averett and Soper (2011) use autoethnography. Gaya Wicks and Rippin (2010), whose methods mine most closely resemble, have a significantly larger sample size, holding two workshops of 10 participants each, and the workshops were held within the context of an academic programme.

In researching participants’ motives in qualitative research, Bell reminds us that non-participation may in itself be a statement of a negative experience; for those who have a positive experience:

“…their self-determination to engage in the research gave them a more formalized voice and served as validation of their experiential knowledge.” (2013:533)

Bell notes the interrelationship of other motivations for participants, ‘…their contribution to the knowledge base of an issue as well as being a sort of therapeutic tool for themselves.’ (2013:532) The participants in this study acknowledged and appreciated the opportunity to share their experiences, although I recognise that there was limited opportunity to reflect on each other’s’ comments.

6:2 Conclusions, Reflecting on Aims and Objectives

When devising the Aims and Objectives for this research, I had not anticipated that the significant emergent themes from the study would be those which, at first sight, are the antithesis of what I had assumed would be useful for
NQSW: hiding places, spaces where one feels lost, holding a state of managed anxiety, and valuing transition as uncertain, faltering and fluctuating. One aspect of these spaces, emotions and experiences is that they seem to be valued precisely because they are not recognised by outsiders (Shortt and Warren 2012), so developing recommendations which recognise them as a resource for NQSW is challenging.

The findings emerged through the artefacts and narrative of workshop participants and, I believe, are congruent with my review of literature relating to the topic and methodology. Viewed through the lens of participants’ narrative, the photographs of artefacts have the power, as noted by Gaya Wicks and Rippin (2010), to provoke and unsettle.

I have reflected in 3:4 that the experience of gathering workshop materials, and particularly of making the canvas dolls, was at times uncomfortable and challenged deeply-held assumptions. In the hands of the workshop participants the materials evolved into artefacts with compelling presence (Pinkola Estes: 2008), to which I experienced the visceral response suggested by Warren (2002).

There were two aspects to this response. The first was that the use of dolls seemed to support the emergence of unspoken ideas; this demonstration of their apparent power emphasised the need for me to develop my expertise in their use should I wish to use them again.

The second aspect relates to Shortt and Warrens’ (2012) findings about the assumptions made by organisations in structuring the physical environment for workers; in my role in the organisation of implementing national guidelines for the learning and development of NQSW, I have assumed that the provision of a structure and the assignation of clear functions would provide the most effective support. However, the response from several NQSW has been that, whilst willing to comply with structured support and assessment, they had found a competency-based, cross-referenced approach unhelpful in making sense of the NQSW experience and identifying their strengths and future learning.

This research has, I believe, provided the participants with the opportunity for shedding the rational, and reflection on the confused complexity of the workplace, which Weick (2007) noted as crucial for sensemaking. Through the research and dissertation processes I have had my own opportunity for self-reflection and sensemaking; the artefacts and participants’
narrative are prompting changes to my day to day practice, and will inform my contribution to the organisation’s development of support and assessment processes within the ASYE framework.

For me as researcher, useful reflection has taken place in terms of my Aims and Objectives, confirming Shaw’s (2008) and Coffey and Atkinson’s (1996) views that the design and analysis of qualitative research are pervasive throughout the research process; Coghlan and Brannick (2010:10; 2010:142) provide visual demonstrations of the evolution of research through successive reflective cycles. In 1:4 I noted that in my applications for Ethical Approval and Research Governance Approval (appendices 1 and 2), I had made assumptions about my ability to shape the research; my exploration of Grounded Theory (Lincoln and Guba 1986) in 3:1 suggested that this honesty about assumptions is central to action research, in that whilst I formulated the research question, and determined the focus through methodology, the outcomes were, within the principles of action research, determined by the participants.

Through chapters 4 and 5 I doubted that the research had achieved the objective of generating new knowledge, and considered my Aims and Objectives to have been naïve and over-ambitious. However, in developing the ‘So What?’ and ‘Now What?’ aspects of this concluding chapter, I recognise that they were an essential starting point for the study and for the dissertation, and that substantial knowledge has been generated. I have developed an understanding of, and enthusiasm for Brydon-Miller et al’s (2003:21) “…beauty of chaos…complex, multi-dimensional, intractable, dynamic problems that can only be partially addressed and partially resolved.” Although the participants commented that they had not learned anything new from the workshop, the language with which they describe their initial experience as NQSW relates a great deal of the messiness and uncertainty noted by Brydon-Miller et al. Where I originally anticipated clear outcomes in terms of changing individual approaches to practice, and developing resilience, identity and capability, I now recognise the centrality to action research of the participant’s expertise, and the imperative for me as researcher to drop my own tools of rationality (Weick 2007) in order to contribute usefully to the developing knowledge of my community of practice.
The participants confirmed the value for them of the opportunity for reflection; while the workshop may not have presented the restorative activity which I suggested in my application for ethical approval, there were emergent themes, which have formed the basis of my recommendations. Additionally, the artefacts and narrative provide an opportunity for the participants to develop their sensemaking, should they wish to revisit the data in the future.

6:3 Recommendations

The experience of the first post-qualifying year appears finely-balanced, as noted by the language of research; ‘Perfect Opportunity~Perfect Storm’ (Taylor and Bogo 2013) suggests this tension, and is also resonant of Van Maanen’s (2010) ambiguity and logical opposites. Kearns and McArdles’ (2012) exploration of ‘I am, I have, I can’ as dimensions of resilience, recognises contextuality and individuality as significant in problem solving in complex situations. Community Care (2014), describes the potential for ‘cliff edges…try to avoid a situation where someone is seen as newly qualified one day and experienced the next.’ The cliff edge appears even more perilous than the ‘gap’ through which Keen et al (2013) caution the NQSW against falling, and it is consistent with the metaphors of physical unease used by the workshop participants (4:2) and by researchers (2:2).

My recommendations for the negotiation of this perilous first year in practices are for NQSW in the organisation, for the organisation itself – the community of practice, and for myself as researcher and practice educator. These recommendations are set against the background of the characteristic of being, becoming and belonging, my understanding of which can be summarised as follows:

‘Being’ is complex and extensive (Bates et al 2010); in Kearns and McArdles’ (2012) terms, this is the ‘I am’ of managed optimism, creativity and challenge, where idealism and realism are in equilibrium. ‘Becoming’ brings the notions of professional socialisation, of knowing, perceiving, thinking, and feeling (Humphrey 2013). It develops through interaction, co-operation, and coming to feel part of something: relating to the resilience framework of Kearns and McArdles’ analysis, it involves the ‘I have’ dimension, the nature of support and trust, and ‘I can’, which includes communication skills, practice wisdom,
and problem-solving. ‘Belonging’ develops from the notions of being and becoming, and involves feeling at home, safe and emotionally attached (Yuval Davis 2009); belonging to a specific setting is likely to invoke awareness of boundaries and divisions – us and them, and may be strengthened in response to perceived threat. The first four recommendations relate to NQSW within the organisation, and the remaining three to the use of arts-based research:

1. It is important for the organisation, and those supporting new workers, to recognise the nature of transition for those who join, and to develop a tolerance for uncertainty. While a smooth, seamless process may appear the most appropriate, this prevents the learning that comes from dissonance, failure and the unintended. For the NQSW and the organisation, I would suggest that developing a tolerance for uncertainty and lack of clarity, is crucial; Simpson et al’s (2002) concept of Negative Capability is informative here. This recommendation relates to the ‘I Am’ dimension of Resilience (Kearns and McArdle 2012), and to the complexity of ‘being’ (Bates et al, 2010). It requires the organisation to recognise the validity of supporting the NQSW in what would appear to be an unhelpful, unproductive state; as Kushner (2005a) notes, it may be difficult for the organisation to tolerate what appears to be failure within the terms of the measurement of competencies and outcomes. However, because the Professional Capabilities Framework (TCSW 2012) takes a holistic view of the concept of capability, there is opportunity for those supporting NQSW to encourage the situating of ‘self’ within professional development, including critical reflection on the challenging and disconcerting. In evaluating the outcomes of assessment and support frameworks for NQSW, the organisation should be mindful of that which is difficult to measure and may not appear to be a successful outcome, as these may be essential steps in the transition process.

2. A related recommendation is for the organisation to not only provide formal opportunities for NQSW to meet, within the ASYE framework, but to enable opportunities for the development of NQSW peer relationships, the professional socialisation which Humphrey (2013) suggests will support ‘becoming’. Recognising Shortt and Warrens’ (2012), analysis of the meaning of
the work environment, and Levi’s (2011) emphasis on the importance of social relationships, perhaps the organisation should not provide designated spaces for such activities, but to facilitate communication, and to acknowledge the creativity and autonomy of NQSW in evolving their own effective ways of building communication. This offers the potential for NQSW to access the liminal, unassigned, physical and emotional spaces where significant learning may occur. It may be that the workshop participants’ common experience of being in the mist, or thicket, where the way through is unclear, also equates to the ‘hiding and escaping’ in-between places of Shortt and Warrens’ research (2012:27). In order to develop resilience, individual NQSW need to be supported to find their own way to clarity, but within an organisational framework and culture which values the knowledge, skills and experience which they bring.

3. The attitude of the host community to learning and the employment of NQSW is important, as the initial experiences of the research participants suggest. Pare and Le Maistre (2006) emphasise the benefit to the NQSW and the host community of the potential for mutual transformation. The challenge for the organisation is therefore to promote an organisational narrative which approaches the appointment of NQSW with enthusiasm and positivity, acknowledging the contribution the NQSW perspective brings. This requires the recognition and valuing of different types of knowledge, and an organisational culture and narrative which welcomes new perspectives.

4. Not only are NQSW involved in sensemaking, developing resilience and finding their identity as professionals and members of the organisation, but the colleagues with whom they interact are experiencing successive organisational changes, including to their physical environment and working relationships. The development of a cultural recognition within the organisation of the value of NQSW becomes more complicated in an organisation which is moving to modern working, where there are unintended emotional consequences for existing employees as well as for those who are new. Consideration of the impact of modern working, on new workers, but also on those supporting them, is therefore important; how can newness be managed
in terms of addressing Levi’s (2011) concerns and recognising the inherent tendency for the unintended and emotional responses? (Wilkinson 2011)

5. A recommendation for me, as researcher, is to disseminate the findings within the organisation, as anticipated in my appendices 1 and 2, in ways which assist in developing the reputation of arts-based research and development activities in the organisation. In suggesting this, I note Taylor and Ladkins (2009) caution that this may be met with cynicism as another ‘fad’ or ‘flavor of the month’, which is difficult to prioritise during times of organisational change, budgetary constraints and challenges of capacity.

6. A recommendation for future learning for me as researcher comes from my sense that had I held a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the group, the development of the methodology may have supported their group reflection on the the promotion of sensemaking. The aspects of emergence which relate to ‘listening for the music’ (Torbert 1999:190) in my study would have been enhanced by the development of group discussion through the artefact as a medium of discourse (Sievers 2008).

7. This recommendation relates to recommendation 2, in that similar research is likely to be more effective with a group who already recognise themselves as a cohort, and have pre-existing relationships which they have had the opportunity to develop for themselves. Therefore the support for developing peer relationships between NQSW will offer the potential for learning through arts-based research in the organisation.

MacFarlane (2007:30), exploring landscape and wilderness, talks of ‘wildness’ as an idea about which there two conflicting narratives: ‘...a quality to be vanquished...a quality to be cherished.’ In reaching the concluding paragraph of this dissertation, I am reminded by MacFarlane’s analysis of my sense of the workshop participants’ ambiguity, characterised by their emergence from the unclear and hidden, and the aesthetic nature of the organisational environment. My reading of literature relating to the topic and method suggests that far from needing to be left behind, or ‘vanquished’, these emotional and physical places remain to be revisited through successive
learning cycles. MacFarlane discusses that which occurs in wild landscapes as ‘continuous coming-into-being’ (2007:31), which feels an appropriate metaphor with which to leave this piece of work – the potential for the NQSW experience to be cyclical, emergent, ambiguous and transformative.
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6. Workshop Plan – Researcher's Notes
Appendix 1: Ethical Approval – University of the West of England

Faculty of Business and Law
Frenchay Campus
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol BS16 2QY
Email: bbs.researchethics@uwe.ac.uk
Tel: 0117 328 86890
UWE REC REF No: FBL/13/08/07
02/10/2013

Dear (Researcher)
Application title: Newly-qualified Social Workers in a Statutory Adults Social Care agency: Recurrent Themes and Emergent Issues from the First Year in Post-qualifying Practice.
Your ethics application was considered by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee and, based on the information provided, has been given ethical approval to proceed.
You must notify the committee in advance if you wish to make any significant amendments to the original application using the amendment form at http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/bl/blresearch/researchethics.aspx.
Please note that any information sheets and consent forms should have the UWE logo. Further guidance is available on the web: http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/aboutus/departmentsandservices/professionalservices/marketingandcommunications/resources.aspx

The following standards conditions also apply to all research given ethical approval by a UWE Research Ethics Committee:
1. You must notify the relevant UWE Research Ethics Committee in advance if you wish to make significant amendments to the original application: these include any changes to the study protocol which have an ethical dimension. Please note that any changes approved by an external research ethics committee must also be communicated to the relevant UWE committee.
2. You must notify the University Research Ethics Committee if you terminate your research before completion;
3. You must notify the University Research Ethics Committee if there are any serious events or developments in the research that have an ethical dimension.
Please note: The UREC is required to monitor and audit the ethical conduct of research involving human participants, data and tissue conducted by academic staff, students and researchers. Your project may be selected for audit from the research projects submitted to and approved by the UREC and its committees. UREC/FREC Standard Approval Letter Version 1 1/8/2013 W we wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely
Chair, University/Faculty Research Ethics Committee
c.c (supervisor, where applicable)
we wish you well with your research.
Yours sincerely
Chair, University/Faculty Research Ethics Committee
c.c (supervisor, where applicable)
APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

This application form should be completed by members of staff and PGR students undertaking research which involves human participants¹. Please note, there is a separate application form for ethical review of research using human tissue – see below. Research should not commence until written approval has been received from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) or Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). You should bear this in mind when setting a start date for the project.

This form should be submitted electronically to the secretary of the relevant Research Ethics Committee (see Guidance notes page 6 below) together with all supporting documentation (research proposal, participant information sheet, consent form etc).

For further guidance please see

PROJECT DETAILS

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APPLICANT DETAILS

| Name of researcher (applicant) | |
| Faculty and Department | Bristol Business School, Faculty of Business and Law |
| Status (please tick relevant box) | Postgraduate Research Student / |
| Email address | |
| Contact postal address | |
| Contact telephone number | |
| Name of co-researchers (where applicable) | N/A |

For all applicants: Has external ethics approval been sought for this research? (See guidance notes below) Yes: /

If yes, please supply details

¹ ‘Human participants’ include living human beings, human beings who have recently died (including body parts), embryos and foetuses, human tissue and bodily fluids, and human data and records.
Research Governance approval through Adult Care….Council being requested 21/03/13, and approved in their document dated 16/05/13

APPLICANT DETAILS CONTINUED

**For PGR student applicants only:** *(See guidance notes below)*

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Director of Studies comments *(See guidance notes):* 

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**DECLARATION** *(See guidance notes below)*

The information contained in this application, including any accompanying information, is to the best of my knowledge, complete and correct. I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting this research and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.

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1. **Aims and objectives of, and background to the research:** *(See guidance notes below)*

**Aims:** This project aims to explore, through an arts-based action enquiry process, the everyday experience of NQSWs (Newly-qualified Social Workers) in ACHW (Adult Care Health and Wellbeing) in their first post-qualifying year. This narrative inquiry is intended to give the opportunity to NQSWs to explore and make sense of their first post-qualifying year through a cycle of investigation, action and reflection.

The project will pay particular attention to whether these NQSWs experience the national frameworks, as detailed in ‘Background/context’ below, for supporting NQSWs, and ACHW appraisal and probationary frameworks, as reinforcing the deficit narrative i.e. the perception of others as to what the NQSW can or cannot do in terms of processes and procedures. It will seek to explore resilience and the development of identity through enabling critical reflection and, potentially, be a restorative activity.

NQSWs are likely to find unsettling the transition from student to qualified professional, as they develop professional identity in the context of theoretical knowledge and organisational expectations. The researcher hopes that this research will give NQSWs the opportunity to use their skills of critical reflection to make sense of their experience and develop new insights. The NQSWs in the agency have also developed informal peer networks, supported by formal learning and development activities; it is hoped that the research will enable them to explore their experience as a cohort, and identify ongoing relationships.

**Background/ context:** Recruitment and retention of NQSWs are themes of national and local significance; the recommendations of the Social Work Reform Board have seen the development of clearer frameworks for the professional development of social workers, with the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment for NQSWs) having been introduced nationally from September 2012. Whilst the ASYE is not mandatory, it provides guidance for Employers and Higher Education Institutions as to the support and assessment of NQSWs through their first post-qualifying year and subsequent academic modules.

The local authority within which this research takes place has worked in partnership with other statutory Adult Care and Children’s’ services regionally to develop a framework for the ASYE for NQSWs who qualified from 2012.

The NQSWs who will be invited to participate in this research qualified in 2011, and will have been supported through the Skills for Care NQSW framework, which preceded ASYE. Their experience therefore predates the ASYE.

During their year as NQSWs, they have been employed by an agency which has experienced major organisational change, the introduction of Modern Working, significant changes to processes and recording systems in response to national policy drivers, and increasing budgetary constraints. Their perceptions of the development of their professional capability and identity, and of the expectations of the agency, are likely to offer valuable feedback to ACS in developing best practice.

**Objectives:**
- Promoting self-reflection and sense-making for participants, which may include changes for their approach to day to day professional practice.
- Furthering knowledge for this group of NQSWs in the development of resilience and a strengths-based approach to professional capability.
- To inform the agency use of work-based research methodologies.
To inform the researcher, through critical reflection, in the development of her professional practice as a Practice Educator.

Because this is an emergent process, to record recurrent themes and emergent issues. The experiences of the agency in recruitment, retention and support of NQSWs appears to be consistent with national and international research, particularly in identifying the differing expectations of higher education institutions – that NQSWs are undertaking a process of development of identity and capability and require the opportunity for critical reflection – and statutory Social Work agencies – that they require fully developed professionals who will competently implement procedures.

2 Research methodology to be used (include a copy of the interview schedule/questionnaire/observation schedule/focus group topic guide where appropriate): (See guidance notes below)

Methods of Data Collection:
The eleven NQSWs who are potential participants, will be invited to take part in an arts/crafts-based workshop; in preparation, the researcher will provide an information sheet (included in the Ethics application), and have individual conversations with those interested, obtaining written informed consent, including specific direction as to whether the individual agrees to audio-recording.

The researcher will facilitate a workshop, which will be introduced by explaining to the participants that the researcher is interested in understanding their experiences as NQSWs through the use of art and crafts.

Workshop content:
- brief discussion of the use of arts/crafts-based action research, and agreement of ground rules: the ground rules would be those appropriate to all group learning and development activities e.g. no mobile phone use, one person speaking at a time, acknowledging and respecting the views of others; the maintenance of confidentiality ‘what is said in the room stays in the room’ unless it compromises the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable service users, or forms part of the previously-agreed sharing of information for the research project. In addition, ground rules which acknowledge the nature of the session, consistent with the participants information sheet and ethical considerations e.g. that participants can leave at any time without giving explanation, and that whilst acknowledging roles and potential power differentials, the role of the researcher is as facilitator/participant. Also regaining consent to the audio-recording of the group discussion and reflection – if any participants do not want this, the researcher will instead write up immediately after the activity.
- work with art and craft materials, towards making a doll or other piece of work.
- group discussion and reflection on the process of the activity: if all participants agree, this will be audio-recorded by the researcher, and if not the researcher will write up immediately after the activities.

The researcher will then invite participants to make further contact with her if they are interested in taking part in a follow-up one-to-one interview, at least two weeks after the workshop, to explore their subsequent reflection on the workshop, and themes or issues which have emerged through their reflection. Subject to the consent of participants, this will be audio-recorded; alternatively, the researcher will write up immediately after the activity. Participants will be assured of their confidentiality throughout any contact and any participation in the project.
Although described as an ‘interview’, this is intended to be a conversation providing the opportunity to reflect on the participant’s experience. It is not intended to address issues which are within the remit of professional supervision, nor will the researcher come with pre-set questions.

The two week timescale has the following rationale:

- It recognises organisational expectations, team capacity issues, and the need for NQSWs to plan their diaries several days in advance.
- It provides an opportunity for reflection and knowledge transfer – in a two-week period NQSWs are likely to have professional 1:1 or peer supervision, which may develop their reflection on the workshop.
- It provides the researcher with time for reflection and potential new insights.
- NQSWs can request that this period of time be extended, but there is the possibility that the data may then not be included in the research.

PARTICIPANT DETAILS (See guidance notes below)

3 Will the participants be from any of the following groups? (Tick as appropriate)

- [ ] Children under 18
- [ ] Adults who are unconscious, very severely ill or have a terminal illness
- [ ] Adults in emergency situations
- [ ] Adults with mental illness (particularly if detained under Mental Health Legislation)
- [ ] Participants who are unable to consent for themselves (See guidance notes concerning the Mental Capacity Act)
- [ ] Prisoners
- [ ] Young Offenders
- [ ] Healthy Volunteers (in high risk intervention studies)
- [ ] Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator, e.g. those in care homes, students, colleagues
- [ ] Other vulnerable groups

Note: If you are proposing to undertake research which involves contact with children or vulnerable adults you will generally need to hold a valid Criminal Records Bureau check. Please provide evidence of the check with your application.

If any of the above applies, please justify their inclusion in this research

None applies

4 Please explain how you will identify, approach and recruit your participants, eg sample size, recruitment strategy. Please explain arrangements made for participants who may not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information in English: (See guidance notes below)

I will be working with a maximum of 11 Social workers in the organisation who are
finishing their first year as qualified practitioners. They make up the cohort of Social Workers in ACHW who have undertaken the Skills for Care NQSW framework in 2012 and are now beginning the first post-qualifying module.

I will distribute hard copies of a Participant Information Sheet (included in this Ethics application) at an NQSW peer support session (copies in internal post plus explanatory email to those unable to attend). I will invite interested parties to contact me for an individual conversation. In the email and at the peer support session I will acknowledge the sensitivities of confidentiality, and I will assure them of their privacy at all stages.

INFORMED CONSENT AND WITHDRAWAL (See guidance notes below)

5 a What are your arrangements for obtaining informed consent whether written, verbal or other? (Where applicable copies of participant information sheets and consent forms should be provided)

The Researcher will obtain written informed consent from all participants (the Consent form is included in this Ethics application); participants will be given a copy of the signed consent form and another copy will be held by the researcher in a secure locked location.

b What arrangements are in place for participants to withdraw from the study?

The Participants Information Sheet and Consent Form will provide clear written information that participants can withdraw at any stage without having to provide any explanation. They will be assured that withdrawal will not have any impact on their work.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY (See guidance notes below)

6 If the research generates personal data, please describe the arrangements for maintaining anonymity and confidentiality or the reasons for not doing so:

The sample selection is specific, a maximum of 11 members of staff, all of whom are social workers who began working for ACHW from September 2011 onwards and are in their first qualified post. These 11 named social workers attend peer support sessions, and are about to begin post-qualifying awards. As noted above, at a peer support session I will distribute copies of the Participant Information Sheet and provide staff with the opportunity to ask questions. For those not in attendance, I will write to them to explain the scope of the research and invite contact from interested parties.

There are two areas which need to be addressed in terms of generation of personal data and potential disclosure: the potential identification in the workshops and interviews of service users, carers, families, and workers with whom the NQSWs have been involved; secondly, the identification in the research findings and analysis of individual NQSWs. The NQSWs and the researcher are registered social workers who adhere to professional standards in terms of maintaining confidentiality. They have
received training in the agency implementation of Data Protection legislation. As recent graduates (and the researcher as a Practice Educator) they will have, during social work qualifying programmes, implemented academic requirements in terms of anonymising service user and carer information in written work. They therefore have a common framework within which to make judgements about the use of service user, carer and worker information in the workshop and individual interviews.

The researcher will anonymise agency / multi-agency team names, organisations and geographical areas, and generalise scenarios and anecdotes; if in doing so, the relevance and meaning of the point is lost it will not be included in the research, as the researcher prioritises the maintenance of confidentiality in the collection of data.

Service users and carers / workers:
- At the beginning of the workshop the researcher will introduce discussion of groundrules, including confidentiality and anonymity: Participants will agree not to disclose any material discussed within the workshop.
- Should specific information be disclosed in the workshop or individual interviews relating to a service user, carer, or worker, the researcher will delete any audio-recording at that point and will not include that information in a subsequent transcript.
- If in reviewing data collected, the researcher considers that there is a potential ‘jigsaw’ effect of identifying a service user, carer or worker, that information will be removed from the research and deleted from written, audio or electronic records.
- The only exception to the above will be if a participant or the researcher considers that the information identifies actual or potential harm to a vulnerable person, in which case agency Safeguarding procedures will be followed.

Identification of participants:
- Because the number of potential participants is small, the researcher will not exclude any NQSW from the group; however, because data from this small number of participants may compromise anonymity, the researcher will take the following steps:
- If specific information about a participant emerges from the workshop or interview, it may be significant to the research but have the potential to identify them. The researcher will retain any audio recording, and discuss later with the participant how the significance can be retained in the research in a way which also maintains their confidentiality.
- If in reviewing data collected, the researcher considers that there is a potential ‘jigsaw’ effect of identifying a participant, the researcher will discuss with the participant how their contribution can be anonymised. If this cannot be done without losing the ‘sense’ of the data, the researcher will not include that data.
- Data will be stored and deleted in line with 7 (below).

The agency Research Governance Framework provides clear guidelines as to the legislation which underpins the use of information obtained from research; it also suggests courses of action for obtaining advice. I would use academic supervisor tutorials, line management supervision, and discussion with members of Council RGF panel to support my decision-making. As a social work professional, I adhere to professional standards, and as a Practice Educator, the balance between providing evidence and maintaining confidentiality is imperative.
If I cannot be satisfied that I will maintain confidentiality, I will not use that information in my dissertation.

Storage arrangements for personal data are detailed in 7 (below).

DATA ACCESS, STORAGE AND SECURITY (See guidance notes below)

7 Please describe how you will store data collected in the course of your research and maintain data protection:

Any audio-recorded information (recorded with the consent of all workshop participants) will be stored in a locked drawer with the researcher as the only key holder. Where participants do not give consent for audio-recording, the researcher will make written notes immediately following the session, and these will be kept in the same drawer. The researcher will keep this data secure until it has been transcribed, at which point the audio-recorded information will be deleted and written material shredded.

All data will be transcribed verbatim onto an encrypted memory stick, and as a password protected document on a password protected computer. This material will be retained for 1 year from the point of transcription, and then be deleted, in line with Cornwall Council’s record retention policy.

In the workshop participants will produce a piece of artwork which they will retain, and use as they wish. I will invite participants to photograph their artwork, and may request their permission to include those images in my dissertation. I will assure them that images will be associated with assigned numbers or pseudonyms, to protect their privacy.

When participants sign consent forms I will assign them a number or pseudonym, which will be used to correlate information from the workshop and individual interviews. I will store the consent forms and information on assigned numbers in a secure location away from other data relating to the research which may offer potential identifying factors.

RISK AND RISK MANAGEMENT
8 What risks (eg physical, psychological, social, legal or economic), if any, do the participants face in taking part in this research and how will you overcome these risks? *(See guidance notes below)*

Any data that gives potentially identifying information will be anonymised: please see section 6.

The researcher will adhere to the requirements of the registration body for social workers in England (HCPC), and agency procedures, in relation to any information which confirms or implies risk of harm.

The researcher will not use deception during the project; no incentives will be offered, and participants can withdraw at any point without giving reasons. Informed consent will be gained from participants at the beginning of the workshop session and each one-to-one discussion.

Because this project uses self-reflective action research as a basis for data collection, there is the potential for the surfacing of emotion, for which participants may require further support; section 21 identifies that this will need to discussed with individual participants prior to the workshop, and a follow-up process agreed which is appropriate to that individual.

The information sheet will make clear that a reflective discussion will take place at the end of the workshop; however, participants may be apprehensive as to how much information they share with their peers. The researcher knows the group as a cohort, a group of people with shared experience, but individual NQSWs may view their relationships with peers differently, so the researcher should not make assumptions about the nature of existing relationships between individual participants. The researcher will also not know the context of the participants' attendance e.g they may be feeling particularly busy, may be anticipating a stressful interaction with a service user, or have issues in their personal lives. In facilitating the workshop, the researcher will maintain awareness not only of verbal interaction, but also other aspects of the group dynamic, and will accept that participants are experts in understanding their own situation.

The researcher recognises the potential power imbalance between the NQSWs and herself, as she has worked with many of the NQSWs as an assessor during their qualifying programmes, as a mentor for them as NQSWs, and may be involved in the future in supporting them through academic post-qualifying modules and agency review bar processes. The researcher adheres to professional values and ethics, and will acknowledge this potential to NQSWs prior to their agreement to take part in the research. They will be assured of their confidentiality, and that their participation is within the boundaries of this project for research purposes and will not affect interaction with the researcher in other professional roles.

It is worth noting that the research participation can be liberating and provide important opportunities for sensemaking. The power imbalance requires sensitive attention, and at the same time it may provide a resource for supportive sensemaking in a safe environment, by a researcher aware of the important dynamics and responsibilities.

It is imperative that undertaking the research does not impact negatively on service delivery. Best practice for supporting NQSWs includes the provision of protected development time; within this, I would expect that the use of creative methods to evaluate NQSWs experience and inform good practice would be viewed as a legitimate use of time by the organisation. Indeed, Council has agreed the project as outlined.
9. Are there any potential risks to researchers and any other people impacted by this study as a consequence of undertaking this proposal that are greater than those encountered in normal day-to-day life? (See guidance notes below)

Research will take place in agency working hours, and both the researcher’s and participants’ whereabouts will be known to their line managers through the electronic calendar; participants and researcher will be contactable at all times by phone (although agreed arrangements will be made during the sessions about accessing mobile phone calls/messages).

Research is likely to take place on Cornwall Council premises and as employees of Cornwall Council, and registered Social Workers, participants and the researcher adhere to organisational procedures re managing personal safety. They also adhere to the Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers and Health Care Professionals Council Standards in managing risk to self and others.

Publication and Dissemination of Research Results (See guidance notes below)

10. How will the results of the research be reported and disseminated? (Select all that apply)

- Peer reviewed journal
- Conference presentation
- Internal report
- / Dissertation/Thesis
- Other publication
- / Written feedback to research participants
- Presentation to participants or relevant community groups
- / Other (Please specify):
  Summary and recommendations to Learning and Development, Adult Care statutory Children’s and Adult services

Other Ethical Issues (See guidance notes below)

11. Are there any other ethical issues that have not been addressed which you would wish to bring to the attention of the Faculty and/or University Research Ethics Committee?

Ethical issues have been identified in previous sections of this form.

Checklist

Please complete before submitting form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is a copy of the research proposal attached?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you explained how you will select the participants?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you described the ethical issues related to the well-being of participants?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you considered health and safety issues for the participants and researchers?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you included details of data protection including data storage?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you described fully how you will maintain confidentiality?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a participant consent form attached? <strong>Two consent forms, one for each part of research activity.</strong></td>
<td>Yes  (x 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a participant information sheet attached?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a copy of your questionnaire/topic guide attached?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where applicable, is evidence of a current CRB check attached? (See guidance notes)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>
APPLICATION FOR PROPOSED RESEARCH OR CONSULTATION PROJECT

This document is available in large print and in other formats on request. Please contact the Research Governance Coordinator.

SECTION 1 Details of applicants

1. Title of Project
   Newly-qualified Social Workers in a statutory Adults service: recurrent themes and emergent issues from the first year in post-qualifying practice.

2. Department work is being undertaken for

   Section
   Learning and Development

3. Applicant (all correspondence will be sent to this address unless indicated otherwise)

   Surname:  
   Forename(s):  
   Title:  

   Job title of applicant:  Advanced Practitioner, Continuing Professional Development

   Address:  
   Council

   Tel: -

   Email: -

   Originator (where different) As applicant

   Surname:  
   Forename(s):  
   Title: -
4. Other workers and departments/institutions involved?

Dissertation Supervisor
11 social workers employed by

5. What is the estimated financial and staff cost to the council of this research/consultation? Please include costs for preparation, conducting, analysing and communicating your findings.

As a researcher, I am employed by Council, which has funded my MSc course. No additional costs will be incurred.

8 days study leave are allowed by the organisation for preparation and analysis of findings.
Conducting research will take place as part of my facilitation of peer support and individual mentoring sessions for NQSWs (Newly Qualified Social Workers), which are part of my job role.
Arts and craft materials will be supplied by the researcher.

6. Please give details of the relevant experience and qualifications of the main researcher

Qualifications:
BA Hons Sociology (Sussex 1976)
Practice Teaching Award (Plymouth 2005)

Current research proposal forms part of MSc Leadership and Management (Coaching and Mentoring) at Bristol Business School, University of the West of England.

Employment History:
I jointly co-ordinate the implementation of national frameworks for the support of NQSWs, and am a practice educator for social work students who are moving towards qualification. I am also co-facilitating workshops for teams moving to Modern Working. These aspects of my work have developed my understanding, supported by learning from the MSc course, of the emotional context of the workplace and of the narratives which develop in organisations.

7. Outline of the project (please attach extra pages if necessary)

Aims: This project aims to explore, through an arts-based action enquiry process, the everyday experience of NQSWs in ACS in their first post-qualifying year. This narrative enquiry is intended to give the opportunity to NQSWs to explore and make sense of their first post-qualifying year through a cycle of investigation, action and reflection.

The project will pay particular attention to whether these NQSWs experience the national frameworks for supporting NQSWs, and ACS appraisal and probationary frameworks, as reinforcing the deficit narrative i.e. the perception of others as to what the NQSW can or cannot do in terms of processes and procedures. It will seek to explore resilience and the development of identity through enabling critical reflection and, potentially, be a restorative activity.

Background/context: Recruitment and retention of NQSWs are themes of national and local significance; the recommendations of the Social Work Reform Board have seen the development of clearer frameworks for the professional development of social workers, with the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment for NQSWs) having been introduced nationally from September 2012. Whilst the ASYE is not mandatory, it provides guidance for Employers and Higher Education Institutions as to the support and assessment of NQSWs through their first post-qualifying year and subsequent academic modules.

The local authority within which this research takes place has worked in partnership with other statutory Adult Care and Children’s services regionally to develop a framework for the ASYE for NQSWs who qualified from 2012.

The NQSWs who will be invited to participate in this research qualified in 2011, and will have been supported through the Skills for Care NQSW framework, which preceded ASYE. Their experience therefore predates the ASYE.

During their year as NQSWs, they have been employed by an agency which has experienced major organisational change, the introduction of Modern working, significant changes to processes and recording systems in response to national policy drivers, and increasing budgetary constraints. Their perceptions of the development of their professional capability and identity, and of the expectations of the agency, are likely to offer valuable feedback to ACS in developing best practice.

Objectives:

- Promoting self-reflection and sense-making for participants, which may include changes for their approach to day to day professional practice.
- Furthering knowledge for this group of NQSWs in the development of resilience and a strengths-based approach to professional capability.
- To inform the agency use of work-based research methodologies.
- Because this is an emergent process, to record recurrent themes and emergent issues.
Methods of Data Collection:
The 11 NQSWs who are potential participants, will be invited to take part in an arts’
crafts-based workshop; in preparation, the researcher will provide an information
sheet, and have individual conversations with those interested, obtaining written
informed consent, including specific direction as to whether the individual agrees to
audio-recording.

The researcher will facilitate a workshop, which will be introduced by explaining to
the participants that the researcher is interested in understanding their experiences
as NQSWs through the use of art and crafts; workshop content:
• brief discussion of the use of arts-based action research, and agreement of
  ground rules.
• work with art and craft materials, towards making a box, mobile, totem
  pole, doll etc
• group discussion and reflection on the process of the activity

The researcher will then invite participants to make further contact with her if they
are interested in taking part in a follow-up one-to-one interview, at least two weeks
after the workshop, to explore their subsequent reflection on the workshop, and
themes or issues which have emerged through their reflection. This will either be
audio-recorded or the researcher will write up immediately after the activity.

Timetable of the research

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>March/April 2013</th>
<th>April / May 2013</th>
<th>May/ June/ July 2013</th>
<th>Autumn 2013</th>
<th>December 2013</th>
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<tr>
<td>RGF / UWE Ethics approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruiting participants</td>
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<td>Workshop and Interviews</td>
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<td>Analysis and recording of findings</td>
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<td>Dissertation submission</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissemination of findings in agency</td>
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8. How will the findings be used?
The results will be written up and used as part of the researcher’s dissertation for
the MSc Leadership and Management (Coaching and Mentoring).

The summary and recommendations will inform managers, continuing professional
development workers and practice educators working in the Training and Development Unit,
(ASYE) for NQSWs. The researcher hopes to share findings with
9. How will the data be finally presented? (e.g. Report; in a return)

The research is part of an MSc dissertation, and will be presented as a 15,000 to 20,000 word assignment. The researcher will also provide a summary for those detailed in (8) above.

10. How will your results be disseminated and to whom will they be sent?

The summary and recommendations will be made available to participants to share with their peers and teams as they consider appropriate. The results will also be shared with colleagues and practice educators in partner organisations, to inform the development of a consistent approach to the implementation of the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment for NQSWs); this may indicate that a broader sharing of the results is important, e.g. with operational team managers.

11. How will you feed back to respondents?

Participants will be asked, as part of the process of gaining informed consent, if they wish to receive a summary, and to specify their preferred format.

12. Will you be putting the final document/findings onto the COUNCIL website?

If yes, where? If no, please justify.

The summary and recommendations will be made available on the Cornwall Council website.

Will you be putting the final document/findings on any OTHER website?

If yes, where? If no, please justify.

The assignment may be made available on the University West of England web site.
13. Have service users/carers been involved in the design of this project?

If yes, please explain in what way. If no, please justify.

Service users have not been involved in the design of this research; no service
users or carers will be asked to participate in the research process. The researcher
will explore the experiences and narratives of NQSWs, and the focus is on their
perceptions of strengths and deficits.

SECTION 2  Details of project

14. How will the data be stored, and what consideration has been given to the relevant Data Protection issues?

Any audio-recorded information (recorded with the consent of all workshop
participants, and individual interviewees) will be stored in a locked drawer with the
researcher as the only key holder. Where participants do not give consent for
audio-recording, the researcher will make written notes immediately following the
session, and these will be kept in the same drawer. The researcher will keep this
data secure until it has been transcribed, at which point the audio-recorded
information will be deleted and written material shredded.

All data will be transcribed verbatim onto an encrypted memory stick, and as a
password protected document on a password protected computer. This material will
be retained for 1 year from the point of transcription, and then be deleted, in line
with Cornwall Council’s record retention policy.

In the workshop participants will produce a piece of artwork which they will retain,
and use as they wish.

When participants sign consent forms I will assign them a number, which will be
used to correlate information from the workshop and individual interviews. I will
store the consent forms and information on assigned numbers in a secure location
away from other data relating to the research, or which may offer potential
identifying factors.

15. How will the sample be selected, approached and recruited? What inclusion and exclusion criteria will be used? If relevant, how many participants will be recruited and what ages will they be?
The sample selection is specific, a maximum of 11 members of staff, all of whom are social workers who began working for ACS from September 2011 onwards and are in their first qualified post. These 11 named social workers attend peer support sessions, and are about to begin post-qualifying awards. I will write to them to explain the scope of the research and invite contact from interested parties.

Because the number of potential participants is small, I will not exclude any NQSW from the group; however, I am aware that data from this small number of participants may compromise anonymity, as there is the potential for a ‘jigsaw’ effect of identification when related to information from another source. As when working with social work students on qualifying programmes, who are required to produce anonymised portfolios which include information about service users and carers, I will review the data to determine and address the risk of disclosure.

The sample will be approached to take part in two aspects of the research; the first is the craft-based workshop, and the second is an individual interview to take place at least two weeks after the workshop (open to those who have attended the workshop). I will make clear when the consent forms are signed that participants can withdraw their consent at any point without prejudice.

Attached information sheet and consent form.

16. Will any of the sample be reimbursed – either in cash or in kind – for taking part in this project?

No reimbursements or incentives will be offered by the researcher.

SECTION 3

17a. Is written consent to be obtained?

Yes – consent form attached

If “yes”, please attach a copy of the consent form to be used. If “no”, please justify.
17b. If “yes”, from whom will the written consent be obtained? (Participant, person with parental responsibility, other (please specify)?

Participants only.

18a. Does the study include subjects for whom English is not a first language? If so, what arrangements have been made for these subjects?

All participants self-define as having English as a first language. I will confirm individually with participants whether information and consent material, and dissemination of findings, should be made available in an alternative format, and whether appropriate adjustments are required for the workshop and individual interviews.

18b. What arrangements have been made for those who will require an alternative format? (e.g. visual impairment).

Please see (18a)

19. Will the subjects be given a written information sheet or letter?

Yes – copy attached

If “yes”, please attach a copy with this application form. If “no”, please justify.

SECTION 4  Risks and ethical problems

20. Ethical considerations

Attached UWE Application for Ethical Review of Research; from a meeting between the researcher and their dissertation tutor on 14th February 2013, it was agreed that ethical approval should first be sought through the agency, and this will underpin the decision made by UWE.

Any data that gives potentially identifying information will be anonymised: please see section15.

The researcher will adhere to the requirements of the registration body for social workers in England (HCPC), and agency procedures, in relation to any information which confirms or implies risk of harm.
The researcher will not use deception during the project; no incentives will be offered, and participants can withdraw at any point without giving reasons. Informed consent will be regained from participants at the beginning of the workshop session and each one-to-one discussion.

Because this project uses self-reflective action research as a basis for data collection, there is the potential for the surfacing of emotion, for which participants may require further support; section 21 identifies that this will need to discussed with individual participants prior to the workshop, and a follow-up process agreed which is appropriate to that individual.

The researcher recognises the potential power imbalance between themselves and the NQSWs, as the researcher has worked with many of the NQSWs as an assessor during their qualifying programmes, as a mentor for them as NQSWs, and may be involved in the future in supporting them through academic post-qualifying modules and agency review bar processes. The researcher adheres to professional values and ethics, and will acknowledge this potential to NQSWs prior to their agreement to take part in the research.

### 21. Are there any potential hazards to subjects or researchers?

If “yes”, please give details and the likelihood.

There are no potential hazards to the researcher.

There is the potential for the research process to surface emotions and difficulties for the participants, and the researcher will need an agreed process with each participant as to what would be the most appropriate follow-up should this occur. It will be made clear to participants that they can withdraw from the research at any point without prejudice, and any data obtained from them will be excluded from the project.

### 22. Do you have a destruction policy?

If “yes”, please specify; if “no”, please justify

Yes - Material generated by this project will be destroyed in line with ACS destruction policy.
23. Signatures of relevant bodies

I agree to comply with the recommendations of the RGF Panel and RGF principles throughout this project, and that the details given are correct.

Signature of applicant ................................................................. Date

Name in capitals .............................................................................

Signature of originator ................................................................. Date

(if different)

Name in capitals .............................................................................

SECTION 5

24. Accompanying documentation (please check you have included, and then tick all that apply)

- Additional pages for question no(s).  □ N/A
- Copy of questionnaire  □ N/A
- Copy of information/letter for participants  □ Yes

Copy of University/College ethical approval:

**UWE will await agency ethical approval – Ethical Review form attached.**  □

Copy of parental consent form  □ N/A
Copy of informed consent form  □ Yes

Code of conduct: **the researcher adheres to HCPC Standards**  □

Other (please specify)
Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet

Dear Newly-qualified Social Worker,

As part of my MSc Coaching and Mentoring course at the University of the West of England, I’m undertaking some research, and I would like to invite you to participate. Before you make a decision, I would want you to understand why I’m doing this research and what it will involve. I would appreciate it if you could take time to read this information, and discuss it with others if you want to. If you would like more information, or if anything is unclear, you are welcome to contact me.

It would be helpful for me to know by 25th October 2013 if you are interested in finding out more and perhaps taking part; there is no obligation for you to participate and if you prefer not to do so you don’t have to give an explanation, and this will not affect any other work we are involved in together. If you do agree to take part, you can withdraw at any point without giving an explanation. Please be assured that at all times, any communication with me and your participation in any activity will be kept strictly confidential by me. Your privacy is very important at all times.

The title of my research project is:

**Newly-qualified Social Workers in a Statutory Adults Social Care agency: Recurrent Themes and Emergent Issues from the First Year in Post-qualifying Practice.**

As part of my role in Social Care Learning and Development, I’m involved in developing and delivering support for NQSWs. From September 2012, ACHW (Adult Care Health and Wellbeing) is using the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) as a framework for supporting NQSWs, and I’m hoping that the results of this research will help ACHW in implementing this. The purpose of my research is to explore the everyday experience of NQSWs in ACHW in their first year in a qualified post, through an arts / crafts-based workshop and optional follow-up interviews. I hope that this will give NQSWs a chance to explore and make sense of their experiences, and hopefully provide feedback which can help develop practice in supporting NQSWs.

**What is involved?** I will submit my dissertation in December 2013. During the autumn 2013 I will be asking participants to attend a half day workshop, and, if they wish to continue to be involved, to have a one to one interview with me; this will take place at least two weeks after the workshop.

The workshop will involve:

- Review of the purpose of the study
- A brief discussion of the use of arts-based action research, and agreement of ground rules.
work with art and craft materials, which the participants can choose to use as they wish

- group discussion and reflection on the process of the activity

Participants are encouraged to ask any questions that they have during the workshop activities.

I will audio-record the group discussion and reflection, if all participants consent. Otherwise I will write this up as soon as possible after the workshop.

I will then invite participants to make further contact with me if they are interested in taking part in a follow-up one-to-one interview, at least two weeks after the workshop, to explore their subsequent reflection on the workshop, and themes or issues which have emerged through their reflection. With consent I will either audio-record, or I will write up immediately after the activity.

Who is being invited to take part and who else will be there?: I am inviting NQSW's who qualified up to academic year 2010-2011 and who work in [redacted] to take part in the workshop. The one to one interviews will be in a private location with no one else present.

It is your decision as to whether to take part; I will ask you to sign a consent form to participate in the research; as part of this I will ask you if you will agree to my audio-recording part of the workshop and the one-to-one conversation. If any participant of the workshop prefers me not to audio-record, I will not do so.

You are free to withdraw from the research at any time. If you do withdraw, or decide not to take part, you do not have to give a reason, and this will have no effect on any other work in which we may be jointly engaged. If you withdraw, I will destroy any written transcripts, I will not use any recorded audio comments from you, or responses from others to what you say. I will destroy audio material after 1 year in accordance with [redacted] data protection requirements.

The art materials which you produce during the workshop will be your property for you to use as you wish; I will ask you to photograph your materials and may request your permission to use those images in my dissertation. I may also ask for your permission to quote your comments about the process and meaning of the materials that you produce. As with all procedures, it is your choice whether or not to indicate your permission.

Benefits and risks:

- Whilst the purpose of the research is to inform how [redacted] implements ASYE and future support for NQSWs, I hope that the workshop will provide an opportunity for you to explore, in a supportive and creative space, how the use of art and craft materials supports you as individuals in making sense of the experience of the first post-qualifying year. For those who would like to explore in greater depth the issues which have surfaced from the workshop, I will invite you to have a one to one interview. Through participation, you may gain new meanings and sources of understanding to support you in your role.
- Risks: the workshop may bring to surface surprises or emotions, which cause discomfort in the setting of workshop. We may make sense of these emotions as they arise, or if you prefer, you can leave at any time. We will have agreed in advance the support which you would like in addressing what has emerged.
- Because the workshop will be with people in the organisation whom you know, you may feel more or less comfortable. We will agree ground rules at the
beginning, such as agreeing that the experience is confidential and for the purposes of sensemaking and creative engagement.
I will not be asking you to describe how you feel, but will ask the group for their experiences and reflections on the process of using art and craft materials in the workshop. If you do wish to share your feelings during the interview, you are of course welcome to do so and our conversations will be private.

Use of data
I will use the data to produce a 15,000 – 20,000 word dissertation. I will produce a summary and recommendations which I will make available to you and the other participants in the project. Any reference to quotes will be with the use of pseudonyms to protect privacy. I will also provide information about recommendations to Social Care Learning and Development, as feedback for developing best practice in supporting NQSWs in [redacted]. I’m hoping to share the summary and recommendations with the Children’s Social Work and Psychology Service, and colleagues in statutory services across the [redacted] region, also to inform processes for recruitment and selection to social work posts in [redacted] Council. The purpose of sharing information is to provide recommendations to enhance further support for the NQSW role within [redacted].

Funding: I am funded by Social Care Learning and Development, [redacted]; my academic support will be through Bristol Business School, University of the West of England.
My contact details are:

The contact details of my academic supervisor at UWE are:

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.
Appendix 4: Arts-based Workshop Consent Form

Arts-based Workshop Consent Form

Research title:
Newly-qualified Social Workers in a Statutory Adults Social Care agency: Recurrent Themes and Emergent Issues from the First Year in Post-qualifying Practice.

The information gathered for this research project will be treated as confidential, and numbers or pseudonyms will be used to refer to it in the dissertation. Researcher's notes will be securely stored and destroyed in accordance with the requirements of Cornwall Council. Photographic material will only be used in the dissertation with permission of the participant to whose work the photo relates.

The Researcher is an employee of Cornwall Council, a student registered with University of the West of England, and a social work professional registered with the Healthcare Professionals Council.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have read and understood the Participants Information Sheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My questions have been answered satisfactorily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree to be a participant in this research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that I can withdraw from the research at any stage with no explanation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree that my contribution to the Group Discussion and Reflection can be written up by the researcher immediately after the workshop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name (printed)…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….
Signature………………………………………………………………

Date……………………

Researcher: -

Academic supervisor: -
Appendix 5: Individual Interview Consent Form

Individual Interview Consent Form

Research title: Newly-qualified Social Workers in a Statutory Adults Social Care agency: Recurrent Themes and Emergent Issues from the First Year in Post-qualifying Practice.

The information gathered for this research project will be treated as confidential, and numbers or pseudonyms will be used to refer to it in the dissertation. This one to one interview may, with your consent, be audio-recorded, or written notes will be made by the researcher after the interview. The content of these notes will only be used in the dissertation with permission of the participant to whose comments they relate. The researcher’s notes will be securely stored and destroyed in accordance with the requirements of Cornwall Council.

The Researcher is an employee of Cornwall Council, a student registered with University of the West of England, and a social work professional registered with the Healthcare Professionals Council.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have read and understood the Participants Information Sheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My questions have been answered satisfactorily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree to be a participant in this research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that I can withdraw from the research at any stage with no explanation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree to the researcher audio-recording our interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree to the researcher making a written record of our interview after the interview has taken place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Name (printed)...........................................................................................................

Signature....................................................................................................................

Date.............................
Appendix 6: Workshop Plan

Workshop Plan

Newly-qualified Social Workers in a Statutory Adults Social Care agency: Recurrent Themes and Emergent Issues from the First Year in Post-qualifying Practice.

Researcher’s notes

No of participants: **up to 8** Duration: **3 hours**

The workshop will explore the everyday experience of NQSWs in their first year in a qualified post, through a crafts-based workshop.

Resources: **Postcard images, Flip chart and pens, Craft materials, Camera, Audio-Recording equipment.**

Timing, activity, assessment and resources:

**Introduction:** **5 min**

Welcome, Housekeeping, confirm timing of workshop, refreshment arrangements.

Review of the purpose of the study: brief resume of information sheet, check consent forms have been signed, and confirm whether session will be audio-recorded (if all participants have given written agreement) or will be written up by researcher immediately afterwards.

Participants are encouraged to ask any questions that they have during the workshop activities.

**Participants are free to leave at any point during the workshop, and do not have to provide any explanation: confirm that participants’ communication with the researcher, and participation in the research, will be kept confidential by the researcher.** Ground rules for workshop (next activity) will examine related issues.

**Agreement of ground rules:** suggestions on previously prepared flip chart: **5 min**

Participants can leave at any point without giving explanation.

Confidentiality in workshop:

- **Participants and researcher as registered social workers and employees of agency – standards / legislative requirements / agency procedures apply to this workshop.**
- **Pre-prepared flip with details of what action researcher will take in the event of disclosure of Safeguarding issues, service user/carer/worker identification/ potential for identification of participants in dissertation** (as in section 6, UWE Ethics application)

Acknowledgement and respect for views of others
One person speaking at a time

Mobile phone use

Camera use to record images of material produced (by consent of participant – can withdraw this at any point, photos can be deleted and remain the property of the participant)

Other suggestions from participants to be recorded on flipchart and displayed throughout workshop.

Information about methodology:

During their 3 year Coaching and Mentoring course at UWE, the researcher has learned about how organisations are not emotion-free, nor is their essence the electronic and paper-based processes. Strati (1999) suggests that the problem with most research on organisational theory is that it assumes that as soon as the employee crosses the threshold into the organisation, they lose their body and clothing and exist in pure thought only – which the organisation uses for work processes. Ideas meet and merge on a rational level, and organisational life is devoid of ‘…beautiful or ugly sensations, perfumes and offensive odours, attraction and repulsion.’

So the researcher has come to understand that organisations and what goes on within them can be examined using less ‘traditional’, quantitative methods, for example, story-telling, photography and art.

In the research module we discussed Action Research: doing research, frequently in the researcher’s own organisation, where new knowledge emerges during the research and this contributes to developing good professional practice. Some of the characteristics of Action Research are:

- The importance of the value base of the researcher – that in doing the research they model sound values.
- That the power rests with the participants and that as a group they have greater power to identify and bring about change than they do as individuals.
- That the participants are experts in their own situation.

So this research is based on the principles of Action Research because it feels so relevant to and congruent with social work. The tool the researcher is using is working with dolls.

This came about from a chance conversation with a facilitator on the Research module – the researcher had decided to work with NQSWs for their dissertation, and the facilitator happened to suggest using dolls as a workshop method.

So the idea of this afternoon’s workshop is for it to be an enjoyable exploration, where there is no expectation of answers to specific questions, but instead the opportunity to see what emerges for you as participants, for the researcher, and, in time, for the organisation.
Warm-up exercise: Postcard images 15 min
Ask participants to look at the postcards/images.

Then to select one or two that catch their attention, which ‘speak’ to
them. Participants to take those card(s) and think about why they were
attracted to them, what is it that they see in those cards? (3 min)

In pairs or threes, use the images on the cards to have a conversation
and to share hopes and fears about the workshop. (5 min)

If consent from participants, begin audio-recording at this point.

As a group to share how they found the exercise – what was easy /
difficult? Any surprises? (5 min)

Use of Arts/crafts materials 45 mins
Introduce this workshop with the research title, and explain that research aims
to look at how the process of the workshop can capture those recurrent themes
and emergent issues – it is not about producing a finished piece of work which
is judged on its artistic merit.
Reiterate that the work remains the property of the participant, the researcher
would like to photograph and perhaps use the images in her dissertation, but
the participants can withdraw consent at any point.

Introduce the materials – participants can use materials in any way they wish,
confirm that the canvas dolls and other materials belong to the participants so
participants can do what they wish to them – they will not need to be handed
back or restored in any way.
Participants are asked to produce their own piece of work, but can do this
alone, in pairs or groups.
During this time, participants can get refreshments, take breaks, use break out
rooms – agree a time for coming back together.
During this session the researcher will move among group to check if
participants have questions / concerns, invite narrative as to what they are
doing, but as open questions, as far as possible not ‘why’ questions.

Group discussion and reflection on the process of the activity
30 – 40 minutes
Request feedback from the group about how they found the process,
encouraging them to use their pieces of work to illustrate and explain: allow
conversation to develop but use open questions to encourage development of
issues / recurrent themes? Agree who will look after the pieces of work. Again,
invite stories, metaphor, insights.

Break: 10 minutes

Close 15 mins
Thanks and recognition of participation.
What next – opportunity for follow-up interviews, arrangements: refer to
participant information sheet.
Confirm contact arrangements for the researcher, should participants
have questions or concerns.

End recording.