

# **Social Work: Barriers and Opportunities**

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## **Background:**

This paper will present the findings of a national study completed in Ireland (2011-2012) on the continuing professional development (CPD) needs of social workers.

Over the last decade CPD has come to be seen as an important part of the professional life of social workers in a number of countries. In Ireland, the setting up of the regulatory body, CORU, in 2010 is particularly significant, as social workers will henceforth be required to undertake CPD in order to renew their registration.

## **Methods:**

The overall project is based on the results of a survey of IASW members was carried out during June/July 2011 and in addition interviews and focus group discussion completed with social workers, managers and policy makers.

## **Results:**

While acknowledging the importance of CPD the paper will elaborate on the findings of the research, identifying the barriers and challenges to CPD participation.

## **Conclusions:**

The research identified barriers to participation related to issues of funding and difficulties in getting time off work to attend courses. An analysis of the data suggests that these are inter-related issues. A lack of funding, whether for training costs or staff cover, is therefore a central barrier to participation identified by survey respondents.