

CHANGING LIVES - NATIONAL PRACTITIONERS CONFERENCE

25 JUNE 2008

Good afternoon, I am very pleased to have been invited to close today's conference, particularly so quickly after assuming the role of President of ADSW.

For Directors of Social Work it can be all too easy to forget the reasons we all first came into Social Work. We can become immersed in policy, legislation, strategies and action plans. This is one of the reasons that in preparing for the annual conference last month, we commissioned a series of 5 short films reflecting the impact of our services. This is one of those short films.

(FILM)

Whether we are Directors, Managers or Practitioners it is a timely reminder not only about the critical nature of our services to individuals like Derek but the length and breadth of Scotland there are many unsung heroes who deliver excellent services to those in greatest need.

My conference address in May paid tribute to all of our staff - those in the front line of services, in the community, in residential and in day care. The excellent support from our back office staff who are every bit as important as those providing direct care. As Directors, I am in no doubt that we are only as good as the staff around us who go that extra mile time and time again. This against a background of increasing demands on our services, the expectations of the public never higher and the bar raised in terms of the range and quality of services that we are expected to provide. Today gives me the opportunity to thank you on behalf of the Association. I would ask that you take that message back to your colleagues.

It is of course against that background of changing need and expectation that the 21st Century Review of Social Work took place. Changing Lives published two and a half years ago reflected the changes we need to make to strengthen Social Work and Social Care.

Perhaps like you I became a little frustrated by the lack of tangible outcomes. This however should not be confused with nothing is happening. Nothing could be further from the truth. Quite the contrary it is impressive just how much work is going on to ensure our profession is truly fit for purpose.

Over the past 6 weeks I have been very impressed with how much is happening to support the development of Changing Lives. The passion you feel is mirrored across the voluntary sector, SWIA, Care Commission, BASW, SSSC, local authorities, universities and the Scottish Government. All of whom I have had separate discussions with to help drive Changing Lives forward.

I can therefore stand here today with confidence and reassure you that Changing Lives is very much alive and kicking!

The Scottish Government have indicated that Changing Lives requires to shift from being driven centrally to a policy owned by the profession. On behalf of ADSW I am happy to accept that responsibility for those aspects of the policy which do not require further Scottish Government involvement. Over the past 2 weeks I have set ADSW's plans out for the Minister.

It is critical that the key agencies and stakeholders take responsibility to work together in establishing the future of Social Work. Our claim to being a profession is now greatly strengthened with regards to the role of the Care Commission, SSSC and the 4 year degree course.

The responsibility is for us all to further develop Social Work in Scotland and this afternoon I would like to set out ADSW's contribution.

Firstly, ADSW and in particular the office bearers, including those who chair the standing committees hold key roles for the Association whilst at the same time hold key positions within local authorities. In this respect nothing has changed - I can vouch for that! We do now have three Professional Development Managers - Romy Langeland, Yvonne Robson and Wendy Harrington whose key responsibilities are to take forward Changing Lives. Wendy has assumed a key role in connecting with Local Practitioner Forums and has been playing an important role in today's event. In Yvonne's case she has additional responsibilities in relation to the development of the National Training Strategy for criminal justice social work. Our three managers are funded by the Scottish Government for an initial 2 years. Their extensive experience in practice allows us to be more proactive as an organisation. Since becoming President, office bearers have met and set out our key priorities for the next year. Not surprisingly Changing Lives is top of that list.

Over the next 12 months, ADSW will host 3 seminars with key partners on 3 key issues:

- Personalisation
- Risk
- Workforce Development

I will be hosting influencing dinners to look at key issues including:

- The role of the universal services
- Leadership

It is my intention to establish an annual social work lecture which I hope will be hosted by the Lord Provost of Glasgow, Bob Winter who was a former Director of Social Work.

Our Professional Development Managers will be working closely with the chairs of the 5 workstreams to help take forward key messages from their work.

This of course is a national agenda but it has 2 component parts:

1. It must be localised.
2. It must be bottom up and top down.

Let me explain.

ADSW's Executive is made up of 8 geographical areas with two representatives from each of these areas and along with the office bearers, it is the decision making body of the Association. For some time these geographical groups have lain dormant. In my view they are an essential part of lifting the profile of Changing Lives and leading change. Attending these will be ADSW members from that area of Scotland. However Changing Lives is not just about local authority social work, it is about the range of providers in all sectors of Social Work/Social Care. We must build alliances across sectors and agencies which truly reflect the views of the profession. I would like to see each of the groups meet initially before the end of September.

Let me now turn my attention to the role of the Local Practitioner Forum.

Chapter 7 of Changing Lives 'Building Capacity for Sustainable Change' and particularly Page 75 refers to the need for a new structure of social work forum which provides a way to improve practice and help develop policy. This is about good connections.

One of these is the Local Practitioner Forums in my view remain an essential part of Changing Lives. The progress and change I have referred to during this presentation can only be successful with the input of practitioners across Scotland. There are good examples of the success of Local Practitioner Forums in Scotland although there are also areas where the Local Practitioner Forums have been less successful. Part of what I would like to see is:

1. Consistency of Local Practitioner Forums meeting - importance of alliances across the social care sector.
2. Local Directors/CSWO meeting with their Local Practitioner Forums during the year.
3. Local Practitioner Forums feeding into the ADSW geographical meetings.
4. My commitment to meet with representatives of the Local Practitioner Forum on at least two occasions between now and next May. These meetings will help inform my regular meetings with the Minister, Adam Ingram and the National Social Work Forum.

These 4 points I hope begin to help you see how Changing Lives connects up, down and across the Social Care sector. Changing Lives is

all our responsibility and as President of ADSW for the next year I am determined to play my part in this next stage.

Within ADSW all of our key meetings over the next year will have Changing Lives as a standard item on the Standing Committees and Executive agendas.

Within my own authority of Dundee, Changing Lives will be a regular item on my Directorate meetings and I hope this will become the norm across the country.

I started with a powerful reminder of the role of Social Work and Social Care in Scotland. It highlighted the vital role of our services and how important our role is in informing the public about what Social Work does and does well. We are not strong enough in celebrating our successes. This is why I am taking a proposal to the ADSW Executive next week to better inform the wider public on the work we do. The success of such a campaign will be as much about local stories as it is about the national perspective. I would like to discuss this with Local Practitioner Forums in the near future.

In conclusion, I feel very privileged to represent the Directors of Social Work over the next year. More than that I am very proud to be part of the Social Work profession, a profession which at times has been misunderstood, at times defensive and like every other professional group has made mistakes. It is however our responsibility to celebrate what we do well to let the public know the innovative, the creativity and above all the quality of care provided to thousands of people day in and day out across the country.

I thank you for the opportunity to address you today and I look forward to working with you over the next year.