

Changing Lives: Practice Governance Group
30 October 2006 – Conference Room 4, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh

Present:

Andrew Lowe, Chair
Alexis Jay
Geraldine Doherty
Sandra Nutley
Liz Bohan
Bryan Williams
Peter Gabbitas
Ruth Stark

Scottish Executive

Catherine Rainey
Paul Connell
Moira Hughes (Secretariat)

Apologies

Apologies were received from Alan Campbell, Chief Executive, Aberdeenshire Council.

Welcome & Introductions

1. Andrew welcomed every one to the meeting and thanked them for their commitment to taking this agenda forward. Catherine also took this opportunity to thank Andrew for agreeing to chair this change programme and explained that this was an important area of work to be taken forward. There followed brief introductions from each of the members around the table.

2. Changing Lives: Context Setting

Catherine delivered a presentation setting out the background to Changing Lives and explained the key messages and themes that emerged during the course of the Review. Catherine went on to explain how Changing Lives sits within the whole Public Service Reform agenda and the relationships between the various forums and groups both at a national and local level.

3. Practitioner Forums and how these are being set up across all 32 local authority areas was briefly discussed. . It was felt important to note that the Practitioner Forums are not just made up of social workers, the expectation is that there will be representation from all professional groupings and be representative also of the voluntary and private sector.

4. Whether there should be a representative from the Care Commission on the Group was raised in relation to the Commission's experience re governance. It was agreed it would be useful to keep them engaged and draw on their expertise as required. It was agreed that professional leadership cannot sit in isolation. There needs to be good communication between the Chairs of all of the Change Programmes in order to flag up points of influence across the different change programmes. No timescale has been established for the life of any of the Change Programmes. Work will be progressed in each of the groups and developed in a variety of ways with the possibility of some work being carried out at a later

stage collectively. Andrew expressed interest in a senior media person being appointed to, or work in some way with, the group and the Group were asked to think about this.

5. Issues regarding the funding arrangements set out in Changing Lives Implementation Plan were raised. Catherine explained that due to delays in one or two of the Change Programmes being set up it was not now possible, or indeed desirable, to work from the base line identified in the Implementation Plan. Consideration was being given to requiring Change Programmes to provide a business case to draw down funding from a central pot of money as appropriate..

A Kilbrandon Moment

6. Andrew informed the Group that he had attended the recent ADSS conference and spoke of the interest shown in our Social Work Review and the opportunity for change which was unparalleled in the last 40 years. Looking back on Kilbrandon he was struck by the fact that the clear expression of a few simple ideas and principles had radicalised the service resulting in the Children's Hearing System which has endured largely unchanged for forty years. It would be helpful if we could similarly articulate some simple statements/ideas of what our work would be about.

7. A full discussion followed including:

- Accountability across the areas of private agencies, local authority and voluntary agencies. Geraldine explained the background to the 1999 regulation which went beyond social work and set out the social service worker's accountability to the Codes of Practice set out in legislation.
- practice governance needs to be about both the practitioner's accountability and the users/carers' perspective.
- BASW recently issued consultation on how much people are responsible for their own actions and how accountable they are and how supported they feel.
- thought that the Mental Health Act brought about a new framework. It was suggested that there were good examples of accountability frameworks around.
- direct payments and the fact that this area is not registered at present by the SSSC was also highlighted.

8. The group agreed that some work will need to be done on mapping out what we mean and where we are at present in terms of Practice Governance. The main points that emerged from the discussion that followed were. :

- Need for clarity of the terminology around accountability/responsibility and also supervision/consultation;
- Recognition that much of this applies to any profession;
- What enables people to be responsible for their own behaviour?
- This group needs to have close links with the other workstreams, particularly leadership/management and the workforce groups but also Service Development in relation to devolved budgets for example;
- need to define what Practice Governance, and the key elements within that, means;
- Is Governance the right word?
- Need for discussion around the complexity of accountabilities in relation to the social service workforce, not just the social worker's skills;

- One size might not fit all but there should be sufficient core elements that could apply across any workforce/organisation etc;
- Care and case management aspects must be connected to governance.

9. It was agreed that a base line needs to be established and Andrew said that he would be grateful for any thoughts, before the next meeting in January, on how this work could be done. Andrew asked the group to particularly think about:

- What is Practice Governance
- What is funding/accountability/control
- Team responsibility
- Professional leadership
- How does this currently operate, or not.
- Are there problems with it – rather than how things are addressed.

Action: Catherine agreed that a synopsis of the discussion would be fleshed out and a paper circulated to help establish an agreed baseline and understanding for the work of this group.

10. Andrew reported that he was keen to carry out a discrete piece of work on the role of the Chief Social Work Officer and how this relates to practice governance. He thought it would be helpful to hold a workshop on this. Discussion continued on the different models of the Chief Social Work Officer and the balance of management and leadership issues and what this means for practice governance. Alexis said that she would be happy to share the views from the SWIA inspections with the group and was happy to put something together for a future agenda item. Again it was seen as important to make the connections with other workstreams to look at the overlaps in this area.

Action: Alexis offer of pulling something together from SWIA inspections on CSWO to be included in a future meeting – possibly the proposed workshop.

Membership

11. Andrew outlined what membership of the Practice Governance Group would entail. Initially it was suggested that the group would meet bi-monthly throughout the year with some pieces of work being taken forward between meetings, including the possibility that members would establish within their own areas some models of practice.

12. Bryan reiterated the point that it was crucial to make the linkages and be joined up with all the other streams of work established to take forward Changing Lives. It was agreed that the Practice Governance Group need to be robust in making the linkages to other work and groups.

Action: Moira would circulate the membership of all the Change Programmes to the group.

13. It was agreed that there needs to be a clear focus and outcome for the work of the group. It is important that this is set out. The self assessment returns from local authorities would also inform this.

The meeting of all Chairs of each of the Change Programmes was seen as a good starting point in identifying specific areas of work where there could be a need to make linkages / consider joint working.

Action: Catherine agreed to provide an update on these and a paper on what the workplan and desired outcomes for the work of this group might be for consideration at the next meeting.

Research Strategy

14. Bryan gave an update on this topic, explaining that the group (Research & Development) had held its first meeting and that this had gone well. The second meeting was due to take place in December. There had also been 2 pre-meetings with research leaders and research users which had also gone well. Bryan spoke of taking the whole system approach and the 3 dimensions of the Strategy:

- Better linkage between research and practice and training;
- Better use of research evidence; and
- Better embedding of research

15. Bryan also spoke about the link to UK developments and participation in the consultation by SCIE and the contribution of the four UK governments. The sub-group membership is made up from –

HEIs
Users both statutory and voluntary
Employers
Practitioners

Use will also be made of small group discussions, critical friends and the various layers of stakeholder involvement.

16. Funding has been made available both from SIESWE and Changing Lives to support a post at SIESWE to assist Bryan with the disbursement of the budget and to support the initiative. Bryan has been encouraged by the widespread support for the venture.

17. Andrew asked that Research be made a standing item on future agendas.

Action: Moira to include R&D as standing agenda item

Future Meetings and Business

18. Moira was asked to canvass dates for bi-monthly meetings of the Group.

Priorities

19. Sandra summarised the four key priority areas –

- Understanding the task – what is meant by Practice Governance
- Address the timeline of tasks – this will need some adjustment
- Reasonable expectation for the group to liaise with each other by e-mail in between meetings
- Boundaries for decision-making (Ruth agreed to re-visit the survey conducted earlier by BASW).

20. Liz suggested that she would take the question “What is Practice Governance” back to the Practitioner Forum and bring back to the Group what practitioners think this means.

Action: Ruth to have a look at what can be learned from grievances, often relating to boundaries issues, and see if anything to feed into the group.

Action: Liz would consider the issues of Practice Governance in her PF and feed back views/issues.

Date of Next Meeting

21. The next meeting of the Group will take place on **26 January at 10.00 a.m. in Conference Room 6, Scottish Executive, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh.**