

# **National Social Work Services Forum**

## **Draft Minutes of the Meeting**

**26 September 2006**

Malmaison Hotel

Leith

Edinburgh

### **Present:**

**Peter Peacock, Minister for Education and Young People – Chair**

David Crawford - Association of Directors of Social Work

Norma Graham - Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland

Annie Gunner - Community Care Providers Scotland

Christine Hallett - University Principals /Universities Scotland

Len Hammersley - Association of Scotland's Colleges

Peter Hay - Society of Personnel Directors

Alison Horner – National Practitioners Forum

Alexis Jay - Social Work Inspection Agency

Jane Kennedy – CoSLA

Gail MacNamara - College of Occupational Therapists

Ronnie O'Connor - Association of Directors of Education

Jacque Roberts - Care Commission

Stephen Smellie- UNISON

Ruth Stark - British Association of Social Workers

Carole Wilkinson - Scottish Social Services Council

Tommy Williams - Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

Bryan Williams - Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education

### **Scottish Executive representatives**

Val Cox – Head of Division SWSPD

Colin MacLean – Group Head – Children, Young People and Social Care

Valerie Macniven – Justice Department

Catherine Rainey – SWSPD

Adam Rennie – Health (for Paul Gray)

Elaine Martay - SWSPD (minutes)

### **Apologies:**

SOLACE

Joanne Atkinson - Association of Community Health Partnerships

Janet Birks – Falkirk – co-chair of the Service Development Change Programme

Sandy Cameron – Scottish Executive – Chair of the Performance Change Programme

Brian Corrigan - Social Care Association

Nigel Henderson – Penumbra – co-chair of the Service Development Change Programme

Pauline Innes - Communities Scotland

Andrew Lowe – Scottish Borders – Chair of the Practice Governance Change Programme

Elaine Martay – SWSPD

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Catriona Renfrew - Health Board Chief Executives

SE Representatives:

Paul Gray – Health (represented by Adam Rennie)

Karen Lax – SWSPD

Colin McKay – Public Services Reform

Mike Nielson – Development Department, Housing and Regeneration

Ruth Parsons – Public Services Reform Group

## **1. Welcome, Introductions and Minutes**

1. The Minister welcomed members to the second meeting of the National Social Work Services Forum. There were general introductions for the benefit of new attendees.
2. The minutes were agreed as a correct record.
3. Matters Arising: Stephen Smellie would like the members to note that in commencing the local practitioners forums UNISON and BASW were keen to offer support in using their infrastructure and contacts to assist in getting these up and running.
4. The Minister welcomed the approach and the support for involving practitioners in fora to discuss issues locally related to the Changing Lives agenda. He encouraged ongoing local dialogue to take this forward.

## **2. Implementation Plan**

5. Val Cox noted that the Implementation Plan had been generally well received, despite some unhelpful focus by the press. Milestones and targets for each change programme had been set out, though these would need to be flexible in order to respond to changing circumstances and priorities since the Plan had been drafted. There was already much work underway, particularly on the workforce change programme.
6. It was unclear whether practitioners were as aware of the programme as would be hoped. Alison Horner (NPF), Ruth Stark (BASW), Stephen Smellie (UNISON) and Gail MacNamara (COT) shared the view that awareness amongst front line staff was patchy. The workforce was employed in diverse work sectors (eg private and voluntary) and this caused problems in reaching them. While many would have been aware and possibly seen the report of the review, less clear that people would be aware of the Implementation Plan.
7. Suggestions on how to disseminate Changing Lives and the Implementation Plan to practitioners effectively were:
  - Pro-active programme of seminars and presentations by all partners
  - All members to be active in disseminating information to all levels in their organisations
  - To consider a high profile champion for the change programme.
8. The Minister thanked everyone for their help in getting the Implementation Plan pulled together and indicated that other Ministers were grateful too. He re-affirmed his keenness to

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ensure front-line involvement in the change programme. He asked everyone to make efforts to reach across to all front line workers. Partner engagement would also be important in getting good lines of communication established, and he urged a very pro-active approach.

**9. ACTION: SWSPD to increase efforts to engage practitioners. NSWSPF members to consider their approach to communication possibly setting up seminars / presentations to their constituents.**

### **3. Update on Implementation**

10. Catherine Rainey up-dated the Forum on the activities of the 5 change programmes.

10.1 Workforce Development Group – Work in this area was already well underway building on its previous incarnation. Carole Wilkinson (Chair) explained that the milestones were being developed into a proforma, showing policy links and links to other change programmes. These would be circulated to the members when ready. The next meeting will take the form of a workshop.

10.2 Leadership and Management – Building on previous work, his group had agreed to requesting a 5<sup>th</sup> cohort of the leading to Deliver programme be funded – commencing early in 2007, and appropriately targeted, as one strand of activity. David Crawford (Chair) indicated there was a lot going on and a need to link with the mapping activity previously mentioned, capitalise on what is already out there, and cannibalise approaches from other sectors where relevant. .

10.3 Performance Improvement – The first meeting will be on 23 October when initial scoping will be undertaken. One of its key aims will be to embed a culture of continuing improvement in the across social work services. The principles, characteristics and behaviours identified to do this will feed across all 5 change programmes.

10.4 Practice Governance – First meeting will be on 30 October. Will be looking at initial scoping. There is a sub-group looking at Research and Development which has already met. Bryan Williams (Sub Group Chair) indicated there was a good range of representation on the group and an enthusiasm for the task of developing a strategy for the sector.

10.5 Service Development – This change programme will meet in the near future

11. The chairs of the 5 change programmes and the R &D sub-group will meet with officials in December. An important focus of that meeting will be the flagging up connections between the Change Programmes and agreeing a series of formal and informal arrangements to ensure appropriate co-ordination and liaison across the Programmes.

12. A group had been formed to look at the workforce development of academic teachers and at the curriculum. It was seen as a route to ensuring a future cohort for Leading to Deliver. It was hoped that all those Scottish Universities which offered appropriate degrees would in future be involved, including those which train OTs.

13. The Minister suggested that the Leadership and Management group should look at the Education pilots for standards in leadership. He felt that it was important to identify the next generation of leaders in order to ensure that they were properly supported to develop the appropriate skills.

14. It was agreed that issues of leadership needed a common approach, and a framework within which to work. Leadership is not just about senior management, but about leadership across the board. The Minister recognised that part of the difficulty is that public sector organisations are in different places, not all starting from the same point. He reiterated the importance of positive, proactive management – and learning from approaches taken in other sectors.

15. UNISON and BASW hoped for more involvement in the change programmes, particularly in Practice Governance. They had specialist knowledge and research in this area, and the danger was that this knowledge would not be utilised. It was explained that though, of necessity, the numbers had to be small on these groups, there was the capacity to bring in specialist people, or set up sub-groups. It was expected that there would be plenty of opportunities for UNISON and BASW to be involved but further consideration would be given to this. It was subsequently agreed that BASW should be invited to join the Practice Governance Change Programme, and UNISON the Workforce Change Programme.

16. The Minister welcomed the discussion and the constructive engagement in this agenda. He emphasised the importance of keeping the discussions and dialogue ongoing and ensuring that everyone was in the loop and ways found to ensure they can contribute effectively.

17. It was explained that all change activities would be on the web, and that there was an opportunity for people to register their interests so that they could receive specialist information pro-actively.

#### **4. Report back from Day 1 – National Priorities**

18. Carole Wilkinson and Bryan Williams presented feedback from the previous day's workshop. Comments on the context of national priorities are summarised below:

- It was felt that Changing Lives gave the “what” and the “why”, and therefore the national priorities for implementation should be about “how” to deliver change, and how that change should happen.
- Question on “why national priorities”. These should engage stakeholder support for a shared view. This meant that communication and language had to be clear and precise, as people tended to interpret things differently.
- At the same time it was recognised that if there were national priorities, then some things would be left out which then might be considered less important.

19. Bryan Williams focused specifically on change priorities:

- Need for a balance between having national priorities and appropriate expression of those locally, recognising that different localities had different needs.
- Recognising the tension between top-down and bottom-up concepts and priorities. This meant that national priorities needed to be dynamic and capable of re-shaping through time.

- Although change priorities would be relevant to social work services, they would need to be sit within the context of the Integrated Social Services and the Public Services agendas, and so would need to be defined appropriately.
- They needed to be action-orientated and support early progress on some areas.

20. The workshop proposed that the next steps should be:

- That officials capture the discussion in a structured way
- A paper is produced for discussion at a further NSWSF in December
- A proposed approach to be delivered to the Minister around the turn of the year.

21. The Minister thanked colleagues for this update and made the following comments:

- The national priorities were to focus on areas for improvement, and these would change over time, and could include topics like leadership, structures and systems.
- He would not like to see any aspects of SW down-played. For this reason he agreed that the language, and understanding, needed to be precise.
- He recognised that this change agenda was a long term commitment, but there could be areas where improvement could be made and then move onto identifying another priority.

22. Members welcomed the Minister's explanation of the purpose of national priorities being to focus on areas fro improvement. Also reinforced the importance of ownership by the workforce and engagement to ensure these help deliver, and don't become a barrier to, progress.

### 23. ACTION:

- **This and the previous day's discussion above to be summarised by officials in a structured way.**
- **A further meeting of NSWSF would be called in early December to discuss.**
- **The need for two way dialogue to ensue with stakeholders in order to get commitment would be built into any proposed approach.**
- **A draft would be delivered to the Minister around the end of the year.**

## 5. Communication Strategy

24. The Minister considered the communication strategy as very important given the diversity of people and organisations that had to be aware of, engaged with, the programme.

25. Val Cox informed the members that this was a draft strategy, which was subject to further development. In particular the strategy needed to provide a stronger focus on engagement with front-line staff.

26. Points made in discussion included:

- research done into the amount front-line staff read SW journals like Community Care, Care Appointments, indicated a disappointing trend. Staff were becoming disillusioned and less interested.

- that newspapers read by the whole workforce varied, so a multi-faceted strategy would need to be developed.
- Suggestion that the development of a DVD for staff had been very successful with respect to raising awareness of housing stock transfer.
- Use of Frequently Asked Questions on website / in payslips could help hook in staff.
- Should tell people not just about what is being done, but give examples of engagement in the process by people at all levels.
- Ownership was very important as it gave people permission to change behaviour.
- Wide range of mechanisms already out there – important that messages are consistent and coherent; from whatever source they are received.
- A lot of communications does not necessarily get to the parts need to reach. “What it means for me” approach could help ensure people take on board.
- The messages in the Comms strategy don’t reflect some of the harder areas ie some people will have to hand over control to make this agenda work.
- Links with Users and Carers Forum need to be developed.

27. The Minister thanked members for a very useful discussion, and indicated that he would like to see a session for MSPs some time in the new year in order to keep them on board. A letter to the relevant Committee(s) could be a precursor to that.

28. **ACTION:**

- **Officials to draft a letter for the Minister to send to the relevant Committee(s) outlining the work of the change programme**
- **Officials to develop further the communication strategy in the light of this discussion.**
- **Officials to look at the logistics of sending personalised letters entitled “what it means for me” to front-line practitioners.**

**29. The Minister closed the meeting thanking members for their input and constructive engagement in taking the programme forward.**

**30. Date of next meeting:** Now arranged for 5 December 2006 at Victoria Quay in CR2. Time to be confirmed to suit the Minister’s timetable, but is expected to be an **all day event** with the Minister chairing the final session).

**Secretariat  
SWSPD  
November 2006**