



**Report of 21st Century Social Work Review Open Event
Wednesday 22 June 2005
Woodhill House Aberdeen**

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to outline the views presented by participants at the open event held in Aberdeen, on the 22nd of June 2005. The event was designed to obtain the views of those with an interest in Social Work Services and/ or the Social Work Review and contribute to the 21st Century Review of Social Work. Participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds and included service users and carers, front line social work staff and representatives from health, education and housing.

The aim of the event was to:

- Consider the implications of the findings of the review so far.
- Develop potential solutions to problems experienced within social work currently.
- Seek consensus on what kind of social work we need for the future.

Participants attended two workshops from the following topics:

1. Access to Services
2. Integrated Services
3. Leadership and Management
4. Skill Mix
5. Bureaucracy, Systems and Processes
6. Personalisation through participation
7. Prevention and Early Intervention
8. Professional Accountability
9. The Voluntary and Statutory Sectors
10. What kind of Social Worker do we want for the future?

In a further session groups then discussed, possible solutions to the issues identified.

Summary of Findings

This section contains the key points from the discussion.

1. Access to Services

There needs to be a user focus to service access

- Information about a range of services has to be publicly available in libraries, schools, town halls or community centres.
- More effective first points of contact for users. This should be highly responsive, sympathetic and well trained staff with experience in listening.
- 24 hour service with more flexible working shifts for staff to be encouraged. Out of hours service should provide sufficient advice, and short term
- Help to clients as a minimum.
- Right Service, Right Time, Right Worker. Importance of building relationships of trust and understanding between social workers and their clients. Provide a service which is responsive to the needs and wishes of the client.
- Skill Mix Should Include properly supported with financial and administrative support. More para-professionals to take on some of the workload of social workers. Recognition that a social worker is not always required to do all tasks involved with providing care to clients.

2. Integrated Services

- Better communication and information sharing amongst social work staff and clients; social work services in both statutory and non statutory and the wider care services, e.g. health or housing departments.
- Effectively address client need via a one stop shop, in a direct and efficient manner. Clients not to be passed from one professional to another. Initial social worker is continuous contact services provision. This social worker has to provide a well organised, co coordinated care package that draws on the appropriate members of staff.
- More multidisciplinary training that encourages learning from other professions and care providers. This will also develop respect and understanding of the role each can play in providing effective responses to and improve integrated working
- Joined up funding to enable more efficient collective working across sectors and departments.
- Common goals and values to be produced within integrated teams. This will then ease collaboration, produce common understanding and approaches to care.

3. Leadership and Management

- Chief Social Work Officers need to be credible, visible and powerful. They have to be recognised as the embodiment of Social Work Services.
- Management and Leadership training has to be integral to social work education and not an add on.
- Integration in social work services requires clear leadership and vision.
- Collective commitment to a learning culture will ensure the correct skills, behaviours and competencies.

4. Skill Mix

- Bureaucracy and workload. Job requirements outstrip time available to social workers. Too much time on bureaucracy
- The core social worker role as the sole provider of care has to be abandoned.
- A variety of diverse expertise and roles to be used and recognised. There should be less resistant to sub letting tasks among different professionals.
- Reward has to become fairer and reflect the qualifications of social work staff, should also come from competence and experience.
- Need to recognise the skills of others and recognition that social work draws on a variety of discourses and from many professions and sectors. These skills have to be shared and integrated with others.
- Support networks for social care staff have to be encouraged. Recognition and value for all staff for the role they provide in the team. The team identity has to be inclusive and respect contribution of every member.

5. Bureaucracy, Systems and Processes

- Better use of administration support Social workers to recognise that they don't have to do all tasks related to their client. More experienced, specialised staff can be designated particular roles, which will reduce the burden on social workers as well as provide a more effective service to users.
- Joined up systems need to be in place for social work services both non statutory and statutory sectors, as well as other care services i.e. health, criminal justice, and housing. There is need for systems to share information, prevent duplication and enable working and collective analysis of client need and care packages.
- Better access to IT to all members of staff and carers that they are all well trained.
- Social work should be based on trust not defensive practice and bureaucratic accountability.
- Recording to be focused on client care, rather than political targets and interests.

6. Personalisation through Participation

- All service users as well as their carers should be involved in every level of the process relevant to their care. Their opinions are valuable and have to be recognised as making an important contribution to the decision making process.
- Services have to be needs led rather than resource led.
- IT is important to find a balance between consistency and creativity in social work practice to ensure fairness in service provision for all service users. A benchmark and minimum standards have to be established.
- Recognise that not all users are able or willing to contribute to their personalised care package and ensure that approaches for these people are considered.
- Empower local areas to make financial decisions that suit their specific local conditions. They can then more easily respond to issues that are personal to specific individuals.

7. Prevention and Early Intervention

- Community based approach
- There has to be detailed understanding of the variety of universal services available. Effective integration and sharing amongst different organisations has to take place,
- Outcomes rather than the processes to be focus for assessment
- Social work needs to act as a supportive service that is tailored to the individual user.
- It's everyone's responsibility not just a social workers to undertake preventative and early intervention work, not just a social worker.

8. Professional Accountability

- Social work staff should be more able to learn from their and others mistakes the successes and good practice.
- Social workers have to be allowed to operate within a new of reflective practice, guiding supervision, and professional autonomy. Remove the blame culture where management take on little responsibility and provide poor support in relation to high levels of risk.
- Policy needs to be based on learning e.g. Case Reviews.
- Shared accountability for risk assessment and management. Different local authorities, social work agencies and wider care sectors, all have to recognise their roles and responsibilities.
- Increased capacity for therapeutic, preventative, personalised service provision. Through reduced work loads for individual social workers and fewer high risk cases that place demands on time and resources.

9. The Voluntary and Statutory Sector

- Statutory accountability rests with the chief social work officers, but more roles and tasks could be passed to the voluntary sector under their supervision.
- There needs to be recognition of the diversity of care options that could be made available to clients if the statutory sector were more open and aware of the capacity and abilities of the non statutory sector. There has to be better support through stronger umbrella organisations resourced and able to represent voluntary organisations.
- Important to avoid tokenism in consulting users and carers. Their views and opinions can be highly valuable and need to be credited.
- More secondment of staff within the different sectors as well as encouraging joint training.
- Partnerships have to be cemented in trust, transparency, consistency, communication and commitment to success.

10. What Kind of Social Worker Do We Want For The Future?

- Strong, clear, defined social work legislation that provides a clear grounding for the profession.
- Social work needs clear definition and the social workers need a clear job remit. This will ensure all care sectors and social work staff understands their position in relation to client care.
- Social work staff needs the time to be able to fulfil the needs of clients to the best of their ability social work need appropriate professional recognition.

- Social workers embodying a variety of skills and roles in relation to care, agent of social control, they wanted to be understood as agents of social change.
- While there is growing specialisation in social work there is still a need for a common knowledge, skills and value base

11. What Needs to Happen in Order to Achieve Your Vision

Outlined below are key points from the discussions of the future of social work

National

- Build strong relationships and networks between statutory and non statutory sectors.
- Joint single agency to draw on a multitude of care sectors i.e. Health, criminal justice, housing and social work.
- Strategic care authority to set strategic direction for care.
- Increase resources.
- Strong national leadership.
- Longer term funding from the Scottish Executive.
- Joint thinking in the Executive itself.
- Make resources more needs based.
- Recognition that solutions can't be the same across Scotland.
- Reduce the bureaucracy in commissioning and contracting.
- Improve conditions, of pay and reward for social workers.
- Service provision and advice to be available 24 hours and be much more.
- Clarity of social worker role and the role social work plays in service provision, and a strong professional identity.
- Need to have a more positive media image.
- Develop services to fit new demographic trends i.e. a growing elderly population.
- Problem of social work being recognised as a mainly female profession.
- Develop Opportunities to share good practice and effective problems solving.
- Outcomes rather than process driven assessment.
- More investment in technology.

Local

- One stop shop improved integrated services.
- Devolved budgets and more long term funding.
- Reduce the number of local authorities.
- Local management need to listen and react to demands from front line.
- Multi disciplinary team and Co location.
- More consistent social work services for service users as well and geographical areas.
- Local accountability and community planning
- IT systems joined up and improved access for all social work staff.
- Understanding the role of other professionals and care sectors.

Individual

- Retention initiatives and support for newly qualified social workers.
- Better use of Para professionals and assistant staff.
- Professional service requires professional staff
- Develop an 'I can say no' ethos in social work.
- Develop trust.
- Introduce a dedicated user and carer group officer.
- Many clients are stigmatised and need to be treated as real people.
- More individualised service provision.
- Empower service users.
- Making the focus more user i.e. empowering users rather than giving aid to users.
- Lower expectations of service users and stress responsibilities as well as rights.
- Consistency and tension between creativity i.e. providing a unique, specialist service for an individual, while retaining a consistent level of service amongst all users.
- Leadership at all levels needs to be more proactive and relational to and engaging with the ground level experience.

1. Access to Services

Modernising Social Work Services to deliver:

1.1 Flexible hours for mainstream services

There was suggestion that primary social work services should be accessible 24 hour a day, to meet user expectations. This would be met by flexible shift working and practices, This is the expectation users have of the services they require.

1.2 More integrated services

Social work services could be provided from various venues e.g. GP surgeries supermarkets, shopping malls and community centres. These locations are more convenient for users. Co location was seen as highly valuable to creating integrated services. Services could also become more integrated if the skills mix was addressed. Respondents felt social workers were not always the most appropriate professional to provide all aspects of service provision to a client. Improved use of administration and finance assistants would reduce inefficiency and frustration of social workers these support staff need to be sufficiently skilled and have efficient amounts of experience.

There could be 'local area coordinators' put in place, to ensure the right access to the right services for clients. This coordinator has to be knowledgeable about the diversity of services available within and out with social work in their local area. They have to effectively share information a diversity of care options to best fulfil the need of clients.

1.3 Less stigmatised services

Participants suggested that social work could become less stigmatised if information about the range of services was available in public places such as, schools, libraries, mobile libraries. Putting information online was seen not to be sufficient.

Relevant material, that is accessible to users, up to date and clear has to be distributed from appropriate places.

Social work services need to change public perceptions. Get the message across that social work services are 'not all about taking your children'. They can be highly valuable for the needs of people's local communities and do positive things for families and individuals.

1.4 More proactive services

'Self care' was highly valued amongst the participants. Social work staff should work to enable to become less reliant.

They should encourage independence in their clients within a secure, caring environment.

Services should be more proactive e.g. the first point of contact to be responsive and effective at providing the correct services. This 'receptionist' role is key to success of matching provision with the needs of the user this

first point of contact needs to be highly sympathetic and staff to have the right skills listening and helping skills.

Services only seem to be available to those who are in crises. There needs to be a preventative, early intervention process that allows social workers to respond to issues at the early stages where they can be more effectively addressed.

1.5 Self assessment and direct services.

By ensuring information concerned with social work services is more readily available the public domain, clients are more able to consider the care options available to them and identify that which would best meet their needs. Clients should not have to go through complex access particularly for simple care.

A good assessment of need, allows the right service to be provided at the right time, by the right worker.

1.6 Models of service delivery for rural and island communities:

Small, isolated communities must have the ownership and control over their service provision. Community ownership of services was key to effective access to services that fits the needs of the client. One respondent considered the lessons could be learnt from model of social work used in Cuba.

2. Integrated Services

2.1 Successful creation of integrated services

Co-location is a potential way of sharing client information. Where co location isn't possible other methods of effective communication have to be established. It is recognised that sometimes, even with co location communication can still be poor.

There needs to be more open accountable and transparent services a 'one stop shop' for both assessment and care provision would be useful.

It's important to listen to people and effectively engage with their opinions.

Specialist and generalist social work staff should work together. Generic qualities would unite social workers in terms of values, job remits and approaches to care.

2.2 Integration of Children and Families Social Work, Community Care and Criminal Justice:

Relationships between, for example, housing and social work, or health and social work are becoming less clear. Participants felt it was important to maintain a separate social work professional identity.

Some believe that through the re-structuring of social work services in with mainstream services will lead to the disintegration of social work

With this increasing integration the voice of the social worker is not always being heard.

Efficient systems and processes have to be in place for sharing of information amongst statutory and non statutory social work sectors and providers such as health, housing or criminal justice.

More multi disciplinary training and collective working would give the opportunity for professions and professionals to learn from each other.

There are distinctive roles within an integrated team. Social work should retain an important element of care provision.

The holistic views and abilities of social work are not well acknowledged. There has to be a strengthening of social work in the future.

Service users don't want to be passed between different specialist agencies. They need the attention of one worker who collaborates with other departments, sectors and care providers.

The potential benefits of integration:

The needs of communities can be responded to more effectively when the individual needs become the central uniting focus of integrated teams for them to person centred services diversity of professional contributions and advice can be pulled upon.

Strong collective engagement can help prevent crisis, as well as ensure teams can intervene effectively with cross profession contributions at key moments.

Views and solutions concerning service provision to clients can be brought together by relevant parties. Brings a depth of knowledge and understanding behind the client care.

Having integrated teams allows for more choice for service users.

Integrated teams could facilitate sharing of good practice and effective responses and learning from what works well and also what is seen to be ineffective can occur not only within statutory and non statutory social work services This can also help to create common goals and practices which make care services much more collective.

2.4 Overcoming barriers to integration:

- Respondents saw a variety of barriers to integration such as:
- Lack of shared funding streams.
- Differences in language and contradictory practice between integrated workers.
- All contributing parties are autonomous and have distinctive working practices, styles and approaches values and cultures.
- A lack of trust amongst the different care providers and individuals involved within particular care packages.

To overcome these barriers participants proposed co location, regular team meetings and a strong user perspective. There were calls for more involvement of the voluntary sector and more openness by social work.

3. Leadership and Management

3.1 Leadership and management in social work services:

- Leadership comes from informed, autonomous, independent individuals.
- Leadership is not seen as an exclusively senior management quality. Every member of staff within social work services should have the opportunity to make decisions, influence circumstances, and shape the care of individual clients. They have to be recognised from their professionalism and are trusted to make the correct choices.
- Leadership to operate in management structure often management is inexperienced and this hinders the ability of individuals to make decisive, creative decisions. Management can also be a way of developing leadership, if the correct structures are in place.
- Leadership and management in social work services must empower encourage and support individual leadership decisions while being supportive and sharing of the responsibilities and accountabilities.

3.2 Barriers to improved leadership and management:

Many respondents see a strong divide between frontline social work staff and management. There is not enough collaboration and collective thinking between the two. Effective leaders within the front line services tend to be promoted to management. Management is increasingly unable to lead as their decisions are not properly informed by frontline. As a result management decisions regularly miss the actual client need.

3.3 Proposed accountability to bodies:

There are difficulties with regularly competing accountabilities for example between SSSC and the employer. There needs to be clear lines of accountability for all those involved in care provision.

Social work needs clear boundaries and definitions and to understand everyone's roles... Clear leadership and management need a strong vision. Particularly the case in relation to high risk cases where clarity is essential. Managers are unable to lead and manage effectively because of the huge variety of pressures and bureaucracy placed upon their time.

There is also tension between being a manager and a leader. There has to be separation of roles in some instances.

There was criticism about the lack of integration in the Executive. Upper levels of management have to be strong, proactive and engage with all levels of social work. The Scottish Executive has to ensure all their policy recommendations are joined up.

3.4 Developing professional leadership in social work services:

Various levels of management need different kinds of skills and knowledge. There was strong support for learning courses to develop skills for leaders and managers. One homogenous course was not sufficient. There has to be graded training and specific development programmes that empower individual circumstances. In fact, it was strongly felt that principles of effective leadership and management have to be built into social work education from an early stage. It has to be well integrated into formal qualifications rather than just being tagged on after staff is promoted.

Formal training for the transition between practitioner and senior management needs to be prioritised. From this transition sufficient training time must be set aside to ensure the correct skills and standards are being learned.

Leadership has to be developed in conjunction with other professional groups. E.g. health.

Social workers, particularly new recruits have to be supported and encouraged to make confident decisions. Social Work culture has to reflect principles of leadership and strong management. There is a need for a change of attitudes in the service. There is concern about a lack of resources and capacity to make the changes required, and this is particularly for the voluntary sector.

Decisions made in relation to the effective delivery of services should be more led by the first line of management.

The role of the chief social worker is to ensure social work accountability and embody the profession. However this role is being diluted and the role has less credibility.

There needs to be recognition that there is no one model for local authority's lack of common structure in local authorities and little cooperation means problems for integration.

The Scandinavian model of service provision was highly praised amongst the participants. Their approach is a single service model that integrated all kinds of services. There needs to be positive commitment to and strong integration amongst the professionals in health, education, schools, housing and corporate ownership.

4. Skill Mix

4.1 Skill mix in social work services:

Social workers are recognised as having to juggle a complex and extensive workload. Many participants were adamant however that tasks did not have to be undertaken by a qualified social worker. Allocation of tasks, to other staff, can create less burden on the social workers, as well as enable the most suitable and well trained, member of staff to undertake the activity.

Care managers could play an important role in improving the skill mix within social work services. They can encourage and co ordinate team working.

Not enough recognition is given to the role and status of the qualified social worker e.g. pay and reward. There should be respect for the difficult, complex and challenging roles they play in providing social care the levels of responsibility and accountability have to fairly reflect the abilities of social workers.

There is an understanding that, financial assessment and client care can't be undertaken by non social work staff.

Some social workers enjoy the complexity and diversity the job offers and feel this element may be lost by introducing new job roles.

4.2 Examples of business or administrative roles that work well:

Many respondents felt that there were too many bureaucratic demands on social work services, they are time consuming, largely repetitive and irrelevant to provision of client care. The possibility of 'off loading' administrative tasks and business roles was highly appealing.

4.3 The need for para-professional roles and more service support staff:

Time spent organising care and setting up services such as taxis are very time consuming and could easily be delegated to others. However, using para-professionals to provide a service raises issues of staff continuity. Clients highly value consistency in the staff and delegation of tasks may upset this balance.

It is important that some kind of common foundation and set of values are in place. Everyone involved in the planning of a particular individual has to understand the person's background, setting and wider circumstances.

Moving from hierarchical professional structures to a culture that values a range of functional and vocational roles:

Financial management should be recognised as a professional skill.

All job roles should be recognised and respected. Some respondents believed there should be more recognition of practice and formal education. There should be a career path for social work assistants.

5. Bureaucracy, Systems and Processes

5.1 Reducing/ the level of paper work:

There was demand to significantly reduce paperwork, particularly that irrelevant to providing care to clients.

There seems to be a lack of trust in social worker services e.g. filling forms and paperwork to justify their actions. There should be a balance of knowledge, ability and professionalism with the need for accountability.

Much of the reporting surrounding clients are duplicated by other professionals.

5.3 Examples of systems that have successfully cut unnecessary paper work:

Some proposed a dedicated worker to deal with care management. They could organise the administration of care packages, set up the service sheet and put the care package into the system.

Email has become an effective measure of communication but cautious use to avoid overloads of emails.

5.4 Developing new and different systems and roles.

Reducing the number of forms that have to be completed by a qualified social worker would e.g. preventative work and collaborating networking with other professionals.

Social workers may not have skills in computing, business management or finance. Certain tasks could be undertaken by 'finance teams'. Social work should be open to accepting expertise from other professions.

All members of staff need to be able to access computers.

6. Personalisation

6.1 Current practices of personalisation.

Personalisation is valued throughout social work. But there is work to mainstream it. Social workers believe in working with service users and aim to do so in the most effective way they can.

There is a need to involve clients and their carers. And to act as an advocate.

6.2 The achievability of providing 'pure' personalisation of services and their implications for:

Resources

Currently social work service provision is seen to be resource led rather than client need. For personalisation to work resources will have to exactly match need.

Currently, social work staff can't offer what people want.

The strengths and weaknesses of the personalisation approach:

Strengths

Service users and carers can be involved at all stages. Every client gets the opportunity to have an influence over their care plans.

Better engagement with clients and more creative approaches to care.

Responds to particular clients specific needs.

It is needs led rather than process driven...

Empower clients by providing the correct kind of assistance to help themselves.

A more personalised approach may also reduce the stigma and negative preconceptions of social work services.

Weaknesses

Need to balance social workers authoritative position. They should have the final say and the authority to make decisions.

There is concern that people's expectations and demands of social work services will rise. There has to be acknowledgement and honesty of the limits.

Involuntary clients don't necessarily respond effectively to a personalisation.

Often the social worker has to make decisions without client help in these circumstances. There are clients who also can not contribute.

It takes a long time to build strong bonds and relationships between social workers and their clients.

The enabling factors which allow this approach to be adopted:

Continued development of IT and technological solutions can be encouraged to allow creative dialogue and interaction between social workers and their clients.

The factors which will prevent this

Lack of resources at a localised level for this.

There has to be more creative approaches and willingness to engage with service users. Social workers and carers could be more involved in training of social work staff.

Systems are not flexible enough to allow clients to meet easily with their social workers.

Pressures on social workers time are becoming less able to be client centred.

Sometimes responding to high risk problems can conflict with the Personalised service.

7. Prevention and Early Intervention

7.1 Balancing early intervention and response to crisis:

Early intervention is seen as preventing individuals having to enter into the statutory social work system, and minimising damage and distress for those who are already there. Some examples of problems that early intervention and prevention can be effective in addressing are substance abuse, domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, nutrition and lifestyle.

Part of the process of early intervention and prevention has to include effective assessment as soon as problems arise for individuals.

7.2 The role social workers should play in early intervention:

Early involvement services should come from a variety of sources i.e. health and the voluntary sector, personalised and tailored manner.

There should be a multi agency resource centres that respond to community need.

7.3 Focus on early intervention and continuing to deal with crises:

It was proposed there be a generalist, universal service for early intervention and prevention, while using more specialist teams for crisis. Others thought a divide between the two was unhelpful and it was possible to do both.

There is the possibility of improving the public image of social work by more preventative work.

7.4 Measuring or evaluating the effectiveness of early intervention:

Research into what works in terms of early intervention have to become central issues for social work academics. Social work services evaluation has to become far less targets based and more concerned with outcomes for users.

Professional Accountability

8.1 Autonomous and Accountable

Social workers have to take the responsibility for mistakes consequently they 'watch their backs' and can feel isolated. Good supervision and support would be highly valued. Social workers are expected to be accountable for issues out with their role. The organisations in which social workers are employed taking responsibility.

Social workers do not feel that they have the autonomy to make individualised, personalised decisions surrounding client need.

There has to be the recognition that risk can't be completely eradicated.

Risk:

Social workers take on the responsibility for assessing and managing risk.

There needs to be a single, collective assessment system that allows social workers time to consider issues. There was also concern about a possible lack of flexibility in a shared assessment system.

Social work accountability to

- **Person using the service**
- **Employer**
- **Scottish Social Services Council**
- **Public**

Respondents highlighted issues related to multiple accountabilities for social workers practice.

There was an expressed interest in breaking up this hierarchy and allowing all members of social work staff to be able to influence professional decisions. All members of staff should be allowed to contribute critically and suggest creative ideas, which would be encouraged and respected.

However some participants felt it was difficult for social workers to engage other departments and organisations. Working in harmony and achieving consistent collective solutions to client service provision was a challenge. Participants particularly felt responsibility for and accountability about high risk cases. Problems were not shared as they should be. Ideally, participants would like to see shared assessments being made and shared risks being managed by everyone.

Managing risk is difficult in a multi disciplinary setting when there are sometimes different assessment tools.

Social workers are expected to do risk assessment in a multi agency context other authorities don't want to be responsible.

There is conflicting legislation between social work and other areas, such as housing.

8.4 Promoting and developing greater openness to learn from mistakes:

Client feed back forms would encourage openness. However caution was voiced that this could produce compliance. It was considered important to learn from mistakes and from successes.

Social workers should be encouraged to take the time to reflect upon their mistakes, good practice and occasions when they could have acted differently to gain a better result.

8.5 The role of professional supervision should play in promoting accountability and the safe management of risk:

Good supervision and support is important. Participants recognised that there were support mechanisms in social work, but what was autonomy is more important.

9. The Voluntary and Statutory Sectors

9.1 Involvement of independent organisations in policy development and strategic planning.

More responsibility should be handed over to the non statutory sector. Everyone should be able to contribute to strategy and policy development. The ability to make a valuable contribution should be recognised. Trust and transparency between sectors is essential.

Diversity needs to be supported and encouraged and innovative relationships could be built and designed to provide social work services.

There is extensive variation amongst the local authorities in relations with non statutory sectors. It's difficult to establish a common model of practice. However structures should be in place to develop the co operation and collaboration of different care contributors.

The Scottish Executive consultation process has to include all kinds of organisations and set a good example.

There should also be more involvement of users and carers in services non-statutory services provide. There opinions could be highly valuable in shaping successful working.

9.2 Supporting the development of flexible personalised, and good-value services at local community level:

Training has to be recognised as important in both the statutory and non statutory sector.

9.3 Promoting greater interchange of ideas, staff, training and resourcing between sectors:

Trust, transparency, consistency, communication, commitment are seen as core to developing greater interchange between sectors. There needs to be channels that encourage more consultation and communication and the development of a partnership culture. Secondments between the sectors and shared training opportunities and development between sectors would aid this.

9.4 Managing and accountability for services in the voluntary sector and how this could be managed.

Voluntary organisations can do statutory work. Needs good supervision and agreements. Responsibilities and accountabilities have to be clear from the outset. The statutory sector will continue to take on the majority of the responsibility.

The voluntary sector is overly regulated.

9.5 Good partnerships between the sectors that enable quality provision and inhibitors to this:

Currently the resources for social work services are distributed amongst the different local authorities. Local authorities then have control over what is

given to the voluntary sector. There is demand for the contracting culture to change. Local authorities regularly interfere with the working of non statutory organisations. Sometimes their requirements are too difficult to meet. The statutory sector has to be more flexible.

10. What Kind of Social Worker Do We Want For the Future?

10.1 Defining what is a social worker:

The six core roles of the social worker defined were, 'councillor, advocate, partner, assessor of risk and need, care manager and agent of social control'. 'The social worker is seen as the profession of choice when no one knows what the right answer is, where relationships are complex, and where there is a high degree of risk'.

Participants were highly critical of the list. They thought there are more than these six core roles. There has to be a more comprehensive list to truly represent the role of the social worker. The second part of the statement was seen as projecting negative values and perceptions on the role of the social worker i.e. 'No one knows what the right answer is'

Importantly, social workers' roles were seen to be about long term changes. They promote social justice, social inclusion and reduce social injustice.

Currently the social worker role is seen to be overly concerned with managerial duties. Quantity rather than quality and processes rather than outcomes.

Respondents were adamant that clear definitions of the role and skills of the social worker had to be established by the review. This would ensure both social workers themselves and other related professionals were clear about their position in care provision. There needs to be definition of 'this is what we do' 'this is what we don't do'.

A clearer role would increase the value and respect of the complexity, challenges and demands of the job. A recognised professional body for social workers was seen to be desirable, however social work services try to value all roles and contributions to care that are made by every member of staff.

Participants were keen to see a root and branch review and consolidation of legislation. There are currently too many laws and regulations. One participant noted an estimated number of 78 Acts of parliament in total.

Social Workers wanted to be recognised as agents of social change and to be able to offer real alternatives to inequality and difference. They didn't want to be concerned with enabling not controlling.

10.2 Making most effective use of the skills of qualified social workers:

Respondents felt social workers needed the time and space to concentrate on effective, direct, efficient client care. They want to be able to use their skills of listening and engaging with clients to respond effectively to need. They want to be able to personalise service, encourage individuality and empower service users.

To do this, participants were highly supportive of diverting tasks to other professionals and social work staff. Social workers are seen to have to develop new skills of co ordination, delegation and management for this.

Administrative support and team clerks should have a role within social work services. Specifically trained and suitably well qualified administration staff should be encouraged to take on some of the paperwork and filling tasks.

Sometimes the value of writing up case notes and forming reports can have a very direct impact on the quality of care that a social worker can provide. A balance has to be struck.

Social workers are to be encouraged to what they are effective at doing and share this with others.

10.3 The right balance between a generic social worker role and specialist roles:

Social workers are seen to be effective at managing change. The separate generic and specialist roles potentially threaten the core social worker values.

Social workers see the value in having increasingly more specialist niches and post qualification training. Life long learning and more emphasis upon personal learning development would help to facilitate the development of specialist knowledge. Respondents also insist it is important to retain a communal set of values, knowledge and skills that are holistic and general to all social workers.

10.4 Developing high quality therapeutic relationships between social workers and clients:

Some respondents were critical of increasing the co-operation and delegation of tasks to large number of care providers. They recognised that this could create benefits for therapeutic relationships in terms of including a wider contribution of views, professionalism and services that could be made available to a client. They also recognised that one on one, consistent, social worker attention would potentially diminish. Continuity of staff is highly valued amongst clients and this was considered to be more important in producing a high quality therapeutic relationship.

Many respondents see the role of social work as not solely concerned with direct client care. They recognised to some extent that areas like administration, bureaucracy and business/ finance management are now a part of being a social worker. However their role requires readdressing and rebalancing and a focus therapeutic relationships.

10.5 Good practice based on clear evidence of effectiveness:

There is not enough post qualification training, currently, training relies on support from other professionals who don't have the time to properly induct and advise staff members.

There has to be further opportunity to challenge and debate issues within social work.

There has to be better sharing of evidence based practice. More joint working with social work and social work education could facilitate this. Social workers need to be in academic research to develop methods of evaluation.

Users and carers opinions could also become more recognised to inform best practice methods.

What Needs to Happen in Order to Deliver Your Vision

National

Build strong joined up relationships and networks between statutory and non statutory sectors-

The non statutory sector should grow and develop and both the statutory and non-statutory sectors should complement each other. The dominance and superiority of the statutory sector should be eradicated. A more co operative and respectful relationship between statutory and non statutory providers is established.

To encourage practices such as joined up working, shared funding, multi agency training and common service agreements, that has to be clear, well outlined responsibilities and accountabilities for everyone Relationships will become cemented and developed, trust will continue to grow and encourage innovative and collaborative networks. The statutory and non-statutory service need to realise how they complement each other.

Joint single agency that can help draw on a multitude of care sectors such as health, criminal justice, housing and social work-

There are different sectors related to a particular clients care. Pooling different sectors together can help produce collective, shared knowledge and expertise.

Strategic care authority.

It would be highly advantageous to have a care authority that sets the strategic direction for client care. They would outline the contribution that the statutory and non statutory sector would play, as well as set out the role of the wider care sector. This would produce clear defined relationships amongst care providers, and bring clarity about roles and responsibilities.

Increase resources-

As a society, there is strong recognition and high levels of support for many public services, particularly the NHS. Social work services are under recognised and undervalued as a public service acknowledgement and support for There should be a better social work services to gain the respect they deserve.

Strong national leadership-

Leaders whether they are Ministers, Councillors or senior social work managers, have to promote social work services and staff. Social workers also have to promote their service.

Longer term funding from the Scottish Executive-

There is demand to fund on a more long term basis. Current short term funding is seen to 'just plug gaps. Planning is vital in good care provision.

Joined up thinking within the Executive itself-

Departments within the Executive have produce conflicting legislation Unified policies throughout the different sectors are needed.

Make resources more needs based-

Service provision is currently resource rather than user led. Social work services need to be more aware of the needs of their clients and centre their vision for care on these principles. Services have to be more effective, useful and relevant.

Recognition that solutions can't be the same across Scotland-

Need to realise that solutions within different specialities are place specific and require particular specialist consideration. Rural and island communities need different kinds of planning compared to urban, city environments.

Reduce the bureaucracy of commissioning and contracting tasks-

Funding processes are extremely complex. Simplification would ensure that joint working is more straightforward. Current demands for commissioning and contracting of services need to be more considerate of social workers time.

Improved conditions of pay and reward for social workers-

Different local authorities can pay different salaries. There needs to be standardisation of pay and reward amongst the statutory and non statutory sector a basic salary rate that should be established for new recruits.

While there is pressure to unify and standardise pay schemes, there should be common salary that fits experience and training levels. Salary has to be based not only on qualifications but also the levels of experience. There has to be a clear path way that social workers can take in terms of furthering their career. This also has to be clear and unified across the country.

However, there is some recognition that in unpopular areas (both spatially and in terms of sectors of social work) incentives and particular financial rewards may have to be given to encourage staff. But there is pressure not to divide up sectors and regions, as in producing favouritism and making particular employment sectors more enticing. Also, wage increases should not be given to social workers within the child and families field who may feel they have more responsibility and higher levels of accountability. It can create a value base that undervalues and diminishes the credibility of workers within for example the elderly care sector.

Every specialist area has to allow social workers to develop new skills and further their qualification.

Social workers need to be recognised as qualified professionals and should be paid in recognition of this. They should be valued in terms of pay similar to nurses and teachers.

There also has to be recognition that pay is not always the motivating factor.

Service provision and advice has to be available more flexible for the user- Client crisis does not always occur between 9 to 5 Social work services need to be responsive to problems at all times of the day.

Better clarity of the social worker role and the role played in service provision and produce a core set of social worker values that have a strong professional identity-

There has to be a clearly defined conception of the role of the social worker and social work that is built around a core set of values and a common professional identity. This has to ensure that social workers themselves, those who work with social work from the non-statutory sectors and different care professionals are clear about this. Social work services itself and other providers need to feel well positioned amongst the multiple partnerships that care provision is provided within.

Needs to have a more positive media image-

There is too much blame and negativity surrounding the social worker and the role of social work. More positive images have to be encouraged and developed.

This strong positive image of social work to come from ministers, councillors, senior managers, non statutory services as well as individual practitioners.

Develop services to fit new demographic patterns of a growing elderly population-

Possibly need to rethink the current approach to provision. With a shrinking workforce and a growing elderly population, there should there be more emphasis upon elderly care within social work services and more innovative approaches to practice.

Gender divides/ the problems of social work being recognised as a mainly female profession-

Industries that are recognised as being strongly gendered such as social work services tend to have a pay system that reflects this e.g. where 'women's work' is less well enumerated. Women's contribution to the work force is highly undervalued particularly within the caring and support professions. More men need to be attracted to and recruited to the service, and pay needs to reflect a less gendered divide.

Opportunity to share good practice and effective problem solving-

Many of the opportunities to develop a culture that encourages sharing and co operation have already been mentioned. The sharing ethos can also be encouraged where social workers share good practice and effective problem solving skills. This kind of openness can also allow for mistakes and near misses to be discussed. Internet forums, newsletters could all be effective ways of doing this.

Outcomes rather than process driven assessment-

An improved auditing and inspection system that elaborates successes as well as the failure is needed. There is currently too much concentration on formal procedure. Every local setting can achieve successful approaches for their clients in different ways. The process should have more choice and local practitioners need to have more scope for flexibility. Outcomes not process should be assessed.

Investment in technology will help communication and integration. Effective IT training and support has to be given to those who need it.

Local

One stop shop-

Effective responses and services assessed and allocated with ease and effective integrative working.

Funding has to be more specifically allocated to particular authorities and sectors-

Criminal justice direct funding was raised. Different regions should have more autonomy and control over their services.

Devolved budgets that cover much more long term funding

More autonomy in lower levels of care management to allow decisions to be made that consider local circumstances, individuals' needs and are efficient.

Reduce the number of local authorities-

It was suggested that streamlining and combining of local authorities may make integration simpler.

Local management need to listen and be in touch with the direct users and providers of care.

Multi disciplinary teams-

Social workers can take a lead role in providing a holistic approach better services.

Local accountability and community planning-

Need to address localised patterns and circumstances of need. Recognition that a single model of integration, run on centralised management won't work.

Centralised government arrangements are highly problematic.

A single model is recognised as being useful for ensuring a base line of service provision, however, due to local variability; a common rigid template is unhelpful.

Individual

Retention initiatives and support for newly qualified social workers-

There has to be effective support for social workers in their first posts. They need to have more practice based support from experienced qualified social work colleagues and support to reduce stress and anxiety levels. There has to be a consultative process where new social workers can ask questions, gain experience and support. Recognition it is important to recognise how resilient and enthusiastic new recruits are. Support has to help sustain their positive and optimistic ideas.

Better use of Para professionals and assistant staff-

Administration support, finance/ business management and social work assistants have to be developed to reduce the demands on social worker time.

Professional service and professional appearance-

One participant felt that not all social workers were good enough at keeping up a strong image of social work.

Develop an 'I can say no' ethos. Many social workers feel unable to turn clients away. They feel over burdened and unable to address everyone's needs. By encouraging a 'say no' approach, quality care can be provided.

Introduce a dedicated user and carer group officer-

Users and carers want to be able to put their views across in a non threatening, open, engaging way. They should be able to inform planning, acting as a representative for the clients that they work with. They should be able to initiate feedback to social work staff that are /have been involved in their care. Issues and problems, as well as positive feedback and appraisals should be heard from the users this is recognised as a useful after care initiative. A dedicated user and carer group officer was one suggestion. The voices of the user and the carer have to be heard much more they have to be recognised as active agents who can inform their care planning.

Fear is recognised as regularly preventing sharing of information.

There has to be better consultation with users and carers. The location and accessibility of meetings have to be considerate to their needs. Other methods such as email have to be more readily used to keep people in contact.

Better information about services for carers-

Carers need to be able to access information about services for those they care for as for themselves. The needs of this group have to be further considered within care packages.

Many clients are stigmatised. Clients need to be treated as real people-

Social workers are recognised as trying to de-stigmatise and respect all their clients. Many service users can have socially unacceptable problems, such as homelessness, criminal records, mental health problems, or disabilities. Social work staff needs to continue to promote respect amongst networks of client care as well as amongst the general public.

Empower service users-

Enable users to help in the decision process e.g. self assessment. Recognise that they have power and choice. Social workers have to encourage their individuality and ensure they are aware of the options open to them. Make them feel more engaged with the system.

Making the focus more centred around empowering users rather than giving aid to users-

Quality of life improvements.

Lower expectations and stress responsibilities as well as rights-

It's important to recognise client's rights and responsibilities. This is hoped to encourage independence and reduce the reliance many clients have upon social work staff.

Consistency v creativity-

Standards should be a minimum guarantee not a template for service provision. These standards should be a model of inspection based on consistency but also

individuality. This is recognised as a tension and a challenge. This can give social workers autonomy and discretion

Leadership at all levels needs to be more proactive and relational to and engaging with the ground level experience-

It's too easy for management to be cut off from the experiences and demands of those who are experiencing service provision and who are directly providing it.

Talk to the Wall Comments

Direct comments made by participants

Role of the social worker

- Social workers- The changers
- Definition- There should be 6 core roles of social workers, the additional being 'agent of social justice'. The definition should read, 'the profession of choice where there is a need for a holistic assessment of a complex situation, particularly when there are issues of risk and protection'
- Social workers- voice of the people
- Recognise the validity of social worker's contribution towards individuals and families who require palliative care- not only in the hospital/ hospice setting but also in their own homes.

Confident, competent workforce

- Pay is based on the value of the work NOT solely the possession of qualifications.
- Social workers need more autonomy in order to be enabled to make decisions.
- Directors and senior managers are paid too much and there should be a fixed maximum ratio between the lowest paid and the highest paid worker in social work.
- Will the headlines concerning (fine/imprisonment) in relation to review of hearing system adds to workers confidence and contributes to staff recruitment and retention?

Service organisation and delivery

- We may have to recognise that with limited resources of finance, manpower and time that there will be a necessity to form new partnerships with other bodies especially health and voluntary organisations.
- More effort should be put into recognising carers who are at present 'hidden'. Such folk are often under considerable stress and suffer personal hardship. These carers are only revealed in a crisis. A little help now can avoid later more serious problems.
- People should get as generic a service as possible even from a specialist team or agency.
- A traditional integrated social work department can contribute just as well, if not better, to integrated services as a dismembered one can.
- Person led service provision
- Communication and co operation across local authority boundaries.

Legislation

- Section 12 of the 68 act is still valid

Elizabeth Bulmer
Research Assistant for the 21st century social work review
21/07/05

Annex 1

1. Access to Services

1.1 How could access to Social Work Services be modernised to deliver:

- More flexible hours when mainstream services would be available
- More integrated services
- Less stigmatised services
- More proactive services
- More direct services through self assessment

1.2 Would different models of service delivery be needed for rural and island communities?

2. Integrated Services

2.1 What do we mean by integrated services and how can these be successfully created?

2.2 As Children and Families Social Work, Community Care and Criminal justice become more integrated with other services will social work departments disintegrate, will this matter?

2.3 What do you see as the potential benefits of integration?

2.4 How can barriers to integration be overcome?

3. Leadership and Management

3.1 What do you mean by improved leadership and management in social work services?

3.2 What are the barriers to improved leadership and management?

3.3 Are there particular skills, competencies and/or behaviours needed for leaders and managers now or in the future?

3.4 How can we develop professional leadership in social work services?

3.5 How should issues regarding the need for leadership and management at different levels throughout organisations be addressed?

4. Skill Mix

4.1 What roles need to be developed to improve the skill mix within social work services?

4.2 Can you provide examples of business or administrative roles that work well?

4.3 Do we need new 'Para- Professional' roles or more service support staff?

4.4 How do we move from hierarchical professional structures to a culture that values a range of functional and vocational roles?

5. Bureaucracy, Systems and Processes

5.1 How can we reduce/ cut the level of paper work?

5.2 What areas should we target most?

5.3 Can you give us examples of systems that have successfully cut unnecessary paper work?

5.4 As well as looking at systems, do we need to develop new and different roles to reduce the burden of paper work?

6. Personalisation through Participation

6.1 Is 'personalisation through participation' a different approach from that already adopted?

6.2 Can 'pure' personalisation of services be achieved- what are the implications for?

- Resources
- Power relationships- statutory involvement e.g. mental health, child protection, criminal justice
- Risk/ Accountability
- Planning and commissioning of services- best value

6.3 What are the strengths and weaknesses of the personalisation approach?

6.4 What are the enabling factors which allow this approach to be adopted?

6.5 What are the factors which will prevent this from occurring?

6.6 What are the messages that can be transferred to the development of the social work role and the wider social care sector?

7. Prevention and Early Intervention

7.1 How does social work strike the right balance between early intervention, prevention and response to crisis?

7.2 What role should social workers play in early intervention?

7.3 How can we manage to focus more on early intervention, whilst at the same time continuing to deal with crises?

7.4 How do we measure or evaluate the effectiveness of early intervention?

8. Professional Accountability

8.1 How can organisations ensure that social workers are able to practice autonomously within the context of the organisation's legal and statutory requirements?

8.2 Should social workers assess and manage risk? What are the implications of this for practice?

8.3 How should social workers manage their multiple accountabilities for their professional practice to?

- The person using the service
- Their employer
- The Scottish Social Work Services Council
- The wider public

8.4 How can we promote and develop greater openness to learn from mistakes?

8.5 What role should professional supervision play in promoting accountability and the safe management of risk?

9. The Voluntary and Statutory Sectors

9.1 What might the future look like? What should the involvement be of independent organisations in policy development and strategic planning and in the provision of services?

9.2 How do we support the development of flexible, personalised, and good-value services at local community level?

9.3 How do we promote greater interchange of ideas, staff, training and resourcing between sectors?

9.4 Could projects in the voluntary sector take on more responsibility and accountability for services? How would this be managed?

9.5 What do good partnerships between the sectors look like and what enables quality provision? What inhibits it?

10. What Kind of Social Worker Do We Want For the Future?

- 10.1 Do you agree with the statements, 'the six core roles of the social workers are counsellor, advocate, partner, and assessor of risk or need, care manager and agent of social control'? 'The social worker is suggested as the professional of choice when no one knows what the right answer is, and where there's a high degree of risk'?
- 10.2 How do we make most effective use of the skills of qualified social workers?
- 10.3 What is the right balance between a generic social worker role and specialist roles?
- 10.4 How can we develop high quality therapeutic relationships between social workers and clients?
- 10.5 How can we base practice more clearly on evidence of effectiveness?